THE PORNOGRAPHERS AND THE PROPHET: HENRY MILLER, ANAÏS NIN, AND LAWRENCE DURRELL READING DOSTOEVSKY

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Programme in English
York University
Toronto, Ontario

June 1998

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ABSTRACT

In the 1930s, three expatriate writers, Henry Miller, Anaïs Nin, and Lawrence Durrell, met in Paris and formed an alliance. With Miller at the helm, they set out to bring about a revolution in writing and to create a new kind of prose. Surprisingly, in their quest to create this new prose, they chose none other than the nineteenth century Russian novelist Fedor Dostoevsky as their guide. Although time would show that each of these three writers had a different conception of what that new prose should be like, their alliance in the 1930s proved a decisive one for each of them. Their wrestling with Dostoevsky during that period was, for each writer, an especially important stage of formulating an individual vision of prose narrative and a key to subsequent achievements.

The dissertation has three focuses. The first is an analysis of Miller's dialogue with Dostoevsky set first within the context of the American reception of the Russian novelist and then within the context of Miller's Parisian experience in the 1930s. The second is an examination of the interrelations of Miller, Nin, and Durrell and the work produced by them in the 1930s, when the three formed the nucleus of an international group of writers, poets, and artists later known as the Villa Seurat Circle. The third is a consideration of how the reading of and the struggles with Dostoevsky became reflected in the texts of Miller, Nin, and Durrell, during the 1930s. Altogether, the dissertation explores the complex dynamics within a case study of cross-cultural reception and appropriation.

The dissertation includes a consideration of how Dostoevsky's style, philosophy, and literary types were received, interpreted, and transformed by the Villa Seurat writers (paying

special attention to their reading of *Notes from Underground*). This dissertation will be of interest to those examining Dostoevsky's reception in the United States, to scholars of Miller, Nin, and Durrell, and to those interested in the intersection of literary and cultural studies in general.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to acknowledge the unwavering support of my family–my father, Roman, my mother, Evgenia, and my sister Irina. They have been my first readers, my most exacting critics, and my gurus. They are my inspiration and my strength, and my gratitude to them can never be sufficiently expressed.

I am most indebted to Professor Nick Lary, who has been the ideal supervisor and teacher. He has shared his knowledge and provided the needed guidance while giving me the freedom to explore issues that were of interest to me. I am also greatly indebted to Professor Richard Pope who has been a mentor and whose insights and writings (both scholarly and creative) continue to inspire me in my own work. My deepest gratitude and admiration must go to both of them.

I would like to thank all the members of my examining committee and, especially, the external reader, Professor Viacheslav Ivanov, for providing me with many interesting ideas and suggestions that I know I will develop in my future work on the subject.

Maya Johnson has contributed a tremendous amount to this dissertation while writing her own. Her insights have helped me a great deal in my work. Her knowledge, her friendship, and her sense of humour are much appreciated.

I would like to thank Dr. Olga Bakich for her support, encouragement, and friendship. Marina Avasar and Adrianna Stech have been great friends and an unfailing support over the years. The wisdom and the many talents of these women are a perennial inspiration.

I would also like to thank Professor Anne Pilgrim for her kindness and support in the years that I have taught with her.

I should acknowledge the support that I have received in the early stages of planning this dissertation from Jay Martin and Mary Dearborn. Jan Pearson has always been a great help. I have been assisted in my research by several grants from York University for which I am grateful. I have also been helped by David Koch, Shelley Cox, and the staff of the Morris Rare Book Library at the Southern Illinois University when I was conducting my research there.

Separately, I would like to acknowledge the interest taken in this dissertation by Baroness Cassandra von Sutton and to thank her for her sponsorship.

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INTRODUCTION

In the early stages of planning my dissertation, I was invited by a small art gallery to attend the opening of a one-man show of a Toronto artist who was originally from St. Petersburg. At the reception, after the topic of the latest developments on the local art scene was exhausted, the artist politely inquired what I was working on at graduate school. I replied that I was about to write a dissertation on Henry Miller's reception of Fedor Dostoevsky. At which point all politeness suddenly evaporated. The artist demanded to know how I could do such a thing. When he saw the blank look on my face, he angrily exclaimed, "How can you associate a prophet like Dostoevsky with a pornographer like Miller?!"

Over the next few years, the scene repeated itself in a variety of contexts and settings–social, professional, and geographic. Dostoevsky scholars raised their eyebrows at the linking of Dostoevsky and Miller (when so little has been done with Dostoevsky's reception by *major* authors). Scholars of American literature were puzzled that I would wish to work on Miller at all (sexist, racist, antisemitic, homophobic). Other reactions ranged somewhere between incredulity and a sense of a personal insult. When I decided to broaden the focus of the dissertation to include Anaïs Nin and Lawrence Durrell, two writers with whom Miller was closely associated in the 1930s, the general response to my topic changed little. Nin was remembered mostly through *Henry and June*, a 1990 film by Philip Kaufman based on the eponymous volume of her unexpurgated diaries, which garnered the

first ever NC-17 rating (a controversial rating by the Motion Picture Association of America designed to replace the stigmatized "X" rating). Lawrence Durrell presented a different set of problems, as people would first happily recite such titles as *A Zoo in My Luggage* or *My Family and Other Animals* (all written by his younger brother, the naturalist and author Gerald Durrell), and only then recall *The Alexandria Quartet*, a tetralogy of novels which won him international acclaim in the 1960s.

The question, whether asked directly or implied, was always the same: What do these authors have in common with Dostoevsky? Before I offer any answers here, however, I should provide some background. It has long been a commonplace in Dostoevsky studies that the twentieth century belongs to Dostoevsky and that world literature would not be what it is today without exposure to Dostoevsky's writings. Thus, Georgii Fridlender, a patriarch of Soviet Dostoevsky studies, writes in his book *Dostoevsky and World Literature* [*Dostoevskii i mirovaia literatura*] (1979) that "from the beginning of the twentieth century [Dostoevsky] exerted and continues to exert today an enormous influence on the literature and the spiritual life of humanity" (7). There is hardly any need to point out either the vagueness of such sweeping assertions or that both 'humanity' and 'world literature' tend to refer in this context to the larger European countries (Fridlender, for instance, restricts his discussion of Dostoevsky's reception to French and German literatures).[1] The fact remains, however, that Dostoevsky was translated into a number of languages, read in a number of countries, and that both his writings and himself have been the focus of much attention and debate in the twentieth century.

Some scholars have even argued that Dostoevsky's impact in other countries was more profound than it has been in his homeland; for example, Victor Terras, a well-known American Dostoevsky authority, writes that Dostoevsky's "greatest impact has been on Western readers" (1993.5). But is it really possible to speak of a 'Western' reader, as if the West is some kind of a monolithic entity and not a series of countries with vastly different languages, systems of reference, and cultural traditions? René Wellek, another American scholar of Dostoevsky, attempts to address the issue of Dostoevsky's 'Western' readership in his important essay "A Sketch of the History of Dostoevsky Criticism" (1962). In the essay, Wellek offers some thoughts on how the Western reception of Dostoevsky differed historically from the Russian reception (he argues that Western critics could be less partisan than the Russian ones, but that they were generally hampered by their lack of knowledge of Russian intellectual and social history) but then quickly points out that there are "divergences in Dostoevsky criticism in the main Western countries" (7). Wellek goes on to briefly sketch in Dostoevsky's reception in France, Germany, and England. When he turns to the topic of the American reception of Dostoevsky, however, he comments that "Dostoevsky's influence on American writers has hardly begun to be explored" (13).

Almost forty years have passed since Wellek wrote about the lack of research into Dostoevsky's reception in the United States, but there is still a significant gap in scholarship in this area. To date, the standard text for anyone inquiring into this issue is Helen Muchnic's pioneering but long outdated study *Dostoevsky's English Reputation: 1881-1936* (1939). As its title suggests, the study focuses on Dostoevsky's reception in England rather

than in the United States, so that some important American connections are ignored.[2] More problematically, Muchnic bases her study on the assumption that the English and American responses to Dostoevsky are not only identical, but are determined by the same cultural and social factors, which is clearly not the case. The other well-known and frequently quoted study in this area which, nonetheless, only partially concerns itself with Dostoevsky's reception in the United States, is Gilbert Phelps's wide-ranging *The Russian Novel in English Fiction* (1956). Again, Phelps's focus is on the English reaction to Dostoevsky, with America added almost as an afterthought. Like Muchnic, he does not differentiate between the American and English receptions of Dostoevsky.[3]

Among the more recent contributions to this area of inquiry there are A. N. Nikoliukin's *The Interrelations of Russian and American Literatures: Turgenev, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and America* [*Vzaimosviazi literatur Rossii i SShA: Turgenev, Tolstoi, Dostoevskii i Amerika*] (1987) and Myler Wilkinson's *The Dark Mirror: American Literary Response to Russia* (1996). Only a chapter of Nikoliukin's work is devoted to Dostoevsky ("The Legacy of Dostoevsky and American Literature" ["Nasledie Dostoevskogo i amerikanskaia literatura"] [238-284]). Despite the brevity of the Dostoevsky chapter, Nikoliukin manages to provide a number of interesting insights into the issue. On the whole, however, his study is seriously flawed by its biased perception of American literature in favour of the so-called 'socially-progressive' authors (those who do not fit the bill are either derided or absent), and the chapter is most convincing and thorough in a discussion of Dostoevsky's impact on Faulkner (264-284).[4] Myler Wilkinson provides a brief but

interesting discussion (informed by the theories of Edward Said and Mikhail Bakhtin) on Dostoevsky's American treatment as the "Russian Other" (52-55) as well as a provocative chapter on Sherwood Anderson's reception of Dostoevsky (112-129). Wilkinson's focus, however, is on the American literary response to Russia in general and Dostoevsky's American reception is a secondary concern at the most.

The most significant recent work in the area of Dostoevsky's American reception has been done by two German comparativists: Stefan Klessmann, who wrote *The German and the American Experience of the World. A Comparative Interdisciplinary Cultural Analysis in the Mirror of Dostoevsky's Reception between 1900 and 1945* [*Deutsche und amerikanische Erfahrungsmuster von Welt. Eine interdisziplinäre, kulturvergleichende Analyse im Spiegel der Dostojewskij-Rezeption zwischen 1900 und 1945*] (1990), and Horst-Jürgen Gerick, who wrote *The Russians in America. Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev and Chekhov in Light of their Importance for the Literature of the USA* [*Die Russen in Amerika. Dostojewskij, Tolstoj, Turgenjew und Tschechow in ihrer Bedeuntung für die Literatur der USA*] (1995). Klessmann's ambitious and erudite monograph addresses Dostoevsky's reception both in Germany and the United States in the first half of the twentieth century. His study ranges across several disciplines and mediums, but since his focus is on the difference between the American and German outlooks on the world, the treatment of the American writers' reception of Dostoevsky is far from comprehensive (Faulkner is given most attention). Klessmann deserves special credit for being the first scholar to consider the importance of Dostoevsky for Henry Miller (256-266). This said, he largely ignores Miller's seminal works

of the 1930s, and bases his brief assessment of Miller's reception of Dostoevsky on his *Rosy Crucifixion* trilogy (1949-1960). Gerick's wide-ranging study poses many interesting questions about how a diverse group of American writers (from William Faulkner to Woody Allen) responded to Dostoevsky and his novels. Because, however, his study attempts to cover much ground and because Dostoevsky is only one of the Russian writers under consideration, little space is devoted to each American writer's reception of Dostoevsky (Faulkner's treatment is a noteable exception) and many questions remain unanswered.

Apart from these general texts, there is only a handful of book-length studies about Dostoevsky's reception by a particular American author (foremost among these is J. Weisgerber's *Faulkner et Dostoievski: Confluences et influences* [1968; trans. 1974]). If Dostoevsky's impact on American literature is as great as scholars imply (as one scholar puts it: "Not a single important twentieth century American writer passed by Dostoevsky with indifference" [Nikoliukin 1987.262]), why are there not any more thorough studies focusing on Dostoevsky's reception by American writers, or, at the very least, why are there not more monographs on Dostoevsky's reception by individual American authors? Wellek suggests that a scarcity of works on Dostoevsky's impact on American authors is due partly to the fact that "it is difficult to isolate [the impact of Dostoevsky on American writers] from that of many intermediaries" (13). But an abundance of intermediaries also characterizes the German reception of Dostoevsky, and there is no lack of studies on Dostoevsky's reception in that country. Nikoliukin offers a more convincing explanation when he writes that many problems of Dostoevsky's American reception have not been adequately addressed because

the necessary "historical-literary material has not been gathered in its entirety to this day" (1987.250). In fact, much of this 'historical-literary material' *cannot* be gathered, because many American authors whose works seem to indicate a connection with Dostoevsky included neither direct quotes from his works, nor discussions of him and his writings within their own texts or correspondence, nor did they leave extensive archival materials behind them. Consequently, a discussion about Dostoevsky's reception by these authors must be limited to the more hypothetical area of intertextuality, which–though critically illuminating–cannot be supported by 'hard evidence' and remains ultimately conjectural.

What makes Henry Miller particularly attractive as a subject of a case study about Dostoevsky's reception by an American writer is that, first of all, so much information is available to the researcher. Miller includes numerous references to Dostoevsky as well as passages from his novels, essays, and speeches in his own texts; there are many discussions about Dostoevsky and his writings within Miller's correspondence; there are published memoirs by Miller's friends and associates which contain much information about Miller's reading of Dostoevsky. Miller's 'dialogue' with Dostoevsky continued throughout his lifetime, from his early attempts at writing to the pieces written shortly before his death in 1980, and he readily acknowledged that he owed a large debt to Dostoevsky as a writer (he said that he embarked on his writing career with the hopes of becoming one day "an American Dostoevsky" [1971.3]). Miller's dates (1891-1980) ideally positioned him to participate in the American discovery of Dostoevsky: he was an impressionable twenty-one-year old when the first of Constance Garnett's historic translations of Dostoevsky became

available in the United States, and he read all that he could get his hands on in his twenties and thirties, as critical works on Dostoevsky were published through the next decades. But what makes Miller's reception of Dostoevsky particularly interesting is that, even though he frequently stresses the importance of his 'Americanness' in his approach to Dostoevsky's writings (the narrator of one of his texts announces: "I have understood Dostoevsky, or rather his characters and the problems which tormented them, better, being American-born" [*Nexus* 19]) and even though some of his key assumptions about Dostoevsky were those commonly made by American readers (as will be shown in the dissertation), he eventually formulated his own unique vision of what Dostoevsky accomplished in his novels.

Miller's personal vision of Dostoevsky, which included the idea that he had put an end to the novel, became especially important to Miller in Paris of the 1930s, during the most creative and important decade of his life, when he gained both international fame and notoriety for a series of innovative texts (admired by such literary authorities as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and George Orwell) in which sexuality was treated in a manner that was much too explicit for the times. During this period, Miller developed close personal and professional relationships with two younger authors who were also writing in English: Anaïs Nin (1903-1977) and Lawrence Durrell (1912-1990). Nin, who became a feminist icon in the 1970s after the publication of her monumental diaries and her woman-centred erotica, was largely unknown in the 1930s (she published several stories in various magazines as well as an analysis of D. H. Lawrence's work--*D. H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study* [1932]). Durrell, who became famous in the 1960s after he wrote a series of poetic and experimental

books about life in Alexandria, was a beginning novelist and poet in the 1930s (before he became associated with Miller, he published several derivative novels under a pseudonym for Faber and Faber).

In the last few years, the three writers (Miller, Nin, and Durrell) and their works have become the centre of much popular attention and scholarly inquiry. Two new biographies of Miller appeared for his centenary in 1991 (Mary Dearborn's *The Happiest Man Alive; Henry Miller, A Biography* and Robert Ferguson's *Henry Miller, A Life*); two biographies of Nin were recently published (Noel Riley Fitch's *The Erotic Life of Anaïs Nin* [1993] and Deirdre Bair's superb biography, *Anaïs Nin* [1995]); an unauthorized biography of Durrell was published in 1996 (Gordon Bowker *Through the Dark Labyrinth: A Biography of Lawrence Durrell*) and another biography, authorized by his estate, is being written by Ian MacNiven, an established Durrell scholar. Recent comparative studies on Miller include John Parkin's book about the connection of Miller with Rabelais (*Henry Miller, The Modern Rabelais* [1991]) and Gay Louise Balliet's book about Miller's link with Surrealism (*Henry Miller and Surrealist Metaphor: "Riding the Ovarian Trolley"* [1996]). Suzanne Nalbantian published a comparative study of Nin's autobiography (*Aesthetic Autobiography: from Life to Art in Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Anaïs Nin* [1994]) and Richard Pine recently published a study on Durrell's fiction (*Lawrence Durrell: The Mindscape* [1994]). Similarly, collections of critical essays–old and new–were recently published on each of the writers (Ronald Gottesman edited *Critical Essays on Henry Miller* [1992]; Philip K. Jason edited *The Critical Response to Anaïs Nin* [1996] and Suzanne Nalbantian edited *Anaïs Nin;*

Literary Perspectives [1997]; Julius R. Raper, Melody L. Enscore and Paige Matthey Bynam edited *Lawrence Durrell: Comprehending the Whole* [1995]). There are several journals dedicated to publishing scholarly and creative pieces connected to the writing of Miller, Nin, and Durrell (one example is *Anaïs: An International Journal* edited by Gunther Stuhlmann who was the editor of Nin's original diaries) and there are many World Wide Web sites which provide information about each author.[5] In other words, there is every indication to believe that these writers whose works were once stigmatized and marginalised for various reasons are being embraced both by the critical and academic establishment and by new reading publics, and that attempts are being made to contextualize their writing and to understand why they wrote as they did.[6]

One key to understanding Miller's, Nin's, and Durrell's writings, as I will argue in this dissertation, is found in the alliance which they formed in Paris of the 1930s.[7] The basis for their alliance was a shared vision of literature–as exemplified by the novel–as something antiquated and lifeless, and a shared belief that a completely new type of writing had to be invented. Miller, the ideologist of the group, offered up Dostoevsky as both the pinnacle of novelistic achievement and as a gateway through which one must pass in order to realize this new kind of writing. The experimental prose produced by Miller, Nin, and Durrell in the 1930s bears many marks of their attempts to go beyond what Dostoevsky had accomplished in his novels. Time would show that each writer had a completely different opinion on what that new writing should be. Nonetheless, their association in the 1930s proved to be a decisive one for each writer, and their wrestling with Dostoevsky during that period was, for

each one, an important stage of formulating an individual vision of prose narrative.

This dissertation has three focuses. The first is an analysis of Miller's dialogue with Dostoevsky set first within the context of the American reception of the Russian novelist and then within the context of his Parisian experience in the 1930s. The second is an examination of the interrelations of Miller, Nin, and Durrell and the work produced by them in the 1930s, when the three formed the nucleus of an international group of writers, poets, and artists known as the Villa Seurat Circle.[8] The third is a consideration of how the reading of and the struggles with Dostoevsky became reflected in the texts of Miller, Nin, and Durrell during the 1930s. Altogether, the dissertation explores the complex dynamics within a case-study of cross-cultural reception and appropriation. It is hoped that this dissertation will be of interest to those examining Dostoevsky's reception in the United States, to scholars of Miller, Nin, and Durrell (it is the first book-length monograph to consider their writings conjointly), and to those interested in the intersection of literary and cultural studies in general.

The dissertation consists of four chapters. The first, "Dostoevsky, His American Reputation, and Miller's Villa Seurat Circle," isolates and discusses several important historical and cultural factors which affected the American reading of Dostoevsky, outlines the membership of Villa Seurat Circle, describes the interrelations within it, and plots Miller's reading and reception of Dostoevsky and his critics. The second chapter, "The Villa Seurat Circle and Attempts at Post-Dostoevskian Prose," begins with a consideration of Dostoevsky historical reception as a prose stylist , includes an examination of the

experimental prose that was available as a model to Miller, Nin, and Durrell in the 1930s (including that of James Joyce and of the French Surrealists) along with their rejection of it, and provides a discussion of how their interpretation of Dostoevsky's style influenced their own writing. The third chapter, "Villa Seurat and Readings in Dostoevsky's Philosophy," opens with an account of the historical problems associated with the reception of Dostoevsky's ideas both in Russia and outside of it, provides an account of how Miller, Nin, and Durrell tried to grapple with some of the philosophical questions posed by him (the relationship of good and evil, the reason for the existence of suffering, etc.,), paying special attention to their misreadings of Dostoevsky (including Kirillov's suicide in *The Possessed* [*Besy*] [1871-1872]). It then shows how their interpretations of these philosophical dilemmas were reflected in their prose. The final chapter, "Writing the Underground: Fantastic Women, *Hommes Fatals*, and Others" begins with a consideration of how literary allusions to Dostoevsky and his works are used in Miller's own texts, and goes on to consider a number of characters in the texts produced by Miller, Nin, and Durrell which bear a direct or mediated connection with the types in Dostoevsky's novels (paying special attention to the type of the "Fantastic Woman" and her male companions), and finishes with a discussion of the importance of Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* [*Zapiski iz podpol'ia*] (1864) for the prose that the three writers produced in the 1930s. The four chapters are followed by a conclusion which summarizes what has been done and proposes some implications of the study.

As implied above, the critical approach of this study is interdisciplinary and borrows

from a number of diverse critical methods (what has been justly called in cultural studies, a "bricolage of methodologies" [Bercovitch 247]). Transliteration conforms to the Library of Congress system. In the case of Russian names, an attempt has been made to use the forms most familiar to Anglophone readers. In all the quotations cited in English, the spelling of Dostoevsky's last name has been standardized (Miller's various texts alone employ more than four variants of the spelling of this name). All the references to Dostoevsky's works are to the thirty volume Soviet Academy of Science edition (1972-1990). Translations from Russian are my own except where otherwise noted (the Appendix to the dissertation provides the Russian original of most of the Dostoevsky quotes cited). Quotations from most French texts (including Miller's interviews given in French) are left in the original language.[9]

DOSTOEVSKY, HIS AMERICAN REPUTATION, AND MILLER'S VILLA SEURAT CIRCLE

> "I plunked myself in front of Dostoevsky's portrait, as I had done before many a time, to study his familiar physiognomy anew...Such a plain, homely face, he had. So Slavic, so moujik-like. The face of a man who might pass unnoticed in a crowd...I stood there, as always, trying to penetrate the mystery lurking behind the doughy mass of features" (Henry Miller *Plexus* 20)

In 1872, the famous Muscovite art collector, Pavel Tretiakov, commissioned the fashionable artist, Vasilii Perov, to paint a portrait of Fedor Dostoevsky. The portrait, exhibited in St. Petersburg later that year, in Moscow in 1874, and in Paris in 1878 as part of the International Artists Exhibition, was pronounced a masterpiece. It became the effigy of Dostoevsky to be celebrated by Georg Brandes among others, and reproduced around the world as an image supposedly truer to the original than the many photographs taken in those years. The portrait came to represent the artist during the moment of creation: the spirit hovering over chaos, an icon in a frame instead of the traditional setting framework. Perov sat Dostoevsky in three quarter profile, his cheekbones sharply defined, his face gaunt. The writer is wearing a grey jacket, one in which he is often seen on the photographs of the period. In the painting, however, the jacket is bulkier, more formless, looking more like an overcoat than a tailored frock-coat. Dostoevsky's legs are crossed, his large hands with prominent veins and square fingers clasped around one knee. At his chest, the intense, swirling colours of his cravat (black with blood-red upward rushing streaks) relieve the rigidity of his pose. Above him and behind him, darkening on the left side of the painting, is a brown backdrop to which Dostoevsky is turning away from the viewer. Dostoevsky's gaze is directed downwards and travels beyond the painting. He is looking into the darkness.

The iconography of the portrait is immediately identifiable. The portrait's background, where ochres, russets, and umbers blend, suggests the gloom of St. Petersburg tenements, the trademark site of Dostoevsky's novels. The 'overcoat' is a visual reference to Nikolai Gogol, Dostoevsky's literary God-father, but also to Dostoevsky's years of penury and exile. The intense gaze down into the darkness is suggestive: Dostoevsky's literary subjects come from the obscure and the downtrodden. Finally, the primal colours of the cravat at Dostoevsky's chest, the black with the red streaks, are once again evocative of the intensity of the passions within both the author and his creations.

But does the portrait really capture, as Perov had hoped, Dostoevsky's 'essence'? The question, of course, is irrelevant. Picasso's apocryphal comment after painting Gertrude Stein's portrait comes to mind: "She doesn't look like it now, but she will." Perov's portrait has *become* the 'genuine' Dostoevsky, more identifiable than the photographs.[1] As one of Dostoevsky's admirers raved after seeing the portrait,

> The prophet's smouldering, self-consuming ardour burns and stares from these facial features–the stiff, far-seeking gaze of a reclusive seer, a soul whose inspiration and passion were world-embracing, a heart which felt to their depths all human woes, which understood all vice, all ignominy and degradation, as well as all piety, goodness and puremindedness (Carl Nærup qtd. in Kjetsaa 269).

The *icon* of the portrait, much like a religious icon, 'reveals' its subject while imprinting it on the viewer's consciousness to be superimposed on any other representation. In other words, every photograph and every image of Dostoevsky seen after the portrait will be perceived in terms of its affinity to the archetype that Perov's portrait of Dostoevsky has become. More importantly, every artist from Iurii Annenkov to Ilia Glazunov working on a painting,

drawing, or etching of Dostoevsky after Perov would have to react, whether consciously or subconsciously, to Perov's portrait of Dostoevsky. Doubtless, the original site for the iconography of Dostoevsky's pictorial depictions is ultimately found in the novels and the biography of the writer. Perov's portrait, however, was first to combine and articulate these topoi visually and thus became the ur-image in the history of Dostoevsky's subsequent representations by Russian and non-Russian artists.

By contrast, the genesis of the cultural representations of Dostoevsky, especially that of his cross-cultural representations, is far more complex. It is evident, nonetheless, that the history and the tradition of Dostoevsky's representation within a given culture must be considered before it is possible to seriously address his impact upon an individual or a group of individuals operating within that culture. And few writers have had such an impact cross-culturally, or had a richer, more interesting history of cross-cultural reception than Dostoevsky. Certainly, few Russian writers have had such a fanatical, widespread, and enduring following in countries outside of Russia. Attesting to this 'foreign' veneration of Dostoevsky is a phenomenon of the 1910s and 1920s known later as the Dostoevsky Cult (remnants of which persist to this day), which occurred among the English and American intelligentsia, when Dostoevsky was glorified as not only the greatest of novelists, but also as the wisest of psychologists, and the most accurate of prophets (Mirsky 1935.107-108; Muchnic 1939.62-110).

While both the United States and England were fascinated by Dostoevsky, it was the former that had a special vested interest in the writer and his works. Like Russia, the United

States was long posited on the margins of the Great Western Canon and perceived in terms of its 'otherness' to Europe. At the close of the nineteenth century, the literature of the United States, like that of Russia, was still being unfavourably compared to the literary heritage of Europe and dismissed by many European critics. As late as 1923, D. H. Lawrence, noting the parallels between American and Russian literatures, criticized the prevailing European vision of American literature as "children's tales" (*Studies in Classic American Literature* 4-7).[2]

Significantly, while Dostoevsky was only one of the many Russian writers imported to the United States in English translations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, he was the first Russian writer to arrive who had been celebrated by the Europeans themselves precisely because of his perceived stance *outside* of the European literary tradition rather than for any conformity to it: one of the most influential European critics of Dostoevsky exclaimed, "Voici venir le Scythe, le vrai Scythe, qui va révolutionner toutes nos habitudes intellectuelles" (Vogüé 1886.203). This situating of Dostoevsky as a literary outsider who subsequently becomes accepted on his own terms by the Europeans made him especially interesting to American writers who were being similarly marginalised. And interested they were: as one scholar of Dostoevsky's impact on the literature of the United States claims, "Not a single important twentieth century American writer passed by Dostoevsky with indifference" (Nikoliukin 1987.262).

Dostoevsky as American Cultural Icon

Since a comprehensive history of Dostoevsky's reception in the United States has yet

to be written, it is difficult to talk about the genesis and the development of his cross-cultural portrayal in that country. Three factors, however, may be isolated as playing determining roles in the eventual claiming of Dostoevsky as an American cultural icon; namely, in chronological order: 1) the fact that the first English translation of any work by Dostoevsky to become widely available in the United States was his problematic semi-autobiographic novel *Zapiski iz mertvogo doma* (1860-62) (most accurately translated as *Notes from the Dead House*); 2) Melchior de Vogüé's collection of essays about Russian literature published as *Le roman russe* (1886), which to a large degree shaped and biased the Western and especially the American critical response to Dostoevsky; and 3) the socio-cultural situation in the United States in 1912-1920, when Dostoevsky was rediscovered by the Anglophone world through the translations of Constance Garnett.

Given the American fascination with Siberia in the second half of the nineteenth century, a fascination made evident by the many publications of explorers' accounts of travels and adventures in Siberia, as well as by the popularity of 'exotic Russia' novels, in which unhappy Russian heroines are inevitably exiled to Siberia, suffering all kinds of unspeakable horrors in the process,[3] it is not surprising that Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Dead House*, a novel about convict life in Siberia, caught the attention of the American reader. The relative neglect into which this novel based on Dostoevsky's experiences in Siberia during his imprisonment and exile has fallen, belies the immense popularity which it enjoyed upon its publication. Joseph Frank warns us, however, that the novel has always been the least carefully read of Dostoevsky's longer works and that, in fact, it contains "the matrix of the

later Dostoevsky...in its deceptively objective and noncommittal pages" (1983.159).

Notes from the Dead House consists of a central narrative, ostensibly written by a certain Alexander Petrovich Gorianchikov, a wife-murderer, about his experiences as a convict, discovered by chance and introduced by an unnamed persona appearing in the 'foreword' as the editor of Gorianchikov's notes. In Russia, the novel (intended to be a literary comeback for Dostoevsky) was a success--according to Dostoevsky himself, it created a "furore" ("To A. E. Vrangel" [31 March-14 April 1865] XXVIII.2:115)--chiefly because it was popularly perceived to be a source of "the most reliable and most interesting information about...the Russian jail" (Pisarev 1866.97), and not least because it was the first such published account written by one who had experienced it firsthand. In the United States, the novel (first made available the year of Dostoevsky's death in an English translation by Marie von Thilo reprinted in New York from the London edition by Henry Holt & Co.) was also immensely successful. The unprecedented demand for the book resulted in a new translation by H. S. Edwards appearing in New York in 1887, making *Notes from the Dead House* the only novel by Dostoevsky to be available in more than one English translation during the nineteenth century.

The reasons for the novel's popularity with the American readership were similar to those which had made it successful with its first Russian readers: it was seen to be a source of accurate first-hand information about Siberia and, by extension, about Russia. This idea was both promoted and exploited by the deliberately sensationalist rendering of the novel's title in the first translation–*Buried Alive or 10 Years of Penal Servitude in Siberia*–which

includes such commonplaces associated with Siberia and Russia in the popular imagination of the time as "penal servitude" and "buried alive" (the last neatly evoking both the snows enveloping Russia, that other Great White North of the American imagination, and the oppressiveness of its regime). *Notes from the Dead House* thus appeared ready-made to fit into the American stereotype of Russia, summed up by one disgruntled Russian in 1896 as consisting of "snow and wolves and police agents, with the threatening prospect of Siberia in the background."[4]

As the first Dostoevsky text to become available and to find success with the American reader, *Notes from the Dead House* had done much to lay the foundations of what eventually became another stereotype: the American perception of Dostoevsky. Like many before them who were not sure "what part of [the novel] is fact and what fiction" (W.R.S. Ralston [1881] qtd. in Muchnic 8) the American readers made the classic mistake of confusing the central narrator with the author. The American publishers actually encouraged this by announcing the novel in their circular as "Fedor Dostoevsky's record of his ten years' exile in Siberia" (disapprovingly cited by a lone reviewer in *The Dial*'s "Briefs on New Books" [1881.15]). Once *Notes from the Dead House* was thus popularly identified as a hybrid of journalism and memoirs, the issue of artistry moved into the background. In fact, the novel was seen as having been disingenuously written and marked by a lack of design and stylistic polish; as one anonymous American reviewer put it in 1887, "There is little attempt at a story, and none at all at fine writing."[5] In this way, Dostoevsky first entered American consciousness as a writer who underwent horrible experiences, and whose chief concern was

to transcribe them into his autobiographical texts, with no special thought given to style or structure. This first impression of the American readers would soon be reinforced by the publication in 1886 of Melchior de Vogüé's *Le roman russe*.

As attested to by Dostoevsky scholars and afficionados (including André Gide), Vogüé's response to Dostoevsky, outlined in the best known chapter of *Le roman russe*, was of great importance in forming subsequent critical reactions to Dostoevsky and his work. What is more problematic is determining the precise way in which Vogüé shaped the American response to Dostoevsky. As is well known, at the time of his study's publication in 1886, Vogüé was already an accepted authority on Russian literature, having learnt the Russian language and met many Russian writers through his appointment in 1877 as the secretary to the French Embassy at St. Petersburg.[6] *Le roman russe* originated as a series of essays about Russian literature published in the widely read *Revue des Deux Mondes* throughout the 1880s. Revised and published in book form, Vogüé's study was widely acclaimed and made available in an English translation in 1886, the year of its original publication. Even more than the French, however, the Anglophone readers had to take Vogüé's word for his analysis of Dostoevsky's novels, because of the simple fact that none of these, with the important exception of *Zapiski iz mertvogo doma*, were translated into English before 1886.[7] *Le roman russe* thus became both the real introduction to Dostoevsky and his work for the American reader and the most authoritative source of information about Dostoevsky available.

Even a most casual reading of *Le roman russe* makes it clear that Vogüé had many

biases as a critic. Interestingly, however, Vogüé's biases towards Dostoevsky served only to strengthen the original reaction of the American readers to *Notes from the Dead House*. In the famous chapter named "La religion de la souffrance," for example, Vogüé stresses the pain and anguish that Dostoevsky personally underwent and inscribed into his work ("on aurait peine à comprendre ces livres si l'on ne savait la vie de celui qui les a créés, j'allais dire qui les a soufferts; peu importe, le premier mot renferme toujours le second" [204]; "ce fut cette page de son [Dostoevsky's] histoire intime qu'il récrivit" [240], etc.,). The supposed autobiographical veracity of Dostoevsky's novels is emphasized by Vogüé's repeated claims that Dostoevsky's characters are identifiable with their creator ("les héros de ses romans, en qui son [Dostoevsky's] âme est si visiblement incarnée" [207]; "le caractère...qui remplit à lui seul [Dostoevsky] un gros volume" [257]). Importantly, Vogüé also suggests that Dostoevsky was an indifferent stylist, whose novels feature "longueurs...intolérables" (255),[8] a conviction that was to be reflected in Henry James's well-known characterization of Dostoevsky's novels as "fluid puddings though not tasteless" and in his condemnation of that "vice [which is their] lack of composition [and] their defiance of economy and structure" (1912.246).

Thus far it may seem that Vogüé's sole contribution to the American reception of Dostoevsky was simply to confirm the sketchy impression of Dostoevsky formed by a naive reading of *Notes from the Dead House* a writer who wrote barely fictionalized and straightforward accounts of his own suffering. Significantly, however, Vogüé had introduced several new features into the rapidly solidifying stereotype of Dostoevsky in America, the

most important of these being his description of Dostoevsky as an outsider. True, a notion of Dostoevsky being a discard of the 'good society' was already nascent in a reading of *Notes from the Dead House* as straight autobiography, but Vogüé went further than that. His depiction of Dostoevsky is not only that of a social outcast but of a literary and moral outsider, a prodigy in both senses, partaking equally of the marvellous and the abnormal: "Il faut considérer," he writes, "Dostoïevsky comme un phénomène d'un autre monde, un monstre incomplet et puissant" (267). Moreover, even though Vogüé saw Dostoevsky as a realist ("nul n'a poussé plus avant le réalisme" [267]),[9] he also made it clear that Dostoevsky's reality is that of darkness, desperation, and other extreme states ("il n'en connaît que les extrêmes" [261]). As Vogüé rhetorically claims,

> C'est un voyageur qui a parcouru tout l'univers et admirablement décrit tout ce qu'il a vu, mais qui n'a jamais voyagé que de nuit. Psychologue incomparable, dès qu'il étudie des âmes noires ou blessées, dramaturge habile, mais borné aux scènes d'effroi et de pitié (267).

It is this last verdict that informs the remarks of many nineteenth and early twentieth century American literary critics who, like William Dean Howells, felt that Dostoevsky had little to say to Americans whose reality was "full of shining possibilities and radiant promises" (1892.126), and whose lives had nothing in common with those of the obviously underprivileged and doomed Russians:

> In a land where journeymen carpenters and plumbers strike for four dollars a day the sum of hunger and cold is comparatively small...Our novelists, therefore, concern themselves with the more smiling aspects of life, which are the more American (1892.128-129).[10]

This popular reading of Dostoevsky, based on an early acquaintanceship with *Notes*

from the Dead House and an assimilation of Vogüé's pronouncements delivered in *Le roman russe*, persisted in America into the twentieth century. Dostoevsky was pigeonholed as a talented maverick whose autobiographical accounts of suffering stood outside of both Western literature and the rational Western world and bore little relevance to the rosy American reality. Life, however, was changing even for the Americans. Change was coming on too gradually for some, like Howells, to notice, but once it came it could not be ignored. The increased immigration from Europe at the end of the nineteenth century resulted in a demographical shift to the urban centres, with shabby overcrowded tenements becoming a common sight in all the large cities; one such typical tenement block in New York contained

> 2781 persons on two acres of land, nearly every bit of which was covered with buildings. There were 466 babies in the block, but not a bathtub, except the one that hung in an air-shaft. Of the 1588 rooms, 441 were dark, with no ventilation to the outer air; 635 rooms gave upon "twilight air-shafts." In five years 32 cases of tuberculosis had been reported from that block, and in that time 660 different families in the block had applied for charity (Morion, Commager and Leuchtenburg II:281).

The existence of poverty and disease in the United States could no longer be denied–they were right there in the heart of the big cities. Americans were slowly awakening to the fact that 'the sum of hunger and cold' in their own country was much larger than they had initially thought.

A further blow to the American complacency about the status quo in the Western world was delivered by the coming of World War I, with the detailed reports of the fighting and the atrocities in Europe avidly read across America as front page news. When the United States itself had entered the war in 1917, the American perception of the state of Western Civilization and of the benevolence of their own leaders, those who sent them over to Europe

to fight and die, would never be the same.

Coinciding with these major shifts in the American experience was the rise of psychoanalysis which rediscovered everyman's psyche as an unexplored and dangerous terrain. Freud came to America to lecture on psychoanalysis in 1909, and by 1916 as many as five hundred psychoanalysts were practising in New York city alone (Morion, Commager and Leuchtenburg II:445). When Constance Garnett's translations of Dostoevsky appeared in 1912-1920, Americans were ready to concede along with the young T. S. Eliot that they "have been living in one of Dostoevsky's novels...not in one of Jane Austen's" (1917.189).

The obvious must be emphasized here with regard to the Garnett translations: Americans, like all those who read Dostoevsky in a language other than Russian, were getting a text that had been mediated/recreated/re-transcribed into another linguistic and cultural matrix. What complicates matters is that Constance Garnett (whose visibility as a translator is due to the fact that she dominated Dostoevsky's translations into the English language and singlehandedly created a canonical body of Dostoevsky texts for the Anglophone reader[11]) was inscribing the texts into her own cultural practice–an English rather than an American one. If a translated text can be regarded as "a weave of connotations, allusions, and discourses specific to the target-language culture" (Venuti 1992.8), the American readers of Garnett's Dostoevsky translations were bound to mentally re-inscribe the already translated text into their own cultural context. While a discussion of the specifics involved in such a re-inscription lies outside the scope of this dissertation, it may be speculated that American readers were at some level aware of the mediation

involved in the translation and were perhaps better prepared than English readers to confront a text created in a cultural context far removed from their own.

Whatever the case, the Garnett translations made possible the discovery of Dostoevsky by a wide range of American writers, poets, and critics, including Sherwood Anderson, John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, Thomas Wolfe, Floyd Dell, Hart Crane, Randolph Bourne, and many others.[12] While acceptance and, in many cases, adulation of Dostoevsky became widespread in the United States after the first World War, the existing American stereotype of the writer had hardly altered; what differed was the reaction to it. The response to Dostoevsky of the American literary intelligentsia, preserved in essays, memoirs, diaries, and letters, best attests to the persistence and the rigidity of the Dostoevsky stereotype in the United States. Dostoevsky was still perceived to be an outsider both to society and to literature proper, but now this position was seen to be a privileged one: the writer is not so much outside looking in, as above looking down–all-seeing, all-knowing, oracular. Thus Sherwood Anderson calls Dostoevsky "the one writer I could go down on my knees to" and compares *Brothers Karamazov* to the Bible, adding "there is nothing like [it] anywhere else in literature" (1921.70-71), while Hart Crane remarks that a reading of Dostoevsky "ought to prepare one's mind to handle any human situation...that ever might arise" (1920.47).

Dostoevsky was still a writer of darkness, gloom, and extreme states, but now he was seen as presaging and describing contemporary American reality for American men and women. Dos Passos turned to Dostoevsky after coming to the conclusion that Turgenev had

become irrelevant to his generation of Americans (1973.23). Floyd Dell suggested that the "terribly and wonderfully revelatory" power of Dostoevsky's novels for the Americans lay in their ability to show for the first time "that we are not really the respectable citizens that we seem, slowly evolving mediocrities...[but that] under the petty painted exterior of the ordinary soul may be the lightning-riven gulfs of Dostoevsky" (1915.38). Similarly, an American guide to literature published in 1925 concludes the chapters on Dostoevsky by asking rhetorically, "Even these 'abnormal people' in Dostoevsky's world–are they not potentially ourselves?" (Brewster and Burrell 175).

Dostoevsky was still seen to be a faulty stylist (Hemingway recalls pondering the matter in the 1920s: "How can [Dostoevsky] write so badly, so unbelievably badly, and make you feel so deeply?" [1964.137]). Many, however, like Thomas Wolfe, now felt that Dostoevsky's way of writing, still characterized as 'disorganized' and 'inclusive,' in contrast to the architectonic exclusions and silences of the acknowledged masters of form like Turgenev and Flaubert, was precisely what made him great, which is what he wrote about Dostoevsky to Scott Fitzgerald (1937.643). Anderson, who shared Wolfe's point of view, describes Dostoevsky in one of his letters as an awesome "river in flood carrying down mud, stones, rails etc. There is power there," as compared to Turgenev's rather prosaic "clear stream...[beside which] you sit down...[and] wade in" (1929.9). Finally, Dostoevsky was still seen to be a largely autobiographic writer who incorporated his own life experiences into his texts and whose characters were often little more than masks for, in Theodore Dreiser's words, "none other than Dostoevsky stalking this earthly mystery" (1929.488).

Needless to say, not all American writers hailed Dostoevsky upon discovering him in the Garnett translations; as Gilbert Phelps writes, "There was in fact always a hard core of resistance to Dostoevsky and what he stood for, socially, spiritually, and aesthetically" (1956.169). Upton Sinclair, one notable example of such resistance in the United States, admitted that he could not finish a single Dostoevsky novel and that he saw all of his works as little more than "impassioned, even frenzied propaganda" preaching Russian Nationalism and the Russian Orthodox brand of Christianity (1925.265-267). Similarly, Ezra Pound first ignored Dostoevsky (he reportedly told Hemingway in the 1920s that he still had not read anything by Dostoevsky [Hemingway 1964.134-135]) and was then openly contemptuous of him, suggesting that Dostoevsky promoted "egoistic psychological nuvveling" (Pound 1934.252) and was a bad model for a writer to follow.

What is ultimately significant though, is that the serial, as it were, publication of Garnett translations allowed Americans (both those who loved Dostoevsky and those who rejected him) to view Dostoevsky if not as a directly relevant, then as a contemporary writer; in 1917, Randolph Bourne commented on Dostoevsky's "superb *modern* healthiness" (emphasis added), asserting,

> It is impossible not to think of Dostoevsky as a living author when his books come regularly, as they are coming, to the American public every few months. Our grandfathers sixty years ago are said to have lived their imaginative lives in anticipation of the next instalment of Dickens or Thackeray. I can feel somewhat of the same excitement in this Dostoevsky stream (24-25).

Some years later Malcolm Cowley wrote that his generation of American expatriates in Paris of the 1920s identified closely with Dostoevsky and felt that a novel such as *The Possessed*

[*Besy*] "might almost have been written by a young American in Montparnasse as he leaned his elbows on a café table of imitation marble ringed with coffee stains" (1934.94-104). It was this anachronistic, and perhaps somewhat illusionary 'up-to-dateness' that promoted Dostoevsky's appeal and eventually resulted in his appropriation by the American literary and cultural elite.[13]

Notably, the Dostoevsky vogue in the United States never did reach the level of "hysteria and mystical jargon" (Phelps 172) which characterized the Dostoevsky Cult in England. The Americans read the English exponents of the Cult like Middleton Murry with interest (as made clear by the many articles appearing in American journals discussing the British studies of Dostoevsky) and gathered to listen to the visiting lecturers from England give talks about him. Nonetheless, the American response was subdued by comparison to that of the English; once again, there were many social and cultural reasons for that. The English novelist and critic, John Cowper Powys, who enthused about Dostoevsky in his *Visions and Revisions: A Book of Literary Devotions* (published in New York in 1915), that he was "more than an artist...He is, perhaps...the founder of a new religion" (252), had little success lecturing on him in America's heartland; Dostoevsky was much too shocking for self-respecting and law-abiding American provincials:

> I think it was the first time that these busy employers of foreign labour and their hard-working wives had ever had the lid taken off from the terrors of our human soul, and that this should have been done to them in a 'worth-while programme' as they must have regarded this discourse of the man in the 'Oxford gown,' made them feel betrayed. In place of the 'worth-while,' behold! they were being pushed towards a cranny in the floor out of which came sulphur and brimstone!
>
> There was a tremendous hullabaloo. The lady who was responsible for the coming to town of this wolf in sheep's clothing burst into indignant tears...One of the

> prominent local clergymen there, I think he was a Presbyterian, rose from his seat in the front row and austerely withdrew, not however without banging the door behind him as an aggrieved child might have done (1934.526-527).

The urbanite intellectuals, on the other hand, were more ambivalent as a group in their response to Dostoevsky. If New York of the 1910s and 1920s can be taken as a microcosm of the American intelligentsia, one immediately notes the deepening rift between the Greenwich village 'Bohemian' intellectuals, who were keenly responsive to the modern European–and especially the English–trends (as reflected by the journal *The Dial* which served as one of their mouthpieces[14]) and who embraced Dostoevsky, and the left-leaning Marxist intellectuals, whose opinions were voiced by magazines like *The Masses*, which closely followed the trends set first by the radical left in Russia and then by the Soviet Union,[15] and whose attitude to Dostoevsky was much more problematic. Writing in *The Masses* in 1916, after Gorky's two articles on 'Karamazovshchina' attacking Dostoevsky as Russia's evil genius became widely known among the New York left-wingers, Floyd Dell had to temper the enthusiasm he expressed in his well-known hymn to Dostoevsky written only a year earlier and cited above, by acknowledging "the total wrongness of [Dostoevsky's] attitude toward life" (1916.28).

Nonetheless, while the Dostoevsky Cult in England peaked in the mid teens of the century, only to drop sharply as the second decade began (according to Phelps, "[the Cult] died away almost as quickly as it had come...[because it] became discredited" [173])[16], the interest in Dostoevsky in the United States persisted; if 'Dostoevsky' was no longer a fashionable buzzword, then Dostoevsky the writer had succeeded in becoming established in

the minds of Americans as the novelist and thinker *par excellence*. One generally does not find that disillusionment and disappointment with Dostoevsky in the United States which appears to have been common among the intellectuals of England in the 1920s (see Muchnic 105-106, 151, 154).[17] The American intellectuals, who discovered Dostoevsky before or during the 'cult' years, usually remained faithful to him. Thus, writing only a year before his death, Theodore Dreiser recalled the profound impression made upon him by reading Dostoevsky at the turn of the century, noting that the novels "thrilled me in my late twenties, and would do so again, I feel" (1944.1002). The conviction that Dostoevsky was the one writer who spoke to the varied American experience directly also persisted beyond the cult years; when the young Richard Wright was trying to find a way to "shed some light" on life in a Chicago Ghetto in the late 1920s, he turned to Dostoevsky who became one of his literary models (Wright 1960.214).

As the last Garnett translations of Dostoevsky were coming out in 1920, American interest in Russian literature was already being transferred onto the more contemporary Russian writers like Babel, Pilniak, Zoshchenko, and so forth.[18] But while others took the spotlight, Dostoevsky never left the stage. Once again, the special investment that Americans have had in Dostoevsky let itself be felt: in the 1920s, many American intellectuals saw Dostoevsky as a writer who–first and foremost–freed Russian writers from the constraints of the European traditions, helped "lift...from the shoulders of Russian literature, a feeling of backwardness and provincialism," and these same Americans believed that they themselves "labour[ed] under a burden of provincialism as heavy and jagged as that which oppressed the

compatriots of Dostoevsky" (Cowley 1934.104). Dostoevsky, then, continued to be important to Americans in the 1920s and beyond, as writer, thinker, and, significantly, liberator.

Many American writers saw Dostoevsky as an iconoclastic innovator who not only broke the bars of the stale European tradition for himself and his compatriots, but managed to fling the prison doors open for all his readers, pointing the way to artistic and personal freedom. Thus, one American writer recreated the moment of first encountering Dostoevsky in the following cosmic and apocalyptic terms:

> And then one day, as if suddenly the flesh came undone and the blood beneath the flesh had coalesced with the air, suddenly the whole world roars again and the very skeleton of the body melts like wax. Such a day it may be when first you encounter Dostoevsky. You remember the smell of the tablecloth on which the book rests; you look at the clock and it is only five minutes from eternity; you count the objects on the mantelpiece because the sound of numbers is a totally new sound in your mouth, because everything new and old, or touched and forgotten, is a fire and mesmerism. Now every door of the cage is open and whichever way you walk is a straight line toward infinity, a straight, mad line over which the breakers roar and great rocs of marble and indigo swoop to lower their fevered eggs.

The writer was Henry Miller and *Black Spring*, the book from which the description comes from (14), was written in Paris of the late 1930s in Villa Seurat, during the most creative and important period of Miller's life, the time when he finally found himself as a writer and arrived on the literary scene.

The Villa Seurat Circle

Little has been written to date about the iconoclastic and eclectic circle of writers, poets, and philosophers, or in the words of one of its members, "cranks, nuts, drunks, writers,

artists, bums, Montparnasse derelicts, vagabonds, psychopaths" (Perlès 58), congregating at 18 Villa Seurat, the studio that was Miller's home base for five years in the late 1930s.[19] The motley and cosmopolitan gathering at that impressive address (Villa Seurat had housed Antonin Artaud and Chaim Soutine, while Chagall, Dali, and Gromaire all lived near by) was headed by Americans like Walter Lowenfels (poet and experimental writer, whose chapbooks were published in Paris throughout the 1930s and who shared *This Quarter*'s Aldington Poetry Prize in 1931 with e.e. cummings), Michael Fraenkel--Miller's one time mentor (philosopher, publisher, and former businessman, writing and preaching on spiritual death), and Richard Thoma (a writer who had been one of the assistant editors on the *New Review* with Ezra Pound), among others. There were also French writers, like the experimentalist and pataphysician Raymond Queneau, Georges Pelorson (editor-in-chief of the Parisian literary magazine *Volontés*), and Alfred Perlès–Miller's Parisian "boon companion" (an Austrian who wrote novels in French and contributed regularly to English and American "advance-guard publications" [Putnam 114]). There were artists like the American illustrator Abe Rattner and abstract painter Betty Ryan, the German painter Hans Reichel, and Brassai—the acclaimed photographer of Parisian life. And, of course, there were the three members of the circle who would become its most famous representatives: Miller himself, then fast approaching guru status in the circle, his patroness, muse, and fellow writer, Anaïs Nin, and the poet-novelist Lawrence Durrell whoarrived at Villa Seurat on a pilgrimage to meet Miller after reading his *Tropic of Cancer* in Greece. The association of these three writers in the 1930s–the Three Musketeers, as they called themselves, or the Trinity, as

others called them–would have an extraordinary impact on the rest of their private and literary lives.[20]

Although the Villa Seurat *habitués* formed a loose and unstructured alliance– no programmatic credo, the individualism of its members held up as a cardinal virtue (in the early 1930s, Miller and Perlès had written a parody of group manifestos called "The New Instinctivism," which, among the list of things rejected and supported, rejected itself), and peripheral members coming and going–there were many factors uniting the circle. Perhaps the strongest of these was a common need for a support network in the face of an often indifferent readership and an often hostile literary establishment; the members of the circle promoted and 'boosted' each other, collaborating on various projects:

> Queneau reviewed *Tropic of Cancer* and *Black Spring* in the *NRF*. Miller became the editor of the "Siana Series," books to be distributed through Obelisk Press...Nin supported the series financially...[Miller's] *Aller Retour New York*, the first volume published, was followed by...Thoma's *Tragedy in Blue* and Anaïs's *House of Incest*...[Miller] did write a preface for Fraenkel's *Bastard Death*, wrote about Nin's diary in *The Criterion*, and printed the essay--Un Être Etoilique--in a separate pamphlet in 1937. With Nin's encouragement he planned to edit a series of "Booster Broadsides," including ...*En marge des sentiments limotrophes* by Perlès, *Incognito in America* (poems) by [Richard] Osborn, and *The Neurotic at Home and Abroad* by David Edgar (Martin 315).

Durrell would write to Miller in 1938: "In Paris we made something, by God. There was a good, firm free-masonry laid there between us all...I think of those days like comets, and the good warm contact of wills" (August 1938.131).

Members of the circle also published together in various British, American, and–oddly enough–Chinese journals,[21] and themselves collaborated on a journal appropriately called *The Booster*. Furthermore, Miller, Durrell, and Nin had in common the

fact that they were primarily Anglophone writers proceeding from a common literary–if not cultural–base who were, nonetheless, interested in and open to other literatures and cultures as well (each of them, in fact, would write in languages other than English), unlike many expatriates who staunchly kept to their own language and their own countrymen even when living abroad. On the other hand, it is clear that the United States continued to be important for the German-American Miller (even when denouncing America in his writings, he always points out that he is American in everything that he is and does), as it was for Danish-French-Spanish Nin (she spent her formative years in the United States and insisted that she be viewed as an American writer[22]), and for Anglo-Irish-Indian-Colonist Durrell who renounces 'English death' and chooses Miller as his 'maître'. Miller proceeded to take him to American films, discuss American Jazz, recommend American poets, and otherwise familiarize him–if often critically so–with the mysteries of the American Way. (As Durrell would later write in one of his poems, "America America/...One day I'll pierce the veils that hide/The spirit of the great divide/The sweet ambition which devours/You, super duper power of powers" [1968.290]).

Miller, Nin, and Durrell also shared an interest in but a general dissatisfaction with modern artistic movements, especially those connected with other Parisian expatriates. Thus, Miller presumably avoided Stein and the frequenters of her salon, being, as he later explained, "against groups and sets and sects and cults and isms and so on" (1962a.55)[23]. Further, Miller had scathingly compared a particularly bleak Parisian city square with "intellectual trees, nourished by the paving stones" to T. S. Eliot's verse in the *Tropic of*

Cancer (38) and wrote in *Black Spring* that the works of Aldous Huxley, Gertrude Stein, Sinclair Lewis, Hemingway, Dos Passos, and Dreiser are only valuable as substitute toilet paper (1936.49). For his part, Durrell confided to Miller that Eliot's *The Waste Land* reminded him of "those little printed exhortations to muscular development students on how not to masturbate" (Early November 1936.22-23),[24] while Anaïs Nin had once stopped sponsoring a theatre because they staged Stein's plays.[25]

This is not to say that the three key members of the Villa Seurat circle had no use for literary models of any kind. Just the opposite, in fact; the list of the writers admired by the Three Musketeers (that is, writers other than themselves) was both extensive and extremely diverse, ranging from Rabelais and Lao Tse to Whitman and Proust. All three wrote on D. H. Lawrence (Nin actually made her real debut as a writer with a volume of Lawrence criticism); Durrell was engrossed in the study of the Elizabethans; Miller produced a cornucopia of literary pieces on Balzac, Keyserling, and many others. Miller's privileged position within the circle (he was the only writer of the three to achieve international fame of sorts during the Villa Seurat period, and both Nin and especially the young Durrell tended to see him as an authority on literary matters) made him especially effective in promoting his enthusiasms among the others in those early years. Notably, while Miller's literary models were many and varied, he had only one permanent idol in Dostoevsky ("the god, the real one" [1962a.36]), a writer whom he discovered early in his youth, with whom he would identify throughout his long life, and about whom he exclaimed as an octogenarian in one of his last published pieces "Mother, China and the World Beyond":

> the writer I most admire is the Russian Dostoevsky...To me without Dostoevsky's work there would be a deep, black hole in world literature. The loss of Shakespeare...would not be as great as losing Dostoevsky (1977b.187).

Miller began to read Dostoevsky in his late teens, after he was introduced to him by a casual acquaintance in Brooklyn; the place and time of the introduction (the corner of Broadway and Kosciuski Street in the late afternoon) would gain a mystical significance in Miller's eyes, invoked again and again in his many descriptions of this fateful initiation ("I never tire of rehearsing this introduction to Dostoevsky...it seems to me that late afternoon in Brooklyn the sun must have stood still in the heavens for a few moments" [1979.103]). Miller had eventually read and re-read almost all of Dostoevsky's major works, including every secondary source he could get his hands on (as his narrator once noted, "I am...always fascinated to learn what others have to say about [Dostoevsky], even when their views make no sense to me" [*Nexus* 18]).

According to Miller, he became seriously interested in the 'Russians' through Emma Goldman, the famous anarchist, who, in 1913, was lecturing on European playwrights in the American mid-West, where Miller found himself at the age of twenty-two making a last-ditch attempt to escape city life and become a cowboy.[26] The meeting with Goldman became, in Miller's words, "a turning point in my life" (1959b.384). Goldman, a woman of deeply conservative literary tastes despite her political views (see Wexler 124-125), was committed to promoting Russian drama and Russian literature in America because of its pressing social agenda (as she once noted, "in no other country are the creative artists so interwoven, so much at one with the people" [1914.273]). She had, however, a special

respect for Dostoevsky, whom she viewed as a revolutionary victim of an oppressive regime.[27] Typically for the period, Goldman identified not only with Dostoevsky, but with his characters; at one point in her life, when she was in a desperate need of money 'for the cause of the Revolution,' she found inspiration in the character of Sonia Marmeladova:

> Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*...had made a profound impression on me, especially the character of Sonya, Marmeladov's daughter. She had become a prostitute in order to support her little brothers and sisters and to relieve her consumptive stepmother of worry...Sensitive Sonya could sell her body; why not I? My cause was greater than hers (1931.I:91).

Whatever Miller may have heard Goldman say about Dostoevsky publicly or privately, it was her conviction that Dostoevsky was relevant and contemporary, a writer with whose life and characters one could identify, that was ultimately significant for him, prefiguring, as it did, the perception of Dostoevsky common in the Bohemian Greenwich Village of the 1920s, which would become Miller's milieu after his marriage in 1924 to June Juliet Edith Smerdt Smith Mansfield, his muse and nemesis.

Dostoevsky and the Greenwich Village Bohemians

June, who appears in Miller's books of the Villa Seurat period and beyond as Mona or Mara, was a member of the Greenwich Village crowd, employed variously as a taxi-girl in dance halls and as a hostess at various Greenwich Village nightspots and speakeasies, a woman with a hunger for celebrity and aspirations of becoming an actress. However Miller himself may have sympathized with the Marxist-minded intellectuals of the city and imagined himself as a hard working member of the proletariat (as he would write to one of

the scholars studying his work, "I must emphasize again that men connected with the I.W.W. and the Socialist movement–the big leaders of that day–wielded tremendous influence over me, not only politically...but literarily...Don't overlook Max Eastman's magazine *The Masses* followed by *The New Masses*" [26 August 1966.40]), he was soon a full-fledged Bohemian, the "Greenwich-Village type of parasite,"[28] living on June's suspicious earnings, helping her with her "gold-digging" schemes, and trying–not very successfully–to write.

Predictably, June, with her desire to fit in with the Bohemian intellectuals (as evidenced by her unsubstantiated claims to have received a stellar education at the Wellesley College for Young Ladies, to be a writer, actress, and so on, topped with an affected British accent), followed all the enthusiasms of the Village, from psychoanalysis to gender ambiguity, with Dostoevsky heading the list. In the Millers' household, which for a time included June's lesbian lover known as Jean Kronsky, discussions around Dostoevsky were commonplace. In *The Rosy Crucifixion*, where the atmosphere of this *ménage à trois* is recreated, the narrator tells of setting up traps for Mona's–the June persona's–lover by fabricating various incidents from Dostoevsky's novels, and Mona "sit[ting] there, listening attentively, aware neither of truth nor falsity, but happy as a bird because we are talking about her idol, her god, Dostoevsky" (*Nexus* 11-12). To the Villagers, Dostoevsky was a contemporary writer, almost one of them, writing about people identical to themselves:

> "A pity Dostoevsky himself isn't with us!" Mona will sometimes exclaim. As if he *invented* all those mad people, all those crazy scenes which flood his novels...Not strange therefore that nearly every one, male or female, whom Mona admires is 'mad,' or that everyone she detests is a 'fool.' Yet, when she chooses to pay me a compliment she will always call me a fool...Meaning that I am great enough, complex enough, in her estimation at least, to belong to the world of Dostoevsky (*Nexus* 12).

Parenthetically, it should be noted that the concept of madness, especially fashionable in the Village because of the interest in psychotherapy and psychiatry, was linked to Dostoevsky not only because he wrote about 'madmen' but because he himself was viewed as a mad genius of sorts (in Miller's *Plexus*, Mona exclaims that Anastasia, a troubled artist who ends up in an asylum, is "mad maybe, but like Strindberg, like Dostoevsky, like Blake" [603]). The notion of Dostoevsky's 'madness' (both as a Russian and as a creator) was very much a part of the American reading of his novels. Thus, for instance, Lafcadio Hearn, a literary critic much beloved by Miller (he calls Hearn "one of the exotic figures in American Literature" [1952.30]), whose articles on Dostoevsky were included in a 1923 anthology of his critical writings, *Essays in European and Oriental Literature*, writes that Dostoevsky was "nearly crazed by his own thoughts" (194) and argues that

> The Russian soul, struggling for utterance, under a mountain weight of oppression, was everywhere manifesting symptoms strangely akin to madness...Dostoevsky himself was menaced with insanity (192).

The identification with 'mad' Dostoevsky and his 'mad' Russians had the usual repercussion for the Villagers generally, and for the Millers in particular: the presumed reflection of themselves within the text as characters living on the fringes of society–ravaged demonic women, tormented men led by ungovernable passions–was simultaneously a positioning of Dostoevsky and his characters as models to follow in everyday life. Miller would later write, "I lived out so many roles portrayed by [Dostoevsky's] characters (good and bad) that I almost lost my own identity" (1963.11). This persistent latter-day *imitatio Dostoevsky* was readily noticeable to outside observers; thus, Anaïs Nin ponders about the

Millers in her diary of 1932:

> The more I read Dostoevsky the more I wonder about June and Henry and whether they are imitations. I recognize the same phrases, the same heightened language, almost the same actions. Are they literary ghosts? Do they have souls of their own? (*UD:HJ* 212).

"Herr Dostoevsky Junior"

In light of all this adulation, it is not difficult to see why Miller would choose Dostoevsky as his model when he set out to become a writer, and why he turned to him again and again in his years of writing. It is far more problematic to determine how Miller read Dostoevsky, or, for that matter, *who* Miller's Dostoevsky was. As one member of the Villa Seurat Circle wryly commented,

> God only knows what [Miller] made of the writers who so *influenced* him...Whatever he reads becomes automatically distorted, he ingurgitates one thing and excretes another, and it is a safe bet to say that the influence of those writers *on him* is not the least implicit in their works (Perlès 1959.47).

While this comment rings true for most readers and readings of complex, many-faceted texts, it is perhaps all the more true for Miller, a man who prided himself on his contradictions (he maintained that an absence of contradictions signified intellectual stagnation [1964.85]). Miller himself, however, felt that he was a careful, informed, and accurate reader of Dostoevsky, even though he pointed out that "there are many things about Dostoevsky, as about life itself, which I am content to leave a mystery" (*Nexus* 18).

The first prerequisite to a faithful reading of Dostoevsky, according to Miller, was that sense of a common identity with Dostoevsky that he, June, and the rest of the Greenwich

Village cultivated, the aim being to "know [Dostoevsky] as one knows a kindred soul" (*Nexus* 18). Thus, Miller's narrator describes himself in the *Tropic of Capricorn* as "really a brother to Dostoevsky" (211) or–only half-jokingly–as "Herr Dostoevsky Junior" (212).[29] Everything else, according to Miller, was of secondary importance. Language, for instance, was not a barrier to an understanding of Dostoevsky; Miller contends that "Even in translation some of us understand Dostoevsky, for example, better than his Russian contemporaries–or, shall I say, better than our present Russian contemporaries" (1952.111). The fact that Miller did not read absolutely everything that Dostoevsky had written (when he started to read Dostoevsky, of course, not everything had yet been translated into English) was of little consequence as well. His narrator pronounces: "Nor have I read all of [Dostoevsky], even to this day. It has always been my thought to leave the last few morsels for deathbed reading" (*Nexus* 18).

On the other hand, Miller always advised everyone to read as much Dostoevsky as they could get their hands on.[30] In Miller's list of authors and texts which influenced his own work (all included as an appendix to his somewhat pompously named tome, *Books in My Life* [1952]), he indicates the importance to him of Dostoevsky's "works in general." And it is certainly true that a large variety of Dostoevsky texts is mentioned, quoted from, or discussed in Miller's own works, from his early unsuccessful novelistic experiments like *Moloch* (written in 1928 and published only posthumously), where the central character writes a note to himself about "reread[ing] *The House of the Dead*" (7), to the books of the Villa Seurat period, which include commentaries on *The Possessed* [*Besy*] (1871-1872), *The Idiot* [*Idiot*]

(1868), *Brothers Karamazov* [*Brat'ia Karamazovy*] (1878-1880), *The Eternal Husband* [*Vechnyi muzh*] (1870), and *The Double* [*Dvoinik*] (1846), quotations out of *Crime and Punishment* [*Prestuplenie i nakazanie*](1866) and references to *Notes from Underground* [*Zapiski iz podpol'ia*] (1864), to his later works which cite Dostoevsky's *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* [*Zimnii zametki o letnikh vpechatleniiakh*] (1863) and his speeches of the 1880s. Miller believed, however, that Dostoevsky's legacy went far beyond his writings. His narrator conducts imaginary dialogues with Dostoevsky as a means of inspiration ("communing" as Miller called it) and summons

> "the complete Dostoevsky," that to say, the man who wrote the novels, diaries and letters we know, *plus* the man we also know by what he left unsaid, unwritten. It was type and archetype speaking, so to say. Always full, resonant, veridical; always the unimpeachable sort of music which one credits him with, whether audible or inaudible, whether recorded or unrecorded (*Plexus* 151).

And how *do* we know Dostoevsky 'by what he left unsaid, unwritten?' We–or rather Miller and his Circle–have two sources to draw on: intuition and the critics, and despite all that Miller had said about 'knowing' Dostoevsky intuitively, he himself had always drawn heavily from the critics of Dostoevsky's works (this is especially ironic given his general distrust of biographers and literary critics–in Miller's eyes, "monstrous, fascinating beings, hideous freaks of nature. Like those rank, perverse plants in the tropics which drain the sun and soil of vitality" [1980.111]).

Miller's readings in Dostoevsky criticism, which, incidentally, he brought into and discussed in his own books, were extensive. His list of cherished Dostoevsky commentators includes a number of British, French, and German sources.[31] Miller especially liked the

studies of the already mentioned John Cowper Powys (in his youth, he listened to Powys lecture at the Labour Temple in New York) and Janko Lavrin, "another old favorite and eye-opener" (1952.210); later in life, Miller would correspond with both men. Significantly, the two critics were early proponents of Dostoevsky, and their works contain many proclamations characteristic of the Dostoevsky Cult, although some of them were written long after the Cult years. Thus, Powys's studies of Dostoevsky celebrate his "demonic power of revelation" (1915.244) and extol him as a "formidable psychic pathologist" (1946.7), while Lavrin, in his writings of the 1920s and beyond, praises Dostoevsky as a "great writer and seeker in one, [who] deepened our awareness of man and life to such an extent that his work forms a landmark...in the European consciousness" (1947.156). Predictably, these assertions can be found echoed and expanded in Miller's own scattered writings on Dostoevsky.

The Russian philosopher and critic Nikolai Berdiaev, who lived in exile in Paris when Miller was living there, was also read and admired by Miller. Berdiaev's 'intuitive' philosophical and literary method and eschatological theories were, according to Miller, "right up [his] alley" (28 August 1966.48), as he wrote to Durrell: "I love Berdiaev. It's like my 'alter ego' writing" (8 November 1953.273). Berdiaev's volume of Dostoevsky criticism, *Dostoevsky's Worldview* [*Mirosozertsanie Dostoevskogo*], written in the early 1920s, was translated into English and published in Paris by YMCA Press in 1934, the year Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* came out with the considerably less reputable Obelisk Press. It is reasonable to suppose that Miller, with his attraction to all things Dostoevskian, would have read Berdiaev's book in the mid-1930s.

Berdiaev, interestingly enough, was the first among the Russian intellectuals in Paris to pay attention to Miller's work; apparently, he recognized the *Tropic of Cancer* as a text consonant to his own ideas.[32] (Berdiaev also comments on Miller's depiction of the world in his study, *The Kingdom of the Spirit and the Kingdom of Caesar* [*Tsarstvo Dukha i tsarstvo Kesaria*] [1949.323].) That much in Berdiaev's work attracted Miller's attention is evident from the extensive quotes in *Nexus* from Berdiaev relating to Dostoevsky's perception of evil and his eschatology (18-19) and, certainly, Berdiaev's key assertion that "to 'get inside' Dostoevsky it is necessary to have a certain sort of soul–one in some way akin to his own" (1934.14) is fully in tune with Miller's views on the subject.

Miller paid special attention to the philosopher Oswald Spengler's pronouncements on Dostoevsky (Spengler's *Decline of the West*, published in 1918-22 and first translated into English in 1926-28, generated a cult following of its own in Greenwich Village during the late 1920s). Dostoevsky, for Spengler, was one of the most portentous writers ever, a completely autonomous figure (1918-22.273), a "symbol of the future," and, mystically, a writer through whom "bolshevism" would be conquered (1922.172). Miller cites Spengler's views on Dostoevsky extensively and approvingly (as, for example, in the piece "Balzac and his Double" of the *Wisdom of the Heart* collection [1941b.231-232]).

If one had to decide, however, which critic of Dostoevsky proved to be most important for Miller's own reception and understanding of the writer, one would find that there was not one but two critics of Dostoevsky's works figuring most prominently in Miller's own writings on the subject; notably, both of them are neither professional literary critics nor

philosophers, but writers themselves: D. H. Lawrence and André Gide.[33] Lawrence's complex love-hate relationship with Dostoevsky (he opposed the excesses of the Dostoevsky Cult in England, perceiving Dostoevsky somewhat enigmatically as "a marvellous seer" but "an evil thinker" [1930.235])[34] was well known to Miller: before the publication of Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, Jack Kahane of Obelisk Press instructed him to write a short brochure on Lawrence to be issued in advance of the novel, "to give [Miller] the sort of prestige as a thinker which would disarm the critics in advance and force them to take the novel seriously" (Martin 286).

To begin with, Miller did not like Lawrence and saw the brochure as his chance to show all that was wrong with him as writer and man (in a letter to Nin, at the early stages of his work, Miller wrote, "I see now what a hellish grip I have got on him. Everything falls into whack. And with a vengeful clip" [8 August 1933]). In the process of his work on the project, however, Miller's attitude to Lawrence changed from contempt to devotion, and the brochure grew into a huge collection of fragmented and contradictory notes. Bemusedly, Miller finally gave up on his attempts to produce a cohesive study (those to whom he turned with it were unable to help), and settled for the publication of several of the more coherent fragments separately.[35] Nonetheless, in the year that Miller spent working on the project, he became well acquainted with Lawrence's body of work and, significantly, with Lawrence's writings on Dostoevsky.

In both the published fragments and the manuscript on Lawrence, Miller tries to provide some insights into what amounts to Lawrence's public rejection of Dostoevsky; what

he comes up with, however, is an idiosyncratic account which says more about Miller's own views on Dostoevsky than it does on those of Lawrence. In one characteristic sampling, Miller writes:

> What Lawrence detected in Dostoevsky...was man's attempt to forestall the death process. To transcend death it is first necessary to relinquish the notion of a personal, immortal ego. But this, he felt, was impossible as long as men clung to an absolute God. The clue which he felt was missing in men and which, among other things, he called the Holy Ghost, was the non-human, cosmic view of life. He regarded the lives of men about him as wasted in a sort of eternal twilight of the womb, their energies frustrated in a vain struggle to break the walls that shut them in. This everlasting struggle, this conflict with the self which Dostoevsky apotheosized, Lawrence characterized as a disintegrative process, a struggle of the mind which ends only in the complete disintegration of the personality, the worship of the mind as a thing in itself, as end and aim. And yet he realized that in this struggle to approach the moon of our non-being, as he called it, Dostoevsky had brought to an end a great epoch of the human mind. As a sun-worshipper, however, Lawrence could not but regard this struggle as obscene, as perverse and death-loving (1980.137-138).

Miller believed that Dostoevsky was the single most significant author for Lawrence (he wrote that Lawrence was "tremendously influenced by Dostoevsky. Of all his forerunners, Jesus included, it was Dostoevsky whom he had most difficulty in shaking off, in surpassing, in 'transcending'" ["Creative Death" 1941b.2]), but it was Lawrence's opposition to Dostoevsky, rather than the parallels between the two writers, that proved to be important for Miller's own reading of the latter. It was by engaging in a debate with Lawrence about Dostoevsky through his writings, that Miller was forced to reexamine his own presumptions about Dostoevsky and his works.

If Lawrence's views on Dostoevsky were significant for Miller because they were at odds with his own views on the writer, Gide's reading of Dostoevsky was important to Miller

because he believed that it was in so many ways analogous to his own. According to Miller, Gide's study of Dostoevsky, published in an English translation with an enthusiastic introduction by Arnold Bennett in 1925, was one of the most important books he had ever read (it is the only book by Gide included in Miller's somewhat inaccurately titled "The Hundred Books Which Influenced Me Most" list of *Books in My Life*). It is difficult to say exactly when Miller had read Gide's study for the first time. It is known, however, that Miller was discussing it with Nin as early as 1932 (in a letter of 22 February 1932, Nin cites Miller's opinions on Gide's interpretation of Dostoevsky [1932.12]). It is also known that Miller reread it periodically throughout his life and quoted it frequently in his own writings.

Gide's interpretation of Dostoevsky was, according to Gide himself, highly personal (he wrote that he "gathered from [Dostoevsky's] works what I needed to make my own honey" [146] and that he had "sought, consciously or unconsciously, what had most intimate connection with my own ideas" [162]),[36] but it was this intimate, personal quality that had always appealed to Miller in literary criticism. An extra attraction of Gide's study must have lain in the fact that many of Gide's statements about Dostoevsky could also be applied to Miller himself. Gide wrote, for example, that "Dostoevsky never deliberately states, although he often insinuates, that the antithesis of love is less hate than the steady activity of the mind" (127). Miller–in spite of his love for abstruse and esoteric subjects–was avowedly 'anti-intellectual' both in his approach to writing (he claimed to write spontaneously, taking down a mysterious 'dictation') and painting (he produced thousands of water-colours in a deliberately primitive, child-like style). Gide's observations on Dostoevsky then, provided

Miller with an authority to support his own position on the matter, to make his *own* honey, so to speak (the importance of Gide's claim that Dostoevsky was anti-intellectual will be explored in chapter three of this dissertation).

Although it is evident that the critics, philosophers, and writers read by Miller on Dostoevsky espoused frequently discordant and mutually contradictory visions, there was one point on which they all agreed (even D. H. Lawrence): they all felt that Dostoevsky was a pivotal writer in world literature, one especially worthy of being read and argued about. Another important characteristic that these commentators of Dostoevsky had in common, as far as Miller was concerned, was that they were all a part of the Dostoevsky debate in America, their books read, reviewed, and widely discussed by American intellectuals.

Preaching Dostoevsky

Miller, of course, had always stressed the importance of the American perspective in his reading of Dostoevsky. In fact, Miller maintained that he had a special bond with and an insight into Dostoevsky precisely because he was an American born and bred, a New Yorker, an urbanite who had experienced life in a big city on social levels ranging from the prosperous bourgeois, down to the homeless derelict begging for a dime. His narrator says:

> I have understood Dostoevsky, or rather his characters and the problems which tormented them, better, being American-born...American life, from the gangster level to the intellectual level, has paradoxically tremendous affinities with Dostoevsky's multilateral everyday Russian life. What better proving grounds can one ask for than metropolitan New York, in whose conglomerate soil every wanton, ignoble, crackbrained idea flourishes like a weed? (...) Though millions among us have never read Dostoevsky nor would even recognize the name were it pronounced, they are nevertheless, millions of them, straight out of Dostoevsky, leading the same weird

> 'lunatical' life here in America which Dostoevsky's creatures lived in the Russia of his imagining (*Nexus* 19-20)

and coming to Dostoevsky as an American, Miller was–perhaps without fully realizing it himself–plugged into the established American stereotype of Dostoevsky. It is clear, at the very least, that in Miller's voluminous writings on Dostoevsky it is the American vision of the writer which forms the foundation for his own interpretations.

Interestingly, while Miller's output of critical writings on Dostoevsky and others was enormous (although the promised work on "The Grand Inquisitor" never materialized,[37] he almost compulsively analysed Dostoevsky and his works in his own texts), he himself had repeatedly said that he had no literary critical abilities. Writing to Michael Fraenkel about one of the latter's philosophical tractates in the early 1930s, Miller laments, "Alas, I am only too well aware that I have no critical faculty. I have only the creative instinct... violent passions, hates, aversions, etc. What I would write about your book would not be criticism. It would be only a register of my emotions" (letter quoted in its entirety in Fraenkel's "Genesis of the Tropic of Cancer" 38-56). Many of Miller's own critics agree with this conviction, citing the disaster of the Lawrence study. Thus, Miller scholar and biographer, Mary V. Dearborn, writes pointedly that his criticism is

> uniformly riddled with encomiums, the subject always 'a great man,' his art...the best of its kind. Critical writing was never Miller's strong suit (217).

Similarly, Norman Mailer, a self-proclaimed student of Miller, writes in his anthology of Miller's writings, *Genius and Lust* (1976):

> [Miller's] literary criticism can be pompous and embarrassingly empty of new perceptions...In fact it would be tempting to say that he writes well about everything

> but his enthusiasms, which could explain why the ventures into literary criticism are not as good as one might expect (6-7).

In contrast, John Parkin, a Miller scholar and author of *Henry Miller, The Modern Rabelais* (1990), argues that Miller's unconventional critical writings–"a multifaceted, polytextual display of tastes, responses, quotations, intuitions...[Miller's] authorial voice becoming not a scientific instrument capable of precise and objective observation, but rather the kind of criss-cross of absorbed voices that Bakhtin was...analysing in his studies of...Rabelais and Dostoevsky" (39-40)–should be taken no less seriously than the more orthodox approaches to literary criticism. Parkin writes,

> That these readings are repetitive, circular, enthusiastic to the point of hyperbole is offensive only to those who demand interpretation which is positive, linear and sober (to the point of bathos?), and such criticism could scarcely accommodate even the very use of language which Miller adopts and extends (65).

Whichever position on the subject one espouses, Miller's writings on Dostoevsky make for interesting and revealing reading, illuminating his vision of Dostoevsky, and providing insight into his own life philosophy and writing career. But to return to the question of *who* Miller's Dostoevsky was, or, to put it differently, *which* Dostoevsky Miller preached to both Durrell and Nin in the 1930s? Risking some oversimplification, it could be said that Miller's reading of Dostoevsky (man and writer) was, fundamentally, American; his lengthy comparisons of Dostoevsky with Balzac, Lawrence, Proust, and Whitman[38] among others, include all the assumptions underlying the American reading of Dostoevsky.

Thus, for instance, Miller envisions Dostoevsky the man as an outsider, one "who obviously preferred the lowly life, a man fresh from prison" (*Plexus* 20-21); moreover, as a

genius, "the tragic, unprecedented artist" (*Plexus* 21), Dostoevsky was, according to Miller, already far removed from society and any moral order: "the man of genius is a monster, a traitor and a criminal, among other things...the more abnormal he is--the more monstrous, the more criminal--the more fecundating his spirit" (1980.51). It is as matter of course that Dostoevsky's outsider status was a privileged one in Miller's understanding: it had been shown earlier that Miller saw Dostoevsky as the ultimate commentator on the condition of humankind, whose insights were especially relevant and liberating to contemporary Americans. Further, Miller saw Dostoevsky as primarily an autobiographical writer, writing through and of his own suffering, identifiable with his characters from Stavrogin ("the ideal image of himself" ["The Universe of Death from *The World of Lawrence*" 1939.123]), to Zosima ("alias the real Dostoevsky" [1952.230]). Notably, Miller's interpretation of Dostoevsky's style (to be addressed in the subsequent chapters) includes both the concept of Dostoevsky resigning control over the stylistic elements in the text (obviously related to the widely-spread belief that Dostoevsky was a 'bad' stylist) and the idea that there was something very important gained by this supposed release of controls (the notion, as was indicated earlier, advocated by Sherwood Anderson and some other American writers).

At the heart of Miller's reading of Dostoevsky (as American as it might be), however, lies a more original concept, if the notion of originality is indeed applicable in the case of a writer who discounted it altogether, as he did in the epilogue to his short tale *Smile at the Foot of the Ladder*: "We invent nothing, truly. We borrow and recreate. We uncover and discover" (1948.47); or more elaborately in *Books in My Life*:

> Due to our slavish reading, we carry within us so many voices, that rare indeed is the man who can say he speaks with his own voice. In the final analysis, is that iota of uniqueness which we boast of as 'ours' really *ours*? Whatever real or unique contribution we make stems from the same inscrutable source whence everything derives. We contribute nothing but our understanding, which is a way of saying--our acceptance (1952.196-197).

Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that whereas most Dostoevsky proponents argued that he had *opened* an era in literature and the understanding of the psyche, Miller professed that Dostoevsky had, through his person and writings, both expressed and *terminated* an epoch in world history, human mentality, and, importantly, literature. One of Miller's characters articulates this view when he says that "with Dostoevsky's death, the world entered upon a complete new phase of existence. Dostoevsky summed up the modern age much as Dante did the Middle Ages" (*Nexus* 31). Similarly, in the piece "Balzac and His Double" (1941b), Miller writes that,

> The study of society and the psychology of the individual, which form the material of the novel in European literature, served to create the illusory world of facts and things which dominate the neurotic life that began with the 19th century and is now reaching its end in the drama of schizophrenia...Dostoevsky gave expression to the conflict ...Indeed, *it is with him that the novel comes to an end* (216 [emphasis added]).

Dostoevsky and the Future

But if the novel–and perhaps literature itself–comes to an end with Dostoevsky, what 'liberation' could there be for the new generations of writers? Miller's response to the question would be that the new writers were now free to discard literature with all its staid conventions and formalities, and write life; how one called this new life-writing was of little consequence as long it was clear that it was not literature in the traditional, 'pre-

Dostoevskian' sense. Reflecting on his own works shortly before his death, Miller would say,

> I was definitely not a novelist. Good or bad, from the very beginning of my literary career I thought of myself as a writer, a very important writer to be. I had no use for fiction, though many of my readers regard my work as being largely fictive. I myself am at lost to give it a name (1979. 53-54).

It was this vision of Dostoevsky as the last rather than the first prophet of the novel, the last writer of *literature*, that was duly expounded by Miller to Durrell and Nin in letters, private conversations, and more generally, through his writings. It hardly needs be said that. following Miller's suit, Nin and Durrell read (or reread) the requisite works of Dostoevsky throughout the 1930s, identified with Dostoevsky and his characters, and ultimately earned the high accolades of being compared to Dostoevsky by Miller. In this way, reflecting on Nin's *Diary* in his tribute to her, "Être Etoilique" (1938), Miller would say approvingly that it reminds him of "the raw pith of some post-Dostoevskian novel; [it] bring[s] to the surface a lunar plasm which is the logical fruit of that drive towards the dead slag of the ego which Dostoevsky heralded" (289), and in a letter to Durrell after the first reading of a MS of the *Black Book* (1938), Miller approves of the fact that in it, Durrell "Breaks the boundaries of books, spills over and creates a deluge which is no longer a book but a river of language...You have written in this book which nobody has dared to write...You've crossed the Equator...From now on you're an outlaw" (8 March 1937.55-56), reserving as his highest praise of Durrell's writings the compliment that "Sometimes this stuff seems to me to outdo Dostoevsky" (December 1938.108-109).

Dostoevsky, according to Miller, was the springboard which was to propel the Three

Musketeers of Villa Seurat into a new way of writing, a new dimension. Consequently, the prose produced by Durrell, Nin, and especially by Miller during the Villa Seurat period, prose including Durrell's *Black Book* (1938), Nin's *House of Incest* (1936), *Winter of Artifice* (1939), and diaries of the 1930s, Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* (1934), *Tropic of Capricorn* (1939), *Black Spring* (1936), and his famous short pieces of those years, in other words, prose pivotal to the oeuvre of each of the writers, may be viewed as an almost utopian attempt to create a new post-Dostoevskian writing, emanating from but superseding Dostoevsky (whether the Villa Seurat writers have ultimately succeeded in breaking away from Dostoevsky is another matter). What that "post-Dostoevskian writing" of the Villa Seurat Trinity–as they have also been called–was like, is one of the issues that will be looked at more closely in the following chapters.

VILLA SEURAT CIRCLE AND ATTEMPTS AT POST-DOSTOEVSKIAN PROSE

> "A style that is at once full and empty, consistent and contradictory, certain and uncertain, hard and gentle, comprehensible and incomprehensible, cold and passionate, etc. Dostoevsky is the only one I know of who has at all approached it." (Michael Fraenkel *The Day Face and the Night Face* 51)
>
> "There are some volumes [of Nin's *Diary*]...which are like the raw pith of some post-Dostoevskian novel.." (Henry Miller *Un Être Etoilique* 289)

When the Elder Tikhon finishes reading Stavrogin's Confession in *The Possessed*, his first comment is that the manuscript might do with some stylistic changes. However one wishes to understand this comment within the context of the novel, it does lead one to that other 'cursed question' in Dostoevsky studies: the style of Dostoevsky's own works. In spite of the fact that the efforts of such critics as Leonid Grossman and Mikhail Bakhtin have generally succeeded in rehabilitating Dostoevsky as a stylist,[39] and that such an authority on the subject of style as the Noble Prize winning poet and essayist Joseph Brodsky called Dostoevsky "the very best Russian stylist" (1994.7), the issue of Dostoevsky's style is, historically, a problematic one.

During his lifetime, Dostoevsky was regarded as an inferior stylist whose works were filled with clumsy constructions, awkward repetitions, and verbiage. Beginning with the foremost Russian literary critic of Dostoevsky's age, Vissarion Belinskii, who called his work "at times insufficiently polished, at others overly decorative" (1847.362), critics were either disparaging his literary style or ignoring it in favour of his 'social significance.' When Dostoevsky's works became translated into the major European languages, the issue of style was complicated further by inaccurate translations and by the negative biases of such influential European critics as Melchior de Vogüé (see chapter one of the present study). The

more astute readers of translated Russian prose, of course, have always realized that they were at a disadvantage when reading Dostoevsky; Virginia Woolf, for example, writes in *The Common Reader* (1925) that "we have judged a whole [of Russian] literature stripped of its style" and questions the validity of any conclusion a reader of the translations might come to about Dostoevsky (220). The general tendency, however, was to view Dostoevsky's novels as two-part systems, and to approach their 'content' much more seriously than their 'form', which was most often, as one scholar puts it, "put down to a fall from the Turgenevan ideal, a lapse into a mixture of French naturalism and fantasy" (Crowder 26).

Generally speaking, even those of Dostoevsky's European supporters who felt qualified to talk of his style and who thought that he was a wonderful stylist tended to concentrate on his ideas and the social significance of his works. Thus, for instance, André Gide admits in his book on Dostoevsky that "carried away in my enthusiasm to discuss his ideas, I am afraid I have neglected all too much his wonderful skill in exposition" (157) and, with the exception of a panegyrical paragraph or two, goes on comfortably neglecting it.

While many writers in the first half of the twentieth century claimed to be developing Dostoevsky's questions and themes in their own works, few have professed to be stylistically influenced by him, although, no doubt, many were. In Dostoevsky's homeland, where aesthetic motivations were soon overshadowed by political ones (Dostoevsky was not sanctioned by the Soviet State and many of his works were routinely suppressed), probably the only group of writers that have claimed to be influenced by Dostoevsky stylistically was the OBERIU (a Russian acronym for "Association For the Art of Reality"). Even their claim

needs to be qualified, as this State-suppressed group of absurdist writers and poets of the late 1920s claimed to be influenced not by the prose style of the novels but by the poetry of the buffoonish Captain Lebiadkin in *The Possessed* [*Besy*] (like the famous, "Once there lived a cockroach/A cockroach from childhood/And he fell into a glass/Full of fly-cannibalism").[40]

If various factors made Dostoevsky an unpopular writer for others to emulate within the Soviet Union, the situation was reversed outside of its borders. Mikhail Bakhtin acknowledges this in his *The Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*] [*Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo* (1963) when he concludes that

> At present, in the West, Dostoevsky's novels are, possibly, the most influential of all models. Individuals...follow Dostoevsky the artist (462).[41]

Bakhtin does not elaborate on whether this Western emulation of Dostoevsky occurs at a level of any real depth or sophistication. On the other hand, Gilbert Phelps, a scholar who examines the problem specifically, argues convincingly in *The Russian Novel in English Fiction* (1956) that emulation of 'Dostoevsky the artist' was largely limited in both English and American prose narratives post-1912 to superficial and, all too frequently, embarrassing imitations of the kind of narrative devices found in his novels (174-179).

Interestingly, among the famous English and American writers of the late 1930s–the heyday of the Villa Seurat Circle–there were those who were sympathetic to Dostoevsky as a stylist (including Thomas Wolfe, Sherwood Anderson, and others), but practically none who claimed to be identify with, learn from, or be influenced by his prose *style* in their own

works. The Villa Seurat writers' sustained focus on Dostoevsky's style is, in many ways, unique for the period.

"Fourth and Fifth Dimensional Prose" in the 1930s

On some level, the Modernists' lack of interest in Dostoevsky's style is readily comprehensible: not too many nineteenth century Russian 'psychological realists' had much to offer as far as prose innovation was concerned to the writers of 1930s, a time when prose experimentation was widespread and almost an exigency upon every serious author. A short survey of writing produced in English during the decade shows just how momentous the period was for experimental prose. In England, the ban was finally lifted off Joyce's *Ulysses*, and sections of *Finnegan's Wake* were being published (the completed book came out in 1938). In the United States, William Faulkner came out with his macabre *As I Lay Dying* (1930) written in the stream-of-consciousness mode; John Dos Passos wrote the *U.S.A.* trilogy (1932-1938) which incorporated collages of newspaper headlines, popular songs, advertising slogans, as well as impressionistic passages; and John Steinbeck continued the neo-aesopic mode in his *Of Mice and Men* (1937). The famous American ex-patriots were continuing their work in prose innovation. Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* was published in 1936. In Paris, Gertrude Stein wrote the playful *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933). Elsewhere on the continent, Stein's one-time disciple, Ernest Hemingway, was challenging some genre conventions of his own in his 'non-fictional' works *Death in the Afternoon* (1932) and *Green Hills of Africa* (1935), aspiring after "the kind of writing that can be

done...a fourth and fifth dimension that can be gotten" (1935.26-27).

During the same period, the Surrealists, a movement born in Paris in the 1920s, were continuing their attempts to become international. One of their key targets for conversion were Anglophone (especially English) theorists, artists, and writers. In 1936, *Surrealism*, the famous anthology of French and English essays on the subject, was published in London.[42] In it, André Breton, as the unofficial spokesperson for the movement, outlines the Surrealist programme and welcomes the "English poets and artists who...are now with us, agreeing to pool all their intellectual resources with ours" (116). The Surrealists, then, provided yet another innovative prose model to Anglophone writers in the 1930s through their theories of literature.

Such a richness and diversity of experimental prose models available during the decade makes it all the more intriguing that a small group of Anglophone writers clustered around Henry Miller and his Villa Seurat studio apartment in Paris would turn away from their contemporaries and, increasingly, look to Dostoevsky in matters of prose style. Not only did the members of the Villa Seurat Circle believe that Dostoevsky's style was as significant as the 'content' of his novels (Miller believed that "A man is revealed in his style, the language which he has created for himself" ["Reflections on Writing" 1941b.23]), but they also felt that in the matter of style, as in other matters, Dostoevsky was a pivotal and liberating writer for them. After reading Dostoevsky under Miller's guidance, Anaïs Nin would write in her diary of being 'released' by Dostoevsky's language (*AN:HJ* 88).

But what was it that made Dostoevsky's style liberating to the members of the Villa

Seurat Circle? And, correspondingly, why would they find the Modernist prose models available to them so dissatisfying? Both issues require careful consideration, as Miller, Nin, and Durrell are often treated by critics as Modernist or even Surrealist writers themselves, the assumption being that they shared the sensibility of the general expatriate literary scene in the Paris of the 1930s or, at the very least, that they sympathized with the French Surrealist movement.

First of all, it is evident that Miller and his friends never really belonged to the Parisian expatriate scene proper, that is, they never frequented the Stein salon and were not well-acquainted with its members. Similarly, they did not know too many stars of contemporary French literature. In fact, in the 1930s, the members of the Villa Seurat Circle were positioned on the outer fringes of the literary world. One of the charges levelled against the Circle, and especially against Miller throughout his writing career, was that of being literary parvenus, intellectual impostors who never had any real connection with the literary movers and shakers of the 1930s and beyond:

> Miller was never in contact with the real producers of ferment [in Paris]. He did not know Pablo Picasso, or Braque, nor Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, or James Joyce. His intellectual pursuits consisted mostly of bohemian drunkenness and roistering with sympathetic whores (Armitage 19).

While it would be naive to claim that the members of the Villa Seurat Circle were not interested in literary fame and financial success, it would be equally untrue to say that the only cause for the marginalization of Miller and his friends was that they were simply barred access into the centre of the literary and artistic hubbub. A deeper reason for this marginalization lay in a conscious desire by the members of the Circle to stand separately and

not to belong to movements of any kind. It is also clear that neither Miller, Nin, nor Durrell had ever shown much interest in the celebrated literary masters of the day.[43]

The Villa Seurat Circle's lack of identification with contemporary English and American prose writers is reflected in statements made publicly or privately by all the members of the circle. Miller, for instance, proclaimed in the Autobiographical Note of 1939, "On the whole I dislike the trend of American literature...As for English literature, it leaves me cold, as do the English themselves: it is a sort of fish-world which is completely alien to me" (370). Durrell scornfully wrote in a letter of 1937, "Been to the Café Royal [a literary gathering spot in London] a lot and confirmed the opinion I always had of English writers" (September-October 1937.117). Elsewhere, he accuses American writers of "descending from over-exuberance to mannerism and cheapness very easily" and calls Hemingway and Saroyan "gramophones"(May-June 1946.225). Nin, for her part, had always maintained that she did not find either English or American literatures to be particularly inspiring, referring to the latter privately as the "miserly, sterile, frigid, plain, homely, prosaic, stuttering world of American writing" (October 1957) and publicly, in *The Novel of the Future* (1968), as "the most literal, the most one-dimensional [literature] in the world" (11).

Joyce and "Lifeless Literature"

The hostility of the Villa Seurat members was extended also–with some notable exceptions[44]–towards those writers who were producing experimental prose in English.

Their attitude to James Joyce, whose prose was among the most radically experimental of that available during 1930s, is representative of their outlook on most other Anglophone modernist writers. Durrell refuses to consider Joyce's work seriously, and discards it altogether as "whim-wham and bagatelle" (August 1935.2). Nin rejects Joyce because of his elitism and scolasticism: "[Joyce's prose is] so clever that it was undecipherable for me and I didn't want to study it in terms of scholarship, just as language or mythology" (1974.212) (although she does note graciously enough that he had a "lovely voice" as a singer [1975.223]). Miller engages with Joyce's writings most strenuously of all the circle members, but ends by rejecting him as well.

In Miller's "Universe of Death" published in 1938 as a chapter of the later abandoned Lawrence study, he applauds the portrait of Molly Bloom in *Ulysses*–as primal and mythologized as the June figure in Miller's works ("Beside her the others are reduced to pygmies...[she] is water, tree, and earth. She is mystery, she is the devourer, the ocean of night into which the lost hero finally plunges, and with him the world" [Miller 133]) and holds up the final chapter of the novel as "a free fantasia such as has never been seen before in all of literature" [133]. On the other hand, Miller characterizes *Ulysses* as "vomit spilled by a delicate child whose stomach has been overloaded with sweetmeats...Despite the maze of facts, phenomena and incident detailed there is no grasp of life, no *picture* of life" (129), calls Joyce's *Work in Progress* (published as *Finnegans Wake* in 1939) an example of global schizophrenia (131), and dismisses Joyce himself in these terms: "Joyce's deformity of vision...is depressing, crippling, dwarfing: it is a defect of the soul, and not an artistic,

metaphysical device...He is the high priest of the lifeless literature of to-day" (114-115). As Miller writes to Durrell in an obviously self-congratulatory mood, "Joyce must know what I think of him, which is not very flattering–or haven't you yet seen my "Universe of Death" chapter from the Lawrence book? Anyway I've just flattened him out. I've made a shit-heel of him" (5 April 1937.69-70).

The deeper reasons behind Miller's ultimate rejection of Joyce and of the other famous English and American prose writers of the 1930s–reasons shared to a large extent by Nin and Durrell–are many and go beyond Miller's trademark subversion of authority and his almost programmatic dislike of anything emerging from his native land and England. Anaïs Nin had suggested two causes for this rejection when she remarked in an interview that, as a young writer in the 1930s, she felt little affinity to the key writers producing work in English because

> they were passé, too 1920's. We were trying to be our own writers, and we didn't have much respect for Hemingway or Fitzgerald. We weren't thinking about them so much as about ourselves...I went to Gertrude Stein's place once and found her very tyrannical (1976.238-239).

The Villa Seurat trinity did see themselves as the avant-garde of the 1930s. As far as they were concerned, the great American and English writers who had made names for themselves in the 1920s were written out and finished with by the next decade (in the late 1930s, Miller had compared "the brilliant ones of a decade ago" to "burnt out planets"–they were "so definitely dead" [February 1937]). It was also tacitly understood among the Villa Seurat writers that they were artists–visionary artists–as opposed to the literary craftsmen all around them who were churning out book after book, as Hemingway was apparently doing in

that "arid steel and footrule style of his" (Durrell, May 1937.78). Miller's own comment on Hemingway (made while acknowledging that *The Sun Also Rises* had a lot to do with his reasons for wanting to come to Paris when he did) could be easily extended to the Villa Seurat position on other Anglophone modernist writers:

> Hemingway in my mind was not the great writer they make him out to be. He was a craftsman [except that] he wasn't a craftsman as good as Somerset Maugham. There was a real craftsman. But if you are a craftsman you go on turning it out. It gets thinner and thinner (1977a.220-221).

Further, Miller, Nin, and Durrell had a shared distaste for literary salons and groupings, membership in which was equivalent to one in a military organization. The *habitués* of the Villa Seurat championed extreme individualism and personal expression over group credo (as Durrell wrote to Miller, "I don't want any movements made up of people who agree with each other even on first principles" [August 1936.20]), the converse of what was emphasized, for example, by the Surrealists who were constantly pronouncing anathemas on renegade members like Antonin Artaud (for a time, a close friend of Nin).

The Squashy Universe of the Surrealists

On a more profound level, the three writers–especially Nin and Miller–did have considerably more affinity with the experimentation of the French writers than with that of the English or the Americans. Their connection with the Surrealist movement is especially noteworthy. All the writers of the Villa Seurat circle had, at one time or another, produced prose incorporating such Surrealist standbys as automatism, free association of random images, and symbols from Freudian and Jungian psychology. Moreover, some of the key

thematic concerns explored in the prose of Miller, Nin, and Durrell (sexuality, dreams, the boundary between rationality and irrationality) are all strongly associated with the Surrealists.

Nin's fictional prose of the 1930s (as opposed to her diary writings) appears to be more indebted to Surrealism than the prose produced by either Miller or Durrell during those years; some hostile critics have even labelled her works "Surrealist Soap Opera" (Lyons 105) and Nin herself had commented that the Surrealist label "stuck for years as an expression of ostracism" (1968.2). Particularly remarkable in terms of Nin's connection to Surrealism is her *House of Incest* (1936), a highly poetic and allegorical first-person narrative of one woman's journey through various states towards self-knowledge. The text itself is marked strongly by a kind of Orientalist Surrealism, whereby exotic images ("Alhambra," "simoun winds," "Moorish chants," "Chinese bells," "Indian bracelets") are juxtaposed in an exploration of solipsism, incest, and lesbianism, and where dreams are used as elaborate representations of inner states (the psyche being portrayed as "a city where each house stood on a rock between black seas full of purple serpents hissing alarms" [33]).

At the time of working on the *House of Incest*, Nin was conscious of writing "in a surrealist way...[it] gives my imagination the opportunity to leap freely," as she noted in her diary (*D1* 77). Nonetheless, even while writing the book, she knew that she was resorting to Surrealist techniques for reasons other than a genuine identification with their programme (in 1935 she wrote in her diary, "More and more I'm against surrealism, the belief that the dream is reached through absurdity and negation of all values...The surrealists just want to laugh at the unconscious. *Ce sont des farceurs*" [*UD:F* 177]).

Much later, in 1957, Nin would confide to her psychoanalyst that she "went into surrealism as a method of equivocal truth telling" (Beir 419). Seen from this perspective, the opaqueness of the Surrealist imagery did provide Nin with an acceptable way to write publicly about the "Unmentionable Events" in her life which she was recording privately in her diary: the affair with June Miller who appears as the character Sabina ("The luminous mask of her face, waxy, immobile, with eyes like sentinels...She was an idol in Byzance, an idol dancing with legs parted" [22]), and the affair with her own father which is transmuted in the *House of Incest* into a pair of siblings' incestuous love and a description of a painting of Lot and his daughter ("Lot with his hand upon his daughter's breast while the city burned behind them...all crackling with the joy and terror of their love" [54-55][45]).

All the same, the ideological differences with the Surrealists (as well as the fact that the principal theoretician of Surrealism, André Breton, had called her "a bourgeois banker's wife," a remark that had, apparently, wounded her deeply [Beir 381-382][46]), made her stress both privately and publicly that she was not a Surrealist: in 1936 she wrote emphatically in her diary, "Surrealism bothers and irritates me. I am near them but not one of them" (*UJ:F* 1936.338). In an interview given later in her career, Nin would suggest that the Surrealists were too shallow for her,

> I didn't join the surrealists...I thought they didn't go far enough. They wanted to use all kinds of unconscious artistic techniques...but they did not believe in analyzing...I was as much interested in living as art as I was in art as art (1970.63).

Miller had also flirted with Surrealism, especially in his early Paris years. *Tropic of Cancer* is full of Surrealist passages where random and often deliberately shocking images

are brought together in lengthy automatist lists which are used to describe characters, places, events, or moods,

> Tania is a fever, too--*les voies urinaires*, Café de la Liberté, Place des Vosges, bright neckties on the Boulevard Montparnasse, dark bathrooms, Porto Sec, Abdullah cigarettes, the adagio sonata *Pathétique*, aural amplificators, 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 (5).

A character in *Tropic of Cancer* reads the narrator-Henry Miller persona's writings and tells him "flick[ing] his cigar ash": "you're a surrealist, aren't you?" (57). At one point Miller definitely hopes to attract the attention of the Surrealists and, perhaps, to be hailed by them; in 1934, he writes to Nin that "Marcel Duchamp [the Dadaist painter]... expressed unprovoked & unstinted admiration for the [*Tropic of Cancer*], had great pleasure in reading it, etc. I think thru him, and Raymond Queneau & Jacques Baron, I may finally get the attention of the Surrealist gang--and possibly the South American colony, which seems to pivot around Dali & his wife, Gala" (29 November 1934.235-236).

Black Spring (1936), comprised of ten self-contained short texts, is probably the most Surrealist-inspired of Miller's books. One of the shorter pieces within it, "Into the Nightlife," had its start as a dream diary kept by Miller at the suggestion of Nin, and is little more than a thirty-page record of disturbing, often nightmarish and surrealistically incongruous images of old hags with their hair "full of rats" (151) and young girls with blood "bubbling from [their] temple...something stirring inside...It's a cuckoo!" (165). Miller himself was highly conscious of the Surrealist facet of the book; in a letter to Durrell of 1936, just before the publication of *Black Spring*, Miller writes that "I got somewhat surrealistic myself [in the

book]...As you will see" (June 1936.14). Around the same time, Nin, who had decided by 1936 that she wanted little to do with Surrealism, wrote in her diary that

> [Miller] is to me the only authentic and creative surrealist. The others are theoreticians. He is a surrealist in life, work, character. What I enjoyed in him was his surrealism. What I suffered from was his surrealism, for I am not a surrealist (*UD:F* 302).

Notably, *Black Spring* was also singled out by George Orwell in his famous essay about Miller, "Inside the Whale" (1945), as a prime example of Miller sporadically "slid[ing] away...into the squashy universe of the surrealists" (34).

The abundance of Surrealist imagery in *Black Spring* and Miller's other works has been fully acknowledged. A recent study of Miller's connection with Surrealism, *Henry Miller and Surrealist Metaphor* (1996), even concludes that "Among the critics there is no disputing that Henry Miller was a surrealist" (141). Nonetheless, there are indications, already in *Black Spring*, that while employing Surrealistic techniques Miller is not a full-fledged Surrealist; in longer pieces like "The Fourteenth Ward" and "The Tailor Shop," which are both about his childhood and early youth, he demonstrates that autobiography, the everyday, and portraits of real people interest him more than automatism, the marvellous, and randomly chosen subjects. In another letter to Durrell of August 1936, Miller writes that

> I have used the [Surrealist] method here and there, when it came naturally and spontaneously. At least, I hope so. I don't start out by trying to be Surrealistic. Sometimes it comes at the beginning and sometimes at the end (August 1936.15-16).

In the same letter, Miller expresses his belief that the Surrealists have not, essentially, come up with anything new in their literary theories:

> what constitutes Surréalisme is a permanent thing in art, more especially in literature.

> Swift was a good one, and so was Lewis Carroll in my opinion--and Shakespeare too now and then (15);

something that Durrell emphatically agrees with in his reply ("A definition of the word surrealism, please...Breton etc. Very true, but surely as ancient as Oedipus?" [August 1936.18]).[47]

Surrealism, then, is quickly reduced by the members of the Villa Seurat circle from the status of a philosophical system claimed for it by its adherents (what Miller calls "the societal-politico-economic-mumbo-jumbo theory of the Surrealists" [24 September 1936]) to that of a technique only, one among many available. As Durrell argues, "everyone uses...surrealism etc AS HE WANTS IT. But to make such a stink about it is like me starting a league for more conditional clauses in poetry" (August 1936.19). Eventually, Miller, Durrell, and Nin would claim that their use of the 'technique' was different from the way the Surrealists proper employed it. When Miller read the manuscript of Durrell's *Black Book* in 1937, a book filled with such typically Surrealist moves as an "elegy in swan's-down, ferroconcrete, postmen, Lobo, foetus, halfpenny stamps" (23) used to describe a winter morning, he hastened to note that "Superficially there are analogies between your technique and [that of the Surrealists]; but only superficially! The real difference is vast, a chasm veritably" (13-15 March 1937.58).

Two years after the publication of *Black Spring*, Miller finally addresses his positions on Surrealism publicly in his "Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere" (1938), begun as a review of the already mentioned anthology, *Surrealism* (1936). Herbert Read, the editor, whose own introductory essay was one of the lengthiest in the anthology, was well-known to

Miller. In fact, Read was the one who sent him the anthology. Although Miller is sympathetic to some of the statements made by the essayists (the loneliness of the poet mourned by Paul Éluard, for example) and generally approves of the artwork, he finds the collection of essays infuriating on the whole. Miller's "Open Letter" expresses this anger (writing to Durrell, Miller calls it his "attack" on the Surrealists [6 December 1936]). Indeed, although the "Open Letter" is a typically labyrinthine and often self-contradictory text, it clearly amounts to Miller's declaration of independence from the Surrealists.[48]

In the "Open Letter" Miller raises several objections to the state of the Surrealist movement in the 1930s. According to Miller, the Surrealists lost their sense of humour (a sad departure from the Dadaists, as far as he is concerned[49]), with André Breton "solemnly pontificat[ing]"–in Miller's words ("Open Letter" 163)–about such things as "*objective humour*," which Breton calls "a synthesis in the Hegelian sense of the imitation of nature in its accidental forms on the one hand and of humour...as a paradoxical triumph of the pleasure principle over real conditions" (103). Miller also protests against the Surrealist self-righteousness, exemplified by Read's moral high-horsing in his lengthy introduction: "Surrealists are...aware...of undesirable elements in [their] midst; but they are not themselves to be identified with such elements...they cannot protest against the perversions of a moral code for which they have no respect. But they despise the kind of people who indulge in perversion" [85]). Miller likewise rebelled against their self-styled importance as the chosen ones, to whom nations flock "to learn, to find enlightenment" (Read 20). In Miller's eyes, this attitude is precarious at the very least, as "without a healthy scepticism there can be no

real significance in a work of art, or in life, for that matter" (181).

Miller takes issue most strongly with the Surrealist vision for the future–namely, with the attempts of the mainstream Surrealists to institute a trans-national universal movement–as Breton suggests at the end of his essay, when he attempts to "speak also for the Surrealists of all nationalities, constituting active groups in a great number of countries" (Breton 116). Miller writes, "What strikes one as pathetic, lamentable, deplorable and ridiculous...is the 'effort to get together'" (163-164). According to Miller, this type of quasi-messianic '1000-years-Reich' philosophy positions Surrealism on the same line with the other suspect 'visionary' movements like Marxism, Leninism, and Fascism (he notes, "The seeming discrepancies between the language of Breton and Lenin, or Marx, are only superficial" [178]). In all cases, the danger lies both in the subjection of the individual to the group (as Miller puts it, "Man is happier when he is in a crowd; he feels safe and justified in what he is doing. But crowds have never accomplished anything, except destruction" [184]), and in the dictatorial imposition of a single ideal for everyone to uphold ("the Surrealists are guilty of...trying to establish an Absolute" [181]). Finally, the Surrealists, the "poor bleeding bastards" (196), are dismissed by Miller as "merely the reflection of the death process...one of the manifestations of a life becoming extinct" (194).

Prose Wars

By breaking with the Surrealists and by expressing open hostility to the famous Anglophone writers, Miller and the other members of the Circle gradually positioned

themselves (at least in their own minds) as the independent alternative to the writing of their contemporaries. Miller–as usual–was most vociferous in expressing his dissent. It is this move that was recognized by Ihab Hassan, an early theorist of Postmodernism, when he identified Miller in *Literature of Silence: Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett* (1967) as "one of the first writers...to make a break with the tradition of the modern and to establish an outlook more 'schismatic' than any adopted by the literary masters of his day" (29). In recent years, following Hassan's suit, some scholars have called Miller's writings Postmodern, a label as much due to his rejection of the distinction between 'high' and 'low' literature (Durrell once called him a writer "who has crossed the dividing line between art and *Kitsch* once and for all" [1945.1]) as it is to the notion that Miller's works "run counter to the modernist thinking that was prevalent during his most productive years" (Everman 1992.331).

Miller's output was so vast, however, and his strategies shifted so much, that one can easily find statements within his works that position him as a "Late Modernist" (as Jeffrey Bartlett argues [Bartlett 1992]) or even a Modernist proper (as Bernard Mathieu interprets his work [Mathieu 1976]). Significantly, however, when attacking the major experimental writers of their day, Miller, Nin, and Durrell do so not as much for the reason that they disagree with the Modernist 'outlook' (if such an outlook existed) but because, in their view, the experimental writers of the 1920s were already canonized by the 1930s and provided an accepted alternative mode of literary discourse and thus were not greatly different from the mainstream writers who produced the bestsellers of the day.

A key item in Miller's arsenal in the war against his literary contemporaries was his

concept of prose form and style, which he felt was greatly different from others available at the time, a concept which he tried to share with Nin and Durrell. All the same, when reading the prose produced by Miller, Nin, and Durrell in the late 1930s, one is first struck by the differences rather than the similarities: Miller's naturalistic scenes and lengthy philosophic digressions do not seem to have much in common with the deliberate exoticism and frequent preciosity of Nin's fictional texts, nor with the analytic and precise if often breathless writing of her *Diary*, while again Durrell's lexical baroque and playfulness seem dissimilar to Miller's and Nin's own techniques. This is to be expected–the three writers believed that extreme individualism is one of the most important features of good writing (Durrell, for example, was content to call himself an "ardent Durrealist" [Fall 1936.24]).

On the other hand, this sense can be also seriously misleading, as it is well known that the three writers played an important role in shaping each other's literary works in the 1930s, whether by direct editing (Miller's of Durrell's, and Miller's of Nin's and visa-versa), or by suggestions and epistolary discussions (a three-way exchange among Miller, Durrell, and Nin). Interestingly, the three writers, who admired each other's work intensely, often penned savage critiques of each other's style. Miller, for instance, takes exception to Nin's many passages of 'exotic' purple prose, writing her:

> When you go off into what seems like the cerebral atonalities of the Hindu ragas–your Hispano-Suiza style–you do give the impression of one who has suddenly become tone deaf.[50]

Conversely, Nin criticizes passages in Miller's writings as "flat, lifeless, vulgarly realistic, photographic...not *born* yet" (12 February 1932.4) and, even more caustically (in her diaries),

as "his world of 'shit, cunt, prick, bastard, crotch, bitch'" (*UD:HJ* 49). In the same vein, Miller advises Durrell to cut the verbiage in the *Black Book* and informs him that "You have simply overshot your wad" (3 May 1937.74).[51]

Although even friendly criticism could be painful (Nin wrote Durrell, "I will confess my great weakness, Larry–its true–criticism breaks me down" [December 1938]), it was all for a good cause. They were preparing each other up for the battle ahead–these were simply practice sessions in the literary gym. Thus, Miller writes to Durrell in a distinctly Hemingway mode : "*Move in closer* and deliver good body blows. Aim for the solar plexus, always. If you deliver a foul now and then you will be forgiven–because your intentions were good. But don't pull your punches–that's unforgivable" (3 May 1937.74). In the same mode, Miller wrote to Nin:

> It is because you are not combative enough with your work that I tap you on the chin now and then...Better that I tap you lightly on the chin...than that you enter the ring unprepared and get all your teeth knocked down your throat!..I'm toughening you for the final bout (17 October 1933.225).

And the enemy against whom the battle was to be waged? To risk a generalization: the writers of the Villa Seurat Circle shared an 'us-against-them' mentality, their prose becoming a weapon against what they liked to envision as the hostile monolith of both mainstream and experimental writings by their contemporaries. In a 1936 letter to Miller, Durrell writes that his prose poem (later published as "Asylum in the Snow" and dedicated to Miller) is meant as "A salute of one toy cannon passing your enormous broadsides. Or a squib to celebrate your victories over the infidel" (25 December 1936.35). It is reflecting this opposition (the Crusaders of Villa Seurat vs. the Infidels Everywhere) that battle imagery and

military rhetoric abounds in the letters that Miller, Nin, and Durrell wrote to each other. Miller, for instance, rallied Nin when no one wanted her manuscripts by telling her to "Get out the *House of Incest*, dust it up and send it round to someone else...Don't be discouraged. *This is war*" (3 October 1933.122). Even more explicitly, around the time of the publication of his *Black Book*, Durrell wrote to Miller, "We are all opening fire now on different fronts. Boom Boom. Great puffs of prose. The battle is on" (Early September 1937.94).

But what was it about the prose of the Villa Seurat writers that allowed them to view it as a weapon against the writing and the mentality of their contemporaries? No doubt, there *was* something different and fresh about the vision of prose that Miller formulated for himself in the early 1930s and that he tried to share with Nin and Durrell. This much was sensed even by such early reviewers of Miller's works as George Orwell, who comments that some pages of *Tropic of Cancer* and *Black Spring* "give you an idea of what can still be done, even at this late date, with English prose" (1945.37). To be sure, the crotchety eighty-one year old G. B. Shaw disposed of the *Tropic of Cancer* in a deliberate malapropism as "mere snapshot phonography by a tasteless phonographer" (9 September 1937), but T. S. Eliot wrote in 1935 that it was "a very remarkable book...a rather magnificent piece of writing"[52] and Ezra Pound thought that as an experiment in prose it "can be set beside Joyce and Lewis" (1935.88). Latter-day connoisseurs of Miller's texts would be even more emphatic in arguing the innovative nature of Miller's prose: Norman Mailer, for instance, writes that "Nobody has ever written in just this way before, nobody may ever write by this style so well again" (1976.8), while Erica Jong, poet and author of such iconoclastic texts as *Fear of*

Flying (1974), argues that the main reason why Miller must be read is that "he invented a new style of writing, a style as revolutionary in its own way as Joyce's or Hemingway's or Stein's" (1993.237). On the other hand, it is much more difficult to theorize convincingly about just what is so radically different in the form of Miller's writings (as opposed to their radically blatant sexual content) and about how he came to formulate his vision of prose during the early Paris period.

Admittedly, it is unlikely that anyone will ever produce a fully convincing account of Miller's philosophic and stylistic genesis from an incompetent imitative novelist trying, in the 1920s, to put together a novel after the example of Knut Hamsun, who was called in Miller's books "that Dostoevsky of the North" (*Sexus* 462), to the "gangster author" of the 1930s who refused to write literature. For one thing, Miller's literary apprenticeship is too involved and his own reports of it are too contradictory.[53] Nonetheless, two important moments in Miller's development may be noted here. The first one was always pointed out by Miller himself as well as by his biographers and latter-day critics: at some point in the early 1930s, before the writing of the *Tropic of Cancer*, Miller decided that he had had enough of trying to emulate the various authors that he admired,

> I began assiduously examining the style and technique of those whom I once admired and worshipped...I imitated every style in the hope of finding the clue to the gnawing secret of how to write. Finally I came to a dead end...I realized that I was nothing--less than nothing--a minus quantity. It was at this point, in the midst of the dead Sargasso Sea, so to speak, that I really began to write. I began from scratch, throwing everything overboard, even those whom I most loved ("Reflections on Writing" 1941b.20).

It does not necessarily follow, though, that Miller had stopped thinking about the

styles of other writers or incorporating them into his own texts. In fact, the famous wall charts that he used to plan his books indicate as much. The chart for *Tropic of Capricorn*, for example, contains a list of writers whose styles would be appropriate for parts of the book (looking at this chart years later, Miller would say, "let me see that'–Dostoevsky for Xerxes Society...Hamsun...'y'get me? You see what a cunning bastard and, what shall I say, a cheat [I was]...I'm saying what style can I use, not my own, you understand!'"[54]). The difference here, however, is one between the emulation of a writer's style and the 'citation' (often ironic) of that style in Miller's own work, which is (as such) enormous.

One of the most explicit examples of this ironic and metatextual citation of another writer's style within Miller's own text occurs in the third part of the *Rosy Crucifixion–Nexus* (1960). After the narrator's lengthy digression about his reading of Dostoevsky as an American (18-20), the scene shifts to New York of the early 1910s, where the young Henry Miller persona is trying to extract overdue payments from one of his father's customers, a lawyer. The lawyer, a grotesque character with a number of repulsive personal habits, begins a series of confessions about his own "criminal mind," his decision to murder his wife, and his desire to go "underground" to escape civilization. He concludes by making a proposition that the Henry Miller persona and he should go away together to Costa Rica or Nicaragua and join forces (the former would contribute his writing abilities, the lawyer, his superior knowledge of human nature) to become one Superwriter *à la* Dostoevsky: "Dostoevsky is dead, finished with. And that's where we start. From Dostoevsky. He dealt with the soul; we'll deal with the mind" (29). This is followed by an eight-page discussion between the two

about what Dostoevsky represents to the twentieth-century American reader.

What is especially interesting about this whole section is that the intensity and the grotesqueness of the lawyer, his tedious intellectualizing, his desperate efforts to persuade, his twisted logic, and the very strangeness of what he is saying is actually a parodic pastiche of Dostoevsky's own characters from Peter Verkhovensky to the Underground Man. The style of the passage, with its passionately intense monologues and its repetitions, its lexical strangeness and its stilted diction (reminiscent, significantly, of a translation), is a metatextual gesture, a maze of reflecting mirrors. Miller the writer is parodying Dostoevsky's style in a passage where Dostoevsky is being discussed by two characters, one of whom 'represents' the author and narrates the passage, while the other is a Dostoevskian grotesque who is trying to convince the narrator to write like Dostoevsky. The entire passage illustrates the narrator's claim that the lives of twentieth-century New Yorkers are not much different from these of nineteenth-century St. Petersburgers depicted by Dostoevsky. The playful parody and the irony of the passage is underscored by the narrator's final comment on the incident: "When a few months later...I learned that [the lawyer] had died of the hemorrhage of the brain, I wasn't in the least surprised" (36).

Miller himself had pointed out his rejection of straightforward imitation in the 1930s on numerous occasions, and he downplayed the second pivotal moment in his literary and philosophic development. Nonetheless, Miller's 1930 Parisian meeting with the eccentric philosopher and writer Michael Fraenkel marked his own ideas and writing profoundly. Fraenkel was an East-European-Jewish immigrant who 'made good' in America and who

came to Paris to live the life of a literary gentleman of leisure. In Paris, Fraenkel wrote and published through his own Carrefour Press. His main thesis dealt with what he called the 'inner death' of Western Civilization (Fraenkel was a fan of both Friedrich Nietzsche and Oswald Spengler, two writers whom Miller admired as well). Upon their first meeting, Fraenkel gave Miller his tome on the subject of death, called *Werther's Younger Brother* (1930). Miller was elated: "I felt that I had made a great discovery," he wrote to Fraenkel, "You are saying what no one in America is saying–that I would dearly love to say myself...There was always a fear, as I read, that if you were just a little more insistent, you would drive me mad."[55]

Although Miller's interest in Fraenkel and his ideas was not uninfluenced by the opportunity of free food and lodging which Fraenkel provided, Miller was also intrigued by the possibility that everyone and everything within the "Modern Western Civilization"–including literature–was really dead: sapped of vitality and creative forces, existing by inertia rather than really living. According to Fraenkel's somewhat paradoxical reasoning, the only way to begin to live was to die (as he explained it, "To recover life...you have to kill off this world, die to it, that is, die to it again and again and again" [1945.53]). The two men formed a friendship of sorts, although relations between the two became increasingly strained. Throughout the thirties, Fraenkel and Miller engaged in marathon talks on the subject of death, were room-mates for a while, and collaborated on several projects (most notably, the *Hamlet Correspondence* published through Fraenkel's Carrefour Press in 1939-1941). Echoes of Fraenkel's own teachings filled Miller's letters, essays, and other

texts; Miller would even worry that he had "'plagiarized' Fraenkel's death philosophy in *Tropic of Cancer* in the passages that spoke of death and decay" (Dearborn 184). Correspondingly, Fraenkel's assessment of his own influence on Miller in the 1945 article "The Genesis of the *Tropic of Cancer*" reads like an annoyingly self-congratulatory account of a Hollywood agent who moulds a bit-actor into a Star.

Nevertheless, Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* is not so much a testament of Fraenkel's influence as it is, once again, a declaration of independence. First of all, Fraenkel and his views are both caricatured in the book; Fraenkel appears as Boris the Weather Prophet spreading gloom and doom with every word: "the weather will continue bad, he says. There will be more calamities, more death, more despair...We must get in step, a lock step, toward the prison of death. There is no escape. The weather will not change" (1). Further, Miller opposes Fraenkel's tenet that books should be written anonymously so that the author is cleared of all suspicions of clamouring for fame and becomes "merge[d] [with]...a spiritual whole, the immediate fabric, of which is the art."[56] At one point in their relationship, Miller did plan to write *Tropic of Cancer* anonymously ("When I finish the book," he announces to Nin, "I think I will make it Anonymous" [1932]). In the end, however, Miller not only names himself the author of the book, but also leaves his name unchanged for his own character/persona in the text (almost everyone else's names are altered).

There can be no doubt, however, that Fraenkel represents an important phase in Miller's development as a writer. All things considered, Fraenkel's main contribution to Miller's sense of his own mission as a writer is twofold: the idea that even animal vitality is

something that should be celebrated, and the idea that literature is dead, so that there is no sense going on trying to write something that qualifies as literature. These two concepts were added to Miller's belief that it is one's own personal vision, one's own way of expressing oneself–no matter how unskilled–and one's desire to do so, that is important to the writer and the artist.[57] All three of these ideas are encapsulated in the famous manifesto-like opening section of the *Tropic of Cancer*,

> I have no money, no resources, no hopes. I am the happiest man alive. A year ago, six months ago, I thought that I was an artist. I no longer think about it, I *am*. Everything that was literature has fallen from me. There are no more books to be written, thank God...I am going to sing for you, a little off key perhaps, but I will sing...To sing you must first open your mouth. You must have a pair of lungs, and a little knowledge of music. It is not necessary to have an accordion, or a guitar. The essential thing is to *want* to sing. This then is a song. I am singing (2).

It is these three main notions that form the backbone of Miller's vision of prose in the 1930s, a vision that he passed down through his work and his direct association first to Nin and then to Durrell.

Since–in the Villa Seurat Circle worldview–the bulk of their contemporaries, whether mainstream or experimental, wrote 'literature', which, in the twentieth century, stood for dead prose, Miller, Nin, and Durrell would wage battle with them all through their own living and vibrant non-literary prose. They would transfuse new blood into prose written in English. Nin summarizes this position nicely in her 1934 introduction to Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*:

> In a world grown paralyzed with introspection and constipated by delicate mental meals this brutal exposure of the substantial body comes as a vitalizing current of blood (xxxi).

And this is where the issue of Dostoevsky's style becomes so important to the Villa Seurat vision of prose. If Dostoevsky was, indeed, the last prophet of the novel who took literature to its final frontier (as Miller argued), then to transcend these limits in their own prose, the Villa Seurat writers had to first transcend the prose of Dostoevsky. Fortunately, Miller felt that he had Dostoevsky's prose style pinned down and dissected.

Dostoevsky and Stylistic Perfection

The central assumption lying behind Miller's initial reading of Dostoevsky's style is a conventional one for an American reader of his time; namely, that Dostoevsky was simply too busy and too overworked to be a careful stylist. In a letter to Nin, Miller urges her to remember that

> Dostoevsky had neither time nor money. He was writing for money which he always used up in advance. His life was terrible, terrible. No chance to fashion things out artistically (12 February 1932.24).

Miller also writes that he used to irritate June in the early New York days by "pick[ing] flaws in [Dostoevsky] [and] point[ing] out his bad artistry" (23). Gradually, however, Miller acquires a somewhat different perspective on what he perceived as a lack of polish in Dostoevsky's prose. Along with some other American writers like Sherwood Anderson and Thomas Wolfe, Miller begins to think that there was a different type of perfection to be found in Dostoevsky's prose style than any offered in the prose of the acknowledged master stylists. By the early 1930s, Miller reaches a reversal of his earlier views on the 'flaws' in Dostoevsky's style; in that same 1932 letter to Nin, Miller comments on the evolution of his

views: "Finally, I feel about Dostoevsky now that anything he did was all right. I not only forgive, I applaud, I admire" (24)[58]. In the *Tropic of Cancer*, the narrator sees this supposed spontaneity of Dostoevsky's style as something perfect in itself and worthy of being emulated:

> I have made a silent compact with myself not to change a line of what I write. I am not interested in perfecting my thoughts, nor my actions. Beside the perfection of Turgenev I put the perfection of Dostoevsky (9).

During the Paris years, Miller takes the idea of Dostoevsky's lack of stylistic control further still: Dostoevsky not only relinquishes control when he writes his works, but, at times, he also deliberately disintegrates his prose into chaos. Characteristically, Miller eroticizes these 'break-downs' in Dostoevsky's prose. In the *Tropic of Cancer*, where the narrator and a friend invite several women to the flat and have sex with them, the moment of orgasm is compared to the act of reading a 'chaotic' Dostoevsky passage:

> When the eyes waggle then will I hear again Dostoevsky's words, hear them rolling on page after page, with minutest observation, with maddest introspection, with all the undertones of misery now lightly, humorously touched, now swelling like an organ note until the heart bursts and there is nothing left but a blinding, scorching light, the radiant light that carries off the fecundating seeds of the stars (248).

The chaos of Dostoevsky's prose is seen by Miller as something sensuous, positive, and life-affirming–the moment prior to the inception of new life. Thus, in a published section of his Lawrence study, Miller argues that "wherever in [Dostoevsky's] works there is chaos and confusion, it is a *rich* chaos, a meaningful confusion; it is positive, vital, soul-infected" ("The Universe of Death" 1939.124), and, elsewhere, Miller writes that "Dostoevsky is chaos and fecundity" ("Letter to Pierre Lesdain" 1952.223). In a later work,

the narrator-Henry Miller persona reads a similarly chaotic and 'crazy' passage from his own writings to the Reb, a mad philosopher, whose enthusiastic response is revealing of the importance Miller himself had come to place on the release of controls within the text:

> It was one of those crazy passages which I myself couldn't make head nor tail of..."*Miller!*" He shouted. "*Miller*, that's just marvellous! You sound like a Russian. I don't know what it means but it makes music" (*Nexus* 263).

Miller then, makes an interesting hermeneutical shift in the Paris years from reading the disorder in Dostoevsky's novels as a by-product of his lack of time and money, to interpreting it as a deliberate reflection of Dostoevsky's philosophical position, his reaction to the "disintegration of the world" (23 November 1935.53).

Nin was initially antagonistic to Miller's celebration of the disorder within Dostoevsky's prose (she agreed, however, with his reading of Dostoevsky's prose as disordered and chaotic from the start). In an early letter to Miller, Nin writes that when she first read Dostoevsky at Miller's recommendation, she "laughed and cried together and couldn't sleep, and didn't know where [she] was" but recoiled afterwards because she had "a feeling against complete chaos."[59] By October 1933, nonetheless, Nin was writing in her diary that "the elements I do not like, which leave me cold [are] logic, order, construction, classicism, equilibrium, control. I wanted to shout: I admire imperfections, Dostoevsky" (*D1* 267). Dostoevsky, she comes to believe, reflects "the chaos of nature" (*D3* 138). Gradually, she too accepts the notion that the chaos in Dostoevsky's prose is something to admire and to emulate. Like Miller, who praised Durrell's work by noting its similarities to Dostoevsky, Nin writes Durrell that his prose

> breaks...[into] a *fever*. Sensation overflows from its vase and seems not integrated...read Dostoevsky and it will give you the same feeling (March 1939.98).

Miller, however, shifts his critical position once again, and decides that Dostoevsky, as the last of the great novelists who takes us, as one of Miller's characters puts it, "to the end of the road" (*Nexus* 32), does not take his prose far enough. The moments of complete chaos in Dostoevsky's writings were still not as frequent as Miller thought they should be. The Villa Seurat writers could thus transcend Dostoevsky by giving up *all* control in their works. As Miller's narrator would exclaim in one of his later works, "Dostoevsky hadn't gone quite far enough. I was for straight gibberish. One should go cuckoo!" (1962c.47).

The symbol that Miller uses to represent this complete and total surrendering of controls (as opposed to Dostoevsky's occasional 'break-downs') is that of an explosion. According to Miller, the Villa Seurat writers had to aim for the complete and total chaos and disintegration that only an explosion brings about. Focusing on the conception of the *Tropic of Cancer* in one of his later works, Miller wrote: "in the middle of the book I would explode. Why not? There were plenty of writers who could drag a thing out to the end without letting go of the reins; what we needed was a man, like myself for instance, who didn't give a fuck what happened" (1962c.47).

In his "Reflections on Writing," Miller would say that "I [have] never felt the least desire to conserve, bolster up or buttress anything" (1941b.28). Although the last statement could easily be applied to Miller's treatment of many notions held sacred by his American and European contemporaries, he directs it here against literature generally, and the novel specifically. Since Miller believes that Dostoevsky is the last great novelist ("it is with

[Dostoevsky] that the novel comes to an end" ["Creative Death" 1941b.216]), and that both literature and the novel, which was its greatest genre, are dead, the thing to do is to blast away the remnants to make way for the future. Significantly (in light of the Villa Seurat rejection of their contemporaries) Miller comments on his own genesis as a writer and on his rejection of the novel as follows:

> In the beginning I had dreams of rivaling Dostoevsky...But before very far along I realized that we had evolved to a point far beyond that of Dostoevsky--*beyond* in the sense of degeneration...It was quite impossible for me, therefore, to think of writing novels; equally unthinkable to follow all the blind alleys represented by the various literary movements in England, France and America ("Reflections on Writing" 1941b .28).

Correspondingly, in a passage devoted to the subject of form in *Tropic of Cancer*, the narrator insists that "Art consists in going the full length. If you start with the drums you have to end with dynamite, or TNT...[You do not] sacrific[e]...something for form, for a vegetable that people must digest before going to bed" (76-77). By exploding the last vestiges of outdated literary forms, by giving up any attempt to control their prose, the writers of Villa Seurat would transcend the limits of literary prose that were reached by Dostoevsky.

Practically, of course, this textual 'explosion' was unachievable even if the Villa Seurat Trinity were to practice automatist writing all the time. Commenting on his preferred method of working late in his life, Miller claims that he does not go over his works but instead, "break[s] new ground until I reach the level of exact expression, leaving all the trials and gropings there, but raising them is a sort of spiral circumnavigation until they make a solid under-body or underpinning" (1973a.103). A surrender of all control, however, presupposes that there will be no subsequent editing of the work, and, despite Miller's

remarks to the contrary, it is well known that Nin, Durrell, and especially Miller were inveterate editors of their own and each other's texts. Nevertheless, the explosion--the blasting of narrative, the violent breaking apart and clearing away of the standard features of literary texts--became an ideal to aspire to for the three writers; as Miller always insists, "To build anew one must first tear down the old" (1963.12).

Nin felt that she had achieved this ideal in the *Diaries*: "In the diary," she said, "I did explode" (1966.16).[60] She also writes to young Durrell, saying that she hoped she would be "the one to give [him] the courage of [his] strength, of exploding" (September 1937). Both Miller and Durrell felt that they had achieved it in the *Tropic of Cancer* and in *The Black Book*, respectively. Miller, specifically, describes Durrell's *Black Book* as a "bag of dynamite" (13-15 March 1937.61), advises him to let the future books "explode inside you" (29 July 1937.85) and comments that in his own book, "finally I decided to explode--and I did explode" ("An Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere" 1939.161).

(Mis)Reading the Dostoevsky Scholars

There can be no doubt that Miller's understanding of Dostoevsky's prose was affected by his readings of the Dostoevsky scholarship available to him. Nonetheless, Miller's interpretation of the Dostoevsky commentators is often no less idiosyncratic than his interpretation of Dostoevsky's own works. Miller's all-time favourite critical commentary on Dostoevsky was probably André Gide's book of reworked lectures given in 1922 (it was Miller's enthusiasm for the book that made Nin read it in the early 1930s). The English translation of Gide's study came out in 1925, and it is this translation that Miller had

originally read and reflected upon.

One example of Miller's response to Gide can be found in his 1933 letter to Nin. At one point in his study, Gide comments on what he sees as the links between the novels of Dostoevsky:

> When I recently re-read most of his novels, I was fascinated by Dostoevsky's manner of passing from one book to another. Undoubtedly it was natural that after *The House of the Dead* he should write Raskolnikov's story in *Crime and Punishment*, the story of the crime that sent the latter to Siberia. More absorbing still to watch how the last pages of the novel lead up to *The Idiot* (113).

Miller's own interpretation of the Gide passage reads as follows:

> Since it has been made so clear to us, through Gide's words on Dostoevsky, that each book contains the germ of the next, let us take advantage consciously of this condition of creation. The author is like a tree in the midst of his creations; his creations are the atmosphere in which he bathes; as he grows he sends down roots and it is from the roots that the future trees grow, not from the blossoms and the acorns. Or think of a snake: a snake does not shed the old skin until he has grown a new one. The book you write is the old skin that you are shedding. The important book, the new skin, is always the one that is unborn, or, if not unborn, unseen...the great author is like a monster who produces not a single prodigy, but a whole litter! (8 March 1933.87-88).

Miller proceeds to tell Nin that he is planning to write a series of interlinked books and urges her to do the same.

Miller's commentary on the Gide passage is interesting for two reasons. First, Miller's words illustrate his typically unorthodox interpretation of Dostoevsky criticism. Whereas Gide suggests that the links between Dostoevsky's novels occur on profoundly socio-psychological and philosophical levels (that is, the rebirth of Raskolnikov as a Christian at the end of *Crime and Punishment* leads to the question of whether a true Christian *can* exist in the corrupt Russian society of the 1800s, which, in turn, is the subject of *The Idiot*)[61],

Miller argues that the novels are interconnected as a result of their reflection of the author's personal and creative growth. Each written text is a record of the author's previous life experience: a cast-off skin of the same snake. The present life and day-to-day experiences of the author are that which will become the next written text.

Miller's injunction to write in series, as Dostoevsky ostensibly did, becomes especially significant, however, when one recalls that one feature associated with Miller, Nin, and Durrell's work throughout their careers is writing series of interlinked texts. In fact, this is something that each of the writers begins to do during the Villa Seurat period. Miller's own *Tropic of Cancer*, *Tropic of Capricorn*, and *Sexus*, *Plexus*, and *Nexus* of *The Rosy Crucifixion* trilogy of 1949-1960 are all part of a single series (the last four books are a depiction of Miller's life with June before his arrival in Paris and his breakthrough as a writer which is dealt with in the *Tropic of Cancer*). Nin's entire body of work is one long interconnected series (even if the *Diary* is–artificially–separated from her other writings) with the same characters and events figuring again and again in different texts.[62] Finally, Durrell is probably best-known for the set of four books he produced in 1957-1960, published collectively under the title of *Alexandria Quartet*. Notably, the whole of the *Quartet* evolved from *The Book of the Dead* which Durrell intended to be the last in a set of three that included *The Black Book* and that was meant to be a tribute to Miller; "I have planned AN AGON, A PATHOS, AN ANAGNORISIS," Durrell wrote to Miller in late March 1937, "If I write them they should be: The Black Book, The Book of Miracles, The Book of the Dead" (65)[63].

Dostoevsky and Autobiographical Prose

Probably the most noticeable feature of the prose produced by the three main Villa Seurat Writers in the 1930s, however, is its autobiographical aspect. The narrator and central persona of Miller's books, for instance, is named Henry Miller, and the characters within his texts are all supposedly 'real people' with just their names altered. In the many statements made about his work, Miller tends to claim that it is wholly autobiographical, that in it he is "a man telling the story of his life" ("Reflections on Writing" 1941b.20) and that "all my characters have been real, taken from life, my own life" (1948.46). Miller's strongest and most explicit statement on this account is found in the already cited "Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere":

> The naive English critics, in their polite, asinine way, talk about the "hero" of my book (*Tropic of Cancer*) as though he were a character I had invented. I made it as plain as could be that I was talking in that book about myself. I used my own name throughout. I didn't write a piece of fiction: I wrote an autobiographical document, a *human* book...At a certain point in my life I decided that henceforth I would write about myself, my friends, my experiences, what I knew and what I had seen with my own eyes. Anything else, in my opinion, is literature, and *I am not interested in literature* (161).

Nin's works have an even stronger aura of the autobiographical about them, since they all emanate from or are a part of her famous diaries, where she purports to record her day-to-day life.

Clearly, it would be both dangerous and erroneous to assume that any of the works produced by the Villa Seurat writers is an unadulterated setting down of events as they actually occurred. Even without the famous omissions and rewrites of Nin's diary (the revelation of which was a shock to many when the unexpurgated versions of the *Diary* began

coming out in the mid-1980s), Nin was always reconfiguring and recreating her text. Thus, in the second volume of the originally published *Diary* (1967), Nin indicates that she treats her diary not as a documentary chronicle but as a text to be altered in accordance to the will of its author:

> Back to work. Rewriting volume 45 (New York, Rank, Henry). There are in the diary so many flowers like the Japanese paper-flowers, which need to be placed in water to achieve their flowering. So I am putting all the closed buds in water. What a bloom (*D2* 262).

Similarly, Miller warns his readers repeatedly that not everything that he puts down into what he sometimes calls his "autobiographical romances" (1963b.188) is factual. Miller further problematizes the nature of truth and authenticity by writing in one of his pieces that

> There are no solid facts to get hold of. Thus, in writing, even if my distortions and deformations be deliberate, they are not necessarily less near to the truth of things. One can be absolutely truthful and sincere even though admittedly the most outrageous liar...The truth is in no way disturbed by the violent perturbations of the spirit ("Reflections on Writing." 1941b.25).

In another text, Miller says that even though "many of [his] readers regard [his] work as being largely fictive" he disagrees with such an assessment because "[he] had no use for fiction" (1979.53).

But why the continued need to write in an autobiographical mode? While this question is more complex than it seems at first glance, the answer (or at least one of the answers) is once again connected to Dostoevsky. First of all, Miller and Nin place a special emphasis on what they perceive to be the autobiographic quality of Dostoevsky's books: his writing through and of his "excessive suffering and deprivations" [Miller "Seraphita" 1941b.193-194] (again, a representative view of the American reader of Dostoevsky). On

one level then, the strong and sustained autobiographic aspect of their works (placing themselves into the text as characters, claiming that the texts capture their reality) is an attempt to go beyond what Dostoevsky did in his works. Further, if the novel and literature itself have indeed died with Dostoevsky and fiction is outmoded (as Miller suggests), then the new writer *is* only given his own experience and his own life as the material to work with in his texts.

Miller's own explanation of his choice to write autobiographical texts is connected to the two interpretations above and provides some insight not only into his reason for producing autobiographical texts, but also into his depiction of the 'Henry Miller' persona as, essentially, unsympathetic. In the already cited "Reflections on Writing," Miller says that when he realized that the world "had evolved to a point far beyond that of Dostoevsky--beyond in the sense of degeneration" he felt that the only thing left for a writer to do was to use "[his] own shattered and dispersed ego as heartlessly and recklessly as [he] would the flotsam and jetsam of the surrounding phenomenal world" (1941b.28).

Interestingly, Durrell, who is perhaps the least autobiographical of the three writers, is the one who explores the tension and the interrelation between fiction and non-fiction, autobiography and invention most persistently and memorably in his own work. *The Black Book*, particularly, is filled with lengthy metafictional and somewhat self-conscious discussions on the writing of fictional texts versus the writing of autobiography or journals. Thus, Herbert (alias 'Death') Gregory, the diarist whose secret journal, "the little black book" (71), provides the title of Durrell's text, interrupts his descriptions of the events of his life by

exclaiming in disgust, "literature! literature!" (76) and argues that "Books should be built of one's tissue or not at all. The struggle is not to record experience but to record oneself...There is only my tissue, my guilt, transmuted by God knows what alchemy, into a few pints of green ink and handmade paper. Understand me well" (121). Durrell, significantly, confides to Miller that *The Black Book* is strongly autobiographic in at least one aspect:

> I tried to say what I was: but of course with my talent for covering myself in confetti made out a hell of an epic. I wanted to write myself so miserable and wormy and frightened as I was: NUMB, really--that terrible english provincial numbness: the english death infecting my poor little colonial soul and so on (April 1937.72).

By incorporating themselves and their own lives into their writings, the Villa Seurat writers believed that they were creating not so much autobiographical documents as texts which commented upon and reflected the life of their generation, texts which often rejected their own status as literature but were immensely readable. In their own way then, Miller, Nin, and Durrell were actually following Dostoevsky's famous advice to budding authors:

> Remember my behest: invent neither plot nor story. Take only that which life itself gives you. Life is much richer than all your inventions! No imagination can come up with that which the most ordinary everyday life can give you. Respect life![64]

Dostoevsky and the Real

Needless to say, Dostoevsky never advocated a straightforward mimetic representation of that 'ordinary everyday life.' A clarification of his position is found in what surely must be the most overquoted segment from all of Dostoevsky's notebooks, cited by most of his scholars at one time or another, including Miller's beloved Janko Lavrin, whose

books on Dostoevsky were read by the Villa Seurat writers on Miller's recommendation:

> Dry observations of everyday trivialities I have long ceased to regard as realism--it is quite the reverse...They call me a psychologist, not true: I am only a realist in a higher sense, that is, I depict all the depths of the human soul.[65]

And to reach that goal of giving the reader 'realism in a higher sense' no device or method is ruled out by Dostoevsky: neither that belonging to Gothic horror novels, nor dime-a-dozen detective stories, nor religious tracts, nor philosophical treatises.

Miller marvels, particularly, at Dostoevsky's capacity to combine seemingly disparate elements and to cross from 'low' to 'high' in his novels; as he writes in *Tropic of Cancer*,

> There was no world too low for [Dostoevsky] to enter, no place too high for him to fear to ascend. He went the whole gamut, from the abyss to the stars (255).

Miller himself, incidentally, was quite an expert at this genre-crossing, combining depictions of the kind of scenes found in girlie magazines of his time with discussions of the relative virtues of Matisse and Picasso. In fact, his propensity to fuse 'Kitsch' and 'Art' in his own prose (a propensity that Durrell points out) may stem from his readings of Dostoevsky's novels.

When some critics labelled Miller a realist precisely because he followed Dostoevsky's advice (as Miller puts it, "I am considered quite a realistic writer because I am writing about living people and today" [1956.6]), he replied that if he is a realist, his understanding of realism is different from that of "the journalistic writers, so-called hard-boiled writers" (6). Miller elaborates in a passage which echoes Dostoevsky's own remark about his realism:

> what people call reality is not reality in my mind. I am not only telling the truth; I am

> telling the whole truth, which is in your whole being and not just the surface truth...we are many things; we are a great universe. Just to describe our acts, our sexual life, our conflicts that are external, that's nothing. There's the inner force, which is so much more important (6).

To reveal this 'inner force', the springs of motivation roughly corresponding to Dostoevsky's 'depths of the human soul,' Miller says, "I employ every device. I use dream sequences frequently, and fantasy and humor and surrealistic things, everything and anything which will deepen and heighten this thing called reality" (6). Typically, Durrell echoes Miller's views when he explains that the "phantasmagoria" of *The Black Book* is used to disclose "real problems of the anglo-saxon psyche" (1959.14). In a 1938 attempt to write a blurb for *The Black Book*, he writes that it depicts "the private inferno of the human being" as opposed to the "formal display of the facade in literature."[66]

Nin interprets Dostoevsky's 'realism in a higher sense' in a similar way to Miller and Durrell. In the essay "Realism and Reality" (1946b), Nin argues that a writer should depict a "deeper world" of psychological stimuli, the "inner drama," as opposed to detailing merely

> the opaque quality of our external world which is used in most novels as a defense against a disturbing inner world...with all evasions of the essential inner drama practised by the so-called realistic novel in which we are actually being constantly cheated of reality and experience (26).

The writer should attempt to reveal "layers not uncovered in the narrative novel," Nin writes, adding immediately that "this does not apply...to the Dostoevskian novels in which people act by the impulses of the unconscious" (28-29). Nin's recipe for disclosing the hidden unconscious (as she specifies, "particularly in a society where people's acts no longer correspond to their inner impulses" [28]) is to use symbols, associations, and repetitions (26-

28). A remark she makes in another essay ("On Writing" [1947]) is even more suggestive: the contemporary writer should "face the fact that this new psychological reality can be explored and dealt with only under conditions of tremendously high atmospheric pressures, temperatures, and speed" (34).

What Nin seems to be prescribing, then, is the kind of a 'white heat' intensity of emotion and experience that marks her works and–in her view–is the key characteristic of Dostoevsky's own novels. After a discussion with Miller touching upon the *Idiot*, Nin writes in the *Diary*: "The extravagance of Dostoevsky's language has released both of us...Now when we live with the same fervor, the same temperature, the same extravagance, I am in bliss" (*UD:HJ* 88).

Essentially then, the works of the three Villa Seurat writers can be viewed as their attempt to use their own lives as both a standpoint and material through which they could penetrate the 'depths of the human soul.' To gain this 'realism in a higher sense,' all devices, no matter how extravagant, are admissible in *any* combination desired by the author. The writers are thus free to use any tools available to them in order to achieve their aim. This is one of the things which the Villa Seurat writers found so inspiring and liberating about Dostoevsky's prose style. This is something which their contemporaries, all their rigid theories and methods notwithstanding, could not offer to the Villa Seurat writers. This freedom, the freedom to use anything and anyhow, as long as it is anchored in one's own experience, is something which the experimental prose writers of their day were sadly lacking. The Villa Seurat Trinity extrapolated this freedom from Dostoevsky's own prose

style. As Janko Lavrin claimed, "Those who read [Dostoevsky] in a creative way will certainly derive more benefit from him than from any other modern" (1947.156).

VILLA SEURAT AND READINGS IN DOSTOEVSKY'S PHILOSOPHY

> "Dostoevsky...[is] a great thinker and a great visionary. He is a brilliant dialectician and the greatest Russian metaphysician. *Ideas* play an immense, a principal role in Dostoevsky's oeuvre." (Nikolai Berdiaev *Dostoevsky's Worldview* [*Mirosozertsanie Dostoevskogo*] [1934] 7)
>
> "I am at bottom a metaphysical writer." (Henry Miller *The Cosmological Eye* [1939])
>
> "[It is] that taste for metaphysics which distinguishes a work of art from mere *belles lettres*." (Joseph Brodsky *On Grief and Reason* [1995] 101)

If Dostoevsky the Thinker tends to outweigh Dostoevsky the Artist in the American cultural paradigm, it is clear that his ideas are habitually obscured by two practices of his readers: decontextualization and the assignation of the characters' words to Dostoevsky himself. Granted, this phenomenon is true not only in relation to Dostoevsky nor is it exclusive to the American practice. Dostoevsky, however, seems to have been especially open to this kind of a reading whether outside of Russia or in Russia itself. One Russian scholar complains when writing of Dostoevsky's treatment in his homeland: "There has occurred [in Russia]...a peculiar break-down of Dostoevsky's entire text into an opportunistic code of formulas and quotes...a code in which the word of the author is confused with those of his characters, and in which the words themselves gain a different meaning from the one intended by Dostoevsky" (Zakharov 1989.19). Still, matters have been further confounded in the West by the added elements of inaccurate translations, different cultural matrixes, and a widely-held assumption that sections of certain Dostoevsky novels can be read and evaluated independently of the works of which they are a part. Thus, for instance, chapter five of book five of the *Brothers Karamazov*, where Ivan Karamazov recites to Alesha his 'poem' of Christ's second coming during the time of the Spanish Inquisition, has been published and

studied separately as an independent work.[1] To make things even more bewildering, Dostoevsky has been frequently misquoted, the words and actions of his characters have been mistakenly attributed to other characters and, in extreme cases, texts have been attributed to him that he had never written.[2]

In the later years of the Soviet Regime, when the so-called "unofficial ban on [Dostoevsky] scholarship" was hesitantly lifted (Fridlender 1996.12), it became almost *de rigeur* for Russian literary scholars to accuse the Western intellectuals of imposing their various cultural and ideological credos upon Dostoevsky in an attempt to claim him for their own. Thus, the editor of the critical anthology, *Dostoevsky in Foreign Literatures* [*Dostoevskii v zarubezhnykh literaturakh*], published in 1978 by the Soviet Academy of Sciences, thunders against the Freudians for reducing Dostoevsky's novels to a manifestation of his Oedipal complex and against the Existentialists for "attributing their own views to Dostoevsky [and] manipulating his writings into serving as a pedestal for their own future monument" (Reizov 1978.3-4). The editor concludes that "In the majority of cases, the foreign critics who held the bourgeois world view had profoundly distorted [Dostoevsky's] writings" (4). It hardly needs to be pointed out that the Russian critics levelling such accusations against the Western intellectuals and scholars conveniently closed their eyes to the State-approved ideological slant that they themselves brought to bear upon Dostoevsky and his texts, when they depicted him as "a passionate critic of bourgeois society and bourgeois morals, as well as a member of the Petrashevsky Circle, who (despite everything) remained true throughout his life to the socialist ideals of his youth"[3] (see also the chapter

"Slandered Dostoevsky" ["Obolgannyi Dostoevskii"] in I. Garin's book *The Manyfaced Dostoevsky* [*Mnogolikii Dostoevskii*] 1997.378-385).

It appears then, that Eastern and Western scholars and intellectuals are equally adept at appropriating Dostoevsky for their own uses and hoisting him up as their battle standard.[4] Mikhail Bakhtin observes in *The Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929/1963) that among Dostoevsky's followers one finds people with wildly divergent ideologies "frequently deeply inimical to the ideology of Dostoevsky himself" (462). He also suggests–in keeping with his general perspective on Dostoevsky's writings–that the vast number of misinterpretations of Dostoevsky's work are due to the tendency to "monologize [his] novels...ignoring or denying [their] intentional incompleteness and dialogical openness" (464). Practically, however, the appropriations of Dostoevsky involve *both* his fictional texts and non-fictional writings. The latter category, which includes his journalistic pieces and polemical texts, is often anything but polyphonic and dialogically open in appearance, and yet it is as likely as Dostoevsky's fictional writings to be refashioned according to the views of the reader and subsequently appropriated.

As noted above, the mechanics of appropriation are quite simple and can accommodate a wide range of conflicting perspectives on Dostoevsky and any number of his texts. In the process of appropriation, certain Dostoevsky texts are ignored either partially or completely, passages are decontextualized, and the words of various characters are ascribed to Dostoevsky himself. The end result is a customized list of various Dostoevsky quotes and biographic facts, which is then reproduced by others with the same perspective on

Dostoevsky.

Often, such customized lists are easily identifiable. One critical perspective, for example, stresses Dostoevsky's identity as a political prisoner, passes over *The Possessed* in silence, then stresses again his identification with the 'poor folk' and his criticism of the bourgeoisie. Needless to say, this list is quickly recognizable as the pedestrian critical perspective on Dostoevsky endorsed in the Soviet Union post-1956 (when his books were slowly returned to the libraries and allowed to be published).[5] Amusingly, attempts were even made by Soviet critics to read Dostoevsky's novels as exercises in proto-socialist realism. Thus, the introduction to *Crime and Punishment*, published for use in Soviet schools in 1974, has this to say in conclusion:

> But despite this, despite the heavy gloom enveloping the scene of human life painted by Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment*, we see a ray of light in this darkness, we believe in the moral strength, the courage, and the determination of Dostoevsky's hero to find the path and the means of truly serving the people, because he had been and remained "a man and a citizen" (Tiun'kin 38).

Clearly then, with a bit of imagination and a fair amount of distortion, Dostoevsky's philosophy could and did become anything his readers (professional or otherwise) wanted it to be. The ease and simplicity of this transformation–not to mention its common occurrence–is important to keep in mind as one considers the reading of Dostoevsky's philosophy by Miller and the other writers of Villa Seurat in the 1930s.

The Thinkers of Villa Seurat

During the Villa Seurat period, Miller, Nin, and, to a lesser extent, Durrell tended to

emphasize their own lack of education and their ingenuousness as writers and critics, extolling immediate impression over conditioned response. Due to various personal circumstances, none of the three writers had received a higher education: Miller left the City College of New York after being defeated by Spencer's *Faerie Queene*,[6] Durrell apparently failed entrance exams to every university that his father wanted him to attend, and Nin dropped out of her American highschool after a teacher recommended that she use a less mannered English in her writings. Instead, the three became autodidacts, receiving most of their education through voracious and eclectic reading.

Despite their considerable erudition, however, the writers of Villa Seurat insisted on their inability to understand the more high-brow books that they read, and continued to rejoice in their status as illiterati. Durrell, for instance, writes in 1937: "Of course I'm hopelessly ill-read and jump to conclusions wildly" (February 1937.66). Nin chooses to title her first major published work–a monograph on D. H. Lawrence–"An *Unprofessional* Study" (emphasis added) and writes to Miller in 1932 that "I've written [it]...a bit like a medium, if you wish, a bit in a trance. I feel that if I sit down now I will do some bad thinking about Lawrence" (23 July 1932.71). In the same vein, Miller writes Durrell in 1936: "I know nothing of the classics–practically nothing. I am ignorant. Even about English literature" (22 December 1936.34).

Of all the writers in the Villa Seurat Circle, Miller identified himself most with the stance of a crude 'natural man,' an innocent unspoiled by corrupting culture and civilization, and unbound by any social mores. Adapting Rousseau to his own idiom, Miller would

declare throughout his life that "To become a man in this stinking civilization is tantamount to becoming a rat. It means retrogression" (1979.100). Especially in the Paris days, the pose of an unschooled man of the streets, a product of the New York jungle, was very much a part of the Miller image. The important thing, according to Miller, was not to intellectualize about immediate experience but to set it down as it came, directly and naturally.

Despite all their avowals to the contrary, however, Miller and the other writers of Villa Seurat were all inveterate armchair philosophers and metaphysicians. Miller spent countless hours in philosophical duels with Michael Fraenkel and speculated, in his writings, about the meaning of life, creativity, and death. Nin, in her diary and letters, theorized about the nature of cruelty, sexuality, and the psyche. The youngest of the three writers, Durrell, even came up with a philosophic model of perceiving the world which he called the "heraldic universe" and which he tried to embody in his writing. In a letter to Miller, Durrell elaborates his idea: "I have discovered that the idea of duration is false. We have invented it as a philosophic jack-up to the idea of physical disintegration. THERE IS ONLY SPACE. A solid object has only three dimensions. Time, that old appendix, I've lopped off. So it needs a new attitude. An attitude without memory...I'm using the old proof of determinism..." (August 1936.19).

Although the three writers were in earnest about trying to understand various physical and metaphysical phenomena, their philosophical discussions were often mixed with banter and self-parody. Here, for instance, is a note Durrell wrote to Miller upon his arrival to Villa Seurat in 1937:

> Dear Miller:
> Two questions:
> (1) What do you do with the garbage?
> AND (TWO)
> (2) When you say "to be with God" do you identify yourself with God: or do you regard the God-stuff reality as something *extraneous* towards which we yearn? (mid-August 1937.90).

Miller's note informed Durrell that the garbage is put in a little can under the sink, and that

> As to the second question, being rather pressed for time, and slightly jocund at the moment I should say blithely--sometimes you approach and sometimes you become! Gottfried Benn answers it nicely (via Storch) in an issue of *transition* which I will dig up for you and show you. I could discuss it better over the table (mid-August 1937.90).

Philosophic thought and philosophic discourse, sincere or playfully subversive, were both prevalent in and important to the Circle. At the same time, its key three members felt that it was necessary to deny its importance (Miller, for instance, would comment later in life that he had "always fought against 'knowledge', against intellectuals" [1971.35]).

Certainly, one important reason for the anti-intellectual stance of the Villa Seurat writers lies in their affirmation of spontaneity and action over rehearsedness and reflection (in a letter to Miller, Nin writes that she lives "by impulse, by emotion, by white heat" and that she is "in full rebellion against [her] own mind" [13 February 1932.44]), something congenial to the Surrealists with their automatist lists and their attempts to relinquish conscious control of their writing material. Further, a distrust of the conscious mind with its endless capacities for self-deception and repression is a given in psychoanalysis, and both Miller and Nin had worked as psychoanalysts in New York under the auspices of Otto Rank (an early Freudian who was Nin's some-time analyst and lover). Interestingly, however, the

reason that Miller and Nin themselves cite for their anti-intellectual position is based on their identification with Dostoevsky and is connected to André Gide's interpretation of Dostoevsky as a philosopher.

In his study of Dostoevsky, Gide makes two central claims both about Dostoevsky's opinion on intellect and about Dostoevsky's own status as a thinker. According to Gide, Dostoevsky distrusts the mind. Dostoevsky, Gide writes, distinguishes several regions in the human psyche, the first of which is "the intellectual, remote from the soul and whence proceed the worst temptations. Therein dwells, according to Dostoevsky, the treacherous demonic element" (113). Even more significantly (as far as Miller and Nin are concerned), Gide addresses the commonly held opinion that Dostoevsky is a great thinker and calls it a "grave misconception":

> [In the *Journal of an Author*] Dostoevsky sets forth his ideas. It would seem the simplest and most natural thing in the world to make constant reference to this book; but I may as well admit at once that it is profoundly disappointing...In a word, Dostoevsky is not, strictly speaking, a thinker; he is a novelist...As soon as Dostoevsky begins to theorize, he disappoints us (91-93).

Gide's words made a lasting impression on both Miller and Nin. When Nin writes to Miller about her inability to analyze her position on the writings of D. H. Lawrence, she cites the example of Dostoevsky: "Remember Gide on Dostoevsky--'when he began to explain himself he showed himself a bad thinker'" (23 July 1932.71). In a characteristic twist, however, what is a deficiency of Dostoevsky in the eyes of others (as in the case of Dostoevsky's 'chaotic' style), becomes something to celebrate for the Villa Seurat Circle. Miller comments to Nin that "Gide has mind, Dostoevsky has the other thing, and it is what

Dostoevsky has that really matters" (quoted by Nin in 22 February 1932.11) and she responds: "For you and me, the highest moment, the keenest joy is not when our minds dominate but when we *lose* our mind" (11). In another letter to Miller, Nin exclaims: "Oh, God, today I pray [to] you on my knees for Dostoevsky's obscurity, blindness, the most sacred and precious of all things" (29 September 1932.111). Significantly, in a Parisian interview given later in his life, Miller explains his deliberately anti-intellectual position by pointing to the example of Dostoevsky, and citing Gide's passage which he professes to have just rediscovered:

> l'autre soir, relisant les pages d'André Gide sur Dostoïevski, j'ai été frappé en voyant que Dostoïevski, lui aussi, a toujours méprisé l'intellect. Il dit même que c'est cela, le diable... la grande tentation dans laquelle le diable essaie de nous induire. Les héros de Dostoïevski, ses personnages essentiels, comme le prince Muichkine, sont tous des êtres qui placent le sentiment plus haut que la tête, la grande tentation (1969.67).

In the same interview, Miller, who had been associated throughout his life variously with the philosophies of the American Transcendentalists and Zen and who frequently quotes Ludvig Wittgenstein, Hermann Keyserling, Baruch Spinoza, Nikolai Berdiaev, and other philosophers in his own work, points out that

> Souvent, on trouve que j'emprunte à tous les grands philosophes. Et pourtant, le plus drôle, c'est que je n'ai jamais digéré les idées des philosophes...Pour parler clairement, ma philosophie, si j'en ai une, est une philosophie de non-philosophie (56-57).

But even though the Villa Seurat writers agreed with Gide that Dostoevsky was not a particularly effective thinker–something that they saw as a virtue–they still considered him an authority on a number of philosophical and theological issues (the nature of freedom, the

effects of suffering, evil and the implications of its existence on the divine, and so forth). In the second book of the *Rosy Crucifixion*, the Henry Miller persona imagines himself Chairman of the "Holy Philarmonic Synod" with Dostoevsky given a seat of honour on his right. The big question that the Synod is considering is "that wholly ecumenical question...If there were no God would we be here?" (*Plexus* 610). Dostoevsky's opinion on this subject among others is especially solicited by the Chairman:

> "To imagine that by giving a mere Yes or No the grand problem will be settled for eternity is sheer madness. We have not...." (I paused and turned to the one on my right. "And you, Fedor Mikhailovich, have you nothing to say?") "We have not come together to settle an absurd problem. We are here, comrades, because outside this room, *in the world*, as they call it there is no place in which to mention the Holy Name...*Does God wish to see children suffer?* Such a question may be asked here. *Is evil necessary?* That too may be asked..." (611).

What makes Dostoevsky an expert on the subjects of evil, suffering, the nature of the divine, etc., according to the Villa Seurat writers, is neither theoretical speculations nor erudition in that area (Durrell suggests that "erudition...doesn't exist" [end December 1936.37]), but personal experience. According to Miller, Nin, and Durrell, Dostoevsky is always writing about his own conflicts and his own psyche, even when he is "assum[ing] the problems, the torture and the anguish of all men" (1952.233). In *Tropic of Capricorn*, Miller writes that "Dostoevsky was the first man to reveal his soul to me" (208-209) and Nin agrees with Miller's words in *Tropic of Cancer* that Dostoevsky was "a man placed at the very core of mystery and, by his flashes, illuminating for us the depths and immensity of the darkness" (255) (this passage is cited by Nin in a letter from 22 February 1932.11). Dostoevsky is also the one implied by the Henry Miller-Chairman of the "Synod" when he says that certain

members of the group used their own experience to "reveal...the depths of the human soul in a manner and to a degree never before heard of" (*Plexus* 612).

What the Villa Seurat writers end up with, however, is neither a comprehensive picture of Dostoevsky's worldview nor that of his perception of the human condition, but another customized "code of formulas and quotes" taken from both his fictional and non-fictional works and interspersed with various biographical facts. Inevitably, the code includes decontextualized and misattributed quotes. A representative example of such textual confusion occurs in Henry Miller's treatment of Aleksei Kirillov's suicide in *The Possessed.*

Kirillov's 'Blissful' Suicide

Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* is particularly important to the writers of Villa Seurat Circle. Miller discusses the novel many times with Nin and Durrell and identifies with many of its characters. Nin tries to gain insights into the people in her own life by equating them with the characters in the novel (she writes of her husband, Hugo Guiler, in her diary: "He is Shatov, capable of love and faith" [*UD:HJ* 89]). Nin also titles two of her diaries written in the early 1930s (she always assigned titles to her diaries) "The Possessed" and "Journal of a Possessed." Durrell, writing in his poem "Cities, Plains and People" (1943) of his travels in Europe with his first wife Nancy, chooses as alter egos Dostoevsky and his wife, whom he calls "*the possessed*/Fëdor and Anna" (168 [emphasis added]).[7]

Despite the fact that Miller himself was interested in a variety of characters in the

novel, it is Kirillov's suicide that figures most prominently in Miller's writings, being discussed in more or less the same terms in a number of his texts. As any reader of *The Possessed* knows, the circumstances surrounding Kirillov's suicide involve several catalysts. Foremost of these is that the "Revolutionary Circle" headed by Peter Verkhovensky needs Kirillov to commit suicide in order to cover up their imminent murder of Shatov, a renegade member of the Circle. Kirillov, for his part, has been planning to take his own life for the past three years (ever since his unhappy experience of working in America) and has agreed to postpone his plan until he receives a signal from the Circle. Kirillov believes that he has to commit suicide because only in this way can he assert his self-will ["svoevolie"]: "I must shoot myself because the fullest expression of my self-will is to kill myself with my own hands" (X.470). According to Miller, however, Kirillov commits suicide because he has found happiness.

Miller first introduces the concept of committing suicide 'out of happiness' and links it to Dostoevsky in a pre-Tropics novel, *Moloch*, which was published only posthumously. A young woman commits suicide and the narrator comments:

> She had become so thoroughly saturated with the drunkenness of life that she up and killed herself one day. She up and killed herself out of sheer joy. It's the fashion nowadays to deride such tales. It is said "people don't do such things... out of joy!" Or some "smart alec"...will mention Dostoevsky...as though only in Russian literature, among the epileptoid geniuses do we encounter such... such--shall we call it--*bravado*? But [she] had acted in precisely this manner (1992.231).

In almost all of Miller's later texts, when the idea of committing suicide because one is happy is cited, it is explicitly connected to Kirillov. Thus, in "The Enormous Womb," Miller asserts that "When one really understands what happiness is one goes out like a light. (Vide

Kirillov!)" (1941b.99). In *Sexus*, the narrator identifies himself with Kirillov who "had shot or hanged himself because he was too happy...That was me all over" (46-47). In the *Hamlet Correspondence*, Miller calls Kirillov "one of those blessed men who bumped himself off out of sheer ecstasy" (286). Similarly, in "First Impressions of Greece," Miller writes that "In the *Possessed* Kirillov kills himself because he has discovered the secret of happiness" (81).

Notably, in the *Possessed*, Kirillov *does* talk about finding happiness. This occurs in Chapter One of Part Two, when Kirillov speaks with Nikolai Stavrogin, a former mentor who had come to ask him to be his second at a duel. This is the famous conversation when Kirillov announces that he is very happy and then minutely describes an autumnal leaf carried by the wind, contrasting it to the freshly green leaves he imagined as a child during the long Russian winters. Stavrogin suspects an allegory behind Kirillov's descriptions, but Kirillov denies it, and implies that he said what he did to show that everything is good in the world. Kirillov continues to emphasize this idea, and Stavrogin finally asks him: "So when did you find out that you are so happy?" And Kirillov replies that he realized that he is so happy "Last week on Tuesday, no, on Wednesday" (X.189) at the time when he was pacing back and forth in his room.

It is clear then that, in the novel, Kirillov's realization that he is happy comes several years after his decision to commit suicide and is thus not an incentive. If any doubt at all remains on the subject, all one has to do is to turn to the description of Kirillov's suicide in Dostoevsky's novel. While Peter Verkhovensky waits for Kirillov to shoot himself, Kirillov hides behind the wardrobe. Verkhovensky finds him, but Kirillov pretends not to see him

and stands in a fear-induced stupor, "The paleness of his face was unnatural, his black eyes were immobile and stared at some point in space" (X.475). In his terror, Kirillov then bites Verkhovensky on the finger. Verkhovensky strikes Kirillov on the head with the butt of his revolver and flees the room. He is followed by Kirillov's "horrible cries: 'At once, at once, at once'" (X.476)[8]. As Verkhovensky runs to the exit, he hears a revolver shot. Kirillov has killed himself. This is, obviously enough, hardly a depiction of a suicide committed either in a state of bliss or out of happiness.

What is especially interesting about Miller's misreading of the reason for Kirillov's suicide is the fact that Miller cites almost the entire conversation that Kirillov has with Stavrogin in a letter to Michael Fraenkel from the seventh of September 1937, written as part of their *Hamlet Correspondence*.[9] Setting up the quote by announcing to Fraenkel that "For me the greatest speech ever made by any man in all literature was made by Kirillov, I give it to you, as we have it in the conversation between him and Stavrogin" (286), Miller cites the conversation beginning with Kirillov's question "Have you seen a leaf, a leaf from a tree?" and ending with Kirillov's assertion that people will be happy when they realize that they are already happy.

It is hardly coincidental that Miller begins and ends the quote where he does. In the lines immediately preceding the quoted segment, Kirillov tells Stavrogin that he didn't *know* yet that he was happy when he was angry at another character a little while ago. In the lines immediately following the quoted segment, Stavrogin asks Kirillov to tell him when had he discovered that he was so happy, and Kirillov replies that it was during the preceding week.

In the letter to Fraenkel then, Miller cuts off the sections of the conversation that make his interpretation of the reason for Kirillov's suicide tenuous at best.

For contrast, one might turn to André Gide's citation of the same conversation (originally a part of his fifth address on Dostoevsky) in Miller's favourite study of the writer. When Gide quotes the conversation, he begins it with Stavrogin's comment to Kirillov that the latter seems to be very happy, and concludes it with Kirillov's remark that he discovered that he was happy the week before, at "thirty-seven minutes past two" (131). In other words, Gide gives the immediate context of the discussion about discovering happiness, while Miller decontextualizes it (it would appear, intentionally) in his letter to Fraenkel.

There *is*, however, a character in another novel of Dostoevsky who explicitly links happiness and suicide. In *Brothers Karamazov*, Mitia Karamazov recounts the story of his meeting with Katerina Ivanovna, when he gives her all the money he has in the world to save her father:

> When she ran out, I had my sword; I took it out and wanted to kill myself right at that moment, why--I don't know, it was really stupid, of course, but it must have been because of the rapture. Do you understand that from some types of rapture you can kill yourself (XIV.106).

In Miller's mind the two instances from two different novels are merged into the single act of Kirillov's happy suicide, and the new version, with its misreading of the reason for Kirillov's suicide, is then perpetuated in Miller's texts.

In some ways then, the 'Dostoevsky code' that the Villa Seurat writers came up with has much the same structure as all the other versions floating around both in the West and the East. The Villa Seurat writers perpetuated their own misreadings and misattributions of

various sections of Dostoevsky texts. They favoured certain Dostoevsky texts over others (most notably Miller who, like D. H. Lawrence, wanted to write on *The Grand Inquisitor* as is it were a self-contained text). They had their own version of Dostoevsky's biography (stressing his exile in Siberia, his endless suffering, and his lack of recognition, over the triumphant later years of his life). They also had their favourite passages from Dostoevsky's works, with highly individual associations for each one. What makes the Villa Seurat 'Dostoevsky code' unusual and interesting, however, is the pride of place they give it in their own writings and the creative way in which they engage with it in their writing and in their own life.

"Everything is Good"

Ever since George Orwell wrote his famous essay on Miller and his work, arguing that Miller's stance was that of a passive Jonah giving himself up to the world or the whale to be swallowed alive, Miller had been associated by critics and readers with an unequivocal and indiscriminating acceptance of life as he found it. The note of all-inclusive approval is, indeed, frequently sounded in Miller's central texts. *Tropic of Cancer*, for instance, concludes with the symbolic description of the Seine, which flows through the whole of Paris and encompasses its various inhabitants, whether savoury or not: "It is always there, quiet and unobtrusive, like a great artery running through a human body...its course is fixed" (318). The final completed book of the *Rosy Crucifixion* (*Nexus*) includes a list of ingredients–some horrifying–which are needed to "whip up ecstasy" and to quicken one to life:

> you've got to throw in the equinoctial processions, the ebb and flow of tide...the ravings of the insane...you've got to have eclipses, sun spots, plagues, miracles...all sorts of things, including fools, magicians, witches, leprechauns, Jack the Rippers (308).

Perhaps most explicitly, Miller writes in one of his longer polemical pieces, "The World of Sex" (1940, 1959):

> Life has no other discipline to impose, if we would but realize it, than to accept life unquestioningly. Everything we shut our eyes to, everything we run away from, everythingwe deny, denigrate or despise, serves to defeat us in the end (83).

Miller himself cites Walt Whitman as a source for his attempt to embrace all: "Always [there is] underneath, you see, this idea of 'acceptance'--which is Whitman's great theme, his contribution" (1959.34). There is a major difference, however, between the 'acceptance' of Whitman and 'acceptance' of Miller. Although Whitman says in "Song of Myself" that he does not "decline to be the poet of wickedness" (verse 22) he rarely sounds an overt note of approval or celebration for the so-called 'wicked'. The most Whitman achieves is a commiseration of sorts, as with the ostracized prostitute in "Song of Myself": "Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you" (verse 15). Miller, on the other hand, always asserts that life is inconceivable without wickedness or evil and, accordingly, both are important and even desirable. In *Art and Outrage* (1959), for instance, Miller writes that "one reason why I have stressed so much the immoral, the wicked, the ugly, the cruel in my work is because I wanted others to know how valuable these are, how equally if not more important than the good thing" (34).

On a certain level then, Miller's all-encompassing affirmation of the various sides of life sounds suspiciously like Kirillov's 'Everything is Good' philosophy, which the latter

expounds to Stavrogin during their conversation. Kirillov says: "Everything is good...Everything...This mother-in-law will die, and the little girl will remain--everything is good...Everything is good, everything. Those feel good who know that everything is good" (X.188-189). But again, an important distinction can be made between the two world views. For Kirillov, the line separating good and evil does not exist anymore, or, to put it another way, he simply does not recognize evil. When Stavrogin is sceptically listening to Kirillov's speech, he poses the question: "And if one dies of starvation, and if one rapes and dishonours a little girl--is that also good?" (X.189). Kirillov responds in the affirmative: "It is good. And if one smashes the head [of the rapist] because of the child, that is good; and if one does not, that too is good" (X.189).

Even though Miller occasionally strikes a very similar note to Kirillov's belief that evil does not exist, he reserves it mostly for the world of art and literature, what he calls "the non-moral, non-ethical, non-utilitarian realm of art" ("Reflections on Writing" 1941b.21). When it comes to other realms, however, Miller has a very different opinion. A particularly vivid example of this may be found in one of his better-known later autobiographical texts, *A Devil in Paradise* (1956)[10], about the disastrous visit to Miller's home at Big Sur of Conrad Moricand, an impoverished aristocrat and amateur astrologist, who was a frequent visitor to Villa Seurat during the 1930s.

After a pleasant evening of good food and wine at Miller's place, the two men are left alone and Moricand begins to tell a story about a particular experience that he had in Paris. Moricand takes a long while setting up the story and Miller is apparently not aware for some

time that Moricand is telling him about an encounter with a child prostitute. Moricand follows the child and the procuress into a seedy hotel, books a room, and then proceeds upstairs, where the procuress passes him in the hallway, nodding to a room and telling him in French that the child is there. At this point, Moricand makes a long pause in his narration. Miller, a father of a young girl himself at the time, "struggle[s] not to reveal [his] true feelings":

> All I could think of was the little girl sitting on the edge of the bed, half-undressed probably, and nibbling at a piece of pastry...Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, I heard myself saying to him: "*Eh bien,* what then?" (322).

Moricand's response and Miller's horrified reaction to it show that, as far as Miller is concerned, evil definitely exists in the world and can never be confused with good:

> "What then?" he exclaimed, his eyes aflame with a ghoulish glee. "*Je l'ai eue*, that's what!"
>
> As he uttered these words I felt my hair stand on end. It was no longer Moricand I was facing, but Satan himself (322).

It is hardly accidental, of course, that Miller chooses to damn Moricand (who said appalling things about Miller after their friendship broke down) by narrating precisely this incident in such detail--about three pages worth in all. The act of seducing or raping a child is something that figures prominently in the biography of the 'demonic' men in Dostoevsky's novels. In *Crime and Punishment*, for example, Svidrigailov is accused of causing the death of a child in this way, and he is tormented by a nightmare of a five-year old child prostitute the night before he commits suicide. In the *Possessed*, it is Stavrogin who seduces a child who then commits suicide. Violating a child is perceived in Dostoevsky's novels as the act of extreme, repulsive, and *ridiculous* evil (both Svidrigailov and Stavrogin are not as much

repentant of their actions as they are deeply embarrassed by them). Significantly, Moricand is depicted by Miller as neither embarrassed nor repentant, and this is why the narrator calls him not simply demonic but "Satan himself."[11]

Unlike Kirillov, then, for whom a rape of a child also qualifies as a part of the 'good' and for whom no evil exists, Miller admits the existence of evil. Rape of children aside, however, evil is something that Miller is both attracted to and fascinated with. In a diary entry made in the early 1930s, Nin quotes Miller as telling her "I am inspired by evil. It preoccupies me, as it did Dostoevsky...I take goodness for granted. I expect everybody to be good. It is evil which fascinates me" (*UD:HJ* 135). Nin, for her part, begins with a rejection of evil. In a diary entry made in March of 1932, she quotes Stavrogin's words from the excised chapter nine of *The Possessed* containing his confession of the rape, "'I found as much pleasure doing evil...' said Stavrogin," and then she concludes, "To me, an unknown pleasure" (*UD:HJ* 103 [ellipsis in the original]). But already in April of 1932, after many conversations with Miller on the subject, Nin writes these words in her diary: "I am going to make a new beginning. I want passion and pleasure and noise and drunkenness and *all evil*" (*UD:HJ* 142 [emphasis added]). Even more suggestively, as far as her vision of herself as a writer is concerned, in a diary entry where Nin once again quotes Stavrogin's words, she writes that she achieves this evil through her diary: "My evil will be posthumous--the ruthless truths! Yes, the evil I do not act out, I write out" (*UD:I* 203).[12]

It is particularly significant that Miller and Nin repeatedly link the subject of evil--one to which they return again and again--with Dostoevsky. Discussing the question of how to

regard the existence of evil, Miller tries to reconstruct Dostoevsky's approach to the issue (with a nod to one of his favourite Dostoevsky scholars, Janko Lavrin):

> *And what of Evil?* Suddenly it is Dostoevsky's voice I hear. If there be evil, there can be no God. Was that not the thought which plagued Dostoevsky? Whoever knows Dostoevsky knows the torments he endured because of this conflict. But the rebel and the doubter is silenced towards the end, silenced by a magnificent affirmation. ('Not resignation,' as Janko Lavrin points out.).

Miller then turns to Elder Zosima's teachings in *Brothers Karamazov* and cites from the "Discourses and Teachings of the Elder Zosima" in Book Six of the novel, adding a short note of his own as a commentary:

> Love all God's creation and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. If you love everything, you will preserve the divine mystery of things. (Father Zosima, alias the real Dostoevsky.) (1952.230).[13]

Even though Zosima is speaking here about sin rather than evil ("Brothers, do not be afraid of the sins of mankind, love man even in his sin," Zosima says right before the passage quoted by Miller), Miller claims that the 'real' Dostoevsky–whom he identifies with Zosima in a characteristic move–believes that the only response to evil is one of acknowledgement and acceptance of it as a creation of God.

In *Nexus*, Miller qualifies this idea by including a lengthy quote from Nikolai Berdiaev on the subject of Dostoevsky and evil:

> certainly no one but Berdiaev could have written this: "In Dostoevsky there was a complex attitude to evil. To a large extent it may look as though he was led astray. On the one hand, evil is evil, and ought to be exposed and must be burned away. On the other hand, evil is a spiritual experience of man. It is man's part. As he goes on his way man may be enriched by the experience of evil, but it is necessary to understand this in the right way. It is not evil itself that enriches him; he is enriched by that spiritual strength which is aroused in him for the overcoming of evil. The man who says 'I will give myself up to evil for the sake of the enrichment,' never is

enriched; he perishes. But it is evil that puts man's freedom to the test" (18-19).[14] It is in this context and from this perspective--acceptance of evil as a necessity and as an important part of one's spiritual journey--that Miller focuses on and affirms evil in his texts.

Eschatological Visions: "Everything is Permitted"

But if, as Orwell argues, and as it would seem from all the evidence offered so far, Miller does believe in an acceptance of the world as is, together with its good and its evil--both constituting parts of one's spiritual development and, therefore, both precious--how should one understand his many statements to the effect that the world itself should be destroyed? For instance, Miller's narrator says in *Tropic of Cancer* that,

> For a hundred years or more the world, *our* world, has been dying...The world is rotting away, dying piecemeal. But it needs the *coup de grâce*, it needs to be blown to smithereens (26).

In *Tropic of Capricorn*, the vision of destruction encompasses "America destroyed, razed from top to bottom" (12); the narrator exclaims: "If I could throw a bomb and blow the whole neighbourhood to smithereens I would do it. I would be happy seeing them fly in the air, mangled, shrieking, torn apart, annihilated. I want to annihilate the whole earth" (226). In *Art and Outrage*, written when Miller was sixty-six, he writes "Now I *know* the whole structure must topple, must be razed...Nothing less will satisfy" (33). Is this yet another one of Miller's trademark contradictions?

No doubt, a contradiction it is (the narrator of *Tropic of Capricorn* boasts of being "a contradiction in essence" [14]). But there is another aspect to what appears at first glance as

a major incongruity. In many of his texts, Miller, who labels himself "at bottom a metaphysical writer" ("Autobiographical Note" 1939.371), writes about the present age as one of Apocalypse, when old reality dies and a new one replaces it: "This is the Apocalyptic Era," he announces in one text, "when all things will be made manifest unto us...The death which had been rotting away in us secretly and disgracefully must be made manifest, and to a degree never before heard of...we are moving into a new realm of being" ("The Absolute Collective" 1941b.91-92). In *Plexus*, the second book of the *Rosy Crucifixion*, the narrator laments that he--an American--found out about these eschatological issues much too late, in contrast to the Russians who have been occupying themselves with these ideas for the last century and a half:

> A whole century of Russian thought (the nineteenth) was preoccupied with this question of "the end", of the establishment on earth of the Kingdom of God. But in North America it was as if that century, those thinkers and searchers after the true reality of life, had never existed (*Plexus* 634).

Once again, the idea of the Apocalypse is specifically associated by Miller with Dostoevsky. In an essay on Balzac's mystical novel *Seraphita*, Miller calls Dostoevsky "the Apocalyptic writer of the century...[who] saw the end of Europe...but he had also a vision of the world to come" ("Seraphita" 1941b.205). In another piece written in 1950, Miller writes that "Dostoevsky, like so many of the Nineteenth Century Russians, is eschatological: he has the Messianic strain" ("Letter to Pierre Lesdain" 1952.222). Mankind, according to Miller, is "facing an absolutely new condition of life" ("Into the Future" 1941b.163) and it is up to the writer to explode and erase not only the old forms but also the old world--to singlehandedly bring about the Apocalypse, in other words. Writing of Dostoevsky and Whitman, Miller

argues that their efforts lay in precisely that direction:

> They were no longer "men of letters," no, not even artists any more, but deliverers. We know only too well how their respective messages bust the frames of the old vehicles. How could it be otherwise? The revolutionizing of art which they helped bring about, which they initiated to an extent we are not yet properly aware of, was part and parcel of the greater task of transvaluating all human values. Their concern with art was of a different order from that of other celebrated revolutionaries. It was a movement from the center of man's being outward, and the repercussions from that outer sphere (which is still veiled to us) we have yet to hear (1952.242-243).

In *Plexus*, the idea that the great artists and writers are bringing about the end of the old world is couched in even clearer terms:

> A grey, neutral world is our natural habitat, it would seem. It has been so for a long time now. But that world, that condition of things, is passing. Like it or not, with blinkers and blinders or without, we stand on the threshold of a new world. We shall be forced to understand and accept--because the great luminaries...whom we cast out of our midst have convulsed our vision (88).

In *Tropic of Cancer*, Miller even proclaims that the role of a true artist or writer--a hybrid of Nietzschean Superman, Prometheus, and the Atom Bomb--is to destroy everything around him, using every means at his disposal, not sparing himself in the process:

> 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! (254-255).

Correspondingly, Nin often calls Miller "the master destroyer" (3 August 1932.90), while Miller himself calls Durrell's *Black Book* "the most violent act of destruction...[a] positive

one" and declares Durrell "an apocalyptic writer" (13-15 March 1937.58).

It is this state of grace, whereby everything is permitted to the artist as a means to shake up and destroy the present world, that equates the writer with the criminal on the one side, and with the saint on the other--the two extreme positions at which common human morals cease to function and are transgressed. Meditating on this subject in his notes on D. H. Lawrence in the 1930s, Miller writes that "the man of genius is a monster, a traitor and a criminal, among other things...the more abnormal he is--the more monstrous, the more criminal--the more fecundating his spirit" (1980.51). A character in *Plexus* who is given Dostoevsky to read is puzzled to discover that "with him the criminal, the idiot, the saint are not so very far apart" (523). And, as might be expected, in Miller's interpretation of Dostoevsky's physiognomy, the latter has the face of "a writer, a saint, a criminal or a prophet" (1952.224).

It is not surprising then, that Miller, as a writer-criminal-saint to whom everything is permitted in order to accomplish his task on earth, is fascinated by and identifies with Dostoevsky's Nikolai Stavrogin. The latter, of course, is only one of a series of Dostoevsky's characters who try to act on the premise that everything is permitted to them. Starting with Raskolnikov, who murders the old pawn-shop owner to prove to himself that he is above the morals that bind the rest of mankind, and ending with Ivan Karamazov, who tells his young brother that he will "not reject the formula 'everything is permitted,'" Dostoevsky creates a number of characters who attempt to cross over the boundaries of morality set for the rest of humanity. Stavrogin, however, is evidently unique in Miller's eyes. What sets him apart

from the rest of Dostoevsky's characters with superman leanings, according to Miller, is his complexity and his power.

Stavrogin's Bite

André Gide calls Stavrogin "the strangest perhaps and the most terrifying of Dostoevsky's creations" (1925.142). Janko Lavrin calls him "the most puzzling figure ever created by the author" (1947.97). Miller, who agrees with both statements wholeheartedly, proclaims Stavrogin "the supreme test" for Dostoevsky ("The Universe of Death" 1939.122). Miller is especially impressed by Stavrogin's capacity to influence others in the novel. Comparing Stavrogin to Marcel Proust's Baron de Charlus in his "The Universe of Death," Miller writes that, like Charlus, Stavrogin "permeates and dominates the atmosphere when off the scene...the poison of his being shoots its virus into the other characters, the other scenes, the other dramas, so that from the moment of his entry, or even before, the atmosphere is saturated with his noxious gases" (122).

Another side of Stavrogin's character that Miller is spellbound by and identifies with is his internal contradictions, the contradictions that make it possible for him to preach completely different worldviews to Shatov, Kirillov, and Peter Verkhovensky, and to be able to convince them but not himself. Curiously, the act that becomes symbolic of these contradictions for Miller is the incident when Stavrogin bites the ear of the town's Governor (X.42-43).

In fact, Stavrogin's bite fascinated a number of writers, including Miller's beloved

John Cowper Powys and D. H. Lawrence (for whom Miller's feelings were much more ambivalent). Powys, like Miller, refuses to accept the immediate explanation offered for the bite in the novel: namely, that Stavrogin was on the verge of delirium and was not controlling himself when he bit the Governor's ear. Powys considers the act a "wild, unexpected, crazy gesture [breaking] the superficial coating of the propriety of life," and comments on Stavrogin's "diabolical life-zest and...love of spitting in the face of common decency by doing something totally ridiculous like *biting the ear* of the leading official of the town" (1946.85).

D. H. Lawrence, for his part, has nothing positive to say about Stavrogin's bite, but he does include a reference to it in his own novel, *Aaron's Rod* (1922), where a character refers to several others as "A lot of little Stavrogins coming up to whisper affectionately, and biting one's ear" (92). When Miller takes notes on *Aaron's Rod* for his projected Lawrence study in the early 1930s, he becomes indignant when he comes across this off-hand and derisive reference to Stavrogin. In his notes, Miller observes that Lawrence keeps returning to Stavrogin again and again, and explains it by saying that Lawrence, first of all, cannot understand Stavrogin and, secondly, is jealous of him:

> Stavrogin is a hard nut for [Lawrence] to crack. Dostoevsky himself couldn't crack it. He remains enigmatic. But one thing we do know about Stavrogin–he wielded a tremendous power–for evil perhaps. And Lawrence can't stand that. And so he tries to make a petty, malevolent little devil of Stavrogin-*biting people's ears*. Why does he *distort* the way that Stavrogin bit people's ears? That scene is a terrific one, as I recall it, wholly because Stavrogin does it so UN-deliberately, as in a trance. Such a great Slav Hamlet, Stavrogin is! (1980b.26-27).

Further, Miller identifies Stavrogin, the 'Slav Hamlet,' as he suggestively calls him,

with Dostoevsky himself. Although this identification of Dostoevsky's character with Dostoevsky is by now a predictable feature of Miller's literary interpretation, there is a subtle difference here, as Miller connects Stavrogin specifically with the 'God' in Dostoevsky, with the Creator in him. Miller writes: "Stavrogin was the ideal image of himself which Dostoevsky jealously preserved. More than that--Stavrogin was the god in him, the fullest portrait of God which Dostoevsky could give" ("The Universe of Death" 1939.123). In the same text, Miller comments that "Dostoevsky was obsessed with the *idea* of a Stavrogin. He *had* to create him in order to live out his *other* life, his life as a creator" (122). In fact, Stavrogin (and Dostoevsky his creator) are precisely those inhuman ones who are allowed everything in order to bring about the Apocalypse, even if they destroy themselves in the attempt. According to Miller, they both succeed in bringing the event a step closer, as the narrator intones in *Tropic of Cancer*:

> When I think of Stavrogin for example, I think of some divine monster standing on a high place and flinging to us his torn bowels. In *The Possessed* the earth quakes: it is not the catastrophe that befalls the imaginative individual, but a cataclysm in which a large portion of humanity is buried, wiped out forever. Stavrogin was Dostoevsky and Dostoevsky was the sum of all those contradictions which either paralyze a man or lead him to the heights (255).

It is interesting to note, in connection with Miller's own identification with Stavrogin/Dostoevsky and the importance that he assigned to Stavrogin's bite, that Miller advocated and practised similarly shocking gestures which broke 'the superficial coating of the propriety of life' during his life in Villa Seurat. Together with Alfred Perlès, the Austrian-born French avant-garde writer who was his look-alike and 'boon companion,' Miller continually engaged in deliberate *épatage*, some more outrageous than others. At a

party given in Miller's honour by his publisher in 1937, Miller showed up with Perlès. Miller's biographer, Mary V. Dearborn, describes the behaviour of the two as "monstrous":

> When Ginotte, the maid, opened the door, there stood two bald men, nearly identical. The taller one--Miller--reached forward and tweaked Ginotte's nipple; the smaller one [Perlès] handed her his fedora and then did the same (189)[15].

On another occasion, Miller and Perlès invited Roger Pelorson, a journalist with whom Miller was on friendly terms, and his wife to Villa Seurat for dinner. With Miller's encouragement and full approval, Perlès scaled the table with his bare feet in the middle of dinner, and began imitating Hitler's speeches and insulting the guests, breaking a couple of glasses in the process and bloodying his feet.

It is almost superfluous to observe that the love of the shocking gesture, the desire to *épater le bourgeois* was something dear to the heart of many of Miller's contemporaries in Paris in the 1930s, including the Dadaists, the Surrealists, the Futurists, and so on. What sets the Villa Seurat Circle's love of shock apart from that of their contemporaries, is that the former understand their own gestures in the context of the Dostoevskian *skandal*, which explodes the facade of convention in human relations to reveal what is hidden underneath. In this spirit, Nin admonishes her husband, Hugo, for acting the good host and smoothing over an unpleasant moment during a dinner party when Miller and his wife were on the verge of a *skandal*:

> Hugo, who is uneasy in the presence of emotions, tried to laugh off the jagged corners to smooth out the discord, the ugly, the fearful...There might have been a fierce, inhuman, horrible scene between June and Henry, but Hugo kept us from knowing...I pointed out to [Hugo] how he had prevented all of us from living, how he had caused a living moment to pass him by. I was ashamed of his optimism, his trying to smooth things out. He understood. He promised to remember.

"Without me," Nin concludes with some self-satisfaction, "[Hugo] would be entirely shut out by his habit of conventionality" (*UD:HJ* 16). Later, when Nin's relationship with Miller became intimate, she tried to "live up to Dostoevskian scenes" with him (*DI* 109) and was disappointed when she discovered, instead, "a gentle German who could not bear the dishes go unwashed" (*UD:HJ* 186). As for Miller, he nurtured the art of *skandal* back in New York, when June, Jean Kronski (an alias of June's lover sharing their *ménage à trois*), and he would get together to fight over their appropriately nicknamed 'gut table,' referring to Dostoevsky every once in a while.

Biting Obscenities

Another level of the Villa Seurat's use of the shocking gesture involves Miller's–and, subsequently, Nin's and Durrell's–treatment of sexuality in their texts. Explicit sexual content is, needless to say, the one feature popularly associated with the works of the Villa Seurat Circle, especially with the texts of Miller and Nin (Durrell's *Black Book* also shares this distinction). The Villa Seurat Circle's treatment of sexuality, however, is an immense and multi-faceted topic. Any comprehensive analysis of it should include an account of their experience with psychoanalysis and its theories, their difficulties with cultural constructions of gender, their treatment of (as well as their experiences with) homosexuality and lesbianism, and their attempts to write erotica to order.

Further, the task is made even more difficult by the numbers of famous critical texts on the subject written by the likes of Kate Millett and Norman Mailer (both writing about

Miller's texts) who express passionately-argued and convincing, if completely contradictory, viewpoints. Here, however, only two aspects of the Villa Seurat Circle's treatment of sexuality (both connected to their reading of Dostoevsky) will be addressed. The first of these is their treatment of explicit sexual description as a device in their writings, used in order to shock their readers out of their complacency and to induce them to look beyond the socially acceptable for deeper motivations of action.

Over the course of Miller's career, which involved many international lawsuits revolving around the explicit depiction of sexuality in his texts, he continually claimed that the explicit sex in his writings is meant to be obscene rather than pornographic. Most of Miller's early elucidations of this fine point (after all, the two terms were interchangeable in the American Court of Law[16]) come back to a letter he wrote to Nin in the early stages of their relationship. After sending Nin a draft of a text he wrote about the surrealist filmmaker, Luis Buñuel, Miller inquires: "Do you understand clearly the different ways I have used 'fuck' here?" "A nasty word," he adds in parenthesis, only to cross this out. "My idea," he continues, "was to use the nasty words in their strongest form, and not to make people lascivious" (30 July 1932).[17] Obscenity, as opposed to pornography, Miller explained in an interview given, ironically enough, to *Playboy Magazine* in 1964, is there to shock rather than to arouse: "Pornography is a titillating thing, and the other is cleansing; it gives you a catharsis" (81). In the *Tropic of Cancer* the narrator explains, "if any one had the least feeling of mystery about the phenomena which are labelled 'obscene,' this world would crack asunder" (249).

In fact, what Miller and, following his suit, Nin and Durrell claim is that explicit depictions of sex in their texts are designed to function as taboo-breaking gestures meant to crash through convention and reveal what lies underneath. In other words, these gestures function in a manner similar to Stavrogin's bite. In a short text specifically dedicated to the obscene in art and writing, "Obscenity and the Law of Reflection," Miller argues that "When obscenity crops out in art, in literature more particularly it usually functions as a technical device...Its purpose is to awaken, to usher in a sense of reality" (1947.287). Nin, reflecting on her diary in the 1940s (when she was still considering publishing it with little expurgation), suggests that she includes the 'fiery moments'–her sexual experiences, primarily,–in the diary, because they are those of "revelation...when the real self rises to the surface, shatters its false roles, erupts and assumes reality and identity...By this emphasis on the fiery moments...I reached the reality of feeling and the senses" ("On Writing" 1947.37-38). It is in this connection that Nin writes about Dostoevsky going to "the *bottom* of feelings" (4 August 1932.92), striving for "the liberation of the instincts, of the inchoate" (23 July 1932.71), which is why, she feels, he can be forgiven his occasional "childishness...[and] exultation" (4 August 1932.92).

Similarly, Durrell would write in his introduction to a 1960 publication of *The Black Book* that the moments of "crudity and savagery" which made it unpublishable in an English-speaking country in the 1930s, were an attempt to "break through the mummy wrappings--the cultural swaddling clothes" of convention (1959.13-14), an attempt to destroy the assumption that the author is supposed to be someone gliding along the smooth cultural facade, avoiding

any patches of thin ice. In a letter to Miller written soon after the completion of *The Black Book*, Durrell provides an acerbic description of a writer as the Establishment (literary and otherwise) likes to see him, a vision that he was trying to destroy by the obscene gestures in his texts:

> The idea is to take a self-deprecating stance, somewhere between faith hope and charity, and speak in loud treacly tones. If you cover your head with a tea-cosy so much the better. The voice is muffled, and the indeterminate buzzing MIGHT be an author speaking--and it might be just gnats (Early April 1937.71).

Hailing *The Black Book* in what he calls his "salute to the master," Miller raves to Durrell that "You have written things in this book which nobody has dared to write. It's brutal, obsessive, cruel, devastating, appalling...it's an onslaught...No English or American publisher would dare print it...Your commercial career is finished" (8 March 1937.55-56). Durrell's response, after some of the initial euphoria wears off, is to muse, "Was I a monster? I tried to say what I was" (Early April 1937.72). Correspondingly, in an interview given in 1966, Miller explains the explicit sexual content of his books by saying that he included it "to get at the truth of one man: myself...It just happened that this was the part that had shock value" (106).

It would appear then, that the Villa Seurat Circle's main debt to Dostoevsky, as far as the explicit depiction of sexuality in their texts is concerned, lies in their use of it as an extreme gesture which breaks through the veneer of the socially acceptable to get at deeper human motivations. They knew and were probably inspired by the fact that Dostoevsky himself had problems with censorship for trying to use sexual experience as a means of revealing the psychology of his characters.[18] Dostoevsky's explicit (for the times) depiction

of Stavrogin's seduction of Matresha, the adolescent girl who subsequently hangs herself, discomforted his publisher to such an extent that he refused to publish it in his journal altogether. (Dostoevsky decided against including the chapter in the later editions of the novel because he apparently knew that it would never get past the State Censor.[19]) The Villa Seurat Circle's defiance of censorship through their inclusion of explicit sexual content in their texts can be viewed as another attempt to go one step beyond Dostoevsky in their attempt to create a post-Dostoevskian prose.

"To Insects Sensual Lust"

A further connection between the depiction of sexuality in Miller's and Durrell's texts on the one hand and the novels of Dostoevsky on the other revolves around their use of insect imagery in connection with the human sex drive. Dostoevsky's most sustained use of insect imagery in connection with sex appears in "The Sensualists"–Book Three of *Brothers Karamazov*, although the use of insect imagery in this connection exists in earlier texts, most notably in *Notes From the Underground.*

One of the longest and most famous conversations in "The Sensualists" occurs in chapters three, four, and five, in which Mitia Karamazov explains to his younger brother Alesha the nature of his involvement both with Katerina Ivanovna, the woman to whom he is engaged, and Grushenka, the 'fallen woman' with whom he and his father are obsessed. Mitia begins his confession to Alesha by quoting a Russian version of Schiller's "Ode to Joy," reciting the stanzas which end, in the English of Constance Garnett, as follows: "To angels--

vision of God's throne,/To insects--sensual lust."[20] Mitia repeats the phrase "To insects--sensual lust," and tells his brother that he, as well as all the Karamazovs, are the insects implied by the poem (XIV.99,100). He goes on to call himself a "bedbug," a "vicious insect," "a cruel insect," "a vicious tarantula," and compares his sudden erotic interest in Katerina Ivanovna (he is aroused when she throws herself on his mercy) to a poisonous insect stinging or biting his heart (XIV.105).

The same image of a disgusting insect-like bite is used in *Notes From the Underground* by the Underground Man to describe his sensation of arousal when he meets the prostitute Liza. Moreover, the Underground Man takes what he calls the "idea of debauch, which begins without love, grossly and shamelessly, there, where real love is consummated," and associates it with a revolting spider (V.152).

Significantly, the phrase from the *Brothers Karamazov*–"to insects sensual lust"–is cited in the opening fragment of Gregory's diary in Durrell's *The Black Book*.[21] Gregory quotes this line of the poem in reference to Lobo, a character who is said to be obsessively in pursuit of sexual conquests:

> To Lobo sensual lust...Let us begin with Lobo. To insects sensual lust. And to Lobo a victory over the female, because that is what he wants...Perhaps the remark about the insect was a little strong, for it is not my business to raise my own standards to the height of an impartial canon. But it seems to me accurate. The female is a catalyst, unrelated to life, to anything but this motor necessity which grows greater day by day (34-36).

Ostensibly, the insect imagery (through the immediately recognizable quote from *Brothers Karamazov*) is included here as Gregory's way of indicating his dislike of Lobo, his own disgust towards sex, and as a way of contextualizing his distrust of the sexual drive as a

"motor necessity which grows greater day by day." After all, the downfall of both Mitia Karamazov and his father in Dostoevsky's novel is linked with the uncontrollable "insect of lust" in their blood.

Perhaps, however, there is a further significance to the *Brothers Karamazov* reference in Durrell's text, because including such a direct and recognizable quotation from a Dostoevsky novel in the body of his own text is highly unusual for Durrell. In fact, one would be hard pressed to find another such instance of it in the whole of Durrell's work. Why does he choose to include this particular quotation in the *Black Book*? Durrell himself never comments on his interpretation of the Dostoevsky quote (unlike Miller's many comments about Kirillov's suicide) and one can only speculate about the meaning it held for him.

Before one begins to speculate, however, one would do well to note that in *Tropic of Cancer*, Durrell's self-confessed "copybook" when he was writing *The Black Book*, there is a parallel connection of the human sex drive with the insect, as well as several references to *Brothers Karamazov*.[22] The strong connection of sexuality and insects in *Tropic of Cancer* is evident in the very first sexual encounter described in the text, when Mona (June Miller's persona) reunites with her husband (Henry Miller's persona) in a Parisian hotel room. After a passionate night, they wake to bedbugs crawling all over them (20). The link of sex and insects continues in the portrait of Germaine, a prostitute who is commended for giving her customers their money's worth instead of "count[ing] the bedbugs on the wallpaper" (47). There are also many images concerning the metamorphosis of human into insect through sex.

Consider, for example, a description of the stone carvings in an Indian temple, where embracing human figures are compared to swarming insects "the seething hive of figures...swarm[ing] the facades of the temples...in a sexual embrace" (88).[23] Consider, too, Van Norden, the character most obsessed with sex in *Tropic of Cancer*, who says that intercourse with one of his lovers "makes [him] feel like a little bug crawling inside her" (104). The prostitutes, dispensers of sex for the masses, are also transformed from benevolent figures (their early depiction in *Tropic of Cancer*) into sinister insect-like creatures who "attach themselves to you like barnacles...eat into you like ants...[with] tentacles...[that] fizz and sizzle" (158).

It would seem, therefore, that the Dostoevskian association of sex and insects figures both in Durrell's and in Miller's texts. Moreover, upon closer analysis it appears that both *Tropic of Cancer* and *The Black Book* sustain the main use of insect imagery in *Brothers Karamazov*.[24] In Dostoevsky's novel, insect imagery is linked with sexuality and lust as it is in *Tropic of Cancer* and *The Black Book*. Also, in *Brothers Karamazov*, there is an identification of humans with insects through sex (as when Mitia calls himself a vile insect because of his sexual debaucheries). Correspondingly, *Tropic of Cancer* contains many disturbing descriptions of humans transforming into insects, and Gregory of *The Black Book* sees himself as a loathsome insect (186). But what is one to make of these parallels?

In *Brothers Karamazov*, the insect imagery is evoked by Mitia to express his disgust at his strong sexual drive which results in his loveless sexual escapades. The disgust is there because of his anxiety that he really should be following what he calls the "Ideal of the

Madonna," or pure ideal love, rather than the "Ideal of Sodom," or corrupt physical lust (XIV.100). The anxiety is there because Mitia is Russian Orthodox and believes that the heart of man is a "battleground" for God and the Devil (XIV.100). Mitia's own sexual vagaries consequently acquire cosmic significance in his eyes, because depending on what he does, either God or the Devil gains a bit more power on earth.

The use of insect imagery in *Tropic of Cancer* and *The Black Book* betrays a rather different anxiety over the question of sex, all the parallels notwithstanding. The anxiety over sex in these texts starts with the questions of performance, sexually transmitted diseases, and gender identity (and there are enough examples from each category in both *The Black Book* and *Tropic of Cancer*). Ultimately, however, it seems to revolve around the suspicion that the sex drive is a nasty trick of one's biology to pull one back into the anonymity of the hive, the impersonality of the teeming mass of copulating and breeding creatures, animal and insect (Tarquin, a character who has most problems negotiating the issue of sexuality in *The Black Book*, imagines himself pulled back in time "swung between the loins of a troglodite" [94]). In the two texts the dilemma is not how to choose pure love over corrupt lust, but how to express sexuality (gratifying one's instinctual drive which equates the human with the insect) without losing individual identity.

Here, an important distinction needs to be made. Whereas Mitia believes that his sexual dramas are played out in a world where his soul is at the centre watched closely by God and Satan, and where his actions assume supreme importance, the sexual dilemmas in *Tropic of Cancer* and *The Black Book* take place in an impersonal universe explained not by

the Bible but by Einstein's relativity theory (one of the inspirations for Durrell's own fuzzy theory of the Heraldic Universe). The dilemma of human sexuality becomes only as significant (or rather as insignificant) as humans themselves. Gregory's diary in *The Black Book* is being quoted and commented upon by the central narrator on a Greek island, during a winter storm when everything is dwarfed by and made insignificant beside the elements, "our one reality is the Levantine wind...stirring the bay into a muddy broth" (22). Against such a backdrop, the question of how to negotiate "the tempest of lust" raging in one's blood (Mitia's expression [XIV.100]) without compromising one's individuality becomes much less significant. In *Tropic of Cancer*, the narrator concludes by saying that "Human beings make a strange fauna and flora. From a distance they appear negligible; close up they are apt to appear ugly and malicious" (318). Suggestively, in one of Miller's later texts, the narrator is told in a dream that "Heroism and obscenity appear no more important in the life of the universe than the fighting or mating of a pair of insects in the woods. Everything is on the same plane" [*Plexus* 274].)

Nonetheless, an escape from the weight of meaninglessness (what is known variously as the "prison of death" in *Tropic of Cancer* or Bastard Death and English Death in *The Black Book*[25]) is still a question which occupies the thoughts of many characters in both texts. And the only ones in the texts who *can* escape this pull are the artists, the writers, those who can take the conflicts and make use of them in order to create, and who continue to create in the face of the ultimate meaninglessness of it all. In the *Black Book*, Tarquin, who tries ineffectually to write, gives up finally, becoming "like an empty tomb...He sits all day alone,

wrapped in rugs, afraid to walk...afraid to talk" (247). Tarquin's neighbour Gregory first gives up his "literary pretensions" and decides to write a diary (70), and then gives up the diary as well, perishing symbolically as he accepts his insecthood ("Why are we afraid of becoming insects?" he asks, concluding, "I can imagine no lovelier goal" [215]). The central narrator of *The Black Book* who discovers Gregory's diary after Gregory commits symbolic suicide and who is shown beginning his labours as a writer at the end of *The Black Book*, writes defiantly that "I shall not choose as Gregory chose" (249).

Only when one is a creator can one rise above the mould represented by insect sexuality. In *Tropic of Cancer*, the narrator, in the process of writing his book, is sitting beside his lover who is taut with sexual tension and her husband who is tense with sexual jealousy, and thinking all the while, "No you blissful cockroaches, you are not disturbing me. You are *nourishing* me" (28). During an interview given late in life, Miller affirms, "I don't see any meaning in anything that anybody's doing except the very few creative individuals...[creativity is] godlike...It's getting out of the mould" (hb.153).

Suffering

But obviously not everyone can be a creator. Miller suggests over and over that even Dostoevsky himself might have not made it into the pantheon (to use Miller's expression, "the Holy Philharmonic Synod"), if not for his life experiences–his suffering, in other words. It seems curious, at first glance, that while the writers of the Villa Seurat tend to emphasize different passages from Dostoevsky's novels in their writings, there is only one aspect of his

biography that they keep returning to in their discussions, letters, and their own texts: his suffering. According to them, Dostoevsky's suffering is directly connected to his achievements as a writer. Commenting on this link, Miller attributes Dostoevsky's depth of vision and insight to what he calls Dostoevsky's "lifelong bondage"–the suffering that is meted out to him:

> Through excessive suffering and deprivation...Dostoevsky [was]...permitted to give us glimpses of worlds which no other novelists have yet touched upon, or even imagined. Enslaved by [his] own passions, chained to the earth by the strongest desires, [he] nevertheless revealed through [his] tortured creations the evidences of worlds unseen, unknown ("Seraphita" 1941b.193-194).[26]

Miller's identification of Dostoevsky's suffering as the key to his character is neither new nor particularly inventive, however. Beginning with Melchior de Vogüé's insistence that suffering is a chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's life, the emphasis on Dostoevsky's suffering was common in the French, the English, and the American interpretations of his life and work. The vague notion, frequently connected with Dostoevsky, that an author cannot live life comfortably, but has to suffer in order to achieve anything of worth was also around for quite some time, dating at least from the Dostoevsky cult of the 1910s-1920s. It would be difficult, however, to find anyone who turns to the subject of Dostoevsky's suffering or identifies with it as much as Miller does in his own writings.

Dostoevsky's exile in Siberia becomes especially iconic for Miller, a symbol of all his own unhappy experiences. Acutely miserable during his brief teaching position in Dijon in the early 1930s, Miller writes a series of whining letters to Nin, comparing his suffering to that of Dostoevsky in Siberia: ("a sort of existence which you got vividly in *The House of the*

Dead" [12 February 1932.23]; "I feel as Dostoevsky felt when he wrote *The House of The Dead*"[January 1932.9]).[27] Nin, immediately sympathetic, writes back, also equating Dijon with Siberia: "Dostoevsky in Siberia! Henry in Dijon!" (3 February 1932.1). Miller's earlier experience of working for a messenger company in New York is also compared by him many times with Dostoevsky's years of enforced labour in Siberia.

At the same time, Miller feels that Siberia was a "un riche désastre...un trésor" for Dostoevsky (1969.14). But whereas the characters in Dostoevsky's novels believe that 'Siberia' or personal suffering is necessary for a spiritual rebirth (like the repentant murderer in the story told by Elder Zosima in *Brothers Karamazov* who confesses his crime exclaiming "I want to suffer!"), suffering, according to Miller, is the prime catalyst for creativity. Miller does say that only "budding geniuses" can effect the "transmutation of suffering permitting us a work of art," while others end up "insan[e]...or psycho[tic]" ("Balzac and His Double" 1941b.229) but, according to him, that is the crucible that a writer must go through.

Is suffering an absolute necessity for the artist then? In *The Tropic of Capricorn* another character tells the narrator that "some day you're going to be a great writer." He continues: "'*But*,' he added maliciously, 'first you'll have to suffer a bit. I mean *really* suffer, because you don't know what the word means yet. You only *think* you've suffered" (86). One of Miller's shorter texts dating from his 1940 trip across America[28] includes an account of his meeting with an eccentric drunk who tells him "I don't know what kind of stuff you write, but...the thing to do is to learn what it is to suffer. No writer is any good unless he's

suffered." The narrator angrily comments, "I had always been of the opinion that I had had more than my share of suffering" ("The Alcoholic Veteran With the Washboard Cranium" 1941b.126). In another text, Miller again connects the issue of suffering with Dostoevsky (referring to Dostoevsky's *Raw Youth* [*Podrostok*], where Versilov--a much travelled Russian man--insists that "In Europe it was I, and I alone with my yearning for Russia, who was free"). Miller begins with a typically Millerian paradox: "Suffering *is* unnecessary. But one has to suffer before he is able to realize that this is so." He continues with these words which are also the closing lines of the book:

> It is only then, moreover, that the true significance of human suffering becomes clear. At the last desperate moment--when one can suffer no more!-- something happens which is in the nature of a miracle. The great open wound which was draining the blood of life closes up, the organism blossoms like a rose. One is "free" at last, and not "with a yearning for Russia," but with a yearning for ever more freedom, ever more bliss. The tree of life is kept alive not by tears but the knowledge that freedom is real and everlasting (*Plexus* 640).

At first glance, the connection of suffering and freedom is an odd one for Miller to make. What he is arguing, however, is that personal suffering can lead one to an artistic awakening and, through this new artistic identity, to spiritual freedom. In a letter explaining his origins as a writer to Trygve Hirsch, the attorney defending Miller's writings in the Norwegian Supreme Court,[29] Miller cites Berdiaev as an authority on the topics of "metaphysical aspects of suffering, freedom, experience" (all subjects that Miller feels he engages with in his own work):

> As Berdiaev so well puts it, when treating of Dostoevsky, "Suffering is not only profoundly inherent in man, but it is the sole cause of the awakening of conscious thought" (19 September 1957.206).

Addressing the "Holy Philharmonic Synod" of the great artists in *Plexus*, the narrator tells them in his address: "We have all suffered more than is usual for mortal beings to endure. We have all achieved an appreciable degree of emancipation" (612).

Miller's own code name for the suffering of an artist was "Rosy Crucifixion," the title that he decided to use for the whole of his *Sexus*, *Plexus*, and *Nexus* trilogy. A published fragment from Miller's notes on D. H. Lawrence summarizes his position: "the artist is always crucified" ("Creative Death" 1941b.8). It is interesting to note, in this connection, that Miller's Villa Seurat friends were well aware of his attraction to suffering and some of them even thought that he consciously sought it; "Somehow," Alfred Perlés writes slyly in his book, *My Friend Henry Miller*, "I have an idea that he never suffered from his sufferings" (1956.54). Perlés was right to a certain extent: Miller apparently did think that suffering is to be welcomed. It seems, however, that he did not believe that suffering is to be actively chosen as one's lot. Turning to Dostoevsky once again, Miller writes that he was "tested in the fiery crucible by command of Fate. No matter how great the humanity in [him, he would not] have *elected* for such an experience...Dostoevsky did not fling himself into the 'movement' in order to prove his capacity for martyrdom...the situation was thrust upon [him]. But there, after all, is the test of a man--how he meets the blows of Fate!" (1952.240). Suggestively, Miller adds that even though Dostoevsky did not *choose* to suffer, he still "created the special conditions relating to [his] cruel experience, *and* conditioned [himself] to transmute and enoble the experience" (1952.241). The artist should not consciously look for martyrdom, according to Miller, but, all the same, it is only through martyrdom that an artist

can become, like Dostoevsky, a real expert on the key metaphysical and philosophical issues (something that is impossible to do through either theoretical speculations or reading learned tomes). This is what makes the suffering of artists extraordinary, far removed from the ordinary run-of-the-mill suffering of non-artists. The narrator of the *Tropic of Capricorn* says: "from the moment I dipped into Dostoevsky...[o]rdinary human suffering, ordinary human jealousy, ordinary human ambitions--it was just so much shit to me" (209).

"Two Times Two"

By now, it should become obvious that the list of the Villa Seurat's Dostoevsky associations as well as their general philosophical system do contain a series of contradictions and paradoxes (as the preceding section on Miller's treatment of suffering clearly shows). It was suggested earlier, however, that aside from the never completed D. H. Lawrence study, contradictions and paradoxes never posed a problem for Miller (neither, one might add, were they a problem for Durrell or Nin). Even more interestingly, it appears that paradox and contradiction are consciously introduced by Miller into his writings. In one interview, Miller even suggests that these contradictions form a philosophical position of sorts: "One time I'm talking this way, another time that way...I contradict myself...[I] would have to be stagnant not to do so" (1964.85). The narrator of *Tropic of Capricorn* comments on the contradictions and paradoxes in 'his' text by explaining in the opening paragraph of the book that "In everything I quickly saw the opposite, the contradiction, and between the real and the unreal the irony, the paradox" (9), and, subsequently, affirms that "Everything

that happens, when it has significance, is in the nature of a contradiction" (13).

Consider the following two passages from the texts of Miller and Durrell. The first passage comes from the famous manifesto-like opening of Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, and was already partly quoted in chapter two:

> It is now the fall of my second year in Paris. I was sent here for a reason I have not yet been able to fathom.
>
> I have no money, no resources, no hopes. I am the happiest man alive. A year ago, six months ago, I thought that I was an artist. I no longer think about it, I *am*. Everything that was literature has fallen from me. There are no more books to be written, thank God.
>
> This then? This is not a book. This is libel, slander, defamation of character. This is not a book, in the ordinary sense of the word. No, this is a prolonged insult, a gob of spit in the face of Art, a kick in the pants to God, Man, Destiny, Time, Love, Beauty... what you will. I am going to sing for you, a little off key perhaps, but I will sing. I will sing while you croak, I will dance over your dirty corpse... (1-2).

The second passage is taken from Gregory's diary in Durrell's *The Black Book*:

> That I too have nursed literary pretensions, I will not disguise from myself; that I have now finally rejected them is proved by the airy nonchalance of this journal, ha, ha. By its very fragmentary character, which preserves only the most casual excursions among my memories. Yes. At one time I had accumulated every principle, every canon of art which is necessary for the manufacture of a literary gentleman. Now I not only despise the canon, but more, the creature himself: the gent...The theme of my only book is one which even now occasionally entices me...I had planned this work as a profound synthesis of life--as an epitaph to the age. Its theme was revelry; its title...URINE (70).

Suddenly, this all begins to seem strangely familiar--these self-conscious contradictions in Miller's texts as well as in Durrell's *Black Book*, the affirmations followed by negations, the inversions, the lapses in logic, and the paradoxes... Where else does one find the same kind of flawed but riveting mental gymnastics, all delivered with the same kind of reader-baiting passion? In European literature, at least, the classical *locus* for this is

Dostoevsky's *Notes From the Underground*, where the Paradoxicalist (as he is called by the frame narrator) or the Underground Man, indulges in lapses in logic, contradictions, and paradoxes similar to those of Miller's and Durrell's narrators.

The Underground Man's taste for contradiction stems in part from his revolt against the doctrine of rationalism and philosophical materialism so dominant in 19th century Russian thought. In his diatribe in Part One of the *Notes*, the Underground Man takes issue with the supposedly irrefutable logic of the laws of nature, science, and mathematics (the sacred cows of rationalism). The limits imposed upon humanity by these laws are symbolized for the Underground Man by two things: a stone wall and a simple mathematical equation--"two times two is four." The Underground Man continues with his harangue: "'For goodness sake,--they will shout at you, you cannot rebel [against this]--it's like two times two is four! Nature does not ask your advice; she does not care about your wishes and about whether you like her laws or not. You must accept her as she is, and consequently, all her results as well. A wall is a wall... etc., etc.,." (V.105 [ellipsis in the original]) He then asks what happens if he does not *like* the wall and the notion that two times two must always be equal to four. He recognizes that he might not break the wall by slamming into it but, he says, "I will not reconcile myself with it just because it is a stone wall and I do not have the strength necessary" (V.105-106).

Although Dostoevsky takes unusual steps to distance himself both from his character and the views expressed by him (including a lengthy footnote, where Dostoevsky informs the reader that the Underground Man is an invented character), the Underground Man has been

identified with Dostoevsky himself both by the general readership and the scholars.[30] What is especially noteworthy, is that the defiance of the Underground Man against the limitations set by the laws of nature (a gesture that is highly ambivalent in terms of the text itself) has been interpreted as a noble rebellion of the rage-against-the-machine variety. John Cowper Powys, for example, interprets it as follows:

> my conviction [is] that real "reality" implies a world of four dimensions, in other words a world with a *super-lunary crack* in the cause-and-effect logic that two and two make four. To me however, as to Dostoevsky's weird hero of [*Notes From the Underground*], they have ever since--and doubtless will till I die--*made five* (1946.19).

For Miller, who interprets the Underground Man's position in much the same way as Powys, the rebellion of the Underground Man against the limits imposed by the laws of nature (i.e., that two times two must always equal to four) and his revolt against cause-and-effect logic carried very personal connotations. Miller's younger sister Loretta was born mentally retarded and could not grasp the simplest mathematical concepts. Their mother (whom Miller hated for most of his life) insisted on teaching math to her. The lessons would invariably become violent. Miller describes these nightmarish math lessons several times in his writings. In *Tropic of Capricorn*, his narrator provides the following description of one such session:

> the sister standing by the blackboard in the kitchen, the mother towering over her with a ruler, saying two and two makes how much? and the sister screaming *five*. Bang! *no, seven,* Bang! (128).

In a Parisian interview given much later in life, Miller recounts this scene again, adding "A la fin, elle devenait hystérique, elle lançait n'importe quel nombre. Et, chaque fois, ma mère lui

administrait une gifle. Et moi, j'étais là...j'entendais tout. C'était... J'avais la sueur qui coulait...." (1969.44).

Miller, like Powys and like the Underground Man, finds that an insistence on the limits set by natural laws, on solidity of "reality," so to speak, leads to a totalitarianism of sorts, a tyranny of logic and reason ("'No Wrong!'...Slap!") whose own limitations go by unnoticed. Reason and logic, for Miller, is a dangerous illusion that needs to be challenged and broken down.[31]

Significantly, Durrell, who makes a similar attempt to break down the belief in the solid and unalterable nature of three-dimensional reality, a belief that he considers illusionary, cites *Notes from the Underground* in the epigraphs to his own works at least twice: once as an epigraphs, once to his novel *Tunc* (1968) ("two times two is four, that's a wall"[32]) and, another time, to chapter three of his study *The Key to Modern British Poetry* (1952)[33].

The contradictions in Miller's and Durrell's texts, read in light of their identification with the protagonist of *Notes From the Underground*, become an expression of their own rebellion against the dominance of the rational and materialist philosophy in the American and European cultures of their time. This, however, by no means exhausts their reaction to and their absorption of 'Dostoevsky's philosophy' (the two words placed in sceptical quotations to remind once again that what the Villa Seurat writers were reacting to had little to do with Dostoevsky's self-proclaimed philosophical positions) but it is a summary of the main points of contact, all the same.

The Villa Seurat's Dostoevsky Code

It would seem then that the Villa Seurat writers created their own code of formulas and quotes from Dostoevsky's writings. Their Dostoevsky code consists of decontextualized passages, misattributed attitudes (as in Kirillov's suicide), and a hopeless entanglement of the voices of the characters and the author, as if the opinions and thoughts of the characters could be considered to be those of Dostoevsky himself. In all this, the Villa Seurat writers diverge little from their counterparts in the West and in Russia itself. Through their worship of Dostoevsky (as Miller puts it, "the God, the real one...the all" [1962b.36]), the Villa Seurat writers were also refashioning him in their own image. *Their* Dostoevsky is society's reject, a sufferer, a rebel against convention, an individualist, a trickster who spits in the face of authority, a truly free human being in a fettered world, a Zen master out to shock the world out of its lethargy and complacency--to change mankind's awareness of self.

Again, in projecting their own obsessions onto Dostoevsky, the Villa Seurat writers are not much different from his other readers (one may recall the Soviet reading of Dostoevsky as a Socialist Realist). Nor do they differ from others in the general eclecticism of secondary sources they use and the approaches they apply to Dostoevsky. Where they do differ, however, is in their–especially Miller's–insistent return to Dostoevsky in their own writings, their need to incorporate their readings of Dostoevsky creatively into their own texts.

Why this need? On the one hand, as argued earlier, the writers of the Villa Seurat

were aiming to transcend Dostoevsky in their creation of a new prose, so the frequent allusions to Dostoevsky serve as points of reference indicating how far they have managed to pass beyond the Master. On the other hand, in interviews, letters, and texts, Miller always insisted that Dostoevsky liberated him: "Now every door of the cage is open and whichever way you walk is a straight line toward infinity," says the narrator of *Black Spring* of reading Dostoevsky for the first time (14). Perhaps both Miller's ritualistic rehearsals of how he first heard about Dostoevsky and the Villa Seurat inclusion of Dostoevsky into their own writings is their way of both asserting their freedom and of sharing it with the reader. After all, Dostoevsky frees one not only to write, to create, and to contradict dominant ideology, but, as Nin writes, he releases his readers to live (*UD:HJ* 88).

WRITING THE UNDERGROUND: FANTASTIC WOMEN, *HOMMES FATALS*, AND OTHERS

> "My understanding of the meaning of a book is that the book itself disappears from sight, that it is chewed alive, digested and incorporated into the system as flesh and blood which in turn creates new spirit and reshapes the world." (Henry Miller *Tropic of Capricorn* 221)

Van Norden, a character in Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* who aspires to become a writer, never manages to produce a single book. The reason for his failure is the frequent fear and nemesis of a budding author. Whenever Van Norden writes something, he realizes that it has already been written elsewhere and, consequently, discards it:

> The book must be absolutely original...That is why, among other things, it is impossible for him to get started on it. As soon as he gets an idea he begins to question it. He remembers that Dostoevsky used it, or Hamsun, or somebody else...And so, instead of tackling his book, he reads one author after another in order to make absolutely certain that he is not going to tread on their private property (132).

Durrell issues laments on a similar theme in his letters to the 'cher maître' (his usual title for Miller), exclaiming with pathos, "Sweet reader, what would you do if you were too traditional for one half of the world and too advanced for the other half? You would? Very well, then. THIS HAS BEEN ALREADY DONE" (August 1936). Durrell's remark notwithstanding, it appears that a Bloomsian 'anxiety of influence' was never a serious problem in the Villa Seurat Circle. Miller, for instance, happily cites a vast number of literary antecedents and connections, and scatters numerous literary references–transparent or opaque–throughout his texts. References to Dostoevsky's novels figure especially prominently in Miller's books. Generally speaking, these literary references are used by Miller variously as a tip of the hat to Dostoevsky, as loving homage to him, as pastiche, as parody, or as a sly commentary on Miller's own text. An interesting example of the first

instance noted above involves a character named O'Rourke who appears in both the *Tropic of Capricorn* and *Sexus*.

O'Rourke works as a detective for the "Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company" in New York. In the *Tropic of Capricorn*, the narrator tells Curley, one of the company employees who had been involved in stealing money from the till, that O'Rourke is "wise to you; if you ever fall out with O'Rourke it's all up with you" (114). Curley retorts that if O'Rourke knows something, he would have confronted him long ago. By way of response, the narrator explains that O'Rourke is not a typical company detective; he is, rather, "a born student of human nature" (115). O'Rourke, says the narrator, also has a professional memory for certain things: "people's characters are plotted out in his head, and filed there permanently, just as the enemy's terrain is fixed in the minds of army leaders" (115). His preferred method is a cat-and-mouse game which he plays with his suspect, "giving [him] plenty of rope" (115) but studying his every move:

> Some night he'll run into you...And out of the clear blue he'll suddenly say--you remember...the time when that little Jewish clerk was fired for tapping the till? I think you were working overtime that night, weren't you? An interesting case, that. You know, they never discovered whether the clerk stole the money or not...I've been thinking about that little affair now for quite some time. I have a hunch as to who took the money, but I'm not absolutely sure.... And then he'll probably give you a beady eye and abruptly change the conversation to something else. He'll probably tell you a little story...He'll draw that story out for you until you feel as though you were sitting on hot coals...And he'll go on like that for three or four hours at a stretch...studying you closely all the time, and finally, when you think you're free...he'll say in a soft, winsome voice--*now look here, my lad, don't you think you had better come clean?* And if you think he's only trying to browbeat you and that you can pretend innocence and walk away, you're mistaken (114-116).

In *Sexus,* O'Rourke appears again, and a similar description of his detective methods

is provided. It is said of him that "though he often acted like a fool and an ignoramus, though he seemed to be doing nothing more than wasting time, actually everything he said or did had a vital bearing on the work in hand" (366). "He was a detective," the narrator adds, "because of his extraordinary interest in and sympathy with his fellow-man...He sought to understand, to fathom their motives, even when they were of the basest" (366-367).

If O'Rourke's character and methods seem familiar to the reader, it is only too obvious that other fictional detectives share his methods and characteristics. What is indicative though, is that a specific detective is referred to within Miller's text. The narrator of *Sexus* says about O'Rourke: "His knowledge of literature was almost nil. But if, for example, I should happen to relate the story of Raskolnikov, as Dostoevsky unfolded it for us, I could be certain of reaping the most penetrating observations" (366).

In *Crime and Punishment*, of course, the investigator who handles the case of Rodion Raskolnikov and makes all the penetrating observations is Porfiry Petrovich. He has, in fact, much in common with O'Rourke. He too is a "student of human nature" with a keen memory. He too sometimes seems to act foolishly only to cover up his strategies ("Damn it, my head is all muddled up with this affair" [VI.205] he tells Raskolnikov, his suspect, as he tries to trick him into a blunder). He too frequently tells Raskolnikov that he genuinely likes him and wishes him well. At the same time, he plays with Raskolnikov cat-and-mouse games (that is what Raskolnikov calls them at least twice in the novel [VI.195,262]) and tells him that he prefers to delay with arrest, giving his suspect plenty of time to walk about and take in the situation: "What can be the worry to me," Porfiry Petrovich exclaims to

Raskolnikov, "if he walks around town unbound! Let him, let him promenade for now, let him, I know anyhow that he is my little victim and will not run away anywhere from me" (VI..261-262).

In other words, by providing a reference to *Crime and Punishment* in connection with O'Rourke, Miller is acknowledging the readers' sense that they have already read something similar, thereby including and pleasing the reader as well as saving many words about O'Rourke. Upon closer examination, it becomes evident that Porfiry Petrovich does share some characteristics with O'Rourke, as was already noted in passing by some scholars of Miller's works (Parkin, for instance, comments: "[it is] Dostoevsky to whose fictive mode the character [of O'Rourke] belongs (one thinks of Porfiry [Petrovich] in *Crime and Punishment*)" [238]).

A different use of textual allusion can also be gleaned from the *Tropic of Capricorn*. Curley, that young criminal who also harbors homicidal tendencies, is seduced by his aunt, a woman of loose morals. "He said she had seduced him," comments the narrator. "True enough, but the curious thing was that he let himself be seduced while they were reading the Bible together" (112). What is even more curious, one might add, is that the aunt's name is Sophie or Sophia. Miller was, of course, familiar with that iconic moment in Part Four of *Crime and Punishment* when Sonia Marmeladova (whose name is a pet form of Sophia) and Raskolnikov--that is, a prostitute and a murderer--read the Bible together.[1] Suggestively, Curley, who appears again in several books of the *Rosy Crucifixion*, talks about reading Dostoevsky at the narrator's behest and, in *Plexus*, discusses the relationship of good and evil

in his works (532).

The reference to *Crime and Punishment* is more opaque here than in some other of Miller's texts. Nonetheless, enough hints are provided by Miller to make the reference to the Dostoevsky novel recognizable (the reading of the Bible by the quasi-prostitute and the young criminal, the aunt's name–Sophie, the familiar image of O'Rourke–a Porfiry Petrovich type character–looming threateningly in the background). This is less important than the use that Miller makes of the Dostoevsky passage: he parodies it. Instead of Curley being inspired and potentially reformed by the reading of the Holy Book (as Raskolnikov is in *Crime and Punishment*), he is seduced and sexually corrupted by the woman who got him to read the Bible in the first place.[2] This kind of subversive textual parody occurs frequently within Miller's writings and serves, in part, as a game played with his readers, challenging them to recognize the text alluded to and, in part, as a manifestation of his refusal to view the writings of his favorite authors as sacrosanct inviolable texts.

Another important use of textual allusion by Miller is that of mentioning a specific literary character in order to provide an ironic commentary on his own characters and, ultimately, on his own text. To draw upon the *Tropic of Capricorn* once again: a character named Kronski, who works for the same company as the narrator, becomes widowed when his wife dies on the operating table. Kronski goes to meet the narrator and tells him, sobbing, "I knew it would happen...It was too beautiful to last" (84). Just the previous day, however, when Kronski's wife is taken to the hospital, Kronski takes that opportunity to see a woman whom he is trying to bed (one of the few women at the company he still did not have sex

with). So much for a 'beautiful' marriage. On the evening after his wife's death, Kronski tells the narrator a long and involved story about a young girl whom he loved long ago and who also died; he was, apparently, so despondent that he used to go every day and sit at her grave, until the sister of the girl came to comfort him and he told her that it was she whom he actually loved, and the two ended up having sex right at the grave.

At that point, the narrator takes a "good look at him and...[sees] that he [is] out of his head" (85). He tries to make Kronski think of something other than death and "beg[ins] to talk at random, about Anatole France at first, and then about other writers" (85) with no success. Finally, he "switche[s] to General Ivolgin, and with that [Kronski] beg[ins] to laugh...[until] tears were streaming down his eyes" (85). General Ivolgin, of course, is the character in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* who is most known for his pathological need to relate outrageous stories that supposedly happened to him but never actually did.

On one hand, Kronski's laughter over General Ivolgin serves as an acknowledgment of the humor in Dostoevsky's novels, something that Miller–unlike many of his contemporaries who saw Dostoevsky as a morose writer–always appreciated (as he writes in *Books in My Life*: "There are passages in Dostoevsky...which still bring tears of laughter to my eyes" [1952.25]). On the other hand, there is a definite connection between Kronski and General Ivolgin. The narrator does not elaborate on who General Ivolgin is, except to call him "a poor drunken sap" several pages later (92). Nonetheless, a reader who is familiar with General Ivolgin's character in Dostoevsky's novel and knows about his propensity for creative lying can derive some insight into Kronski's character from the juxtaposition of the

two. Kronski's laughter at the mention of General Ivolgin serves as an ironic footnote to, on one side, his teary-eyed insistence that his marital relationship was too beautiful to last (as contrasted with his philandering behavior) and to, on the other, his highly improbable story about wild sex in the city's quiet Jewish cemetery.

On a metatextual level, the reference to General Ivolgin is significant in two ways. First, General Ivolgin's need to tell elaborate anecdotes about himself, anecdotes which turn out to be outrageous lies, raises the issue of the veracity of any autobiographical account, oral or written. Given that Miller himself writes texts which are purportedly autobiographical, but in which he consistently problematizes the boundaries between fact and invention, truth and falsehood, the reference to General Ivolgin becomes especially suggestive.

Further, the reference to General Ivolgin has additional metatextual implications concerning the similarity of the need to invent and relate stories about oneself that never happened (i.e., 'inspired' lying) and the need to invent and write stories as a part of a literary text (i.e., inspired 'lying'). In other words, the reference to General Ivolgin within a text which consistently questions whether the categories of truth and falsehood are at all relevant in a creative text acts as a playful and self-reflexive comment on the text at hand and also on the act of literary creation itself. The narrator of the *Tropic of Capricorn* says, "Will this book be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God?...the truth can also be a lie. The truth is not enough. Truth is only the core of a totality which is inexhaustible" (333).[3]

Dostoevskian Types: Fantastic Women, the Hollywood Vamp, and June

Beyond direct and indirect literary allusions, Miller and the other Villa Seurat writers incorporate a number of characters into their texts which bear a direct or mediated connection with the types in Dostoevsky's novels. An interesting example of this is the character of the wilful, passionate, and irresistible woman, a type which includes Mona in the *Tropic of Cancer* and Mara in the *Tropic of Capricorn* and *Rosy Crucifixion*,[4] a cluster of women in Nin's texts, and Justine in Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* (1957-1960). Scholars and biographers have linked most of these characters to June Smith Miller, Miller's second wife and dark muse. There is a deeper connection here, however, to a particular type of female character in Dostoevsky's novels who also possesses these characteristics–wilfulness, passion, and irresistibility–to excess: the Fantastic Woman ["fantasticheskaia zhenshchina"], as represented by Nastasia Filippovna of *The Idiot* and Grushenka of *Brothers Karamazov*.[5]

The importance of June for the writings of Miller and Nin has been widely acknowledged. Discussions of June take up much space in Miller's correspondence and characters based on June appear in his *Tropics* and *Rosy Crucifixion* (under the names of Mona and Mara[6]), as well as in a variety of minor texts. Robert Ferguson, author of *Henry Miller, A Life* (1991), writes that "Apart from Miller himself, June Smith [Miller] is the most heavily mythologized of all the characters he wrote about" (78). She also figures prominently in Nin's diaries and appears as a character in her texts (for instance, Sabina in *The House of Incest*)[7]. Deirdre Bair, Nin's biographer, writes that Nin hoped that her writings about June and analysis of her as "wife and fictional muse...would become a bridge to help her cross

from the first-person introspection of the diary to the originality of pure fiction" (1995.154). Even Justine of Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*, a *femme fatale* with a dark past and a darker present who serves as a muse to several writers, bears a certain resemblance to the figure of June.

Intriguingly, it seems that June consciously patterned herself on the characters in Dostoevsky's novels (she was certainly not unique in this, as many members of the Greenwich Village bohemian crowd to which June belonged adopted Dostoevsky's 'mad' characters as models of behavior in the 1920s and 1930s)[8]. According to both Nin and Miller, June "was always saying she was like the characters in Dostoevsky" (Nin *DI* 40) and Nin also quotes Miller as writing to her of "June reading Dostoevsky and changing her personality" (*DI* 54).[9] By most accounts, Dostoevsky *was* June's favorite writer after Miller. (The narrator of *Nexus* says that for Mona, the June figure in the text, Dostoevsky was "her idol, her god" [12]). [10] It appears that there was even some squabbling between June and Miller as to who introduced Dostoevsky's novels to whom; Nin writes of Miller bitterly complaining to her that June "even told people that it was she who had first made me read Dostoevsky" (*DI* 10). Nin also writes of June, on her side, confiding that she "had to bring [Miller] his Dostoevsky characters. But he is no Dostoevsky. He could not *see* them...He has been neither realistic enough, nor fantastic enough" (*DI* 146).

But which of Dostoevsky's characters did June emulate? Since almost nothing was recorded by June herself on the subject, one can only speculate. Significantly, in Miller's letters, texts, and interviews, he links June repeatedly with Nastasia Filippovna, whom he

calls, evocatively, a "classic example" of an "angelic vampire" (1974.164). In a letter to his last love, the actress and model Brenda Venus, for instance, the eighty-six year old Miller writes: "Dostoevsky's Nastasia [Filippovna] is an extraordinary female, whether Russian or Chinese or Arabian. Unique. In a way so was my ex-wife [June], Mona of the *Tropics*" (22 February 1977.91). Miller, of course, might have linked June with Nastasia Filippovna not because of any deep parallels between their personae, but simply for the reason that he loved Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, and turned to this novel frequently throughout his life (he even visited the house in Florence where Dostoevsky wrote the novel).[11] But Nin, who set out to consciously imitate June (she writes in her diaries, "I want to be June" [*DI* 89]), also links her to Nastasia Filippovna. When rationalizing her several simultaneous relationships, for instance, Nin cites the example of June's many love affairs and then connects this to *The Idiot* where Nastasia Filippovna is unable to chose between Prince Myshkin and Parfen Rogozhin, and Prince Myshkin is unable to chose between Nastasia Filippovna and Aglaia (Prince Myshkin is asked whether he wishes to love *both* Nastasia Filippovna and Aglaia and responds "Oh, yes, yes!" shocking his interlocutor, who exclaims, "Prince, what are you saying, come to your senses!" [VIII.484]). Nin writes:

> like June I have infinite possibilities for all experience, like June I have the power to burn like a flame, to enter all experience fearlessly, decadence, amorality, or death. [Prince Myshkin] and Nastasia [Filippovna] are more important to me than the self-denial of Abélard and Héloïse. The love of only one man or one woman is a limitation" (*DI* 42).

Even the physical descriptions of June in Miller's and Nin's writings bear a strong resemblance to the descriptions of Nastasia Filippovna in *The Idiot*. By all accounts, June

spent much thought and effort on her appearance, applying elaborate make-up, donning outrageous costumes, and continuously reinventing herself. The narrator of *Tropic of Capricorn* tells of Mara's–the June figure's–"gift for transformation" (235): "She changed like a chameleon...She lived constantly before the mirror, studying every movement, every gesture, every slightest grimace" (237-238). Curiously enough, June's favorite 'look' in the 1920s and 1930s parallels the description of Nastasia Filippovna's appearance in *The Idiot* .

The photographic portraits taken of June in the 1920s and 1930s have much in common with the photographic portrait sent by Nastasia Filippovna to her supposed fiancé, Gavrila Epanchin, and discussed at length in Part I of *The Idiot*. On the portrait, Nastasia Filippovna is wearing a black dress, her eyes are dark and deep set and her hair is blond. Her pallor and her burning eyes are emphasized in the many discussions about the portrait by the other characters in the novel. June's photographs capture this very look: dark clothing, unnatural pallor (noticeable even on a black and white photograph), dark eyes which appear even darker and more deep set because of her dark eye-shadows, her hair dyed blond. The many written portraits of June created by Miller and Nin, both devoted readers of *The Idiot*, focus on these same features. Like Prince Myshkin who obsessively tries to interpret Nastasia Filippovna's face, finding it mysterious and strange, rife with internal contradictions (VIII..484,485), Miller and Nin also focus on June's face and are obsessed with trying to understand it. The narrator of *The Tropic of Capricorn* admits that he "*could not read* [the] *face*" (232 [emphasis in the original]) of the Mara-June persona but, suggestively, asks several pages later: "Who could see...that one half of [her] face belonged to God and the

other half to Satan? (242).

Whether or not Miller and Nin 'read' June's face in the (con)text of *The Idiot*, and whether or not June really tried to look like Nastasia Filippovna, it appears that Miller and Nin did interpret her actions and attitudes in the context of the behavior of Dostoevsky's heroines. Was June the 1920s and 1930s American version of the Dostoevskian prototype? Miller and Nin thought so. Because, however, the description of June's character and behavior survives mostly through the writings of Miller and Nin, it is difficult to gage the accuracy of their judgement.[12] The dynamics at work here are probably complex. June, whose personality and life might have had some parallels with Dostoevsky's heroines to begin with (which is what she reportedly claimed) is, apparently, imitating Dostoevsky's Fantastic Women (in particular, but not exclusively, Nastasia Filippovna) in appearance, behavior, and even in the transformation of her biography to match theirs.[13] Complicating the picture even further is the fact that Miller and Nin were constantly referring back to Dostoevsky when creating their own texts, and that they themselves identified with Dostoevsky's characters (when Nin was psychoanalyzed by Dr. Otto Rank,[14] he apparently suggested to her that there were "fiction heroines, the literary models you sought to emulate" and she responded, "Yes, there was a time when June, Henry, and I were all Dostoevskian characters" [*DI* 293]).[15]

But surely passionate heroines with pale faces and burning eye are not exclusive to Dostoevsky's novels. What specific indications, if any, are there to suggest that Miller and Nin were, in fact, inscribing June within the tradition of Dostoevsky's Fantastic Women

(outside, that is, of the constant linking of the two in the letters of Miller and Nin)? In other words, are there any traits ascribed to June and her numerous personae that are *exclusive* to Dostoevsky's Fantastic Women? To answer these questions, one might compare Dostoevsky's Fantastic Women with a wilful, passionate, and irresistible female type from a different time, culture, and medium immediately familiar to June, Miller, and Nin: the Vamp of the Hollywood Movie Machine–a competing source of June's inspiration. The Vamp (defined by some as "a *femme fatale* for beginners" [Allen 187]) has some obvious parallels with the Fantastic Women in Dostoevsky's novels, parallels that June apparently recognized[16].

The original Hollywood Vamp was, by almost unanimous consensus, Theda Bara, the star of the box-office smash hit, *A Fool There Was*, a 1915 Hollywood film directed by Frank Powell. It was Theda Bara's portrayal of the Vamp that "br[ought] almost overnight currency to a new word" (Dijkstra 12).[17] Her role in the film still provides the clearest and most explicit example of a Hollywood Vamp and her character traits. In brief, Theda Bara plays a darkly beautiful woman, the Vamp, who is irresistible to men because of her beauty and sensuality, exploits them financially, and then destroys them one after another.[18]

The Vamp has some salient features in common with the Dostoevskian Fantastic Women like Nastasia Filippovna and Grushenka; namely, an irresistible appeal, an attraction to money, and destructiveness. In *The Idiot*, Totsky, the man whose mistress Nastasia Filippovna had been for a number of years, exclaims to his friend: "Who would not sometimes be captivated by this woman to the point of disregarding reason and...

everything?"(VIII.149 [ellipsis in the original]). In *Brothers Karamazov*, Mitia Karamazov compares his obsession with Grushenka–"the seductress" as she is repeatedly called–to the Plague: "I have become infected and am infected to this day" (XIV.109). On the same page of *Brothers Karamazov*, Mitia talks about Grushenka's love for money: "I knew that she likes to make money, that she makes it, that she lends money at a nasty interest-rate." The narrator comments elsewhere that Grushenka "knows all about money, [she is] acquisitive, stingy and careful" (XIV.311). The elder Karamazov prepares money to give to Grushenka should she come to visit him and his eldest son Mitia spends money that is not his in order to amuse her. In *The Idiot*, Nastasia Fillipovna is kept by Totsky in style, with every possible luxury paid for by him--"the money, the money that [he] spent [on me]" she exclaims at one point [VIII.137]; another would-be lover, Parfen Rogozhin, attempts to make her his for one hundred thousand rubles, and she tells Prince Myshkin that "everyone has been trying to buy me" (VIII.142). Finally, both Grushenka and Nastasia Filippovna have a nasty, vicious streak in them. Grushenka tells Alesha Karamazov that she is "not kind but vicious [zlaia]" (XIV.318) and calls herself a "villainess" [zlodeika] (XIV.324). She takes pleasure in viciously tormenting her rival, Katerina Ivanovna (she smiles "cruelly" as she tells Alesha about it). She is the main reason for the quarrel between Mitia Karamazov and his father, an important factor in the death of Fedor Pavlovich Karamazov, Smerdiakov's suicide, and Ivan Karamazov's madness. She is also, needless to say, directly involved in Mitia's undoing. Nastasia Filippovna mocks Totsky with "poisonous sarcasms" (VIII.36), takes a vicious delight in tormenting Gavrila Ivolgin and his family during her unanticipated visit, and the

two men with whom she is involved end up tragically–one in prison, the other in a madhouse.

But this is where the parallels between the Hollywood Vamp and Dostoevsky's Fantastic Women end. The Vamp figure is the victimizer rather than the victim, she never experiences feelings of remorse nor is she capable of self-sacrifice, and there is never any indication that she undergoes any suffering. The reverse is true of Dostoevsky's Fantastic Women. First of all, they are victimized throughout their lives. Grushenka is seduced as a young girl and then abandoned by her seducer and thrown out on the street by her family. Nastasia Filippovna is an orphan who is sexually exploited and emotionally abused by her guardian, Totsky, from a very young age. Both women say that no one had ever treated them with respect and compassion. Grushenka breaks down when Alesha speaks to her kindly, exclaiming, "He pitied me, the first one, the only one [who ever did so]" (XIV.323). Nastasia Filippovna says to Prince Myshkin when he tells her that he respects and loves her: "Thank you, Prince, no one had ever talked to me like this before" (VIII.142). Grushenka ends up heading to Siberia; Nastasia Filippovna ends up murdered. Secondly, despite their claims that they are vicious, cruel, and evil, both Nastasia Filippovna and Grushenka know remorse and self-sacrifice. Nastasia Filippovna kisses the hand of Mrs. Ivolgin in apology and repentance after her scandalous behavior during her visit. Grushenka tearfully apologizes to Alesha for harboring designs to corrupt him. Nastasia Filippovna decides to sacrifice her love for Prince Myshkin, because she believes that she is unworthy of him, and offers him to her rival, Aglaia Epanchin. Grushenka decides to sacrifice her life's comforts in order to follow Mitia Karamazov to Siberia. Thirdly, all of Dostoevsky's Fantastic Women

experience much suffering. As Prince Myshkin looks at Nastasia Filippovna's portrait, he says "she must have suffered horribly, no?" (VIII.32). Prince Myshkin's supposition is confirmed by her story of her early youth as Totsky's 'concubine', when she repeatedly wanted to commit suicide, but was too afraid to do so. Grushenka spends the five years spanning from the time of her seduction and abandonment to the time of meeting her seducer again in self-torture and suffering.

It is not one specific feature or character trait, then, that defines Dostoevsky's Fantastic Women, but a combination of characteristics. Like the Vamp, Dostoevsky's Fantastic Women are irresistibly beautiful, infinitely desirable, exploitative and destructive. On the other hand, they also have a series of qualities that set them apart from the typical *femme fatales*: they are victims, they suffer, and they are capable of self-sacrifice. June and her personae in the texts of the Villa Seurat writers combine all of these qualities and characteristics. First of all, June and all her avatars are so beautiful that they are irresistible to both sexes (one thinks of the passage in *Brothers Karamazov* where the narrator comments that Katerina Ivanovna, Grushenka's rival for Mitia Karamazov's love, was "almost in love with her" [XIV.137]). Nin describes June in her diaries as "infinitely desirable" (*UD:HJ* 16) and a "fantastic beauty" (*UD:HJ* 15). Nin's narrator tells Sabina, the June figure in *The House of Incest*: "Your beauty drowns me, drowns the core of me" (25). In Miller's texts, Mara/Mona's great beauty is always emphasized by the narrator. In *Tropic of Cancer*, the narrator raves about Mona: "she is beautiful and I love her and now I am happy and willing to die" (19). In *Tropic of Capricorn*, Mara is the "woman whom you never hoped to meet...and

she talks and looks exactly like the person you dreamed about" (343).

Secondly, June and all her personae are either explicitly or implicitly connected with money. Miller and Nin both call her a 'gold-digger.' The first words that Mona actually utters in *Tropic of Cancer* is "How much money have you left?" (21). In *Sexus*, where Mara/Mona's job as a taxi-dancer is discussed, she tells the narrator: "You don't think I do this [taxi-dancing] because I like it, do you? I do it because I earn more money than I could elsewhere" (71). In Nin's *House of Incest*, Sabina is associated with jewels, expensive fabrics, and various kinds of luxurious and costly things. Similarly, in her diaries, Nin repeatedly dwells on June's attempts to get money out of people, including herself. A notable detail in all of this--considering that in Dostoevsky's novels Nastasia Filippovna is kept by Totsky for five years without allowing him to have sex with her and Grushenka takes money from all and sundry without giving any sexual favors to anyone–is that June apparently claims to take the money from men without even the promise of sex on her part. Nin writes in her diary:

> A statement of [June] came back to me: "However bad things are for me I always find someone who will buy me champagne." Of course. She was a woman accumulating huge debts which she never intended to pay, for afterwards she boasted of her sexual inviolability (*UD:HJ* 30).

The narrator of *Plexus* talks about the money that Mara/Mona extracts from her "devoted admirers" without giving them anything in return: "Seemingly they were all 'perfectly harmless.' It was her way of informing me that never would they think of embarrassing her by suggesting that she spend a night with them. They were all 'gentlemen,' and usually nitwits to boot...Three hundred dollars she had extracted from [one] poor sap" (8-9).

Thirdly, cruelty and destructiveness are also associated with June and all her personae in both Miller's and Nin's writings. In her diaries, Nin exclaims, "I love [June] for what she has dared to be, for her hardness, her cruelty, her egoism, her perverseness, her demoniac destructiveness" (*UD:HJ* 19). Mara in the *Tropic of Cancer* tells the narrator that a man has committed suicide because of her, and he observes that "she is trying to make me understand that it was an awful blow to her, but what she really seems to convey is that she is proud of the fact that she drove a man to suicide" (344). In passing, Nin mentions in the diaries that a man committed suicide because of June (*DI* 45).

On the other hand, just as Nastasia Filippovna and Grushenka claim to be wicked and cruel without necessarily being the epitomes of wickedness and cruelty, so Miller and Nin argue that June only claims to be evil and deliberately destructive but is not. In her diaries, Nin writes of Miller telling her, "June tries desperately to be evil. It was one of the first things she told me the night we met." He also tells her that "June is not really evil" and that he has "overdrawn the cruelty of June, the evil in June" (*DI* 84). Nin writes of June complaining to her later: "Henry...betrayed me...he distorted my personality. He created a cruel me which is not me" (*DI* 133). Nin also shifts her original position (i.e., June wishes to destroy others) and decides that June does not really desire to hurt anyone–it just happens this way: "She lives as if in a dream, in uncalculated impulses and whims, plunging into relationships, destroying unintentionally in her fiery course" (*DI* 45). If June is destructive, writes Nin, she is also helpless: "I actually believe it when [June] tells me that her destructiveness is unintentional" (*UD:HJ* 20). A June-like figure in Nin's *Ladders to Fire* (a

text that Nin began to write in late 1930s and that was published in 1946)–another Sabina–says "I destroy people without meaning to. Everywhere I go things become confused and terrifying" (97), and her female confidante (one of Nin's favorite roles in the diaries) assures her, "I know you're not a *femme fatale*" (96).

Further, June's vulnerability and past victimization is dwelt upon at length by both Miller and Nin. In her diaries, Nin writes of June's sickliness ("I see ashes under the skin of her face...I feel her receding into death" [*UD:HJ* 17]) and of her mental instability, her "neurosis and illness" (*UD:HJ* 47): "She is quite mad, in a sense, subject to fears and manias" (*UD:HJ* 19). At one point, Nin exclaims: "She is so vulnerable, my poor little June!" (*UD:I* 23). The narrator of *Tropic of Capricorn* writes about Mara: "I thought I had found a living volcano, a female Vesuvius. I never thought of a human ship going down in an ocean of despair, in a Sargasso of impotence" (239). Throughout *The Rosy Crucifixion* there are countless accounts of Mara/Mona's accounts of victimization at the hands of both her family ("my mother hates me...I'm the black sheep of the family" [*Sexus* 89]) and various men (including an older man who buys her for one thousand dollars when she is fifteen). Even though these accounts are questioned by the narrator (if not always by Miller's biographers), her unhappiness and suffering is evident to the other characters in the text; "For a beautiful girl," an acquaintance says to her in *Plexus*, "you're about the most unhappy creature I ever met..I've never once heard you laugh" (306). Correspondingly, Nin writes in her diaries of June's "primitive, hysterical suffering" (*UD:I* 22).

It is interesting to note that just as Nastasia Filippovna in *The Idiot* has a soft, tender,

sentimental side despite all appearances to the contrary, so–in Nin's interpretation–does June. Compare these two passages, the first from *The Idiot* where the narrator talks about Nastasia Filippovna, and the second from Nin's diaries when she is musing about June,

> This woman–who sometimes had such cynical and impudent ways–was in reality much more bashful, tender, and trusting than one could have thought (VIII.473);
>
> She has taken drugs; she loved a woman; she talks the cops' language when she tells stories. And yet she has kept that incredible, out-of-date, uncallous sentimentalism (*UD:HJ* 21).

In both cases it is suggested that the tenderness and the sentimentalism have to be hidden behind a thin veneer of cynicism from the prying and indelicate eyes of intruders.

June's and her literary avatars' capacity for self-sacrifice is something that is also emphasized in Miller's and Nin's texts. According to Miller's biographers and Miller himself, June encouraged him to leave his job and to write, promising to support him if he did so. In *Plexus*, Mona begs the narrator to resign (45) and tells him "don't worry about how we're going to get along. Leave that to me. If I can keep that lazy family of mine I can certainly keep you and me" (48-49). In *Sexus*, Mona, who is talking about the narrator (the Henry Miller persona), says "I not only love him, I believe in him as a person. I would sacrifice everything to make him happy" (86). When a character in the same text tells her that she is "making a sacrifice of [her]self," she responds, "I won't deny it" (90). In letters and other documents, Miller dwells on June's faith in his future as a writer even when their relationship begins to unravel. The narrator of *Tropic of Cancer* says that Mona

> used to say to me...in her fits of exaltation, "you're a great human being," and though she left me here to perish, though she put beneath my feet a great howling pit of emptiness, the words that lie at the bottom of my soul leap forth and they light the

shadows below me (250).

Nin also writes in her diaries of June's "heroic sacrifices" (*UD:HJ* 135).[19]

These characteristics ascribed to June and her textual avatars by Miller and Nin (i.e., self-sacrifice, general victimization, and suffering added to the base of irresistible beauty, closeness to money, along with considerable cruelty and destructiveness) inscribe her within the type of Dostoevsky's Fantastic Women. Notably, Miller and Nin also ascribe to June another feature of the Fantastic Women: pride. Nastasia Filippovna and Grushenka are described as extremely proud women both by the narrators and by the characters within the novels. In *Brothers Karamazov*, Mitia Karamazov calls Grushenka "proud and guilty of nothing" (XIV.418) and the narrator calls her "proud and insolent" (XIV.311). In *The Idiot*, Prince Myshkin looks at the photograph of Nastasia Filippovna and comments on the pride he sees in her face–"This is a proud face, terribly proud" (VIII.32), while the narrator calls it a "boundless pride" (VIII.68). Correspondingly, in her diaries, Nin discusses June's "disproportionate pride, a hurt pride" (*UD:HJ* 15), her "enormous and shallow pride" (*UD:HJ* 18). What is especially suggestive is that when Nin is meditating on June's "grandiose side" (*DI* 45) she cites Gide on Dostoevsky's characters, writing:

> I feel closer to [June] than to Henry's earthy simplicities...Someday I may follow her to the very end of her voyage.
>
> Gide says: "The characters of Dostoevsky are moved fundamentally either by pride or lack of pride" (*DI* 46); [20]

June's pride then is another link to Nastasia Filippovna and Grushenka.

In conclusion, an interesting variation may be noted: where Dostoevsky stresses Nastasia Filippovna's and Grushenka's essential Russianness,[21] Miller stresses June's and her

personae's essential Americanism. When Mitia Karamazov is planning to escape with Grushenka to America, he is worried that she will be much too Russian for that country. He tells Alesha:

> I hate that America, the devil take it, already. Even if [Grushenka] will be with me, just look at her: is she American? She is Russian, Russian to the core, she will begin to pine for her mother–her native land....I hate that America already! (XV.186).

In Miller's texts, the situation is reversed. In the *Tropics*, for instance, Russia is imagined as a separate realm–much as America is in Dostoevsky's novels–and 'escape' to Russia is always a possibility (the narrator says that his lover "wants me to go...[to Russia] with her, to the Crimea preferably, and start a new life" [*TCan* 171]). At the same time, it is Mara/Mona's essential Americanism that is always emphasized ("Slavic cheekbones" notwithstanding [*TCap* 346]). This Americanism comes to a climax in the end of *Tropic of Capricorn*, in the much quoted *tour-de-force* passage where Mona is seen as the very embodiment of America, body and spirit:

> Broadway–it's her realm. This is Broadway, this is New York this is America. She's America on foot, winged and sexed. She is the lubet, the abominate and the sublimate–with a dash of hydrochloric acid, nitroglycerin, laudanum and powdered onyx. Opulence she has, and magnificence; it's America right or wrong, and the ocean on either side. For the first time in my life the whole continent hits me full force, hits me between the eyes. This is America, buffaloes or no buffaloes, America the emery wheel of hope and disillusionment. Whatever made America made her, bone, blood, muscle, eye-ball, gait, rhythm, poise, confidence, brass and hollow gut...It's America moving like a streak of lightning toward the glass warehouse of red-blooded hysteria. Amurrica, fur or no fur, shoes or no shoes. Amurrica C.O.D. *And scram, you bastards, before we plug you!* (342)

Hommes Fatals: Mitia Karamazovs and Eternal Husbands

In Nin's *Ladders to Fire*, the narrator suggests that dramatic and exotic women

inevitably have a male counterpart who is in many ways their opposite but to whom they are nonetheless connected: their "*homme fatal*" (47). With some simplification, it could be observed that the male counterparts of the Fantastic Woman in Dostoevsky's novels fall into two main categories. The usual partner is the tormented and tortured–if somewhat masochistic–lover/spouse, a type which is perhaps best represented by Mitia Karamazov in *Brothers Karamazov*. Mitia's relationship with Grushenka is characterized by violent jealousy whenever she is out of his sight, his lying in wait for her to prevent her going to possible lovers, and scenes of scandal. He also contemplates killing his own father if Grushenka decides to take him on as a lover.

Another version of the Fantastic Woman's companion is the trusting and adoring if pathetic spouse, best represented by the easily duped Pavel Pavlovich Trusotsky of *Vechnyi muzh* [*The Eternal Husband*] whose wife, if not entirely a Fantastic Woman herself, has the "gift of attracting, enslaving, and dominating" (IX.26) and dies young of consumption after a repentance of sorts. Trusotsky never suspects his wife of any infidelities during her lifetime, is blind to the fact that she is taking lovers, and is never jealous of her until the indisputable evidence is found after her death (as another character exclaims, "for twenty years he didn't notice *anything*" [IX.102 {emphasis in the original}]). Even when he does realize that women can be unfaithful (based on his experience with his first wife) he is just as blind to the obvious infidelity of his second wife.

What is interesting is that these two types–mirror opposites of one another–can easily cross over to the other side. Thus, Mitia Karamazov, the epitome of jealousy, becomes calm

and trusting at the sight of Grushenka. The narrator of *The Brothers Karamazov* comments:

> He was a jealous man of the type who would, when apart from the woman he loved, invent God knows what kinds of horrors about what was happening with her and how she was "betraying" him. But having run back to her, shaken, crushed, certain that everything is lost forever, that she had betray him, one look at her face, at the laughing, joyful, and kind face of this woman, would revive his spirits. He would lose all his suspicions and rebuke himself shamefacedly but happily for his own jealousy (XIV.343).

The problem is that this state does not last long; the narrator says that it is only "*for a moment* [that] he would become trusting and noble" (XIV. 344 [emphasis added]). On the other hand, the naive and meek Trusotsky can fly into murderous rages. He attempts to kill Velchaninov, the lover of his first wife, many years after the adultery takes place (he finds a letter revealing that Velchaninov is the father of the child he thought his). Again, this switch does not last: it happens spontaneously, in an unpremeditated fashion, and passes as quickly. Velchaninov thinks that "[Trusotsky] wanted to slit his throat, but maybe fifteen minutes ago did not know himself that he would slit his throat" (IX.100).

These two main Dostoevskian variations on the Fantastic Woman's companion (the jealous tormented man and the trusting, easily duped man) are important for the writings of the Villa Seurat Circle. The characteristics of both these extreme types are combined in many figures depicted in the texts of Miller, Nin, and Durrell. The two types meet, most notably, in the narrator-Henry Miller persona of *The Tropics* and *The Rosy Crucifixion*: he insists that he would never think to be jealous of Mara/Mona (like the trustful Eternal Husband) but is shown to be subject to violent jealousies and is constantly suspicious of her within the texts themselves (like Mitia Karamazov). This discrepancy between the words

and the actions of the Henry Miller persona appears to reflect Miller's own relationship with June during their life in New York and Paris. Many times in letters and–apparently–conversations with friends, Miller insisted that not only was he unaware that June took any lovers but that if she had, he was indifferent. Nin, who was puzzled by Miller's attitude (specifically by his apparent naivety and blindness to June's countless extramarital sexual adventures), writes in her diaries that he "offered [June] a fool's faith (June asserts that in nine years she has had only two lovers, and until now he has believed that)" (*UD:HJ* 220). At another point, she writes of Miller telling her complacently, "Don't ask me how [June] earns money. Every time I tried to find out, I ran into such complicated stories, intrigues, miraculous barters, that I gave up trying to understand" (*DI* 9). Notably, Mary Dearborn concludes plainly enough in her biography of Miller that Miller "refused to admit the clear evidence that June, if not precisely a prostitute, did sleep with other men, and that she accepted money in return" (82).

Dearborn's interpretation of this 'state of affairs' is supported by Miller's letters to Nin, where he writes that even though June told him explicitly that she had a lover, he still refuses to believe her:

> I ask her once, when everything is soft and melting, when she is absolutely one with me, I ask her–"about Pop now, was all that true you told me? She nods her head. "Come now...maybe once or twice?" "Ah no, Val, it was more than that...too many times for me to remember...all Summer, or all Winter, I forget which it was. Night after night." This, mind you, she says slowly, reflectively, as something to be regretted but not gainsaid. But I won't believe this. Why won't I? (28 March 1932.41 [all ellipses in original]).

Finally, when June herself gave a rare interview much later in life she insisted that Miller was

never jealous of her, saying: "He never said anything to me that reflected his being jealous of me; peeved, angry, but not jealous" (qtd. in Dick 170).

It seems fitting then, that Miller emphasized the importance of Dostoevsky's *The Eternal Husband* throughout his life. In the *Colossus of Maroussi* (1941) Miller comments: "There are only a few books which I can read over and over...[one of these is] *The Eternal Husband*" (24). In *Books in My Life* (1952) Miller calls *The Eternal Husband* "my favorite of all Dostoevsky's works" (15). Finally, in his "First Impressions of Greece" published in 1973, he writes that "Anything I profoundly like, I notice, always remains a mystery to me...books like...Dostoevsky's *Eternal Husband*...will always be MYSTERY" (100-101).

At the same time, however, Nin writes in her diaries about Miller spending much time in jealous deliberations trying to decide if and with whom June was being unfaithful to him. She also comments on his obsessive need "to know whether June has other lovers, whether she loves women, or takes drugs" (*DI* 16). It is notable that virtually all of Miller's biographers assert that he was in fact jealous of June.[22] There are also many accounts of Miller trailing June to find out where she is going and whether she will meet anyone.

Exactly this kind of discrepancy between words and actions is observable in the narrator-Henry Miller persona. In the *Tropics* and *The Rosy Crucifixion* he frequently insists that he is not jealous of Mara/Mona. In *Sexus*, for instance, he compares himself with Carruthers, one of her liaisons who *is* unmistakably jealous of her, saying:

> I felt sorry for Carruthers, sorry that he should be a victim of jealousy. I had never been jealous in my life. Maybe I had never cared enough (66).

(It is particularly appropriate then that the narrator-Henry Miller persona in *The Tropic of*

Cancer loves Dostoevsky's *The Eternal Husband* and refers to it as "perfect" [11].) At the same time, however, the entire *Rosy Crucifixion* and, to a lesser extent, the two *Tropics* record the narrator's suspicions of the Mara/Mona figure and his jealous exploits. In *The Rosy Crucifixion* the narrator is distrustful of the men (and of some of the women) with whom Mara/Mona talks, is wary of her every move, and is intent on unraveling the lies that, according to him, she spins about her. In *The Tropic of Capricorn*, the narrator calls her "the world's lying machine in microcosm" (241).

In fact, there are other parallels between Miller's depiction of the actions of the Henry Miller persona within his texts and the actions of Mitia Karamazov. The latter, for instance, is so obsessed with Grushenka that he is willing to be subjected to virtually any humiliation as long as he can be with her. During their conversation with Alesha, Mitia says:

> I will be her husband if she deigns to have me as a spouse, and if her lover should come, I will exit to another room. I will clean the dirty galoshes of her friends, make tea for them, and run their errands (XIV.110).

Mitia's words to Alesha regarding the extent to which he is willing to go are eerily similar to both the role that Miller apparently played for June in real life and, correspondingly, the role that the narrator--Henry Miller persona acts out in *The Rosy Crucifixion*. At one point, living in New York during the Prohibition, June had the idea that she and Miller could open an illegal bar, a speakeasy. When they did open for business, the main attractions were the availability of both the alcohol and June. Here is how one of Miller's biographers describes the situation:

> For her part, June saw a speakeasy as an efficient way to consolidate her business. One room would be set aside for her to entertain her lovers, while Miller served

> drinks and snacks to the waiting admirers and his friends in the back room...From the start, Miller had to pretend that he was not June's husband...He washed dishes, made drinks, and...sat around in the kitchen...while June met with her admirers in the front room (Dearborn 97).[23]

And here is how the narrator describes the same situation in *Plexus*:

> Only our most intimate friends are to know that we live here–and that we are married...Which means that if the bell rings and Mona is out, I am not to answer it. I'm to sit quiet...If possible I am to peek out and see who it is–just in case. In case what? In case it's a detective or a bill collector. Or one of the more recent, hence ignorant and intrepid, lovers... (393 [ellipsis in the original]).

In this way, in another literature-imitating-life-imitating-literature scenario, Mitia's imagined humiliations become Henry Miller's and his persona's actual ones.

It is also interesting to note that the dog imagery incorporated by Miller into both *Tropic of Capricorn* (briefly) and *The Rosy Crucifixion* (much more extensively) to express the narrator-Henry Miller persona's utter subjection to Mara/Mona is also found in the description of Mitia Karamazov in his relationship with Grushenka. When Mitia Karamazov arrives to the village of Mokroe where Grushenka has just met with her original seducer, who has come back to claim her, Mitia is compared to a small dog by the narrator:

> It was as if he became altogether meek and humble. He looked at everyone timidly and happily, giggling frequently and nervously, with the grateful look of a small dog who had done something wrong but who was forgiven and allowed back inside (XIV.378);

and again: "In the little dog all sense of competition died out" (XIV.378). Correspondingly, in Miller's *Sexus* there is a long dream sequence during which the narrator sees himself as a chow at a dog competition winning the prize for Mona and then being taken home by her (633-634). In *The Tropic of Capricorn* the narrator tells Mara that he is "wearing the dog

collar you fastened around my neck" (347). Finally, in *Nexus* the narrator is metamorphosed into a dog and barks as he summons the image of Mona (7).

The bringing together of the non-jealous placid Trusotsky and the super-jealous violent Mitia Karamazov into the narrator with the Henry Miller persona is somewhat paradoxical. But in Dostoevsky too the two types come together at certain moments. Moreover, both extremes can co-exist in one individual, recalling Mitia Karamazov's famous exclamation about the all-encompassing nature of man ("man is broad!" ["shirok chelovek!"]). In the already quoted letter to Nin, one of the many where he ruminates on his relationship with June, Miller writes:

> I see everything. I know more than anybody will know about her. But I am two beings. With my seeing eye I rend her--I could stab her over and over...one death would not be good enough...I would resurrect her in order to kill her again and again. There is no limit to my fury. And then there is the other me, maybe it's little Henry again, I don't know, but it is a me that is absolutely trusting, *naïf*, child-like, and that me accepts all the stories, all the lies, all the treachery (28 March 1932.39-40).

Incorporating these extremes does not make for inner tranquility and personal comfort. Correspondingly, both Miller and his textual persona dwell upon the suffering they experience as a result of their relationships. In a series of interviews given in 1969 in French, however, Miller talks about the attraction of such dysfunctional relationships, positioning Dostoevsky's texts as one of the original sites for these kinds of tortured male/female dynamics:

> Quelle bonne relation [between June and me], hein? Le masochiste et le sadique! Quel mariage! Exactement le thème qui revient toujours dans l'œuvre de William Blake: le mariage entre *Heaven and Hell*–entre le Ciel et l'Enfer.
>
> Et c'est vrai que cela représente le mariage au sense le plus parfait du terme. Un mariage où tout est harmonie n'est *pas encore* un mariage, à mon avis. Il faut ce

> conflit et cette torture entre deux êtres...
>
> Mais voilà que je parle très subjectivement, très personnellement... C'est un peu comme chez Dostoïevski. Oui, je trouve la même chose chez lui (109-110 [ellipses in the original]).

What can possibly be the attraction of such suffering? It is worth recalling that in the Villa Seurat Circle's interpretation of Dostoevsky's philosophical ideas, suffering is *desirable* because it can lead to personal rebirth and creativity (see chapter three of the present study). This is perhaps what Nin has in mind when she writes in her diaries of Miller's masochistic need to be jealous and to suffer:

> In broad daylight, I can give him back a little anguish, jealousy, fear, because he wants them, Henry, the Eternal Husband. He loved his suffering with June (*UD:HJ* 202).

It is this kind of 'paradoxical' sadomasochistic characters (and so, not really paradoxical), many of them artists, writers, and poets, that accompanies the Fantastic Women in the texts produced not only by Miller but also by Nin and Durrell. In Nin's *Cities of the Interior* series of texts, Jay, an artist who is based on Miller, has a tormented relationship with Sabina, a character based on June, who complains that Jay spies on her (95). Their love is also hate; the narrator comments: "From the very first Jay hated her" (92). The love/hate and the tortures that he imposes on himself and others help Jay paint and create. In Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* series, Justine's first husband the writer is linked to her by a similar love/hate torture which ultimately inspires him to write a novel about her, and even in *The Black Book*, Herbert 'Death' Gregory exhibits these profoundly sado-masochistic qualities in his relationship with Grace, a former street girl who tries to be a Vamp and *femme fatal*.[24] At one point in the text, Grace confesses to Gregory that her friendship with another character is

turning into an affair, which she, however, is not really interested in consummating. Gregory realizes that "she was just Plasticine. I could have convinced her in a half-minute [not to go]" (85) but sends her to the other man anyway (literally pushes her out of the room) to brood and play the piano. He comments:

> That half-second's pause after I asked whether she really wanted to go was enough to outrage the *professional husband* in me...This you see, begins my perverse business of torturing myself...It was a delicious sensation, like standing on the edge of a cliff (85 [emphasis added]).

It is doubtful whether his self-imposed torture through Grace adds much to his piano playing (he concludes "I sat down to the piano and began to murder Beethoven" [86]), but the relationship is the main reason why he begins to write *his* "Black Book".

Underground People?

In the *Eternal Husband*, Velchaninov--on the verge of illness--tells Trusotsky that both of them are "underground...people" ["podpol'nye...liudi"] (IX.87). In *Brothers Karamazov*, Mitia tells Alesha that there are some among the thousands of prisoners in Siberia who are different from the others, implying that they are not only "underground" physically but also spiritually: "There are many of them, hundreds of them there, those underground ones, with sledge hammers in hand" (XV.31) he says, referring to them later in the same speech as "we, the underground humans" (XV.31). Dostoevsky himself repeatedly refers to the "underground types" within his novels and stories (for instance, he calls Goliadkin of *The Double* [*Dvoinik*] his "chief underground type" ["moi glavneishii podpol'nyi tip"][25]). Whatever Dostoevsky himself may have felt on the subject, the

designation "Underground Man" has been permanently affixed by his readers and critics--Russian and others--to the nameless narrator of his text *Notes From Underground* [*Zapiski iz podpol'ia*].

It is well known that *Notes From Underground* attracted little critical attention originally. The only reaction in the press was provided by Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, a brilliant satirist and Dostoevsky's long-time rival, who wrote an atypically insipid parody on the text and its author whom he depicted as a sick and nasty bird (1864.465-471). A private reaction was provided by Dostoevsky's former lover, Apollinaria Suslova, who wrote him a typically contemptuous letter from abroad, inquiring what *was* that scandalous story that he was writing, and telling him that she did not like it when he wrote cynical pieces, because it did not suit him somehow (June 1864.171).[26] As it often happens, the critics really noticed the text only after its author's death, and since then, it has never lacked for either critical attention or readers. Joseph Frank writes:

> Few works in modern literature are more widely read than Dostoevsky's *Notes From Underground* or so often cited as a key text revelatory of the hidden depths of the sensibility of our time. The term "underground man" has become part of the vocabulary of contemporary culture, and this character has now achieved–like Hamlet, Don Quixote, Don Juan, and Faust–the stature of one of the great archetypal literary creations...Most important cultural developments of the present century-Nietzscheanism, Freudianism, Expressionism, –Surrealism, Crisis Theology, Existentialism–have claimed the underground man as their own or have been linked with him by zealous interpreters (1986.310).

Many critics have made the connection (usually in passing) between the narrator-characters of Miller's texts and of Durrell's *The Black Book* with Dostoevsky's Underground Man. Miller's narrator(s) of *The Tropics* have been called a "Descendant of Dostoevsky's

Underground Man, without his nastiness" (Moore 5) and a "mock underground man" (Widmer 76). In a more extensive comparison, Leon Lewis writes,

> As the [*Tropic of Cancer*] opens, the artist/hero who is Miller's narrator and protagonist has given up the idea of living in any sort of conventional manner and has become a kind of Dostoevskian underground man. We see him first in *Cancer* prowling though the bottom strata of a civilization in decomposition, recording disasters to which he remains immune. His rage cuts through the lachrymose posturing of his fellow expatriates like a sword, while his dream/vision is drawn around him like a shield. His isolation is his protection, but it has its costs. He has no real friends (how different from the corporeal Henry Miller!), just acquaintances he spends time with, gets drunk with, gets laid with and so on, and his relationship with women is ghastly (76-77).

Similarly, Kenneth Rexroth notes when analyzing Durrell's *The Black Book* in 1960:

> All the [*Alexandria Quartet*] is there, writ small. It is one of the first and best books of its kind–that long spate of tales of the life and loves of the Underground Man that have become the characteristic literary fad of the last twenty years. It is a tale of a wretched warren of loathsome characters, and like Dostoevsky's manifesto, [*Notes From the Underground*]...its moral point is that all such people can do is debauch, in rotten frivolity, the ignorant and trusting innocent (25).[27]

Most recently, Richard Pine, author of *Lawrence Durrell: The Mindscape* (1994), comments that "*Notes from Underground* is a mine of suggestion along the lines that freedom requires more than a mechanistic approach to the world: perhaps both Durrell and Miller derived inspiration from [its] closing lines" (424).

Leaving aside the question of how Miller's and Durrell's critics interpret *Notes From Underground* (Rexroth's suggested "moral point" of "Dostoevsky's manifesto" is especially problematic), there do appear to be some parallels between Miller's and Durrell's texts and Dostoevsky's *Notes From Underground* (several of these were already noted in chapter three of the present study). Of course, this is not surprising, given, first of all, the Villa Seurat

Circle's special investment in Dostoevsky and, secondly, the canonical status of this particular Dostoevsky text. It is also not surprising that the writers of the Villa Seurat Circle identify themselves and each other with the Underground Man and include references to the text within their own works. In a letter to Perlès (later to become a part of *Art and Outrage* [1959]), for example, Durrell writes that he "did see several people peeping out of Henry [Miller]...[including] the frightened man in the *Letters from the Underworld*" (25). Miller's response to this, upon reading the letter, is to agree and to connect himself with the Underground Man specifically through the points of being overly civilized and overly sensitive (something that the Underground Man dwells upon at length): "To myself I always think I was born 'ultra-civilized.' Another way of saying it, a more invidious way, would of course be to say that I was over-sensitive" (28).

Several relatively oblique references to the *Notes* are also scattered throughout Miller's writings. In his *Colossus of Maroussi* (1941), for example, the narrator refers to the "sickly *subterranean* living and lying" (48 [emphasis added]) that one must renounce before one can appreciate the pagan glory of Greece. In *Plexus*, the narrator ironizes about his "*'underground'* life" (628 [emphasis added]). In *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch* (1957), Miller writes about a young correspondent who "has not yet taken his soul to the *underground*--but give him time" (154 [emphasis added]). For his part, Durrell (as mentioned in chapter three of the present study) cites the *Notes* as epigraphs to his own writings.

What *is* surprising, in fact, about the explicit references to *Notes From Underground*

in the texts of the Villa Seurat Writers–especially in Miller's texts–is that there are so few of them, considering the space devoted to the discussions of other Dostoevsky writings and considering the importance assigned to it by their favorite critics. André Gide, for instance, whose book on Dostoevsky Miller practically knew by rote, contends that "with [*Notes from Underground*] we reach the height of Dostoevsky's career. I consider this book (and I am not alone in my belief) as the keystone of his entire works" (115). John Cowper Powys, another of Miller's favorites, also emphasizes the significance of *Notes* in his studies. Suggestively, in his introduction to John Cowper Powys's *Letters to Henry Miller*, the editor writes:

> Both men...revered Dostoevsky above all Modern writers. *Memoirs from the Underground* had perhaps influenced them more than any other piece of writing in the past century (Hall 12).

Why then do the Villa Seurat writers refrain from discussing or even properly acknowledging this 'keystone' of Dostoevsky's *oeuvre* within their own writings, considering that Miller, for example, happily spends pages upon pages discussing *The Possessed* and provides a cornucopia of references to the other Dostoevsky novels in his works? Perhaps the scarcity of references and a lack of discussion is in itself suggestive. Just how many parallels *are* there between the writings of the Villa Seurat Circle and *Notes from Underground*? Further, if the writers of the Villa Seurat Circle had indeed set themselves the goal of going beyond what Dostoevsky accomplishes in their own writings, would taking *Notes from Underground* as a point of reference show that they have succeeded or failed?

Writing the Underground: The Underground Man and Miller

To begin with a parallel most frequently noted by the critics: the similarity between the narrator of *Notes from Underground* and the narrating personae within the texts of the Villa Seurat Circle. Much has been written about the nameless narrator of *Notes from Underground* (see Jackson 1958; Abood 1973; Peace 1993). In an author's note on the first page of *Notes from Underground* (a rare instance of such in the whole body of his work), Dostoevsky writes that in the first section of the text the narrator "describes himself [and] his opinions and, wishes, as it were, to understand the reasons why he appeared and was bound to appear in our midst." "The real 'notes' of this person concerning some events of his life," Dostoevsky continues, "will come in the next section" (V.99). The first part of the text then, is essentially a long invective in which the nameless narrator discusses his views on life, society, and himself, all the while arguing with the invisible 'Gentlemen'–his imagined readers. The second part consists of his descriptions of several traumatic events that begin when he was in his twenty-fourth year of life.

Briefly put, the nameless narrator–the Paradoxicalist or the Underground Man–is a forty year old civil servant who has recently quit his job, lives in a squalid room in St. Petersburg, and decides to write about himself and his life. The first three things that he actually says about himself are that he is ill ["bol'noi"], that he is malicious ["zloi"], and that he is unattractive ["neprivlekatel'nyi"] (V.99); later in the text, however, he contradicts himself on at least two of these or on all three, considering that the prostitute Liza *does* find him attractive. Unreliability and self-contradiction are both strongly associated with the "Underground Man"; in one characteristic sampling, he says:

> I lied about myself just now...I lied out of my own maliciousness...I was constantly conscious of a great multitude of completely contradictory elements within myself. I felt them just teeming within me, those contradictory elements...Not only did I not become malicious, I did not become anything. Not malicious, not kind, not base, not honest, neither a hero, nor an insect (V.100).

At the same time, he repeatedly and consistently associates himself with an excessive consciousness ["usilennoe soznanie"] (V.101,102,104,107), and says that he feels isolated and lonely at the same time as he shows nothing but contempt for those who surround him.

At first glance there is little that Dostoevsky's Underground Man has in common with the narrators of the texts produced by the writers of Villa Seurat Circle in the 1930s. The Henry Miller persona of the *Tropics*–the one most often compared to the Underground Man–keeps emphasizing his health and good spirits ("I keep thinking of my really superb health. When I say 'health' I mean optimism, to be truthful. Incurably optimistic!" [*TCan* 49]). He is, superficially, a healthy happy-go-lucky American yahoo whose only problem is making sure that all his biological needs are met (in the *Tropic of Cancer* he rapturously exclaims, "A meal! That means something to go on–a few solid hours of work, an erection possibly" [49]). His ingestive and sexual exploits account for much of the action in the plot. Durrell's *The Black Book* has two British narrators, one of whom is a teacher and the other is a man of independent, albeit limited means who is dedicated to the writings of Blaise Pascal and Edward Gibbon. Nin's texts, both her *House of Incest* and–obviously enough–her *Diaries* are narrated not by men but by women (the three shorter texts of the *Winter of Artifice* each have a third person omniscient narrator).

On the other hand, if the Villa Seurat Circle's narrators are examined more closely,

parallels with Dostoevsky's Underground Man become readily apparent. The Underground Man looks at the portrait of himself he had created and announces that he possesses "all the traits of an antihero" (178). Correspondingly, none of the narrators or personae created by Miller or Durrell are particularly likeable, sympathetic, or in possession of sterling human qualities. Even the portrayal of herself that Nin provides in her diaries is not entirely likeable–she readily depicts her meddling, her obsessiveness, and her paranoias.

The Henry Miller persona of the *Tropics* is particularly close to the Underground Man. He is a man in his forties (both *Tropics* are narrated from the perspective of the 1930s, when Miller was in his forties himself). He had quit his administrative position some time earlier and now wishes to write, mostly about himself. His funds are so limited, however, that his lodgings are usually squalid in the extreme; the narrator of *Tropic of Capricorn* says that after quitting his employment he rented "black holes with drawn curtains...liv[ing] permanently in the zenith of the underworld" (233).

Despite constant contact with people of all sorts, the Henry Miller persona insists on his essential loneliness; in *The Tropic of Cancer*, after accompanying another character on a tour of the Parisian brothels, he comments that "I could be no more truly alone than at this very moment" (98). He also continuously expresses his contempt for everyone who surrounds him throughout his life: "Everybody around me was a failure, or if not a failure, ridiculous. Especially the successful ones. The successful ones bored me to tears" (*TCap* 9). Like the Underground Man, he is contemptuous of himself and disgusted by his own past; in *Tropic of Cancer* he describes himself "lying there on the iron bed thinking what a zero I

have become, what a cipher, what a nullity" (78) and meditates on the "agonizing gutter of my wretched past" (177). He is also a highly unreliable narrator who contradicts himself and others at every turn (in *Tropic of Capricorn* he contends that "In everything I quickly saw the opposite, the contradiction, and between the real and the unreal the irony, the paradox" [9]); and he has the same kind of a hostile relationship with his imagined readers as the Underground Man (in the *Tropic of Cancer* he calls the book that he is writing "a prolonged insult," promising the reader, "I will sing while you croak" [2]).

Further, like the Underground Man, who remembers that in his youth he alternated from disdain and sullen self-isolation to a seeking out of company ("Either I didn't want to speak to anyone, or I reached the stage where I would not only get into a conversation with someone but decide to befriend him" [V.125]), the Henry Miller persona remembers having "nothing but ups and downs. Long stretches of gloom and melancholy followed by extravagant bursts of gaiety, of trance like inspiration" (*TAP* 49). In both *Tropics*, the Henry Miller persona is depicted engaging in all kinds of unsavory activities like stealing, lying, cheating, and so forth; nowhere does he appear noble, heroic, or even particularly likeable.

Another important parallel with the Underground Man is that the Henry Miller persona sees himself in terms of extremes, but unlike the former, who imagines himself as "*either* hero or dirt, there was no middle" (V.133 [emphasis added]), the latter envisions himself as *both* extremes at once: "perhaps," he muses, "I was imbued with the notion that I was both a sub-gorilla and a super-god" (*TAP* 197). The Henry Miller persona presents himself both as a wild child, a Gangster-author (in other words, a version of Rousseau's

'homme de la nature et de la vérité,' posited by the Underground Man as the very opposite of his own type) *and* as the introspective, hyper-conscious, and ultra-sensitive 'late-city man' (he imagines himself changing places with those in torment, "accepting the tortures inflicted upon [them] and nourishing them with my supersensitive brain" [*TCap* 328]). The co-existence of these two types within one character is very 'Dostoevskian' in itself and again recalls Mitia Karamazov's claim that human nature is broad and that a single person can contemplate both extremes at once.

Finally, even though it would seem that the Henry Miller persona is living in the very hub of life (like the Underground Man he is strictly an urban dweller), he frequently expresses the very same sense of disconnection from life of which the Underground Man complains (in the *Tropic of Capricorn* he laments that he has "lost hold of life completely" [13]). He offers the opinion that the books which he read so avidly might be to blame for the way he is: "perhaps," he muses, "I was spoiled in the bud by the books I read" (*Tropic of Capricorn* 60) (the Underground Man ironizes: "At home...I mostly read...Reading was a great help, of course--it agitated, gratified, and tormented" [V.127]).

Writing the Underground: The Underground Man and Durrell

The two narrators of Durrell's *Black Book* also have several features in common with the Underground Man. The older narrator, Herbert 'Death' Gregory, is forty years old, while the younger narrator, who calls himself "Lawrence Lucifer," is in his mid-twenties (Lawrence Lucifer considers himself Gregory's alter ego, saying, "I do not pretend to interpret [his

writing]. It would be too much to expect of the interrogative ego, the other me, whose function is simply to take a sort of hieroglyphic dictation form space, and annotate it, punctuate, edit. Perhaps add a pert little introduction of my own, and an apparatus of variants" [58]). The ages of the two narrators approximate the ages of Miller (forty-five) and Durrell (twenty-four) at the time Durrell was writing *The Black Book.* As it happens, they are also the ages of the Underground Man when he is writing his "Notes" (forty) and when he is living some of the events that he is narrating in Part II of the *Notes* (twenty-four). At different times both of Durrell's narrators literally live underground: because of limited funds they both rent a "tiny basement room" in London's seedy Hotel Regina (34). Both men complain of complete isolation. Looking through Gregory's writing, Lawrence Lucifer cites him on the subject of loneliness ("my isolation...is six by three. The isolation of a coffin. The isolation of a gargoyle hung over a sleeping city" [34]) and identifies with him. Both men make unreliable and self-contradictory narrators, deliberately misleading their readers (Gregory admits to lying at several points in his journal).

Gregory, who appears to have most in common with the Underground Man, is–like the Underground Man–an avid reader (at the end of *The Black Book* he decides to burn his books as a gesture of renunciation). Interestingly, within his journal he makes two oblique if parodic references to Dostoevsky's novels. At one point, talking about his involvement with a street girl named Grace, he writes that their relationship had a "critical point, as when, in any Russian novel, the Christian protagonist, having speculated for pages on the properties of murder, actually *does* poleax his grandmother" (80). Obviously enough, the novel mocked

here is Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* where the Christian protagonist, Raskolnikov, goes through much introspection about whether he can 'cross the boundary' and actually kill someone, and does finally ax-murder an elderly woman.

At a different point in his journal, Gregory recounts a disastrous party that he gave in honor of Grace. A guest (for whom he has little respect) tells him that he is not particularly impressed with his behavior. When Gregory asks him to explain himself, the following exchange takes place:

> "This party of yours. An elaborate piece of self-gratification. You must always take it out of somebody mustn't you? Life is one long revenge for your own shortcomings."
>
> "You've been reading the Russians," I said. Nothing else. It was furiously annoying (51).

"That evening," Gregory continues, "I took it out on Grace, appeased the rage that [his] little observation had bred in me" (51). Significantly, this appears to be a sly reference to *Notes from Underground* itself, where the notion of revenging oneself on others for one's own problems is the specialty of the Underground Man (he thinks of the prostitute Liza who walks in on him during his fight with his servant Apollon: "she will pay me dearly *for all of this*" [V.171 {emphasis in the original}] and he also says that having sex with her afterwards was "almost like revenge" [V.175]).

Gregory possesses one of the key characteristics of the Underground Man; namely, excessive consciousness. Like the Underground Man, he is too aware of many contradictions within himself–both internal and external–and this ultimately prevents him from action and dooms him to inertia. The Underground Man says that "the direct, lawful, and immediate

fruit of consciousness is inertia" (V.108), and Gregory echoes him when he thinks about his own lack of action: "All my life I have done this–imagined my actions. I have never taken part in them" (196). Like the Underground Man whose excessive consciousness makes for constant self-observation ("Likely, I believe [what I just wrote], but at the same time, I don't know why, I feel and suspect that I am lying" [121]), Gregory constantly spies upon himself: "I am always aware of myself," he insists, "as an actor on an empty stage, his only audience the critical self" (201).

The dual or divided consciousness is the subject of one of Durrell's epigraphs to a chapter in his *Key to Modern British Poetry*. Here it is verbatim (from page forty-nine of that text):

> Do you know, I feel as though I were split in two?...It's just as though one's second self were standing beside one; one is sensible and rational oneself; but the other self is impelled to do something perfectly senseless.
>
> Dostoevsky
> *Notes from Underground.*

Actually, the quoted fragment is found not in *Notes from Underground* but in Dostoevsky's *Raw Youth*, where Versilov is talking to his son (this passage is quoted by Gide on page 104 of his book on Dostoevsky). There are two things that may be recalled here. First, the problem of the 'Double'–one which Dostoevsky develops at length in his writings–is important to the writers of the Villa Seurat Circle and especially to Durrell from *The Black Book* onward. Secondly, the quoted passage from Dostoevsky's novel (especially in regard to the consciousness of a split identity), sounds very much like the opening of Gregory's journal in Durrell's *The Black Book*:

> "The presence of oneself!...The eternal consciousness of oneself in substance and in psyche. The eternal consciousness of that shadow which hangs behind my shoulder, watching me flourish my ink on this nude paper...The one self and the other, like twin generals divided in policy, bungling a war" (34).

It would appear that at least in Durrell's mind the problem of the 'Double' which he explores in his own writing, is connected with Dostoevsky's novels and, further, with the narrator of *Notes from Underground.*

Some other parallels between Gregory and the Underground Man that should be noted are a similar propensity to torture themselves, of which their journals are an extension (the Underground Man calls his writings "corrective punishment" [V.178]; "Gregory says: "I have been rereading these pages; a little weary and disgusted at the way I prey upon myself" [196]). Further, the Underground Man and Gregory experience a similar conflict between wanting to be left alone, to die to the world, and a desire to communicate with others; Gregory says that he wears a monk's skullcap "as if in affirmation of the life I have chosen. Yet at night sometimes I am aware, as of an impending toothache, of the gregarious fiber of me" (40).[28] Gregory also shows the same kind of hostility towards his imagined readers as the Underground Man. At one point he addresses the readers directly and tells them of his "terrible thin squealing which I would like to rise from this paper and stifle you. This thin, astringent script of mine–let it be poured into your ears, most delectable of corrosives, until your brains turn green, cancerous, nitric" (203). Finally, he stresses that he does not have the makings of a hero of any kind (like the Underground Man he claims that he is unattractive both physically and in other ways).

Writing the Underground: The Underground (Wo)Man and Nin

The narrators within Nin's writings have several links to the Underground Man. A discussion of these narrators, however, presents special problems. First of all, it was already posited in Chapter Two of the present study that Nin's diaries are inseparable from her 'fictional' writings (like *The House of Incest*) which emanate from the diaries. It was also indicated that she kept re-writing her diaries throughout her life and that they, in fact, occupy a kind of a shady no-man's land between non-fiction and fiction. The other point that must be made here regards the publication of the diaries. The first publication (now referred to as the expurgated edition) occurred in the years 1966-1974. Besides Nin herself, this first publication had three editors, but she was continuously involved in the editing process.[29] The second publication (referred to as the unexpurgated edition) began nine years after Nin's death with *Henry and June: From the Unexpurgated Diary of Anaïs Nin* (1986) and continues to this day.[30] The discussion of Nin's narrators will be limited here to the first volume of her expurgated diary which was based on the diaries she kept in the years 1931-1934,[31] on her *House of Incest*, and on the central text of *Winter of Artifice* (1939) (after which the book in named), which were her only two major 'fictional' texts to be published in the 1930s.

It has been convincingly argued recently that the Underground Man type in twentieth century literature has its analogue in that of the Underground Woman (see Doughty 1995.26-37, 52-62, 94-116). The Underground Woman shares the characteristics of the Underground Man with some variations. She tells her own story and does not allow any one else to define

her or to describe her life. She is self-conscious and aware that she is delivering a monologue. She indulges in self analysis. She is angry at society for its systematic indifference and callousness to her. She is alienated from others and meets this experience with a certain ambivalence (Doughty 26-27). Nin's *House of Incest* and--needless to say--her diaries are all narrated by a female narrator, while "Winter of Artifice" has a third person omniscient narrator who focuses, nonetheless, on the consciousness of a twenty-year old woman. All of these narrators have links to the Underground Woman type.

Certainly, the 'self' which Nin presents in volume one of her expurgated diary (*The Diary of Anaïs Nin: 1931-1934*) exhibits all the characteristics of the Underground Woman listed above as well as many other traits which Dostoevsky's Underground Man possesses. First of all, she insists that she is the only one who can tell her own story and to define her life (she pities another woman for "not [being] like me, able to make her own portrait" [16]). Practically the first thing the narrator of the diary tells about herself is that she feels trapped and isolated. Unlike the Underground Man (whose internal conflicts trap him in the squalid room which he feels he has to live in), however, she is trapped in a life of luxury; she looks at the gate of her large estate property and says "it takes on the air of a prison gate...[but] the obstacle lies always within one's self...I often stand at the window staring at the large closed iron gate, as if hoping to obtain from this contemplation a reflection of my inner obstacles to a full, open life" (4).

She feels completely alienated from the social sphere to which she belongs, and indifferent to the cavalcades of cars driving up the gravel path to the house. She repeatedly

expresses her sense of being cut off from real life: "I feel I am not living" (5); "You live like this, sheltered, in a delicate world, and you believe you are living...and [then] you discover that you are not living, that you are hibernating" (7). Despite the dramas taking place in her imagination, she says she is "hungry for reality. I wanted real experiences which would free me of my fantasies, my daydreaming" (33). In her search for reality, she tries to find fellowship but is not successful:

> I was like a stranger in a strange country who was welcomed...and then suddenly became aware that I did not speak their language, that it was all a game of courtesy. What locked me out? Over and over again I was thrust, and thrust myself, into roomfuls of people with a genuine desire to amalgamate with them, but my fears proved greater than my desire and, after a conflict, I fled. Once alone, I reversed the process and suffered to be locked out and abandoned by those who were talking and laughing in a commonly shared enjoyment and pleasures (107).

She looks outside 'proper society'–the quasi-Bohemians and their alternative lifestyle–but is ultimately disappointed even here; later, she concludes: "I must learn to stand alone. Nobody can really follow me all the way, understand me completely" (260). Overriding everything is her sense of loneliness ("Man," she insists, "can never know the kind of loneliness a woman knows" [106]).

Like the Underground Man, she is a compulsive reader who becomes addicted to reading in her early youth in order to avoid the company of her peers: "I read avidly, drunkenly, by alphabetical order in the library. I had no guidance, as I rebelled against the rowdy, brutal Public School Number 9" (220). Again like the Underground Man who blames books for providing an irritating and ultimately frustrating stimulus, she blames books for encouraging her escapism (she remembers herself "from childhood [on]...living in

created dreams as inside a cocoon, dreams born of reading, always reading" [57]) and setting up unrealistic expectations. In an interesting twist, it is Dostoevsky whom she particularly singles out as an author who leads his readers to expect constant high drama in their life, and thus sets them up for an ultimate disappointment (109).

She also shares with the Underground Man her excessive consciousness and sensitivity. She is extremely concerned about how she appears to others, and continuously analyzes what others may think of her. At one point she worries that she will see herself "in caricature." She asks herself: "Why should I care?" and despairingly concludes: "But I do care. I care about everything. Emotionalism and sensibility are my quicksands" (11) At another time, she exclaims: "I despise my own hypersensitiveness" (77).

Like the Underground Man, she finds herself prevented from acting and living, "stopped on [her] course by all kinds of thoughts" (45) even though she distrusts "the rigidities and the patterns made by the rational mind" (11). She goes on to refer to Gide's opinion on the Underground Man: "thought arrests action and being" (45). (Gide's actual words are: "[*Notes from Underground*] is the keystone of [Dostoevsky's] whole work, the clue to his thought. '*He who thinks, acts not....*'" [138 {emphasis and ellipsis in the original}].) Again like the Underground Man, who makes so-called 'excursions into reality' after which he returns to his solitary dreams and imaginings, she collides with reality only to retract into herself:

> I felt overwhelmed by reality...When I collide with it...I seem to experience a sudden break, I feel I swing in space, I go up in the air, I create enormous distance. Then after the collision, I feel submerged into dreams...And then I cease to live in reality. I feel that I miss it, always. I am living either in a dream or in pure sensuality. No

intermediate life. The overtones or the undertones (160).

As a result of all these collisions she cultivates a secret, underground side; she says that all her rebellions–and there are many–are "concealed, inhibited, indirect" (12). Contributing to all this are her deep insecurities about her looks, her talents, her intelligence, and so forth.

Also interesting in light of the claim that the Underground Woman "tells her own story and permits no voice other than her own to represent or define her" (Doughty 26) is the fact that the 'protagonist' of the diaries decides to go into analysis twice (she says it is "for those who are paralyzed by life" [75]), but *never* actually permits either of the analysts to have the last word. She says that the psychoanalyst "does the dissecting and the explorative operations," but then she continues: "I bring them home, and sift them to catch impurities and errors in the diary" (106). She goes on seeing the psychoanalysts even though she is the one now analyzing them–as well as herself. Actually, the depiction of her relationship with the analysts has certain similarities with Dostoevsky's Underground Man's relationship with his imagined readers, the hostile 'Gentlemen' (there is a similar propensity to guess what the analysts will say and to preempt their words, a similar ambivalent contempt/admiration, and a similar tendency to lay traps of various kinds for them, into which they inevitably fall).

Both the young woman of Nin's "Winter of Artifice" (the central text after which her book is named) whose consciousness forms the focus of the narration and, to a lesser extent, the narrator of her *House of Incest* share characterics similar to those which link the narrator of the first volume of the diary to the Underground Man. The young woman of "Winter of Artifice" is also a compulsive reader from childhood on (57) (significantly, when she grows

up she specifically prefers Dostoevsky [105]) and is withdrawn even as a little girl. She feels alienated, lonely, and secretive. Aware of all kinds of "subterannean channels" within her (65), she keeps a diary that isolates her from life and becomes her underground ("she shut herself up within the walls of her diary. She held long conversations with herself, through the diary" [61]; "This diary...became...a secretive thing, another wall between herself and that world which it seemed forbidden her ever to enter" [66]). She tries to make contact with others (most notably with her father), but finds that "All communication [was] paralyzed by the falsity" (117). She also has a heightened consciousness which makes her aware of all her external and internal contradictions:

> As she talked with tears in her eyes, she pitied herself...for having expected everything from [her father]. At the same time she knew that this was not true. Her mind ran in two directions as she talked, and so did her feelings (95).

Meanwhile (like the Underground Man who admits to acting out a scene when he tells Liza about the horrors of prostitution, but who "beg[ins] to feel what [he] was saying" [V.155]), she is conscious of acting and lying when she confronts her father for failing her in various ways ("the scene she knew best...even though it became an utter lie" [94]). At the same time she was not really pretending ("this statement was untrue only in time...what would I be feeling now if I had [done what I say I did]" [96]).

Finally, the narrator of *House of Incest* talks about her loneliness and the sense of being isolated from others ("I cannot be certain of any event or place, only of my solitude" [39]). She tries to connect to life, but fails and ultimately retracts into her own dreaming: "Collision with reality blurs my vision and submerges me into the dream...the distance

between the crowd, between the others and me, grows wider" (38). Evocatively (in view of the Underground Man's identification with a mouse hiding beneath the floor), she imagines herself "in the cellar where I nibbled at the candles and the incense stored away with the mice" (39). She has a heightened consciousness of the many different contradictions within herself and of the incompleteness of everything she is saying ("I am a woman...smiling always behind my gravest words, mocking my own intensity. I smile because I listen to the OTHER and I believe the OTHER...I see two women in me freakishly bound" [30], screaming, "DOES ANYONE KNOW WHO I AM?" [26]). It is also notable that another character in the book, Jeanne, who shares a voice with the narrator at several points in the text,[32] delivers a speech which sounds as though it emanated from the Underground Man himself:

> As soon as I utter a phrase my sincerity dies, becomes a lie whose coldness chills me...I am so utterly lonely, but I also have such a fear that my isolation be broken through, and I no longer be the head and ruler of my universe (46-47).

Writing the Underground: Other Connections

Besides the figure of the narrator, there are many other connections between the writings of the Villa Seurat Circle and *Notes from Underground* too numerous to be considered here at length. To sketch in a few of these from different categories: Durrell's *Black Book*, for instance, echoes the plot motifs of *Notes from Underground* revolving around the story in Part II about the Underground Man's encounter with Liza, who was sold into prostitution by her family. He considers helping her get out of it, and making her his

wife--he repeats the lines of Nikolai Nekrasov's poem about just such a rehabilitation: "And into my home, openly and freely,/Enter the absolute mistress of it all!"–but does not do anything of the sort.

In the *Black Book*, Gregory has an encounter with Grace, a street girl whom he buys "without any bargaining, for the promise of a cup of coffee" (45). Grace's prostitution is approved by her family, the implication being that they had pushed her into it; she tells Gregory: "When I don't go back they don't worry. Glad to be free of me. Not earning me keep any more, see?" (48). In an ironic reconfiguration of the *Notes from Underground* plot, Gregory eventually does marry Grace (though outsiders are "shocked by the knife edge of cruelty that cut down into our social relations" [53]) and she does become the "absolute mistress" of his home, much to his chagrin, because of the things she does to it:

> It began almost as soon as the wedding guests left: a critical survey of the flat, and a careful enunciation of its limitations...That was how it began. I give you full permission to recognize this as comic relief...Hideous bamboo trolleys, bead curtains...it was suggested that we should have [the sofa] covered in red damask, *with tassels*. "We must get the parlour shipshape," she remarked once or twice, and I recognized a new note in her voice. There was the ring of the Penge matron coming to life in her tones. It is difficult to admit that I began to loathe her (193 [emphasis in the original]).

Grace is the locus of another plot motif from *Notes from Underground*. The Underground Man tells Liza of a funeral of a prostitute who died of tuberculosis and is buried in a grave filled with water, as wet snow falls. Grace also has tuberculosis, of which she eventually dies. She is buried near the sea-coast as the rain drizzles, under "the vast reports of the waves against the concrete" (199). Just as Liza is essentially a pawn in a game the Underground Man decides to play for his own amusement (he says "Most of all, I was

carried away by the game" [V.156]), so Gregory recognizes that Grace was "just a pawn in this philosophic game which [he was] playing" (192).

The images and symbols that the Underground Man draws upon–the Crystal Palace, the anthill–make appearances or spawn counterparts in the writings of the Villa Seurat Circle. In one interesting example, the Henry Miller-persona's description of a visit to the Empire State Building in *The Tropic of Capricorn* amalgamates the four structures contrasted by the Underground Man (the Crystal Palace, the anthill, the cage-house for domestic birds ["kuriatnik"], and the solidly built building ["kapital'nyi dom"][33]) by obliquely referring to all four:

> From the top of the Empire State Building I looked down one night upon the city which I knew from below: there they were, in true perspective, the human ants with whom I had crawled, the human lice with whom I had struggled. They were moving along at a snail's pace, each one doubtless fulfilling his microcosmic destiny. In their fruitless desperation they had reared this colossal edifice which was their pride and boast. And from the topmost ceiling of this colossal edifice they had suspended a string of cages in which the imprisoned canaries warbled their senseless warble. At the very summit of their ambition there were these little spots of beings warbling away for dear life (69).[34]

(In *Colossus of Maroussi*, Miller includes a wonderfully fantasmagoric passage about just how many hours it takes for a window washer to wash *all* the windows on the Empire State Building [153].)

In her work, Nin picks up on the metaphors in *Notes from Underground*, specifically those of paralysis (the Underground Man says "paralysis was hovering above me" [V.134]) and of flaying (the Underground Man says "I am vain to such an extent it is as if my skin were stripped off my body, and the air itself caused me pain" [V.174]). In *The House of*

Incest she turns these metaphors into the symbolic figure of the Paralytic who cannot act and into the equally symbolic figure of the 'Modern Christ,' who says that he was born without a skin, and who describes dreaming of having his skin "carefully and neatly peeled like a fruit":

> Not an inch of skin left on my body. It was all gently pulled off, all of it, and then I was told to walk, to live, to run. I walked slowly at first, and the garden was very soft and I felt the softness of the garden so acutely, not on the surface of my body, but all through it, the soft warm air and the perfumes penetrated me like needles through every open bleeding pore...I shrieked with pain (69).

The dominant themes of *Notes from Underground* are also prominent in the writings of Villa Seurat Circle. For example, the Underground Man's distrust and hatred of philosophic theories and ideas are reflected by Miller, Durrell, and Nin in their texts. The Henry Miller persona says in *The Tropic of Cancer*:

> [Man] will debauch himself with ideas, he will reduce himself to a shadow if for only one second of his life he can close his eyes to the hideousness of reality...And out of the endless torment and misery...[o]nly ideas [emanate], pale, attenuated ideas which have to be fattened by slaughter; ideas which come forth like bile, like the guts of a pig when the carcass is ripped open (96-97).

Similarly, Gregory of *The Black Book* admits: "My imagination has become a vast lumber room of ideas. There is no dogma which does not find an echo from myself (...) I petted myself with the idea, I fattened myself with it" (185-187). In the "Winter of Artifice" the young woman deplores the shaky "edifice of ideas" that her father always imagines is being "attacked or endangered" (105).

The evils of civilization, another pet theme of the Underground Man, are also harped upon by the Villa Seurat writers (this was already described in chapter three of the present study)[35] with the city itself–whether Paris, New York, or London–becoming (like the

Underground Man's St. Petersburg) a focus of everything that is artificial, wrong, and soul-destructive. In *The Tropic of Cancer*, for instance, Paris is depicted as one of these urban "cradles of civilization [which] are the putrid sinks of the world, the charnel house" (182); it "sprouts out like a huge organism diseased in every part" (40), and its "leprous streets" (42) suck in the passerbys. In what sounds like a deliberate paralleling of the city with St. Petersburg, the narrator calls it "a northern city, an outpost erected over a swamp filled in with skulls and bones" (241). Similarly, New York is described as "cold, glittering, malign. The buildings dominat[ing]...A whole city erected over a hollow pit of nothingness" (68). Ultimately, the narrator suggests, there is no difference between any of the European or American cities, because they all embody "that world which is peculiar to the big cities, the world of men and women whose last drop of juice has been squeezed out by the machine--the martyrs of modern progress" (162).

The Underground Man's defence of personal freedom at any cost--against logic, against self-benefit, against everything and everyone--is one of the central themes in the writings of the Villa Seurat Circle. (The Underground Man says: "the whole of man's enterprise, it seems, really does consist only of proving to himself at every moment that he is a man and not an organ stop! Proving it at the cost of his own skin, even at the cost of becoming a troglodite, but proving it" [V.117].) To provide just one example: in *Tropic of Cancer* the Henry Miller persona constantly does things that are not to his own advantage, but that he simply wishes to do if only to reaffirm that he is free (he says that he sees himself "as a plenipotentiary from the realm of free spirits" [275]). Once, during his life in Paris, it

appears that he has found the perfect way out of his constant problems of how to get himself fed and housed: there is a Russian émigré who is willing to sup and lodge him in return for English lessons. Instead, the Henry Miller persona turns the arrangement down without any good reason for it:

> In the morning I wait for Serge to load the truck. I ask him to take me in to Paris. I haven't the heart to tell him I'm leaving. I leave the knapsack behind, with the few things that were left me. When we get to the Place Péreire I jump out. No particular reason for getting off here. No particular reason for anything. *I'm free*--that's the main thing... (72 [emphasis in the original]).

It is evident then, that there are significant parallels between Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* and the texts that Miller, Nin, and Durrell were producing in the 1930s. Besides the main points of contact described above (the persona of the narrator, themes, images and symbols, and plot motifs), there are several other significant ways in which the texts of the Villa Seurat Circle are connected to *Notes from Underground.* First, the Underground Man claims that he does not want to restrict himself by anything in the writing of his notes, he does not want to create "an order or a system": "Whatever will come to mind, that is what I will write down" (V.122). In the beginning of his notes, he makes a joke that he decides is bad, but adds that he will not cross it out (V.100). Similar claims are made by the Henry Miller persona in *Tropic of Cancer*: "I am merely putting down words" (8) and "I have made a silent compact with myself not to change a line of what I write" (11). Further, the entire premise of writing 'confessional prose,' 'the truth as it really is,' etc., on which the Underground Man claims he is relying ("I want to see if one can be completely honest with oneself and not be frightened by the truth" [V.122]) has obvious connections with the entire

corpus of work produced by the writers of the Villa Seurat. Suggestively, the irrepressible Van Norden of *Tropic of Cancer* tells the narrator:

> Some day I'll write a book about myself, about my thoughts. I don't mean just a piece of introspective analysis... I mean that I'll lay myself down on the operating table and I'll expose my whole guts... every goddamned thing. Has anybody ever done that before? – What the hell are you smiling at? Does it sound naïf? (132 [ellipses in the original]).

One of the reasons why the Henry Miller persona is smiling in response to Van Norden's words is that this is, of course, precisely what he is doing within the text that he is 'writing'/narrating. The revelation of oneself is the cry of all the Villa Seurat writers, in one way or another. Hence, the often repeated assertions of 'truthfulness' and 'openness' made by them and on their behalf. This is especially the case for Miller and Nin (the former insists that "the book is myself"[36] and the latter presents her diaries as the ultimate quest for truth and the ultimate self-revelation), but also for Durrell: Gregory of *The Black Book* calls his diary "my tissue, my guilt" (125) and Durrell himself writes that in *The Black Book* he "tried to say what [he] was" (April 1937.72).

If *Notes from Underground* are indeed taken as a point of reference, it becomes doubtful whether the writers of the Villa Seurat Circle actually manage to go much further 'beyond' what Dostoevsky had accomplished in his own text. Even the prose experimentation that is so important to them in their own writings can be traced back to *Notes from Underground.* True, there are no automatist lists in Dostoevsky's text even though there are passages that come close (e.g., "They talked of the Caucases, of the nature of true passion, of the card game 'Galbik', of well-paying positions in the service, of the

income of hussar Podkharzhevsky, whom none of them knew personally, and rejoiced that it was so large, about the extraordinary beauty and grace of Princess D., whom none of them had ever seen, finally they talked about Shakespeare's immortality" [V.146]), but there are quite a few 'surrealist' passages, like the scene of Zverkov's party, which the Underground Man attends only to create a huge scandal and to pace back and forth for three hours while no one pays attention to him, as well as his nightmarish ride to the brothel. Similarly, the breaking down of generic boundaries within their own writings is already suggested in Dostoevsky's text (Dostoevsky himself was apparently not quite certain how to classify *Notes from Underground*[37]).

Finally, the famous sexual scenes in the writing of the Villa Seurat Circle, in which sex is frequently depicted as violent, obscene, and having very little to do with genuine human contact (one has only to turn to one of the many depictions of Van Norden trying to have sex with a prostitute in *Tropic of Cancer*, the narrator observing, "there is no human significance in the performance" [144]), are again prefigured by the Underground Man's criticism of loveless sex. After his first sexual encounter with Liza, which is graphologically represented by the two sets of ellipses and a break between sections (quite *risqué* for the times and the place where it was published), he asks her: "Just tell me what's so good about it: here you and I... got together... just now, and we didn't even say a word to each other, and it was only afterwards that you started to look at me like a wild thing, and I did the same. Is this how people love? Is this how two people should come together? It's a disgrace, that's what it is!" (V.155 [ellipses in the original]).

In the final analysis, the Villa Seurat writers do not so much go beyond what Dostoevsky had done, or invent a new type of antihero-narrator for their works, as they re-invent him for their own time and within their own environments. The Underground People of Miller, Durrell, and Nin are all superfluous city men and women of the 1930s. Like their authors, they live in Europe between two horrifying wars. They live in the era of ever-expanding and depersonalizing financial conglomerates on the one hand and of ever more repressive and dehumanizing political systems on the other. They live, in fact, in that very era foretold by the Underground Man, when Science–as represented by genetics and psychoanalysis–"itself will teach man...that, in reality, he neither possesses nor did he ever possess either free will or a whim of his own" (V.112). In such a time, the ultimate act of rebellion is to assert one's individuality, which is precisely what all the narrators and personae of Miller's, Nin's, and Durrell's texts do through their 'writing'. What is even more illogical and rebellious in an era where everything seems to point to more wars and cataclysms, is that the Villa Seurat Writers offer their Underground People if not a precisely happy end, then hope of one.

Dostoevsky's Underground Man is still in the underground at the end of the text, even though he says that he does not want to be there. The suggestion is that he will possibly stay there for life. By contrast, the Underground People of the Villa Seurat Writers are all given some kind of hope. Even the imagery common for the endings of the Villa Seurat writers books (watching the sun, coming towards the sun, waking up, emerging from ether) suggests not only a new beginning but an escape from the metaphoric darkness of the underground.

Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, for example, finishes with the narrator sitting in a café in a beer garden as the sun shines on him, drinking a coffee and a "great peace c[oming] over [him]" (318), while *The Tropic of Capricorn* ends with the narrator "look[ing] out again at the sun--[his] first full gaze" and thinking of the things that he will do "tomorrow" when he "shall be as a visitor to this earth, partaking of its blessings and carrying off its gifts" (348). Nin ends *The House of Incest* with all the characters, including the narrator, gathering around a woman who was "dancing towards daylight" (72), while the young woman of "House of Incest" feels like she is "coming out of the ether of the past" (119). Durrell's *The Black Book* ends with Lawrence Lucifer waking up with his partner in an "enormous six-foot bed" as the night draws to a close and morning dawns over Greece.

It appears that this new version of the Underground Man and Woman as portrayed in the writings of Miller, Nin, and Durrell–but especially Miller–proved quite popular. If one turns to the works of writers like Norman Mailer, Phillip Roth, Saul Bellow, Erica Jong, William S. Burroughs, and Jack Kerouac, all of whom acknowledged a debt owed to Miller, one frequently encounters the figure of the Underground Man as propounded in Miller's works, even to the suggestion of a hopeful ending (Jong, whose writings and personal life connect her in many ways to Miller and Nin, had developed the persona of the Underground Woman in her many novels beginning with *The Fear of Flying* [1974]). This transplantation of Dostoevsky's Underground Man into the American literary counterculture tradition via Miller should be investigated further, as it sheds light on the subsquent mediated reception of Dostoevsky's Underground Man. Henry Miller claimed that Dostoevsky's books were

"chewed alive, digested and incorporated into the system as flesh and blood which in turn creates new spirit and reshapes the world." The world that was reshaped was, it seems, the world of American literature. Thanks to Henry Miller and his fellow writers at the Villa Seurat, Dostoevsky became a powerful figure in the American literary counterculture.

CONCLUSION

Nina Berberova, the Russian émigré writer, was sitting in a Paris café over a cup of coffee (all she could afford), one day in the mid-1930s, when she saw Henry Miller and his wife June sitting at the next table. "Somehow," she would later note, "those two were a bit like us" (329). What affinities did she see between her milieu of émigré Russian writers and Miller? Poverty? Marginality? Uncertainty of the future? Impossibility of publication in their native lands? Possibly all of these. What she did not know is that they had something else in common as well. Just as the Russian émigrés were obsessively turning to Dostoevsky's works for answers to what was happening in Soviet Russia (see, for instance, E. Iu. Kuzmina-Karavaeva's *Dostoevsky and Our Time* [*Dostoevskii i sovremennost'*], published in Paris in 1929), so Miller, too, was obsessively turning to Dostoevsky for answers of a different sort.

When Miller came to Paris in the beginning of the 1930s, his goal was to revolutionize writing–to create a new kind of text that transgressed the boundaries of literature and that was indivisible from the experience of living itself. Dostoevsky figured prominently in this endeavor from the very beginning. First of all, it was in reading Dostoevsky that Miller developed the desire to become a writer (originally, he had hoped to become an 'American Dostoevsky'); secondly, it was through reading Dostoevsky that Miller gained the courage to give up his secure but shackling job and to free himself for a

life of writing (he often likens the act of reading Dostoevsky to the flinging open of a cage door); thirdly, it was with the understanding that Miller would become a 'Dostoevsky' that his wife June undertook to support him financially in his undertaking; finally, and most importantly, Miller felt that only by challenging and transcending Dostoevsky, who had taken the novel–and literature–to a limit, could he succeed in creating a new kind of writing.

Miller (who was later joined in this by Nin and Durrell) set out to make literature obsolete. To do that, he set up Dostoevsky's prose as the paradigm of literary achievement which he had to both challenge and outdo in his own writing. Although Dostoevsky was only one of many writers important to Miller (the list includes Proust, Rimbaud, and Whitman, among others), Dostoevsky had a special position in that Miller continued to engage in a dialogue with him throughout his long life.

It has been shown in the preceding chapters that Miller's reception of Dostoevsky was, in many ways, predetermined by the fact that he first read him in America as an American. Some of the key assumptions that Miller had made about Dostoevsky (that he was a social and moral outsider, that he was an autobiographical writer, that he could be identified with his characters, that he was not a careful stylist but that there was something important gained by his release of stylistic control over his text) were those commonly made by his fellow Americans and arose out of the factors accompanying Dostoevsky's first arrival to the United States and , in particular, out of the sociocultural shift occurring in the country at the time of the publication of Constance Garnett's famous translations in 1912-1920. On the other hand, it has also been demonstrated that Miller's readings–and misreadings–of the

French, British, German, and Russian commentators and interpreters of Dostoevsky's works (like Gide, Powys, Spengler, and Berdiaev among others) did much to shape his understanding of Dostoevsky and his texts. Finally, it has been pointed out that Miller also brought a number of distinctly personal insights into his reading of Dostoevsky's works. Foremost of these, was the opinion that Dostoevsky had 'terminated' the novel and exhausted the possibilities of that genre.

During the 1930s, when Miller was the acknowledged leader of the Villa Seurat Circle in Paris, he passed on his corpus ideas about Dostoevsky to others in the group. Nin and Durrell, writers with whom Miller had the strongest ties, shared his assumptions about the meaning of Dostoevsky's works (including the key premise that literature had ended with Dostoevsky) and entered into a dialogue with Dostoevsky through their own writings. The texts written by Nin and Durrell, as well as Miller in the 1930s (which include such seminal works for each author as Nin's *House of Incest*, Durrell's *The Black Book*, and Miller's *Tropics* and *Black Spring*) bear many signs of their attempts to respond to, challenge, and go beyond what Dostoevsky had accomplished in his writing. Their interpretation of Dostoevsky's prose style, which included the idea that he purposefully 'released stylistic controls' over his text, and the emphasis which they placed on it proved especially fruitful for their own work, as it both inspired and enabled them to create their own experimental prose by being similarly free and unconstrained in their writing. Further, it encouraged their experimentation with various techniques popular at the time (surrealist passages, automatist lists, and so forth), while allowing them to see themselves as separate from all the

movements around them and to develop their own individual visions of prose narrative. Their exegesis of Dostoevsky's ideas on suffering, sexuality, existence of evil, and others, was also incorporated in their own writings, where they engage and struggle with these same concepts. The idea, for instance, of suffering as a spur for creativity, which they take out of their reading of Dostoevsky's novels, becomes reflected in their own writings of the 1930s and beyond. (It is ironic, of course, that they investigate all kinds of philosophical and intellectual dilemmas posed in Dostoevsky's novels, despite their professed anti-intellectual stance, which they also derive from Gide's interpretation of Dostoevsky as a thinker.)

Additionally, a number of themes, images, and types from Dostoevsky's novels find their way into the texts produced by the Villa Seurat Circle. Particularly interesting is the type of Dostoevsky's Fantastic Women that June Miller was inspired by and imitated. Actually, June Miller proved to be an important mediator of the type for the writers in the circle (the interplay between life and text–complex patterns made by life imitating text and text imitating life–is something that is a constant factor in the Villa Seurat Circle's reading of Dostoevsky). Finally, it has been shown that even though many of Dostoevsky's novels and other writings were important for the Circle, his *Notes from Underground* appears to have a special place in their *oeuvre*, and there are many features of their own works that link them with the Dostoevsky text. Significantly, their recreation of the type of the Underground Man (and Nin's transformation of the Underground Man as the Underground Woman) in their own texts had an impact on the writers of the literary counterculture who considered themselves Miller's heirs.

But do Miller, Nin, and Durrell manage to go beyond Dostoevsky in their own writings (their manifest aim)? In some ways, yes. Their depiction of sexuality, for instance, is much more graphic than its treatment in Dostoevsky's texts (even though the famous chapter "At Tikhon's" of *The Possessed,* dealing with a seduction or rape of a child, still retains more shock value than anything produced by the three writers of Villa Seurat). Their experimentation with prose style (what they frequently term the 'explosions' in their texts) is also more extreme than anything encountered in Dostoevsky's texts–although, arguably, the seeds of every kind of prose experimentation tried out by Miller, Nin, and Durrell are already planted in such Dostoevsky's works as *The Diary of a Writer* and *Notes from Underground.* On the other hand, there is much within Dostoevsky's texts that the Villa Seurat writers seem to simply reinscribe onto their own cultural matrix rather than to 'break through' or 'go beyond'. An example of this is the already cited type of the Fantastic Woman as well as the types of her male counterparts (discussed at length in chapter four of the present study). Furthermore, despite the Villa Seurat Circle's experiments with prose form, and despite their revolutionary intentions, it is still possible to view many of the texts that they produced in the 1930s as rewritings of Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* onto a different linguistic, cultural, and temporal matrix, rather than as a creation of something entirely unique in the realm of prose narrative. At the same time, it should be recognized that it was often in reinterpreting the Dostoevsky texts within their own cultural context, that they created something that had not been done before in Anglophone prose (as argued about Miller's writings by George Orwell, T. S. Eliot, and others).

While Miller continued his dialogue with Dostoevsky unabated in the years post-Villa Seurat, discussions of Dostoevsky and references to him appear much less frequently in the writings of Nin and Durrell (it should be noted though, that Durrell, who was friends with Dominique Arban, a French Dostoevsky scholar, kept abreast of the developments in Dostoevsky scholarship, and appears to have known and been interested in the Bakhtinian notion of the polyphony of Dostoevsky's novels).[1] What is undeniable, though, is that the writers of Villa Seurat were marked and transformed by their wrestling with Dostoevsky, and signs of this are visible in their post-1930s work.

The literary stock exchange is a precarious place and reputations rise and fall unpredictably as literary history is revised. It is difficult to say how Miller, Durrell, and Nin will be treated by literary historians fifty years hence. It appears, however, that as more time passes, they are taken more seriously by the literary scholars. It is rare now to hear that the important period for expatriate writers ended at the close of 1920s, when Hemingway and Fitzgerald returned to America (1928 and 1931, respectively). It is similarly rare to find guides to American literature that do not make some acknowledgment of the importance of Miller's work. It appears that at least Miller's place in the American canon is becoming more recognized even as the canon itself becomes questioned. It is impossible, at any rate, for a serious scholar of American literature to dismiss him any more as a prolific pornographer who produced no works of lasting importance and had little impact on American writing.

Generations of American (and not only American) writers have considered

themselves indebted to Miller. He was especially important to the anti-establishment writers who carried on the tradition of writer/poet as rebel. To provide one well-known example: the entire Beat generation of writers and poets called Miller their literary Godfather. When Allen Ginsberg came to Toronto on 15 November 1996 shortly before his death the following year to perform his "Ballad of the Skeletons" (1995), I asked him from the audience about the impact of Miller and his works on his own writings. He replied that he first encountered Miller's writings at college, at a wild party "where people did drugs and got naked" and where Miller's recording of a section from *The Airconditioned Nightmare* was played. "Henry Miller is life and exuberance!" Ginsberg said. He paused for a moment and added: "He was an impetus to write."

Miller was an impetus to write for many writers and poets. It would be interesting to see whether the writers and poets who considered themselves Miller's heirs also 'inherited' Miller's interpretation of Dostoevsky and his works. References to Dostoevsky, for instance, abound in the works of writers like Norman Mailer and Jack Kerouack who claimed a particularly close kinship with Miller (especially noteworthy in this respect is Kerouack's *The Subterraneans* [1958] which contains many parallels with Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*). How did *they* read Dostoevsky? How much of it was determined by the fact that they were reading him as Americans in America? How much of it was idiosyncratic? How much of it was mediated by Miller? In what way was Dostoevsky and his works used by these writers? Further, what about the Russian émigré writers in America who considered themselves followers of Miller? Did they read Dostoevsky differently because of

Miller? (Eduard Limonov, for instance, is a contemporary Russian writer who lived in America for a number of years and wrote several 'scandalous' novels ostensibly influenced by Miller before returning to Russia and continuing his writing career there; Limonov's works contain references both to Miller and Dostoevsky.) The dynamics become increasingly complex as one examines them. One thing, though, can be recognized from the work done here: in twentieth century America, Dostoevsky and his writings frequently became positioned as sites of social, cultural, and creative conflict, and were often used as legitimization for many different ways of living and creating. In the process, Dostoevsky became appropriated by a number of different writers some of whom passed their interpretation of Dostoevsky and his writings down to the writers who came after them. I think that any work done in this area will prove valuable to scholars of Dostoevsky, to scholars of American literature, as well as all those who are interested in the many puzzles offered by cross-cultural literary studies.

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. Dostoevsky's impact on the literature and culture of Russia and other Slavic countries is usually taken for granted.

2. Muchnic herself says that she interpreted "'English'...broadly, including much American comment as well as that of Continental authors whose works have been translated" (vi). A further problem with her work is that it purports to take in the period of 1881-1936, but is not very useful even as a general indicator of how Dostoevsky was perceived in the early 1930s (either in England or in the United States) because so many important writers, poets, and critics of the period are left out entirely.

3. Phelps writes that his aim "has been to trace the main outlines of the story of the reception of the Russian Novel in England, and to some extent in America, and of its impact upon some of the English and American writers who welcomed it" (9). An annoying feature of this study is that no page or edition references are provided for the sources cited (sometimes the author's name and the book title are also left out).

4. Nikoliukin's discussion of Dostoevsky's impact on Faulkner owes much to J. Weisgerber's *Faulkner et Dostoievski: Confluences et influences* (1968; trans. 1974).

5. A list of a few Web-sites active in the spring of 1998:
http://www.dol.com/nin/ (a site which provides information about Nin and includes accounts by people who knew her personally),
http://www.henrymiller.org/ (a site about Miller out of Henry Miller's Library in Big Sur, California, which provides biographical information and an online forum for *Ping-Pong*–a journal dedicated to Miller's works),
http://www.ablegroup.com/henry/henry1.html (a site out of Nagano, Japan about the "Henry Miller Museum of Art" which features Miller's watercolours and some biographical information),
http://bookstore.johnco.cc.ks.us/docs/RootDocs/durrell_4.html
(The Lawrence Durrell Archive: a site about Lawrence Durrell which includes a bibliography, biography, criticism, and reviews).

6. Miller was called a pornographer for the sexual explicitness of his *Tropic of Cancer*, *Tropic of Capricorn*, and *The Rosy Crucifixion* trilogy (1949-1960). Nin was called a pornographer (posthumously) for her best-selling book of erotica which was published after her death, and for her unexpurgated diaries which detail her sexual exploits. Durrell was also stigmatized as a writer of books that were too sexually explicit for his *The Black Book* (1938) which was written under the influence of Miller.

7. Miller and Nin met in December of 1931. Durrell began writing to Miller in August of 1935 after reading his *Tropic of Cancer* and the two writers corresponded intensively (Nin

also began to correspond with Durrell at that time). Durrell travelled to Paris from Corfu in mid-August of 1937 in order to meet Miller.

8. The name "Villa Seurat Circle" comes from Miller's semi-permanent address in Paris at 18 Villa Seurat. The name for the group was coined in retrospect by the researchers writing about it (Lawrence Shifreen's "Faction in the Villa Seurat" [1981] and George Cleyet's "The Villa Seurat Circle: Creative Nexus" [1981]).

9. I am citing André Gide's and Oswald Spengler's works in the English language translations that Miller had most likely used.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. For the history of the Dostoevsky portrait painted by Perov and for some Russian reactions at the time see pages 118-124 of V. G. Bazanov et al., eds. *F. M. Dostoevsky, New Materials and Research* [*F. M. Dostoevskii, novye materialy i issledovaniia*] (Moscow: Nauka, 1973).

2. It is telling that the first Nobel prizes to an American and a Russian writer were to be awarded only three years apart (in 1930 to Sinclair Lewis and in 1933 to Ivan Bunin).

3. As for example, Thomas Witlam Atkinson's *Oriental and Western Siberia* (1858) published by New York's Harper and Brothers, a publishing house which also offered a translation of Baron Wrangel's *Narrative of an Expedition to the Polar Sea* (1841). Also indicative of the American interest in Siberia during the late nineteenth century is George Kennan's account *Siberia and the Exile System* (New York: The Century Co., 1891) and James Buel's *Russian Nihilism and Exile Life in Siberia* (Philadelphia: Historical publishing co., 1889).

A sampling of the popular novels about Siberia includes the translations of Madame Cottin's *Elizabeth; or, The Exiles of Siberia; a Tale Founded on Facts* which came out in numerous editions throughout the nineteenth century, as well as the countless spinoffs, like translations of Victor Tissot's *Escaped from Siberia: The Adventures of Three Distressed Fugitives*, Mrs. Cooke's *The Forced Marriage; or, The Return From Siberia*, etc.,.

4. Apparently, this pithy pronouncement was made by Prince Wolkonsky in the lectures which he delivered in the United States (qtd. in Muchnic 40).

5. I am quoting from an anonymous, untitled article which appeared in *The Critic* XI (1887):138.

6. For the fullest account of Vogüé's work see Magnus Röhl's *Le roman russe de Eugene-Melchior de Vogüé. Etude préliminaire* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1976).

7. In 1886, two novels by Dostoevsky were published by London's Vizetelly, in English translations by Whishaw: *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* (translated as *Crime and Punishment*) and *Unizhennye i oskorblennye* (translated as *Injury and Insult*). In 1887, Whishaw's translations of *Igrok* [*The Gambler*] and *Idiot* [*The Idiot*] became available to the Anglophone reader. Surprisingly, many important novels such as *Besy* (translated as *The Possessed* or *The Devils*), first became available in English only in the Constance Garnett translations of 1912-1920.

8. Vogüé had nothing but praise for the stylistic achievement of Dostoevsky's first novel *Poor Folk* [*Bednye liudi*]. Thereafter, however, according to Vogüé, Dostoevsky lacked measure: "c'est-à-dire l'art d'assujettir ses pensées, de choisir entre elles, de condenser en quelques éclairs tout la clarté qu'elles recèlent" (267). Vogüé generally felt that Dostoevsky produced nothing of real greatness after *Crime and Punishment*: "Avec ce livre [*Crime and Punishment*], le talent avait fini de monter" (255).

9. It should be noted that at the time that Vogüé discussed Dostoevsky's work in terms of 'realism', the nomenclature itself was relatively new and ill-defined. For an assessment of the meaning that Vogüé himself may have assigned to the term, see pages 156-161 of the chapter "Summary and Discussion" in Muchnic's *Dostoevsky's English Reputation: 1881-1936* (Northampton, Mass.: Smith's College, 1939).

10. Notably, in his uncompleted ambitious study, *Main Currents in American Thought* (1934), Vernon Parrington argues that Howells's optimistic vision of American reality was already outdated in the 1890s. Quoting Howells's remark about Dostoevsky, Parrington comments that

> while Howells was thus summing up the achievements of American realism and somewhat overconfidently forecasting the futre temper, he was in fact writing the history of a past phase. Already the clouds were gathering upon our "gay" horizons, and the current optimists were finding less food to feed on (316).

11. The esteem in which Constance Garnett's translations of Dostoevsky are held is reflected in the fact that in 1976, more than a half-century after her translations were published and while many new translations of Dostoevsky were available, the editors of the Norton Critical Edition of *The Brothers Karamazov* published her translation essentially unchanged (it was revised by Ralph E. Matlaw). For a discussion of Constance Garnett's importance as a translator, see Charles A. Moser's "The Achievement of Constance Garnett" (1988), and for an important consideration of Garnett's Dostoevsky translations see A. N. Nikoliukin's "Dostoevskii v perevode Konstans Garnet" ["Dostoevsky in the Translation of Constance Garnett"] (1985).

12. Once again, there is a scarcity of inquiry into the issue of how Dostoevsky was perceived by individual American writers. Aside from the interesting survey studies, like Iu. I. Sokhriakov's "Dostoevsky's Work and the American Realistic Literature of 1920s and 1930s

(T. Dreiser, S. Anderson, F. Scott Fitsgerald)" ["Tvorchestvo F. M. Dostoevskogo i realisticheskaia literatura SShA 20-30-kh godov XX veka (T. Draizer, Sh. Anderson, F. Skott Fitsdzheral'd)"] in *Dostoevsky: Materials and Research* [*Dostoevskii; Materialy i issledovaniia*], little work has been done in the field.

13. For a discussion of why the term 'appropriation' is particularly fitting in respect to Dostoevsky's reception by the Western intelligentsia, see Colin Crowder's provocative essay "The Appropriation of Dostoevsky in the Early Twentieth Century: Cult, Counter-cult, and Incarnation" (*European Literature and Theology in the Twentieth Century: Ends of Time* 1990:15-33) where he focuses the English response to Dostoevsky from 1880s to 1930s. Crowder's claim that "all things Dostoevskian acquired enormous force in the cultural polysystem of the day" (16) also has some bearing on the American response to Dostoevsky during the 1920s and beyond.

14. *The Dial* was a monthly journal of literary criticism which was originally published in Chicago starting with 1880 but which moved to New York in 1918 where for the next eleven years it became famous for publishing the most interesting modern authors and reproducing radical modern graphics.

15. The publishing history of *The Masses* is best summarized by Jack Alan Robbins in his introduction to *Granville Hicks in the New Masses* (1974:xi-xiv):
"The originator of radical journalism in America as we know it is the journal *The Masses* which was published between 1913 and 1917 under the editorial direction of Max Eastman...*The Masses*...fell victim to the First World War...mail censorship made circulation of *The Masses* all but impossible...A successor to *The Masses*, *The Liberator*, appeared in early 1918 again under the guiding hand of Max Eastman...Eastman turned it over to the Communist party...After two declining years the magazine died...[Launch of *The New Masses*] The guiding spirit of the editorial board was Michael Gold, formerly of *The Masses*...The editorial line was clearly Communist, policy reflected shifting decisions of the Third International in Moscow."

16. For more theories on why the Dostoevsky Cult collapsed in England, see Muchnic 105-106, and Crowder 22-23.

17. Phelps, describing the disenchantment with Dostoevsky of the European intellectuals in the 1920s, cites Edmund Gosse who unreservedly praised Dostoevsky novels at one time, but who in 1926 was prompting André Gide "to wean himself from the influence of Dostoevsky 'We have all in turn been subjected to the magic of this epileptic monster. But his genius has only led us astray...'" (173).

18. These writers were all published in New York's journals and magazines--including *The New Masses*--throughout the 1920s. In this connection, it is interesting to note that in America Dostoevsky was constantly being compared to the 'new' Russian writers; for

example, see C. A. Manning's 1922 article "Dostoevsky and Modern Russian Literature" in *Sewanee Review Quarterly* 30 (1922) 286-297.

19. Information on the Villa Seurat group of authors may be found in the several biographies of Henry Miller: Dearborn 182-202, Martin 222-234, 303-339, Ferguson 212-216, 232-272. Also of note is Lawrence Shifreen's provocative essay "Faction in the Villa Seurat" (*Deus Loci: The Lawrence Durrell Quarterly* V.2 [1981]: 1-19); George Cleyet's essay "The Villa Seurat Circle: Creative Nexus" (*Deus Loci: The Lawrence Durrell Quarterly*, IV.4 [June1981]: 1-6) is interesting as an attempt to contrast the Villa Seurat group to the Parisian Salon of Gertrude Stein, but contains some inaccuracies.

20. Nin's complicated life resulted in a series of estrangements between her and the other two writers. She did not correspond with Durrell for a long period after the war, and initiated an exchange of letters with him only after she read his *Justine* (Bair 416). Apparently, three years before her death in 1977, Nin broke off contact with both Durrell and Miller "because they continued, in their letters to her, to refer to Hugo [Guiler] as her husband, without acknowledging that she was now known on the West Coast as Rupert Pole's wife" (Dearborn 302). Miller had also expressed some bitterness about Nin in volume three of his *Book of Friends* (1979), where he referred to her as "a very ambivalent creature, to put it mildly" (14) and predicted that with the publication of her original diaries "the whole world will be made aware of her inveterate lying, her chicanery, her duplicity, and so on" (47).

21. A journal published in Shanghai called *T'ien Hsia Monthly* "published contributions by almost everyone in the Villa Seurat group" (Dearborn 201).

22. Nin complained bitterly that some literary critics of the 1960s and 1970s referred to her as a non-American writer. At present, there seems to be little questioning of her status as an American writer, although the 1997 exhibition, "Mary Louise Reynolds," in Chicago's Art Institute referred to her as a "French writer and feminist."

23. Bern Porter writes in his *Observations From the Treadmill* that he tried to get Stein to help Miller but she was unwilling:

> I would say Gertrude, look, Henry's a friend mine, he's been over here all these years, you're both from the States, he's sort of broke, why don't you pass him a meal once in awhile? And Gertrude would say: we're very particular who we pass meals to. She said, I have an instinctive feeling for when people are using me and when they really need a meal, and I cannot conceive a situation where I would help Miller however desperate he might be (qtd. in Mailer 83).

24. Later Durrell would change his mind and Eliot would become a second sponsor and mentor, the other so-called "great contemporary literary influence on Durrell" (Peirce 71).

25. In a 1952 letter to Judith Malina, author and one of the founders of The Living Theatre in New York, Nin announces her intention to stop supporting the theatre, because "I cannot sincerely sponsor writing I do not believe in...I [cannot]...support what you do, as a writer who does not believe in Gertrude Stein, Rexroth, or [Paul] Goodman, or Ubu Roi or Eliot." In her *Diary* she writes that she broke with the theatre after seeing a piece by Stein and Rexroth (The letter and the diary entry are both cited in *Anaïs: An International Journal* [3] 1985.135)

26. Kingsley Widmer, a stern critic of Miller, asserts that Miller never actually met Goldman (see his arguments in *Henry Miller, Revised Edition* [1990] 131 endnote 5), though he probably did read her works. What is important here, however, is not whether Miller had physically met Goldman (as he claimed) or not, but that he sympathized with her views on literature. The meeting, whether occurring in person or through Goldman's writings, marked Miller's literary tastes for life.

27. In Goldman's publication, *Mother Earth Bulletin*, she printed a story supposedly written by Dostoevsky on the wall of his prison cell, condemning the workers' exploitation by the ruling classes and their deception by the clergy ("The Priest and the Devil" 360-362), later commenting, "who can deny that the same applies with equal force to the present time, even to [America]?" (1917.117).

28. The contributors to *New Masses* frequently railed against the Greenwich Villagers, whom they accused of bourgeois cynicism. Thus, one *New Masses* writer condemns the type of "the bourgeois cynic, the Greenwich-Village...parasite" (Spector 18), while another censures "Greenwich village playboy[s]" along with the "gang of literary racketeers who have made of New York such a horrible and dangerous place for the young writer who still respects his mind's integrity" (Gold 10).

29. In Miller's account of Conrad Moricand's disastrous stay at Big Sur in 1947-48 (published as the third section of *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch* and, separately, as *A Devil in Paradise*), he has Moricand say that Dostoevsky shares the same astrological sign with Miller (1958.248). Actually, Dostoevsky, who was born on November 11, 1821 (or, according to the Old Calendar, on October 30th) was not a Capricorn–like Miller–but a Scorpio. This bit of information is noteworthy chiefly because it shows that Miller was not averse to altering the facts in his efforts to identify with the Russian novelist.

30. He also introduced Dostoevsky's novels to others in the Circle. For instance, in a letter of 29 July 1937, Miller advises Durrell that he should read Dostoevsky's *The Double* "if you have never done so" (1937d.85).

31. Although Miller understood some German (it was spoken at home when he was a child) and in his years in France had eventually learnt French, he had read all the foreign critics of Dostoevsky mentioned here in English translation.

32. See G. Poliak's article, "Henry Miller and the Russians in the West; Concerning the Russian Version of the Novel" ["Genri Miller i russkie na zapade. O russkoi versii romana"] (introduction to the Russian translation of *Tropic of Cancer* [Moscow: Terra, 1994.313-315]).

33. Powys, whose thoughts on Dostoevsky are alluded to by Miller (if not so often as those of Gide and Lawrence), fits into the same category.

34. Peter Paul Kaye, who does a thorough job anatomizing Lawrence's reading of Dostoevsky in his doctoral dissertation "A Monster in the House of Fiction: Dostoevsky and the Modern English Novelists" (1989), argues that while "Lawrence regarded Dostoevsky as an expression of modernity's worst excesses, its perverse intellectualizing and its denial of the blood (that is, the hidden depths of sensual being)" he also "learned from Dostoevsky's perception of evil and his use of the novel as a quest for wisdom," noting that "the subject matter of Dostoevsky came perilously close to Lawrence's own." He concludes by pointing out that "The struggle with Dostoevsky may be seen as the definitive battle of Lawrence's literary career" (29-30).

35. As, for instance, "The Universe of Death" in an anthology of his shorter pieces called *The Cosmological Eye* (1939). In a curious twist, the Lawrence book, which was to have been Miller's first published full-sized work, came out under the title *The World of Lawrence: A Passionate Appreciation* in 1980--the year of Miller's death--as his last published work, after the heroic editorial efforts of Evelyn J. Hinz and John J. Teunissen.

36. An interesting and convincing examination of Gide's reading of Dostoevsky may be found in Christina H. Roberts doctoral dissertation, "Gide and Dostoevsky" (1969). Among other things, Roberts argues that Gide's self-proclaimed affinity to Dostoevsky is much more limited and his relationship with the writer is much more equivocal than he (and his critics) would have one believe.

37. Miller's *Books in My Life* was to be followed by a second volume [see 1952.15]); eventually, the plans for it must have been dropped. It is possible that Miller was planning to contend with Lawrence's stance on the subject, outlined in his preface to *The Grand Inquisitor* translated by S. S. Koteliansky in 1930. In this connection, it is interesting to note what Parkin says about the English, and by extension, the American publication of *The Grand Inquisitor*:

> The publication of this work [*The Grand Inquisitor*] apart from *The Brothers Karamazov* typifies a central problem of Dostoevsky's reception in England. To assume that the part can be detached from the whole and published separately without a loss of meaning reflects a larger assumption that the novel itself lacks literary integrity and wholeness. Such assumptions virtually guarantee that both the part and the whole will be misunderstood. Unfortunately, *The Grand Inquisitor* is still read as a separate publication in many universities across the United States" (111, endnote

76).

38. Miller's "Letter to Pierre Lesdain" in *Books in My Life* contains an especially fascinating analysis of the parallels between Dostoevsky and Whitman (221-251).

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

39. See L. Grossman's *Dostoevsky's Poetics* [*Poetika Dostoevskogo*] (1925), M. Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* [*Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo*] (1929;1963), and D. Likhachev's "'Careless Writing' and Dostoevsky's Works" ["'Nebrezhenie slovom' u Dostoevskogo"] (1976).

40. See Bella Ulanovskaia's essay "Can the Sun Become Angry at an Infusoria...." ["Mozhet li solntse rasserditsia na infuzoriiu..."] (1974,1996) in *Dostoevsky at the Close of the Twentieth Century* [*Dostoevskii v kontse XX veka*] 604-621.

41. The silence on Bakhtin's part about the Soviet writers' reception of Dostoevsky is telling in itself.

42. The anthology was brought out by Durrell's publishers, Faber and Faber. It included pieces by André Breton, Paul Éluard, and Hugh Sykes Davies, as well as reproductions of the works of Dali, Man Ray, Magritte, and Joan Miró, all chosen by the prominent British literary critic, Herbert Read.

43. They all made exception for D. H. Lawrence who died in 1930 and they also had their individual favourites. Nin admired Virginia Wolfe and Djuna Barnes (she wrote fan letters to both of them but neither answered, after which her admiration for them paled considerably). Miller, for his part, had once hero-worshipped John Cowper Powys, an English novelist who wrote eccentric romances and much literary criticism (including a study of Dostoevsky); he had also expressed some admiration at various times for Wyndham Lewis (in Durrell's eyes, "so much the English blackbeetle squashed into the form of a gingerbread Nashe" [1937b.76]) and Havelock Ellis. Again, some qualifications will have to be made. Miller had, at first, disliked Lawrence immensely. He changed his opinions only when working on a study of Lawrence that he had never actually managed to complete. Miller listened to Powys lecture in New York, and while the impression was a strong one, he frequently criticized and satirized Powys as "John Cowper Pow Wow" in his early private letters (see his letter to Emil Schnellock of November 5, 1923.7).

44. All the same, Villa Seurat writers often included pastiches and parodies on the style of some of their Anglophone contemporaries in their own writings. Miller, for example, parodies Gertrude Stein's style in many of the prose pieces which later came out in the *Black Spring* book. Thus, "Walking Up and Down in China" (1937) begins in a distinctly Steinian manner, "In Paris, out of Paris, leaving Paris or coming back to Paris, it's always Paris and

Paris is France and France is China" (185).

45. According to Nin, the description of the painting is based on an actual painting which Antonin Artaud showed Nin in the Louvre. In the *House of Incest* and in the *Diary*, Nin refers to the painting as "Lot and His Daughter." The two Louvre paintings on the subject, however, are both called "Lot and His Daughters" (the first by Guercino, the second erroneously attributed to Lucas van Leyden). It is the second version that comes closest to Nin's description here ("the elderly Lot is seated before his tent, forndling one of his daughters while another pours wine at the left. On the bridge in the background, Lot's wife is changed into a pillar of salt as she disobediently turns to see the destruction of Sodom" [Lawton 1992.183]).

46. In an entry for 2 October 1937, Nin wrote contemptuously that Breton is little but "an intellectual *fabricant*" (*UD:NM* 128).

47. Viewed in this light, the "Jabberwhorl Cronstadt" piece of the *Black Spring* collection (about the household of Miller's erstwhile friend, the poet and writer Walter Lowenfels), becomes much less a Surrealist text than a parody on the Surrealists done as a rewrite of Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" (as its title suggests), complete with scanning and sometimes even rhyming prose, like the much quoted, "And Jabberwhorl glausels with gleerious glitter, his awbrous orbs atwit and
atwitter" (143).

48. Miller is still interested in getting their attention though, as the title of the piece shows. In a letter to Durrell of November 15, 1936 (after their exchange on Surrealism in the summer of the same year), Miller writes,

> Herbert Read sent me the new book, *Surrealism*, which I am answering immediately with a broadside, in the hope that his gang of English and French surrealists will have the guts to publish it in one of their forthcoming manifestos or what not (15 November 1936.26).

Durrell obviously shared Miller's dislike of Read and his work; in one of the letters to Miller, he adds, as a postscriptum: "Fuck Herbert Read, don't you think, really, on the whole? I can't help feeling that quietly" (August 1936.19).

49. In the "Open Letter" Miller seems to prefer the Dadaists to the Surrealists ("No, the Dadaists were more entertaining. They had humor, at least" [163]), but is equally dismissive of both in the end. In an interview given in the 1960s, Miller shows that he did appreciate some features of Dadaism:

> The dadaist movement was something truly revolutionary. It was a deliberate conscious effort to turn the tables upside down, to show the absolute insanity of our present-day life, the worthlessness of all our values...It was something to make you laugh, but also to make you think (1962a.53).

50. This quote is from a long diary/letter kept by Miller for Nin. Miller called it *The Heaven Beyond Heaven* and gave it to Nin on February 21, 1934 (S.I.U.'s Morris Library, Special Collections, MSS 30).

51. Durrell's best known contribution to this critical exchange among friends came in 1949 when he tried to stop Miller from going ahead with his publication of *Sexus* (the first book in the *Rosy Crucifixion* series). Although he later retracted his remarks, Durrell's initial response to the book was written in acid: "Whatever possessed you to leave so much twaddle in?..One winces and averts the face. What on earth has made you slip back on a simple matter of *taste*--artistic taste?" (5 September 1949.232-3).

52. T. S. Eliot was even more effusive with his praise in his original letter, but allowed only these words to be printed as a blurb on the back cover of *Tropic of Cancer* at the second printing (Martin 317).

53. On the subject of Miller's frequently contradictory accounts of his own literary history, Leon Lewis's cautionary remark in *Henry Miller: the Major Writings* (1986) seems relevant: "even a modest version of literary 'success' eluded Miller for so long that he felt compelled to shift his strategies throughout his career, and when he was finally successful, that 'success' itself altered his perspective on his accomplishments" (3).

54. Quoted by Robert Snyder in "Henry Miller: A Reminiscence" in Ronald Gottesman's *Critical Essays on Henry Miller* (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1992) 393.

55. Miller's letter to Fraenkel is quoted in its entirety in Fraenkel's essay, "The Genesis of the *Tropic of Cancer*" (1945) originally published in *The Happy Rock: A Book About Henry Miller* (Berkeley CA: Bern Porter, 1945), 38-56.

56. This quote is out of a booklet called *Anonymous*, probably authored by both Fraenkel and Lowenfels, and published by Fraenkel's Carrefour Editions (page 10).

57. Miller was also an ardent watercolourist. He went on to have a successful career as a painter in the naive style.

58. Towards the end of his life Miller had apparently reversed this judgement. In a series of interviews given to Christian de Bartillat (later published as *Flash-Back; Entretiens de Pacific Palisades* [1976]) Miller has this to say about Dostoevsky's style:

> J'ai récemment relu *L'Idiot* de [Dostoevsky], c'est un livre capital. J'aime cet auteur. Cependant, je pourrais prendre ce livre et l'"éditer", le couper. Je sens la mauvaise écriture, et c'est terrible, puisque c'est un auteur que j'aime, l'homme que j'admire le plus. Mais je vois ses erreurs (28-29).

59. Dated roughly February 1932 and cited in the *UD:HJ* 44.

60. This is somewhat problematic. Apparently, Nin did not edit herself when she was writing down her entries (similarly, Miller did not edit himself in the process of writing). Nin's severe editing of the *Diaries* for publication is well-known, however.

61. Gide also argues that the frame of mind in which Raskolnikov is found at the close of *Crime and Punishment* (as Gide puts it, "the Christian state *par excellence*" is the same in which Prince Myshkin is found at the opening of *The Idiot* (113).

62. In 1974 Nin would write that when her book *Ladders to Fire* was accepted by the publisher E. P. Dutton "I explained that it was part of a larger design...[but] the editors were aghast" it is because of this, she maintained, that her texts were published separately, to be brought together only much later when "for the first time the continuity was established" ("Introduction to *Cities of the Interior* 1974.viii-ix).

63. Durrell would later say that he had accomplished this goal. He made the following connections: an Agon=*The Black Book*; a Pathos=*The Alexandria Quartet* (1957-1960); and an Anagnorisis=*The Avignon Quintet* (1974-1985). (This is found in Durrell's unpublished letter to James P. Carley and is quoted by the latter in his "*The Avignon Quintet* and Gnostic Heresy" (1987) 240.

64. These famous words were recorded by V. V. Timofeeva (O. Pochinkovskaia) in her reminiscences, "A Year of Work With a Famous Writer" ["God raboty s znamenitym pisatelem"], published originally in 1904. Her reminiscences are cited here from *F. M. Dostoevsky in the Memoirs of Contemporaries* [*F. M. Dostoevskii v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov*] (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990) 137-196 (the Dostoevsky quote is on page 150).

65. This passage out of Dostoevsky's notebooks was first published by N. N. Strakhov in *Biography, Letters, and Notes From the Notebooks of F. M. Dostoevsky* [*Biografiia, pis'ma i zametki iz zapisnoi knizhki F. M. Dostoevskogo*] (St. Petersburg, 1883) 373.

66. This is a sketch found in the "Autograph Working Notebook" in S.I.U.'s Morris Library COLL 42/7/2, dated 1 January 1938 to at least September 1938. It is signed in Durrell's hand as Anaïs and Henry, but is clearly written by Durrell himself.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. P. Kaye comments in his "A Monster in the House of Fiction: Dostoevsky and the Modern English Novelists" that "The publication of this work [*The Grand Inquisitor*] apart from *The Brothers Karamazov* typifies a central problem of Dostoevsky's reception in England. To assume that the part can be detached from the whole and published separately without a loss of meaning reflects a larger assumption that the novel itself lacks literary integrity and wholeness. Such assumptions virtually guarantee that both the part and the whole will be

misunderstood. Unfortunately, *The Grand Inquisitor* is still read as a separate publication in many universities across the United States" (1989.111 endnote 76).

2. See chapter one of the present study for an account of Emma Goldman's publication of a story supposedly written by Dostoevsky on the walls of his prison cell.

3. This summary of the perspective of some of the top Soviet Dostoevsky scholars is found in V. A. Tunimanov's post-Perestroika article on Dostoevsky, included as an afterword in a 1990 publication of *The Possessed.* Tunimanov also points out that this is one of the first Soviet publications of the novel in a separate book format (the powers that be considered it much too problematic to be published separately) (623). N. M. Lary's *Dostoevsky and Soviet Film: Visions of Demonic Realism* (1986) provides a wealth of information and many fascinating insights about the struggles aroung/with Dostoevsky in the Soviet cinema and Soviet culture.

4. In his essay, "The Appropriation of Dostoevsky in the Early Twentieth Century: Cult, Counter-cult, and Incarnation" (1990), Colin Crowder uses the term "appropriation" to refer "to the process by which man and myth, people and plots, were claimed for religious discourse by the spiritually-inclined intelligentsia" (16). When I use the term here, I mean it to include other discourses besides the religious one (e.g., philosophical, psychological, etc.), in which Dostoevsky as well as his body of work were used to illustrate and support the points of view of various people engaged in the discourse.

5. G. M. Fridlender, a patriarch of Soviet Dostoevsky studies who was one of the driving forces behind the landmark publication of the thirty volume edition of Dostoevsky's Complete Works in 1972-1990, comments in a post-Soviet interview that

> I do not view our native "Dostoevsky Studies" of 1917-1989 as darkly as others do. These were the years when such scholars as L. P. Grossman, A. S. Dolinin, A. Z. Shteinberg, M. M. Bakhtin, V. L. Komarovich, K. V. Mochul'skii, N. S. Trubetskoi, P. M. Bitsilli, B. M. Engel'gardt, V. V. Vinogradov, among many others, made a inestimable contribution to the study of Dostoevsky (1996.26).

Although Friendlender is certainly right in pointing out that many seminal studies were written in the Soviet Union, one should keep in mind that often these same studies were not distributed by the State, and that the scholars themselves were subject to persecution and repression.

6. Miller would rant in his later years, "To think that this huge epic is still considered indispensable reading in any college curriculum! Only the other day I dipped into it again, to reassure myself that I had not made a grave error of judgment. Let me confess that today it seems even more insane to me than when I was a lad of eighteen" ("To Read or Not to Read" 1962c.158).

7. It is interesting to compare Miller, Durrell, and Nin's esteem for *The Possessed* to D. H. Lawrence's attitude to the book (note his take on the 'pure mind' which is supposedly degraded in the novel):

> I have taken a great dislike to Dostoevsky in *The Possessed.* It seems so sensational, and such a degrading of the pure mind, somehow. It seems that the pure mind, the true reason, which surely is noble, were made trampled and filthy under the hoofs of secret, perverse, indirect sensuality. Petronius is straight and above-board. Whatever he does, he doesn't try to degrade and dirty the pure mind in him. But Dostoevsky, mixing God and Sadism, he is foul ("Letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell," 1 February 1916, *Letters of Lawrence* II.521).

8. As N. M Lary points out, Kirillov's words can be translated a number of ways ("now" "at once" and–literally–"this hour"). Lary provides a comparison of Kirillov's suicide and the suicide of Jonas Chuzzlewit in Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* and suggests that Kirillov's last words might have been inspired by Jonas Chuzzlewit's despairing cries (Lary 1973.10-11).

9. Miller also planned to include the entire Kirillov's speech to Stavrogin in an anthology of "the things I like...I have about fifteen selections in mind--the most heterogeneous imaginable" (20 January 1937.5-6).

10. This text also appeared as part three of Miller's *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch* (1958), where it is called--with Milton's description of Satan in mind, no doubt--"Paradise Lost."

11. That Moricand is ultimately depicted by Miller as ludicrous, ugly, and pathetic is in keeping with Dostoevsky's presentation of evil in *The Possessed.* Richard Pope who addresses the subject in his essay "Peter Verkhovensky and the Banality of Evil" (1993), writes that in "*The Possessed*, Dostoevsky launched a frontal attack on the romanticisation of evil whereby it is depicted as glamorous, heroic, and even attractive, and he attempted to reduce it to what he felt was its proper depiction–something ugly, banal, and ludicrous, though still preeminently dangerous" (39).

12. Nin quotes Stavrogin's words in a letter to Antonin Artaud of June 22, 1933 (that is, after she admits to herself that she actually likes evil): "Do you remember Dostoevsky's novel *The Possessed*, which says, 'I get as much joy from doing evil as from doing good'? I don't feel that way myself" (the letter is translated from the French and included in the day's entry in *UD:I* 203). Note also, how she reduces the whole novel to that one statement by Stavrogin.

13. Essentially, Miller cites an accurate translation of the text. There is, however, a minor omission and a major discrepancy. In the Russian original, the entire quote is as follows: "Love all of God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand [within it]. Love every little leaf, every ray of God [God's light]. Love animals, love plants, love every thing. If you love every thing you will understand [postignesh'] God's mystery in all things." Miller's citation

excludes the sentence about loving animals, plants and every thing, and instead of "understanding God's mystery" talks about *preserving* the "divine mystery of things."

14. The quote seems to come from *Dostoevsky's Worldview* [*Mirosozertsanie Dostoevskogo*] (1934) and closely corresponds to the Russian text on pages 7-8. It is possible, however, that Miller was drawing upon a French translation of the Russian text, hence the several discrepancies.

15. Dearborn bases her account on the description of it given by the publisher's young son who would grow up to become famous in his own right as Maurice Girodias, the publisher of V. Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955), W. Burrough's *Naked Lunch* (1959), and other classics of literary counterculture.

16. For an interesting account of the progress of Miller's books through the American legal system, see Charles Rembar's *The End of Obscenity* (1968).

17. I am quoting from the original of Miller's letter which is in the archives of S.I.U.'s Morris Library, COLL 46/1/2.

18. Miller wrote to Nin in 1932: "Regarding...those two years of Stavrogin's in Moscow we get so uneffectively, do you know that this part was eliminated from the book (I think it was censored). Anyway today there is a book giving you passages and notes on all this which was merely hinted at" (12 February 1932.24).

19. The notes to the most authoritative edition of Dostoevsky's complete works to date (the thirty volume edition brought out by the Soviet Academy of Sciences in 1972-1990), have this to say about the censorship problems with the chapter:

> A particularly important episode in the creation of *The Possessed* concerns the history of the chapter "At Tikhon's," which had a complicated fate. The chapter, meant to be an integral part of the novel according to Dostoevsky's plans, was rejected by the editorial board of "*Russkii vestnik*" [the journal in which the novel was first published as a serial]. After lengthy and unsuccessful efforts to save it, [Dostoevsky] was forced to agree to the demands of Katkov [who was the editor] and to exclude the chapter which was extremely important to him from the serial publication of *The Possessed.* Afterwards--after the [serial] publication of the novel--[Dostoevsky] made no further efforts to reinstate it, probably because he considered [all efforts] hopeless under the existing censorship (XII.237).

The chapter was published separately in Russia after Dostoevsky's death. Miller, Nin, and Durrell read the chapter in the English translation.

20. F. I. Tiutchev's version of the poem is given in Constance Garnett's translation of *The Brothers Karamazov*, published originally in 1911 (the quote here is from page 127 of New York's Vintage House edition of 1950).

21. There can be little doubt that Durrell is referring to the insect quote via Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*. In the novel, Mitia Karamazov is quoting F. I. Tiutchev's version of Schiller's "An die Freude" (Tiutchev calls his poem "The Song of Happiness" ["Pesn' radosti"]). Since Tiutchev is not well known in the West, it is highly unlikely that Durrell had come across this poem in a book of Tiutchev's poetry. Victor Terras comments that Schiller's original has "Wurm" which means "'any creeping thing' (as at least one English translator has actually translated the word)" (1981.172), which would in turn indicate that Durrell did not get the quote from an English translation of the German poem, but is quoting directly from the Garnett translation of Dostoevsky's novel.

22. A further indication that this particular part of Dostoevsky's book was important for Villa Seurat writers may be found in Nin's letter to Miller when she writes to him that "I thought of you...while reading *The Brothers Karamazov* (The Sensualists)" (July 23, 1932.71).

23. Significantly, this depiction is preceded by a vignette about a young Indian girl who is given in marriage to an "old roué" and who dies in childbirth, telling the doctor "I am tired of this fucking...I don't want to fuck any more, doctor" (89).

24. A classic essay on the use of insect imagery in Dostoevsky's novels is Ralph E. Matlaw's "Recurrent Imagery in Dostoevsky" published in *Harvard Slavic Studies* 3 (1957) 201-225. Minor inaccuracies aside (the Russian version of Schiller's poem cited in *Brothers Karamazov* is incorrectly attributed to another poet), the essay still provides a solid account of how insect imagery is used in the novel.

25. The first of these is actually a title of one of Michael Fraenkel's tomes on death.

26. In the text cited, Miller is comparing Dostoevsky with Balzac, finding special similarities on the subject of suffering.

27. Miller saw *Notes from the Dead House* as an autobiographical text.

28. Miller travelled across the United States when he was advanced $500 by Doubleday Publishers in 1940 to write something fine and patriotic about America. How they could have seriously expected him to produce a gushing account of America remains a mystery. Miller has never been reluctant to expresses his less-than-positive view of his native land. Especially suggestive is the segment in *Tropic of Cancer* where the narrator muses, "It's best to keep America just like that, always in the background a sort of picture post card which you look at in a weak moment...a big patriotic open space with cows and sheep and tenderhearted men ready to bugger everything in sight, man, woman or beast. It doesn't exist, America. It's a name you give to an abstract idea..." (208). What Miller produced as result of the trip, however, is two volumes of some of his funniest and most acerbic attacks on the establishment and politics, and American food (especially recommended is his "The Staff of Life" [1947] that contains a fully contemporary account of the kind of cooking one can

expect in American diners) which came to be known as *The Airconditioned Nightmare* collection (Vol 1, 1945; Vol 2, 1947).

29. In May of 1957, the Attorney General of Norway ordered *Sexus* seized as "obscene writing." Proceedings were instituted against the two booksellers who carried the book. After they were found guilty as charged in June of 1958, they appealed to the Supreme Court of Norway.

30. In a 1941 Soviet edition of the collected works of Saltykov-Shchedrin, the editor provides the following commentary to *Notes from the Underground* which Saltykov-Shchedrin parodies:

> The "hero" of *Notes* studies his own psychology in the greatest of details and for an agonizingly long time digs around in the turbid mess of his own soul, trying, apparently, to find some sort of a formula which could bring some unity into the chaos of his soul. But he, or more accurately, Dostoevsky himself is not able to do this. The "hero", just as his creator, does not manage to break through the circle of contradictory self-definitions (VI.607).

And lest one thinks that the identification of the Underground Man with Dostoevsky is restricted to Soviet scholars, in the 1992 edition of the *Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, in a chapter which includes a discussion of the Underground Man who is called a "hypersensitive paradoxicalist," Dostoevsky himself is described as "inherently a devotee of paradox with an essentially deviant view of life" (Freeborn 307,327).

31. A thought-provoking connection that has never been suggested at all, to my knowledge, is the link between Villa Seurat reading of *Notes From the Underground* and their exploration of Zen Buddhism. Both Miller and Durrell were intently curious about Zen Buddhism. In many letters to Durrell, Miller writes that he identifies with the Zen masters: "Zen is my idea of life absolutely--the closest thing to what I am unable to formulate in words. I am a Zen addict through and through...if you want to penetrate Buddhism, read Zen" (late March 1939.122). In the late 1930s, he reads everything he can about Zen Buddhism, and passes some of the books on to Durrell and Nin. Durrell also shares this fascination. While working on *Justine*, the first text of *Alexandria Quartet*, he writes Miller that he is "deep in Zen Buddhist treatises" (November 1955.278).

Given their suspicions that the solid and unshakeable nature of reality is not so stable after all and that the infallibility of logic and the rational mind is illusory, the fact that they both considered themselves adepts of Zen (especially the Chinese version) is not particularly surprising. What is more interesting, it appears that Gide (Miller's favourite commentator of Dostoevsky) makes the connection between Dostoevsky and Zen in his lectures on Dostoevsky. True, the link is made by Gide in passing and remains tentative and vague, but it is there. In Gide's fifth lecture, when he is talking about Dostoevsky's hostility to the Roman Catholic Church. "Dostoevsky," Gide says, "leads us, we may take it, if not to anarchy, to a sort of Buddhism" (132). This anarchic Buddhism (as good a definition of Zen Buddhism as any) is juxtaposed in the same lecture with *Notes From the Underground.* On

a certain level then--and one wonders if Gide was fully conscious of this himself--the reader can make the connection between the Zen Buddhist belief in the limitation of the rational mind (like the famous *koan*, "what is the sound of one hand clapping?") and the Underground Man's rebellion against rationality. Did Miller and Durrell use the ideas of Zen Buddhism as a prism through which they read *Notes From the Underground*?

32. It is interesting that Durrell chooses to quote Dostoevsky in French here rather than in English.

33. Actually, the text that he cites is Dostoevsky's *Raw Youth* (*Podrostok*) (the words of Versilov). This is either a mistake or a deliberate mystification of the reader on Durrell's part.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. In an early book, *Moloch, or this Gentile World* (1928/1992) there is a reference to Sonia and Raskolnikov together, as well as a direct quote from the novel, when the protagonist "imagines] himself another Raskolnikov, another assassin waiting for the words of a Sonia: 'Go to the marketplace and kneel before the multitude. Go and confess your sins'" (235). In fact, Miller knows so much about the Dostoevsky novel, that in *Nexus* it is noted that the correct translation of the novel's title is not "Crime and Punishment" but "The Crime and its Punishment" (231).

2. Alternatively, one might argue that Miller is simply taking the erotic imagery with which the Dostoevsky passage is fraught a step further.

3. The narrator of *Sexus* meditates on this same problem at some length. Here is an interesting passage that again brings together the concepts of lying, creating, and story-telling:

> That *histoire* should be story, lie and history all in one, was of a significance not to be despised. And that a story, give out as the invention of a creative artist should be regarded as the most effective material for getting at the truth about its author, was also significant. Lies can only be imbedded in truth. They have no separate existence; they have a symbiotic relationship with truth. A good lie reveals more that the truth can ever reveal. To the one, that is who seeks truth (339).

4. In *Sexus*, Mara decides to change her name to Mona (197) (this is apparently based on June's changing of her name in the 1920s).

5. There are, obviously, many female characters in Dostoevsky's novels who fit into this category. Nastasia Filippovna and Grushenka are chosen here because they are generally better known than the other representatives of the same group. These characters are sometimes referred to by Dostoevsky scholars as "Infernal Women" ["infernal'nitsy"] (this is

the other adjective frequently associated with them; Mitia Karamazov, for instance, calls Grushenka "an infernal woman. This is the queen of all the infernal women who can be imagined in this world!" [XIV.143]). They are called here "fantastic" rather than "infernal" because they are called the former in Dostoevsky's novels much more frequently than they are called the latter. Nastasia Filippovna is called a "fantastic woman" by her seducer Totsky and by the narrator (VIII.39; 170) and her beauty is described as "fantastic and demonic" (VIII.482). Grushenka is called the "most fantastic of all fantastic creatures" ["samoe fantasticheskoe iz fantasticheskikh sozdanii"] (XIV.136) and a "fantastic little mind" ["fantasticheskaia golovka"] (XIV.138). According to Vladimir Dal', the great Russian lexicographer of the nineteenth century and Dostoevsky's contemporary, "fantastic" can mean "unrealizable [and] fanciful" or "ingenious and capricious, special and distinctive." Dal''s interpretation of the term is not necessarily adequate because Dostoevsky redefines the term in his novels.

6. Miller identifies these figures as representations of June. See, for example, the series of interviews in 1969 with Georges Belmont (published as *Henry Miller--Entretiens de Paris avec Georges Belmont* [1970]).

7. One scholar of Nin's work, Suzanne Nalbantian, argues that in Nin's "fiction" she "dismembered her 'self' and configured it into three major personae, all of whom were artist types: Djuna the dancer, Lillian the jazz musician and Sabina the actress" (5). She does point out, however, that

> The Sabina figure, who has been thought by many a critic to originate in June Miller, appears in *House of Incest* and proceeds through *Cities of the Interior*, contaminating the other mythic figures of Lillian and Djuna in *Ladders to Fire* and *Children of the Albatross*, and evolving through Stella into the fleeting actress figure in *A Spy in the House of Love* (8).

8. June drew inspiration from a variety of sources. Some of her favourites included Knut Hamsun's Edvarda of his darkly romantic novel *Pan* (1894), H. Rider Haggard's She of the immensely popular early SF/fantasy novels *She* (1887) and *Aysha, or the Return of She* (1905), and August Strindberg's Henriette of the play *Crime and Crime* (1899). She was also a film buff, and avidly followed the careers of many Hollywood leading ladies. Nonetheless, Dostoevsky remained a perennial favourite.

9. The letter appears in a somewhat different form in *A Literate Passion* February 25, 1932. 14-15. This quote is only found in Nin's citation of the letter in her diary.

10. June had a series of conversations with Kenneth C. Dick sometime in the 1960s. Even though she was obviously not well both physically and mentally, she talked about Dostoevsky at length and told Dick that "Among the great men who interest me there are Miller, Dostoevsky, Sartre and Mozart--in that order" (Dick 217).

11. Miller's early attempts to write in New York in the 1920s produced a failed novel *Moloch*, which was eventually cannibalized for other texts and published only posthumously in 1992. The central character of that novel thinks about his correspondence with another character: "He missed those huge bundles of mail which used to pass between them...reams about Dostoevsky...almost a little book on *The Idiot* alone..." (56). In Paris, Miller planned to write about "*The Idiot* in French--with a French Madame for Nastasia Filippovna" (cited in Martin 191). Finally, in 1960, the year when Miller was asked to be a judge at the Cannes Film Festival and travelled throughout Europe, he made sure to visit the house in Florence where Dostoevsky wrote *The Idiot*.

12. Kenneth C. Dick, the author of the eccentric study, *Henry Miller: Colossus of One* (1967), interviewed June extensively in the 1960s when she was by all accounts afflicted with a cornucopia of illnesses, physical and mental. She had apparently been committed to a mental hospital sometime in the 1940s where she was administered electro-shock treatment therapy. According to her account of it, she fell off the table during shock therapy and broke several bones in her body, remaining an invalid. It is much more likely that she was not administered a sufficient dose of muscle relaxants (it is quite possible that at that time none were administered at all) and bone fracture resulted during muscular spasms. Her general behaviour during Dick's visits--he records that at one point she talked non-stop for 12 hours and that he had to get up and wave his hands to get her attention so that he could excuse himself--points to either a drug-induced high or a manic state. (I am grateful to Dr. Evgenia Rubinraut, psychiatrist and psychologist, for her insights into this matter.)

13. June provided Miller with several completely different accounts of her origins and her past. Miller realized that she was lying, but he was not quite sure which version from those she provided was the more truthful one. The narrator in *Tropic of Capricorn* comments: "She changed her whole manner of speech...her phraseology. She conducted herself so skilfully that it was impossible even to broach the subject of origins...Automatically, without the slightest knowledge of legend, she began to create little by little the ontological background, the mythic sequence of events preceding her conscious birth" (238).

14. Dr. Otto Rank was a renegade Freudian therapist (not a medical doctor) who had belonged to the inner circle of Viennese psychotherapists, Freud's so-called adopted children, who were given carnelian rings as symbols of their special status. Nin went into therapy with Rank in 1933--several years after he was 'excommunicated' by Freud for his unorthodox views--ostensibly to stop her obsessive diary writing. Their relationship changed from a patient-analyst one to that of lovers to that of colleagues (Rank instructed Nin in therapy and she practised as his assistant in New York), before it ultimately soured. Rank mentions Dostoevsky occasionally in his writings, but his view of Dostoevsky is not particularly different from the one Freud expounded in his famous introduction to the first German translation of *Brothers Karamazov*, "Dostoevsky and Parricide" (translated into English in 1929). Interestingly, Nin alleges in the diaries that she started an affair with her father on Rank's advice.

15. Before Nin was analysed by Rank, she was in analysis with Dr. René Allendy, the founding member of the Paris Psychoanalytic Society. In her diaries she wrote "if [Allendy] knew some of my extravagances, generosities, and unworthinesses, I would appear to him more like a Dostoevskian character than a Latin" (*UD:I* 66).

16. Nin could not see what Dostoevsky had possibly in common with anything emanating out of Hollywood and confided to her diary with some annoyance that "June has a curious way of jumbling values, of mentioning in the same breath Dostoevsky and Greta Garbo" (*DI* 152-153). Actually, the connection of Hollywood and Dostoevsky is an old and interesting one, albeit hardly explored. A later type of Hollywood Sex Goddess, Marilyn Monroe, dreamed of playing Grushenka in *Brothers Karamazov* (Eli Wallach quoted Monroe on the *A&E Biography Series: "Marilyn Monroe"* which aired on "A&E" in April of 1997).

17. The word, in its meaning of "a woman who intentionally attracts and exploits men; and adventuress; a Jezebel," existed in English since at least 1911, and there were films even before 1915 which included these kinds of predatory female characters.

18. For a thorough description and discussion of the film and of Theda Bara's persona, see Ronald Geni's *Theda Bara; A Biography of the Silent Screen Vamp, With a Filmography* (1996).

19. Nin had her doubts about how much June was actually sacrificing for Miller and how much she was just using him as an excuse for her more unsavoury activities (a Sonia Marmeladova who *enjoys* her street-walking for the family's sake, as it were). She writes in her diary:

> The sacrifices June made for Henry. Were they sacrifices, or were they things she did to heighten her personality?...She urged Henry to leave his job. She wanted to work for him. (Secretly I have envisaged prostitution, and to say it is for Henry is only to find a justification.) (*UD:HJ* 135).

She concludes, however, that the sacrifices were genuine.

20. Gide's actual words are:

> one can *hierarchize* (forgive me this horrible word!) [Dostoevsky's] characters: not according to their goodness of heart, but by their degree of pride.
>
> Dostoevsky, presents on one side the humble...one the other, the proud...The latter are usually the more intelligent. We shall see them, tormented by the demon of pride, ever striving after something higher still (87).

21. Gavrila Ivolgin calls Nastasia Filippovna "an extremely [chrezvychaino] Russian woman" (VIII.104). Grushenka's beauty is specifically and repeatedly described as "Russian" (XIV.136,137).

22. Jay Martin writes that "[Miller] really felt pangs of jealousy whenever one of [June's] lovers was mentioned" (82); Mary Dearborn notes Miller's "paranoia and jealousy" (79); Robert Ferguson writes of Miller "f[inding] himself jealous of...June's 'overtures' to his friend" (84).

23. Mary Dearborn comments: "More and more, watching June's Circe-like maneuvers, he felt like Dostoevsky's eternal husband" (98).

24. Grace tries to fashion herself into a type of a Hollywood Vamp. This is Grace trying to seduce Gregory:

> She was actually being seductive; and above all, not seductive by the ordinary formulae, but by the dashing hectic formulae of the cinema. It was astonishing. Posed like that, her hip stuck out under the palm of one hand, her slender, rather frail legs Venus'd–one knee over the other–she had become that cinema parrot, a dangerous woman. Even her small face was strained to an imaginary expression before an imaginary camera (48).

25. Dostoevsky writes this in his notebook of 1872-1875. This is cited in the commentary to *The Double* in *Collected Works* (I.189). Also, when writing *The Eternal Husband*, Dostoevsky writes in a letter of 18 March 1869 to N. N. Strakhov:

> I was thinking of writing this story already four years ago...in response to the words of Apollon Grigoriev who praised my *Notes from Underground* and told me then: "Continue writing in this manner [v etom rode]." But this is not *Notes from Underground*, this is something different in form, although the quintessence [sushchnost'] is the same, my usual quintessence (XXIX.32).

26. Apollon Grigoriev had apparently told Dostoevsky that he like the *Notes* and that Dostoevsky should continue to write like this from now on.

27. In another 1960 article focussing on "the character who forms the pattern for most of the people in *The Black Book*," Rexroth continues:

> Dostoevsky called him the Underground Man...Certainly Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* is one of literature's most disagreeable experiences. On the contrary, *The Black Book* is often even funny. It is in the tradition of "bitter comedy"...but then, I suppose, so is Dostoevsky's book, in a sense (27-28).

28. The comparison with the toothache is especially apt, since the Underground Man uses toothache as a symbol in his *Notes* (he develops it into an example of how a cultivated man can extract pleasure from unpleasant things).

29. The editors were: Hiram Haydn of Harcourt Brace Publishers (who agreed to publish them with the "proviso that she agree to make significant cuts and edit as Haydn directed" [475]), Gunther Stuhlmann–Nin's literary agent, and--for the last volume of the *Diaries*--

Rupert Pole, Nin's second husband and literary executor.

30. This is how Deirdre Bair--one of the very few scholars to be granted access to the original diaries--describes the process of editing the unexpurgated version of the diaries and the result:

> [Ruper Pole--Nin's second husband and literary executor] selects the passages from the original diaries...and gives each volume its particular focus and shape. Gunther Stuhlmann [Nin's literary agent] then does the careful and precise editing that drove Anaïs Nin to tears in her lifetime. The two men argue their positions and points of view until both are satisfied with the text, then it is sent to a Harcourt Brace editor. All this shaping of [Nin's] original text...has resulted in something different in many cases from what she actually wrote (517-518).

31. In 1970, Nin was diagnosed with cancer to which she finally succumbed in January of 1977. She continued to be involved in the editing of the diaries until her death. The first volume was chosen for consideration here because there is little dispute that Nin exercised a large measure of creative control over the text, and because after the first volume was published and she began receiving fan mail and invitations for various functions and events, she started to take time away from editing; Bair writes:

> Her fan mail gave the first indication of the onslaught that changed her life in a flash. It increased exponentially, and she answered it herself...at great lengths...She was bombarded with requests for interviews and lectures that entailed frenetic travel...her analyst, her two husbands, editors, and friends...all agreed that she was exhausting herself with minutiae and neglecting important issues for peripheral concerns (480).

32. There are several instances in the text where it is not clear whether it is Jeanne or the narrator who is talking.

33. In Dostoevsky's original, there is a pun on "kapital'nyi" (it can mean either a well built house or an apartment building–a house built for the rental profit).

34. Structures and dwellings play an important and frequently symbolic role in the writings of the Villa Seurat Circle. Especially suggestive are the many descriptions of London's Crystal Palace in Durrell's *The Black Book.*

35. Miller takes the strongest stand against civilization in his *Colossus of Maroussi* (1941), written after his trip to Greece where he has a spiritual awakening of sorts. He writes, "I am done with civilization and its spawn of cultured souls...From now on I am a nomad, a spiritual nobody" (98).

36. This quote is from Miller's letter to Edmund Wilson which was published with the 1930 article written by Wilson about Miller (see *Critical Essays on Henry Miller* 1992.93-94).

37. *Notes from Underground* was initially supposed to be part of a novel called *Confession*, but Dostoevsky changed his plans. In letters to his brother, he refers to it variously as an article [stat'ia] (XXVIII.73) and novella [povest'] (XXXVIII.84,85). In his author's note to the text, he calls it notes [zapiski], but he varies it by writing it uncapitalized with no quotation marks around it (i.e., zapiski), capitalized with quotation marks around it (i.e., "Zapiski"), uncapitalized but with quotation marks around it (i.e., "zapiski"). There is some dispute among scholars as to the genre in which *Notes from Underground* fit. Mikhail Bakhtin calls it a Menippean Satire, but this view has been challenged by others; Richard Peace, for instance, writes: "Bakhtin's generic definition of the work seems almost an afterthought...A glaring deficiency is his failure to mention the polemical sub-structure of the work" (94).

NOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

1. Polyphony is explicitly mentioned in Durrell's last masterwork *The Avignon Quintet* (1974-1985). It provides an interesting possibility that Durrell's later experimentation with multiple narrators who compete with each other in the process of narration, and with characters who are authors who create characters who are also authors and who then come in to contradict their creators in the process of the story telling is once again connected to Dostoevsky's works (obviously, much more research is needed to determine the extent of such a connection).

APPENDIX

110 "Я обязан себя застрелить, потому что самый полный пункт моего своеволия–это убить себя самому."

111 "–Когда же вы узнали, что вы так счастливы?
–На прошлой неделе во вторник, нет, в среду,"

112 "Бледность лица его была неестественная, черные глаза совсем неподвижны и глядели в какую-то точку в пространстве."

112 "страшные крики: –Сейчас, сейчас, сейчас, сейчас..."

113 "Когда она выбежала, я был при шпаге; я вынул шпагу и хотел было тут же заколоть себя, для чего–не знаю, глупость была страшная, конечно, но, должно быть, от восторга. Понимаешь ли ты, что от иного восторга можно убить себя"

116 "Всё хорошо...Всё...Эта свекровь умрет, а девочка останется–всё хорошо...Всё хорошо, всё. Вем тем хорошо, кто знает, что всё хорошо."

116 "–А кто с голоду умрет, а кто обидит и обесчестит девочку–это хорошо?"

116 "–Хорошо. И кто размозжит голову за ребенка, и то хорошо; и кто не размозжит, и то хорошо."

133 "Насекомым–сладострастье!"

133 "идея разврата, который без любви, грубо и бесстыже, начинает прямо с того, чем настоящая любовь венчается."

137 "сладострастье буря"

145 "'Помилуйте,–закричат вам,–восставать нельзя: это дважды два четыре! Природа вас не спрашивается; ей дела нет до ваших желаний и до того, нравятся ль вам ее законы или не нравятся. Вы обязаны принимать ее так, как она есть, а следственно, и все ее результаты. Стена, значит, и есть стена... и т.д., и т.д.'"

145 "я и не примирюсь с ней потому толко, что у меня каменная стена и у меня сил не хватило."

152 “Черт возьми, у меня с этим делом ум за разум заходит!”

152-153“И какое мне в том беспокойство, что он несвязанный ходит по городу! Да пусть, пусть его погуляет пока, пусть; я ведь и без того знаю, что он моя жертвочка и никуда не убежит от меня!”

159 “–Как же? Стало быть, обеих хотите любить?
–О, да, да!
–Помилуйте, князь, что вы говоритесь, опомнитесь!”

163 “Ну, кто не пленился бы иногда этой женщиной до забвения рассудка и... всего?”

163 “заразился и заражен доселе”

163 “Знал тоже, что деньгу нажить любит, наживает, на злые проценты дает”

163 “понимавшая толк в деньгах, приобретательница, скупая и осторожная”

163 “денег-то, денег-то сколько ушло”

163 “меня все торговали”

164 “Пожалел он меня первый, единый”

164 “Спасибо, князь, со мной так никто не говорил до сих пор”

165 “а она ведь ужасно страдала, а?”

165 “Она точно была влюблена в нее.”

169 “эта женщина,–иногда с такими циническими и дерзкими приемами,–на самом деле была гораздо стыдливее, нежнее и доверчивее, чем бы можно о ней заключить.”

170 “она, гордая и ни в чем не повинная!”

170 “гордая и наглая”

170 “Это гордое лицо, ужасно гордое”

170 “необъятная гордость”

171 "Я эту Америку, черт ее дери, уже теперь ненавижу. Пусть Груша будет со мной, но посмотри на нее: ну американка ли она? Она русская, вся до косточки русская, она по матери родной земле затоскует...Ненавижу я эту Америку уж теперь!"

172 "дар привлечения, порабощения и владычества!"

173 "он в двадцать лет *ничего* не приметил!"

173 "Он был именно такого свойства ревнивец, что в разлуке с любимой женщиной тотчас же навыдумывал бог знает каких ужасов о том, что с нею делается и как она ему там 'изменяет', но, прибежав к ней опять, потрясенный, убитый, уверенный уже безвозвратно, что она успела-таки ему изменить, с первого же взгляда на ее лицо, на смеющееся, веселое и ласковое лицо этой женщины,–тотчас же возрождался духом, тотчас же терял всякое подозрение и с радостным стыдом бранил себя сам за ревность."

173 "и на мгновение он становился доверчив и благороден"

173 "Павел Павлович действительно хотел его зарезать, но что, может быть, еще за четверть часа сам не знал, что зарежет."

176 "–Буду мужем ее, в супруги удостоюсь, а коль придет любовник, выйду в другую комнату. У ее приятелей буду калоши грязные обчищать, самовар раздувать, на посылках бегать..."

177 "Он вдруг как бы весь смирился и принизился. Он смотрел на всех робко и радостно, часто и нервно хихикая, с благодарным видом виноватой собачонки, которую опять приласкали и впустили."

177 "В маленькой собачке замерло всякое соперничество."

180 "А их ведь много, их там сотни, подземных-то, с молотками в руках."

180 "мы, подземные человеки"

185 "это лицо рекоммендует самого себя, свой взгляд и как бы хочет выяснить те причины, по которым оно явилось и должно было явиться в нашей среде. В следующем отрывке придут уже настоящие 'записки' этого лица о некоторых событиях его жизни."

185-186 "Это я наврал про себя давеча...Со злости наврал...Я поминутно сознавал в

себе много-премного самых противоположных элементов...Я не только злым, но даже и ничем не сумел сделаться: ни злым, ни добрым, ни подлецом, ни честным, ни героем, ни насекомым."

188 "То и говорить ни с кем не хочу, а то до того дойду, что и не только разговорюсь, но еще вздумаю с ними сойтись по-приятельски."

188 "Либо герой, либо грязь, средины не было."

189 "Дома я...всего больше читал....Чтение, конечно, много помогало,–волновало, услаждало и мучило."

191 "она дорого мне *за всё это* заплатит."

191 "походило чуть ли не на мщение"

191 "прямой, законный, непосредственный плод сознания–это инерция"

193 "исправительное наказание"

199 "Я сам начинал чувствовать, что говорю"

201-202"Более всего меня игра увлекала."

202 "надо мной носился паралич"

202 "я тщеславен так, как будто с меня кожу содрали, и мне уже от одного воздуха больно."

204 "всё дело-то человеческое, кажется, и действительно в том только и состоит, чтоб человек поминутно доказывал себе, что он человек, а не шифтик! хоть своими боками, да доказывал; хоть троглодитством, да доказывал."

205 "Что припомнится, то и запишу."

205 "я именно хочу испытать: можно ли хоть с самим собой совершенно быть откровенным и не побояться всей правды?"

206-207"Они говорили о Кавказе, о том, что такое истинная страсть, о гальбике, о выгодных местах по службе; о том, сколько доходу у гусара Подхаржевского, которого никто из них не знал лично, и радовались, что у него много доходу; о необыкновенной красоте и грации княгини Д–й, которую тоже никто из них

никогда не видал; наконец дошло до того, что Шекспир бессмертен."

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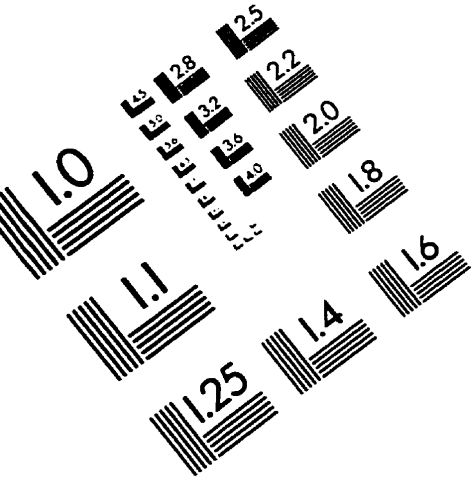

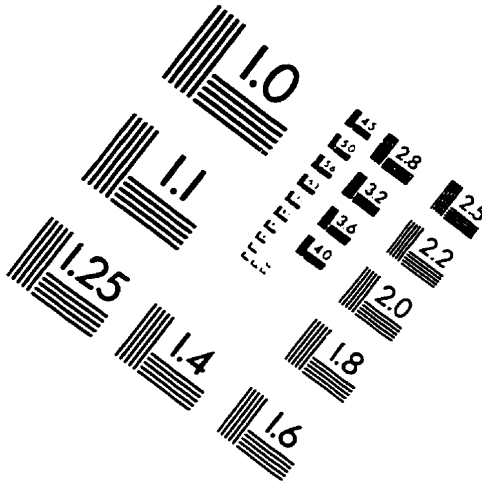

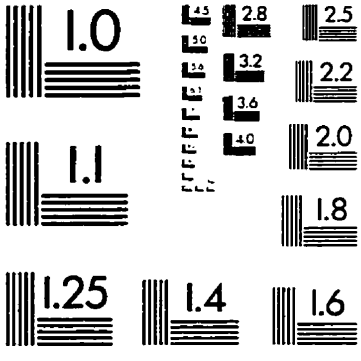

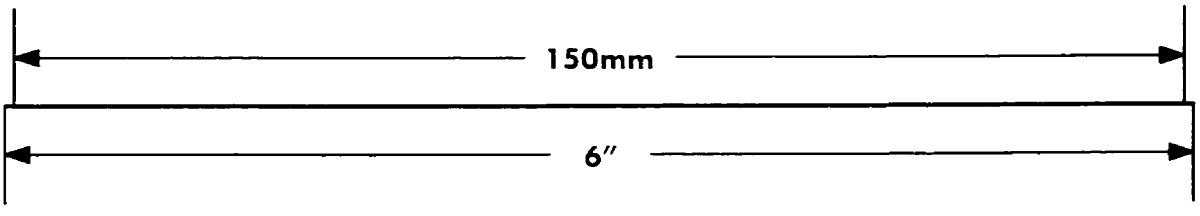

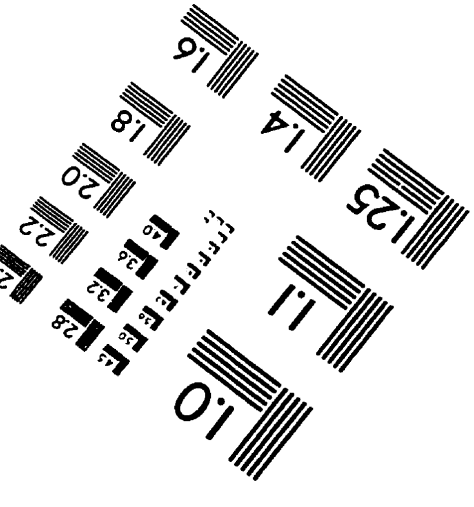

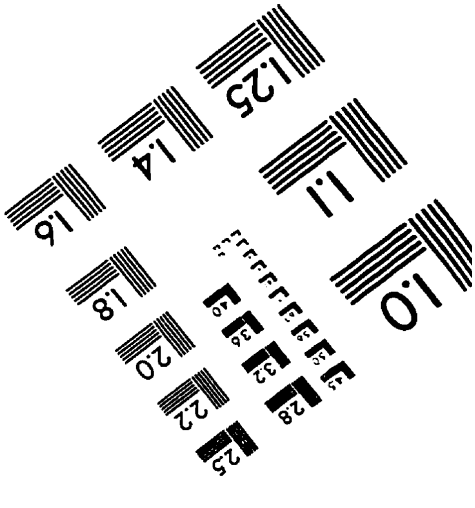

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