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Spitting in the Faces of Gods and Dancing Upon Their Carrion: Zen and the Joy-Fueled Fury of Henry Miller and Friedrich Nietzsche

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**Spitting in the Faces of Gods and Dancing Upon Their Carrion:
Zen and the Joy-Fueled Fury of Henry Miller and Friedrich Nietzsche**

by

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Abstract

Henry Miller, the notorious and frequently misjudged author, and Friedrich Nietzsche, the furiously passionate and often misunderstood philosopher, share striking similarities in the theoretical concerns found throughout their works. Partially appropriated from and inspired by Zen-Buddhism, Miller and Nietzsche's related philosophies led both authors to conclude that the greatest task in life is to pursue the honest creation of Art, the Self, and Joy. Additionally, these two enigmatic essayists mutually emphasized the importance of loving the physical world and physical existence while living joyfully by uniting with other elated, *lean* and *free spirits* to deconstruct and recreate the Self, as well as social constructs such as Art and God. This exploration surveys the similar presence of Zen-Buddhist theories visible in both Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* and Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*. In close analysis of their related texts, insights into the life and times of Henry Miller and his infamous muse, Friedrich Nietzsche, will be discussed in examination of the Zen-Buddhist influence and representations evident throughout their respective works.

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Introduction

Decades after Friedrich Nietzsche first proclaimed “God is dead” in his piece *The Gay Science* (1882), Henry Miller wrote, “I have found God, but he is insufficient” (98) in *Tropic of Cancer* (1934). In an age when *God is dead* or, at best, *insufficient*, Miller and Nietzsche attempt to redefine God, Art, and the meaning of their own existence. Partly inspired by Zen-Buddhist principles including Zen, Satori, Dualism, the Wheel of Life, and the Unconfined Third Perspective, Miller and Nietzsche both challenge dualist constructions of what God is and what defines *good* and *bad* Art. Although Paul R. Jackson’s essay “Henry Miller, Emerson, and the Divided Self” emphasizes the presence of Emerson’s influence in Miller’s works, this thesis focuses on both the Nietzschean and Zen-Buddhist depictions existing in Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer* (TOC). Related examples of Buddhist inspired theory from Nietzsche’s works will vary from text to text throughout, but great emphasis is placed on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One* (or *All and None* (TSZ)) concerning the following discussions of specific Buddhist principles visible within Nietzsche’s works relative to Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer*.

To begin with, Chapter 1 of this discussion predominantly highlights similarities in the lives and times of Miller and Nietzsche, concentrating on their comparable fall from the Lutheran faith, their mutual nomadic tendencies, and the tense era in which Nietzsche published his core works and Miller wrote *Tropic of Cancer*, the time between World Wars. Emphasis is also placed on displaying textual evidence of Miller’s profound appreciation for Nietzschean philosophy, as well as examining resemblances in the critical reception of their works during their particular time periods. With biographical information in place for both Miller and Nietzsche, Chapter 2 discusses their related introduction to Buddhism, as well as defines the precise Zen-Buddhist theories evident in both *Tropic of Cancer* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Correspondingly, Chapters 3 and 4 concentrates on examples of Buddhist influenced philosophy within *Tropic of Cancer* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In examination of their analogous use of recurring themes (including music, art, poverty, laughter, and dance) found throughout both authors' works, similarities in the Buddhist inspired theory visible throughout Miller and Nietzsche's works will be highlighted as well. Although James W. Decker noted the presence of Nietzschean connections within the literary structure and philosophy of *Tropic of Cancer* in his essay *Henry Miller and the Narrative Form: Constructing the Self, Rejecting Modernity*, similarities in the biographical lives, philosophical musings, and literary representations of Zen-Buddhist theories found throughout Miller and Nietzsche's texts will be analyzed to greater extent. With evidence from their related works, the opportunity to advance knowledge of *Tropic of Cancer* and Henry Miller's motivations as a writer and artist arises. In the exploration of Miller and Nietzsche's use of similar themes within their literature, resemblances to the Zen-Buddhist doctrines of Zen, Satori, Dualism, and the Wheel of Life become recognizable in both authors' texts and shall be brought to the forefront of this discussion, revealing parallels in the philosophies of Miller and Nietzsche alike

Accordingly, the discussion of Miller and Nietzsche's related literature in Chapter 4 emphasizes their mutual appreciation for the honest creation of the Self, Art, and eternal Joy, while Chapter Five will focus on the cultural relevance, importance, and implications of Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* and Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. As the discussion of Nietzschean and Buddhist influence evident in Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* unfolds in the following chapters, this conversation also points out areas where further academic research is required regarding issues in both Miller and Nietzsche's works. This section determines that greater research and scholarly discussions of Miller's works in academic circles are both essential and relevant due to

the current lack of critical academic discourse regarding Miller's texts, particularly pointing out the scarcity of feminist critique concerning *Tropic of Cancer* today.

This exploration concludes that Miller, the poetic novelist, and Nietzsche, the furiously passionate philosopher, share striking similarities in the theoretical reflections found within their works. Stirred by several Buddhist doctrines, Miller and Nietzsche ultimately agreed that the greatest task in life is to pursue the honest creation of the self and Art, to live jubilantly, and to repeat that joyful existence recurrently by uniting with other *lean spirits* to deconstruct and recreate socially accepted truths and communally created constructs such as Art and God.

Chapter 1: Wandering Artists Between World Wars

Parallel to the philosophical similarities visible throughout their works, the biographical lives and times of Miller and Nietzsche share some resemblances as well. For example, both authors developed nomadic inclinations which led them to leave their home countries for significant periods of time. Miller, an American Expatriate who left the United States in favor of France, and Nietzsche, the enigmatic philosopher who spent several years in Switzerland and the Mediterranean (primarily Italy), left their homelands for extended stays, eventually returning to their home countries to settle, but for different reasons. While Miller traveled extensively throughout Europe and North America before returning to the United States to establish a homestead in Big Sur, California (1944), Nietzsche's progressively problematic health concerns ultimately sent him back to his mother's home in Naumburg, Germany. Furthermore, the following chapter examines Miller and Nietzsche's related rejections of their Lutheran faiths, comparisons regarding the cultural conflicts during their time, and discusses parallels in the critical and often controversial reception of their works.

In order to expand upon the lives and times of both authors, it is important to note that not unlike Miller's origins, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, born in 1844 in Röcken, Germany, was descended from a long line of Christian ministers. Nietzsche's father was a Lutheran pastor in Röcken, and both of his grandfathers were Lutheran ministers as well. In addition, one of Nietzsche's grandfathers wrote theologically driven books, "including, *Gamaliel, or the Everlasting Duration of Christianity: For Instruction and Sedation . . .* (1796)" (Kaufmann 22). Comparatively, Henry Miller's parents were confirmed Lutherans of German descent living in Yorkville, New York when Miller was born in 1891. In resemblance to Miller's eventual detachment from the Lutheran faith, Nietzsche also firmly rejected Christianity. In a stark

change of course from the professional direction of his Christian forefathers, Nietzsche would later become one of the most infamous critics of Christianity within scholarly communities during the nineteenth century.

Nietzsche's criticisms of Christianity are present within the majority of his works, but one of Nietzsche's more unambiguously damning sentiments regarding Christianity is when he directly "*condemn(s) Christianity...*" (*Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ* 198), declaring that Christianity "is the extremist thinkable form of corruption, it has had the will to the ultimate corruption conceivably possible" (198). Despite this scornful evaluation, Christianity was only one of numerous organized religions and authoritative institutions he would passionately question. Moreover, prior to the completion of Nietzsche's core texts, such as the unapologetic *Anti-Christ*, he was appointed a chair in classical philology at Basel University where he would teach until illness befell him in 1879 and he was required to leave teaching altogether. Despite his resignation, Nietzsche became increasingly productive, publishing several works in the following years which are now widely praised as his most notable and important contributions to philosophy and intellectual discussion in the West (Anderson, sec. 1-2).

During this time of heightened creative productivity, Nietzsche left his homeland of Germany, spending many of his following summers in Sils Maria, Switzerland, and winters further south (frequently in Italy) until he collapsed in the streets of Turin, Italy (January, 1889). Unfortunately, when Nietzsche regained consciousness he displayed symptoms similar to dementia and was never to fully recover. During this time, Nietzsche's mother cared for him at her home in Germany after several unsuccessful treatment attempts, and he was "later in the care of his sister eventually lapsing entirely into silence" (Anderson, sec. 1) until his death in 1900. Although the exact cause of Nietzsche's death remains unverified and under debate, literary

theorists have varying explanations for Nietzsche's physical and mental decline. While the cause of Nietzsche's health problems remains unknown and in dispute due to a lack of physical evidence, "Recent work (Hueneman 2013) has convincingly argued that he probably suffered from a retro-orbital meningioma, a slow-growing tumor on the brain surface behind his right eye" (Anderson, sec. 1), which dispels commonly held misbeliefs that Nietzsche unknowingly suffered from a syphilitic infection attacking his brain, as well as the myth that his psychosis was brought on by the extremities and eccentricities of his own philosophies.

Regardless of the exact cause of Nietzsche's physical and mental deterioration, Nietzsche's sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, "assumed control of his literary legacy..." (Anderson, sec. 1). Prior to Nietzsche's passing, and in the years following his death, Elisabeth printed incomplete and previously unpublished works such as *The Anti-Christ* (1895), *The Will to Power* (1901), and *Ecce Homo* (1908). Of these works, *The Will to Power* was substantially unfinished at the time of Nietzsche's death and "surviving plans for the book [were] marred by Elisabeth's strong anti-Semitic commitments, which were extremely distressing to Nietzsche himself" (Anderson, sec. 1). Because *The Will to Power* was incomplete and fragmented at the time of Nietzsche's death, and due to the fact his anti-Semitic sister heavily edited the work prior to its publication, the work is questionable at best and is a large contributing factor to public misunderstandings of Nietzsche and his works. Nevertheless, literary theorists have since removed many of the anti-Semitic sentiments and alterations made by Nietzsche's sister, helping to refute commonly held myths surrounding *The Will to Power* and Nietzsche's theoretical intentions.

In further consideration, during the years between World War I and World War II (1918-1939), Miller and Nietzsche received mixed reception from critics and the public alike. To

explain, both authors wrote extensively during the rise of anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria, and “When enough of Nietzsche's works and notes had finally been published to make possible a scholarly appraisal of his thought, the First World War broke out” (Kaufmann 8). This era was a particularly inopportune period for any serious discussion of Nietzsche’s works to take place, because tensions ran high throughout the post-World War I and pre-World War II era. In Germany, “where Zarathustra was pushed to new sales records as a ‘must’ for the soldier's knapsack” (Kaufmann 8), the same was not the case in England and the United States where the public quickly misidentified Nietzsche “as the apostle of German ruthlessness and barbarism” (Kaufmann 8). Similarly, “the Italians were marching into Abyssinia and Hitler’s concentration camps were already bulging...” (Orwell 10) when *Tropic of Cancer* was first published in 1934. As it was for Nietzsche before him, Miller was not writing in a favorable period for thoughtful discussions to take place concerning an American’s written accounts of their expatriate escapades in France just before the beginning of World War II when Nazi Germany invaded Poland in 1939.

Although Miller and Nietzsche both received varied and often negative critiques from literary theorists, at the same time Nietzsche was receiving disapproval in England and the United States, he gained in popularity in France. A leading theorist on Nietzsche’s works, Walter Kaufmann, explains that “The French, incidentally, on whom Nietzsche had so frequently lavished his praise, on the whole have retained a far more favorable picture of his thought...” (9) than British and American readers. Comparatively, Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer*, banned in both England and the United States upon its publication in France (1934), also received more favorable reviews by French critics than by those in the United States and England. Like Nietzsche, Miller also praised France (principally Paris) in *Tropic of Cancer* as well. For

example, Miller comments on his view of the perfect Parisian way of life, wondering that “There must be some other explanation for the art of living which they have brought to such a degree of perfection” (154). Miller also describes Paris as the place he died and was reborn in *Henry Miller on Writing*, stating, “In the first year or so in Paris I literally died, was literally annihilated – and resurrected as a new man” (119). Perhaps Miller suggests his love for Paris is, in part, due to the transcendental experiences he had during his Parisian travels.

Placing matters of death and rebirth aside for now, Miller’s work was often negatively reviewed or dismissed altogether amongst critics in the United States and England, but several authors (including T.S. Eliot, Herbert Read, Aldous Huxley, John Dos Passos, Ezra Pound, and George Orwell) praised Miller’s controversial *Tropic of Cancer* (Orwell 9) to varying extents. Known for his resilient opposition to totalitarianism, strong support for democratic socialism, and powerful prose, George Orwell clarifies that even amongst those who publicly applauded *Tropic of Cancer*, the novel “was greeted with rather cautious praise, obviously conditioned in some cases by fear of seeming to enjoy pornography” (9). This *fear* Orwell described may have resulted in ultimate silence from some literary critics who may have otherwise applauded *Tropic of Cancer* if it were not for the *fear* of being labeled a supporter of pornography and moral atrophy.

Unlike in the case of Nietzsche, who received negative reception due to misconstructions surrounding his texts, the mutilation of his works by his anti-Semitic sister, and the appalling misappropriation of his writings by fascists with gravely false and hateful interpretations of Nietzsche’s *The Will to Power* (of which Nietzsche’s sister heavily distorted), Miller’s negative reception predominantly stemmed from misunderstandings and moral disagreements regarding his use of sexual imageries, vulgarities, and obscenities. In regards to the reaction amongst

readers of *Tropic of Cancer*, Orwell explains, “It is rather the fashion to say that nothing is easier than to write an obscene book, that people only do it in order to get themselves talked about and make money...” (14); however, Orwell insists upon challenging the notion that Miller simply wished to make money by writing pornographic novels, asserting Miller, “is the only imaginative prose-writer of the slightest value who has appeared among English-speaking races for some years past” (50). Orwell’s statement is high praise for Miller considering how negatively other critics reacted to *Tropic of Cancer* during the same time. Of course, and unfortunately, many other readers during this era simply overlooked and wrote off *Tropic of Cancer* as unintelligent and crude, pornographic smut.

In contrast to Miller’s active social life, promiscuity, and numerous sexual affairs, Nietzsche lived a somewhat solitary existence, having pursued only one woman, Lou Salomé, seriously during the course of his life. Salomé, a young Russian scholar, rejected Nietzsche’s marriage proposal and their friendship was soon to dissolve after (Anderson, sec. 1). Additionally, some theorists suggest that Nietzsche’s near constant and debilitating health issues may have contributed to his solitary lifestyle. In contrast, Miller would marry four different women over the course of his life, pursuing and congressing with various women, including prostitutes, along the way. Despite these blatant differences between Miller and Nietzsche’s respective love lives, like Nietzsche, Miller was nomadic during a highly creative period of his life. While Nietzsche predominantly roamed throughout Switzerland and Italy, Miller traveled extensively across Europe and North America.

Prior to his nomadism, Henry Valentine Miller (born on December 26th, 1891) attended the City College of New York in 1909, but left after two months, because he “rebelled against educational methods” (Miller, *The Henry Miller Reader (HMR)* 383). In 1917, Miller married

his first wife (Beatrice Sylvas Wickens), a young pianist, and after their divorce in 1924, Miller married his second wife, June Smith. Moreover, Miller also left his position at Western Union, “determined never to take a job again, but to devote his entire energy to writing” (384). Resolute to fulfill his reveries as a fulltime writer, Miller began writing more frequently, even selling “prose poems ‘mezzotints’ from door to door...” (384) as a means of survival.

In 1930, Miller returned to Europe alone after a tour with his wife, June, the previous year. Miller and June were divorced in 1934, but while in Paris alone, Miller met fellow author Anaïs Nin, who encouraged and supported him both financially and intellectually while he wrote *Tropic of Cancer*. Just one year prior to France’s surrender to Nazi Germany in 1939, Miller left France at the invitation of a friend and headed for Greece, where he would stay for one year before returning to New York in 1940. Miller then continued to write while traveling throughout the United States, most markedly between New York, California, and Colorado. The “Great vagabond of literature that he is...” (Durrell xi), Miller did not maintain a steady homestead until settling in Big Sur, California, in 1944. Even after establishing a permanent residence for the first time in several years, Miller continued to travel both abroad and in his native country throughout the rest of his life, but always returned home to Big Sur between travels until his death on June 7th, 1980.

Although Miller and Nietzsche are both known as roving authors within the literary community, they also enjoyed and achieved varying degrees of success within the arts outside of literature as well. While Nietzsche composed several classical, orchestral pieces during the course of his life, Miller was an amateur pianist and relatively successful water-colorist. Furthermore, whereas Miller befriended, shared abode, and engaged in extensive correspondence with several musicians, including Minnesotan musician Harold O. Ross and German pianist and

composer Gerhardt Muench (*HMR* 384), Nietzsche also befriended the German composer Richard Wagner, eventually regarding the composer's works as an enduring muse. Wagner is also cited numerous times within Nietzsche's various essays, including *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), a work in which Nietzsche lavishes Wagner with applause.

Successively, in *The Case of Wagner* (1888), Nietzsche's former acclaim for Wagner turns to harsh condemnations. Said reproach arose in a swift change of course for Nietzsche's relationship with Wagner and his following works, resulting after Nietzsche assisted "in early planning for Wagner's Bayreuth project and attended the first festival" (Anderson, sec.1). Furthermore, Nietzsche "was not favorably impressed by the cultural atmosphere there, and his relationship with the Wagners soured after 1876" (Anderson, sec. 1). Theorists essentially agree that the dissolution of their friendship is due, in large part, to Wagner's own anti-Semitism and involvement in the early anti-Semitic movements that were already gaining traction in Germany and Austria prior to Adolf Hitler's birth in 1889, just eleven years before Nietzsche's death in 1900 (Anderson, sec. 1).

Comparatively, the escalation of anti-Semitism in Germany would later affect Henry Miller indirectly as well. After war broke out in France, and Miller's editor, Jack Kahane of Obelisk Press, died in 1939, Miller no longer received funds for sales of *Tropic of Cancer* until it was reprinted in 1961. Although Miller left Paris one year before France would surrender to Nazi Germany, as previously mentioned, Miller was of both German and Lutheran descent, so it should be noted that Miller likely did not leave France to avoid direct persecution. On a related note, during the Nazi book burning campaigns of the early twentieth century, Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* (1934) went seemingly ignored by the Nazis and was never included on their banned books list as far as remaining records detail; however, in the United States and Great Britain,

Tropic of Cancer was banned shortly after its publication and would remain banned until 1961 (nearly 30 years after its first publication). Additional works by Miller also forbidden inside the United States during this time include *Black Spring* (1936), *Tropic of Capricorn* (1934) and *The Rosy Crucifixion Trilogy* (*Sexus* (1949), *Plexus* (1953), and *Nexus* (1959)).

During the same era, early twentieth century Nazis destroyed numerous texts from several authors. Although they primarily targeted books by Jewish authors, the Nazis also destroyed works from Marxist, Communist, Darwinist, Socialist, and Atheist authors, as well as authors the Nazis believed to be too pornographic and sexually expressive or out-spoken (Whitfield 219). With this in mind, it is curious these Nazis seemingly ignored Miller altogether and either overlooked or entirely failed to comprehend Nietzsche's obvious criticisms of Christianity, monotheism, and anti-Semitism. Relating to the latter possibility, Walter Kaufmann concludes that Nietzsche's "motivation is clearly anti-anti-Semitic" (qtd. in Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 23). Comparatively, Henry Miller, with his vividly described sexual affairs, and Nietzsche, with his unforgiving criticisms of Christianity, monotheism, and anti-Semitism would both seem likely candidates for the insidious bonfires of the Nazis, that is, had Hitler and his fellow fascists comprehended their works.

Although the deceitful editing of Nietzsche's works by his Nazi sister certainly led to the corruption, misapplication, and abuse of Nietzsche's texts, why the Nazis ignored Miller's sex-driven and arguably "non-Christian" works is not as clear. Perhaps one reason they overlooked *Tropic of Cancer* may be due to Miller's German ancestry and Christian upbringing, or perhaps the Nazis simply did not have ready access or knowledge of his works during the anti-Semites' active years of malevolent destruction. With this in mind, it is important to note that the presence (or lack of existence) of anti-Semitism in Nietzsche's writings is still under debate in

scholarly circles today. While Kaufmann passionately argues Nietzsche was not, in fact, an anti-Semite, other theorists (such as Joanne Faulkner and Sarah Kofman) have noted the existence of anti-Semitic sentiments in Nietzsche's writings (Faulkner 42). These differing conclusions are still under debate amongst scholars. Furthermore, little if any research or discussion exists regarding the varying thoughts Miller expresses pertaining to both the Jewish religion and Jewish people in *Tropic of Cancer* (i.e. on pages xxiii, 3, 9-10, 24-25, 35, 41, and 171 (etc.)). While in-depth deliberation of possible anti-Semitic expressions, or potential lack thereof, in both authors' works will not take place in this conversation, Miller and Nietzsche's general position regarding the Judeo-Christian religions will be debated in further detail in Chapter 4 of this discussion, concluding that Miller and Nietzsche were generally opposed to all systems of religion.

On an associated note, the same time early twentieth century Nazis were attempting to obliterate numerous authors' works, *Tropic of Cancer* gained in popularity amongst readers in America during its banned years. Due to high demand, copies of Miller's banned works were smuggled into the United States and England recurrently despite the possibility of looming legal punishments if caught (Orwell 49). The censure of Miller's works in the United States continued until Grove Press republished *Tropic of Cancer* in 1961, leading to several trials which challenged the obscenity and pornography laws in the United States. Regardless of the fact that several of Miller's primary works were still outlawed in the United States until 1961, Miller achieved a moderately sustainable degree of success within the literary community, principally in Europe, when he wrote *The Books in My Life* (1952), an autobiographical account of the exact writers, poets, and philosophers who influenced his life and work.

Desiring to share and emphasize the importance of his own muses, Miller included a list of the top 100 writers who heavily impacted his own writing and world views. Friedrich

Nietzsche, among the most influential authors appearing on Miller's list, is mentioned twelve times throughout *The Books in My Life (BIML)*. Nietzsche's significance to Miller is evident in Miller's incorporation of specific texts written by each author next to their name on his list; however, appearing next to Friedrich Nietzsche's name is "His works in general" (*BIML* 318). Miller asserts that Friedrich Nietzsche's entire body of literature influenced his ideals and individual outlook which, in turn, inspired Miller's own writing as well.

In addition to Miller's overall accounts of Nietzschean influence, Miller stated he was once fired from an editorial position when he was "caught reading Nietzsche instead of editing the mail order catalogue" (264). With no remorse, Miller commented on the loss of his job by asking, "Was not Nietzsche vastly more important in my life than a knowledge of the mail order business" (264)? Miller also explains that Nietzsche, amongst various other authors, is a part of his "genealogical line..." (124), and also recalls that his "very first piece of prose was an essay on Nietzsche's *Anti-Christ*" (48). If the scale of Nietzsche's impact on Miller is not yet clear, in *The Books in My Life*, Miller also reminisces of a time when he revisited Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, and remembers "being positively stunned by Nietzsche's magical use of language" (40). In further consideration of Miller's most profound literary influences, Miller once referred to Nietzsche and the American transcendentalist writer, Ralph Waldo Emerson, as embodiments of "real radical[s]" (qtd. in Jackson 232). Moreover, Miller also expresses his admiration of Emerson, Rimbaud, Whitman, and Nietzsche by "recalling the tremendous impact of their utterances..." (*BIML* 178), and declares these authors to be "Zen masters especially – I think with fury and resentment" (178). Regarding Nietzsche's works, Miller is not entirely wrong, as two of the most noticeable emotions recognizable within many of Nietzsche's writings and Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* are passionate fury and antipathy, but where did Nietzsche's vehement

intensity erupt from and why does Miller refer to Nietzsche's philosophical expressions of fury and resentment as *Zen*?

Chapter 2: Zen, Satori, and Dualism

In order to develop an understanding of Miller's possible interpretations and textual reincarnations of Nietzschean ideals and Zen Buddhist-inspired philosophies, Nietzsche's theoretical origins must be drawn into discussion first. One of Nietzsche's most influential mentors, Arthur Schopenhauer, was a German philosopher who wrote until his death in 1860, passing just sixteen years after Nietzsche's birth in 1844. While a student at the University of Leipzig (1865), Nietzsche comprehensively studied Schopenhauer's works. Years after developing a lasting admiration for Schopenhauer's literature, Nietzsche wrote *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* (Schopenhauer as Educator), and insists "One repays a teacher badly if one always remains nothing but a pupil" (qtd. in Elmen 675). Nietzsche, aspiring to *repay* Schopenhauer with his own advancements in philosophy, began writing more frequently while researching a multitude of works from various authors, including those which influenced Schopenhauer as well.

Often regarded as one of the most important and relentlessly pessimistic philosophers of his time, Schopenhauer repeatedly concerned himself with different Eastern philosophies and religions first emerging into critical discussion among Western theorists in Europe during the nineteenth century. In his article "Nietzsche and Buddhism," author Benjamin A. Elmen describes Schopenhauer's profound influence on Nietzsche, for he, like many theoretical thinkers of the West writing during the nineteenth century, "began his acquaintance with Oriental philosophies under the influence of Schopenhauer" (Elmen 676). Predicting the rise of Eastern religious and philosophical ideals in the West, and in spite of the authoritative efforts underway which sought to convert Eastern communities to Christianity during the nineteenth century, Schopenhauer explains:

In India our religions will never take root. The ancient wisdom of the human race will not be displaced by what happened in Galilee. On the contrary, Indian philosophy streams back to Europe, and will produce a fundamental change in our knowledge and thought. (Schopenhauer qtd. in Elmen 671)

With this hunch, Schopenhauer not only foretold the appropriation and integration of Eastern philosophies into traditional idealisms of the West on a large scale (which is still occurring today), he also predicted the influence of Eastern philosophies on individuals and theorists alike. Fulfilling Schopenhauer's theoretical forecast, specific traditions of Buddhism, particularly Japanese Zen Buddhism, later became noticeable in the works of Nietzsche and Miller alike.

Furthermore, Nietzsche's origins of Buddhist muse most notably arose from the love and appreciation for his fellow European philosopher (Schopenhauer) who inspired Nietzsche to conduct further exploratory research into the ideologies of the East. However, Miller's interest in Buddhism can be traced back to several sources of inspiration. According to literary theorist Manuel Yang, Miller's introduction to Buddhism first occurred when he was still a young man, reading "A.P. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883) from the Brooklyn Public Library at 18" (74). Yang also insists that "Miller identified especially with Zen Buddhism" (74). Furthermore, Miller also "listed D.T. Suzuki's essay in *Zen Buddhism: First Series* (1927) as one of the hundred most influential books in his life" (Yang 71). Of clear influence on Miller, D.T. Suzuki (1870-1966) was a Japanese author known for translating "Buddhism into a comparative religious vocabulary suitable for modern Western readers" (Yang 75). Yang adds that Miller's writing "echoes the medieval Japanese Zen monk Ikkyu's visits to a brothel, and his erotic verses composed in his dotage to his blind, much younger lover" (73). In addition, while Miller's frequent trips to brothels are well documented in *Tropic of Cancer*, Miller was correspondingly

“fond of recounting the tale of Zen Monk ‘Bobo-roshi’ who experienced satori in the midst of sexual congress with a prostitute” (Yang 73), alluding to both Miller’s sexual pursuits and Zen-Buddhist stimulations.

Alongside Miller’s appreciation for Zen-Buddhism, it should be noted that Miller also concerned himself with the ideologies of India’s Hinduism. Karl Shapiro insists that he personally and “Morally [regards] Miller as a holy man, as most of his adherents do – Gandhi with a penis” (xv), indicating Miller’s possible Hinduist motivations. On pages 87 to 93 of *Tropic of Cancer*, Miller also refers to Gandhi, India, and Hinduism, offering textual material for theorists to further consider regarding the possible roles Hinduism plays in both Miller’s life and works. Although this discussion will not focus on the presence of Hinduist representations in *Tropic of Cancer*, the Zen-Buddhist described experience of Satori, or Kenshō (seeing into one’s true nature), became a highly significant Zen-Buddhist tradition for Miller. In correspondence with close friend Lawrence Durrell, Miller confessed he is a:

Zen addict through and through...if you want to penetrate Buddhism, read Zen. No intelligent person, no sensitive person, can help but be a Buddhist; ‘I am a Zen right here in Paris, and never felt so well, so lucid, so right, so centered’. ‘The nearest philosophy to my heart and temperament is Zen, as you probably know’; and ‘zen is more and more the only thing which makes sense to me’. (qtd. in Yang 74)

Quite clearly, Miller expresses that Zen is, “The nearest philosophy to [his] heart..” (74), and further emphasizes Zen’s impact on him by stating Zen is increasingly “the only thing which makes sense [to him]” (74). Although this passage serves to highlight Miller’s deep appreciation for and self-admitted *addiction* to Zen customs, even developing the notion that *intelligent* and *sensitive* people are drawn to Buddhism, further discussion is due in order to understand which

traditions of Zen-Buddhism appear within the themes and prose of Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, as well as in the previously printed works of Friedrich Nietzsche.

Recognizably found within the themes, symbols, and narrative of *Tropic of Cancer* (1934) and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* (1891), Zen-Buddhism affected the philosophical directions of Miller and Nietzsche alike, but what is Zen? What is this Satori Miller and Suzuki both spoke of and Nietzsche alluded to? Lastly, how are the concepts of Zen and Satori at work within *Tropic of Cancer* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and how might these workings assist to build further understanding of the lives and times of Henry Miller and Friedrich Nietzsche? In pursuit of answering these questions, emphasis shall be chiefly placed upon the Japanese practices of Zen-Buddhism and the appearance of Buddhist principles in Miller and Nietzsche's works. Although it is well known amongst scholars that Miller was heavily inspired by Chinese Taoism, predominantly the work of Lao-Tzu (or Laozi, "Old Master"), the often reputed author of the *Tao Te Ching*, the attention in this analysis will focus largely on the influence of Japanese Zen-Buddhism (the most recently developed sect of traditional Buddhism) within *Tropic of Cancer* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

To gain additional understanding of the Zen-Buddhist terms which will be used throughout the remainder of this exploration, what is meant by *Zen* deserves further description. In defining *Zen* for the purposes of this analysis, Shigenori Nagatomo explains:

Zen aims at a perfection of personhood. To this end, sitting meditation called "za-zen" is employed as a foundational method of praxis across the different schools of this Buddha-Way, through which the Zen practitioner attempts to embody non-discriminatory wisdom vis-à-vis the meditational experience known as "satori" (enlightenment). (sec. 1)

Illuminating the objectives of Zen practices, Nagatomo stresses that meditation is fundamental to the achievement of Satori or enlightenment. Although Nagatomo clarifies that Satori is a fundamental goal for Zen practitioners, it is also significant to note that during both Nietzsche and Miller's time, and on to this day, the two fundamental schools of Buddhism still prevalent in Japan are the Rinzai School, founded by Hakuin (1685-1768), and the Sōtō School of Dōgen Zenji (1200-1254). The critical distinction between these two schools lies in their differing views of how Satori is attained. While the Sōtō School (school of "gradual enlightenment" or "silent illumination") places great emphasis on the process of achieving Satori, the Rinzai School (school of "sudden enlightenment") disregards the importance of process altogether, insisting that process is of little to no concern and the experience of Satori itself is all that matters. While this disagreement on the exact value of the process to enlightenment is plain, both schools place emphasis on Satori as one of the ultimate goals for practitioners of the "Buddha-Way" (Nagatomo, sec. 1-2).

In relation, and for all future intents and purposes, another concept both schools of Zen-Buddhism hold in high regard is that of non-dualistic pursuits. Nagatomo clarifies:

Zen maintains a stance of "not one" and "not two" i.e., "position less position," where "not two" signals a negation of the stance that divides the whole into two parts, i.e., dualism, while "not one" designates a negation of this stance when the Zen practitioner dwells in the whole as one, while suspending judgment in meditation, i.e., non-dualism...Free, bilateral movement between "not one" and "not two" characterizes Zen's achievement of a personhood with a third perspective that cannot, however, be confined to either dualism or non-dualism (i.e., neither "not one" nor "not two"). (sec. 1)

According to Nagatomo, Japanese Zen-Buddhists defined the departure from dualism as *not one* and *not two*, but a *third perspective* outside of both dualism (“not one”) and non-dualism (“not two”). Nagatomo clarifies that Zen practitioners “dwell in the whole as one” during meditation in order to obtain an unrestrained *third perspective*, which cannot be exclusively defined as non-dualism or dualism. Furthermore, Nagatomo insists that Zen practitioners “must go beyond ‘the one’ and ‘the two’, as both of these stances are prone to generate a one-sided and hence incomplete worldview” (sec. 1). For practitioners of Zen-Buddhism, Satori and enlightenment exists beyond both contradictory concepts of dualism and non-dualism, what Nagatomo defined as an *unconfined third perspective* (“not one” nor “not two”).

Moreover, the attainment of this unconfined third perspective is of close relation to several animated passages in Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer* and Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*. The following chapter will introduce this discussion of Zen, Satori and the unconfined third perspective as they appear in Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer* and Nietzsche’s works (primarily *Zarathustra*) by focusing on how Miller uses the themes of *love*, *music* and *art*, in large part, to express and describe traditions of Zen and the unconfined third perspective while challenging dualist perspectives regarding those themes as well. In harmony, the following chapter will also discuss Nietzsche’s similar challenges to dualism and non-dualism (opposites, contradictions, or “not one” nor “not two”) by employing the themes of *music* and *art*. Following the discussion of the unconfined third perspective in Miller and Nietzsche’s writings, another Zen-Buddhist principle discussed by Nietzsche, and to a lesser extent by Miller, is that of *the wheel of life*, or as Nietzsche later embellished: *eternal recurrence*. The discussion of Nietzsche’s *eternal recurrence* will appear in Chapter 4 with regards to similarities in Miller’s philosophical musings in *Tropic of Cancer* as well.

Chapter 3: Music, Art, and the Unconfined Third Eye

With the foundation for defining Zen, Satori, dualism, and the unconfined third perspective in place, the discussion of how these teachings of Japanese Zen-Buddhism appear in *Tropic of Cancer* and within Nietzsche's works can begin. In doing so, focus will also highlight the themes which Miller and Nietzsche both explore, the themes of *music* and *art*. To begin with, Friedrich Nietzsche and Henry Miller were both self-proclaimed truth-seekers of sorts, and many of Nietzsche's works, like Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, are full of contradictions and juxtapositions of ideals. Karl Jaspers, a German philosopher and psychiatrist who was writing shortly after Nietzsche's death in 1900, explains that "all statements seem to be annulled by other statements. Self-contradiction is the fundamental ingredient in Nietzsche's thought. For nearly every single one of Nietzsche's judgments, one can also find an opposite" (qtd. in Elmen 671). These contradictions appear in many forms in Nietzsche and Miller's works and serve to describe the incongruities of dualist (not one) and non-dualist (not two) modes of thinking.

The Dualist and the Pianist

A prominent illustration of Miller's challenges to dualism appears in his contradictory descriptions of women visible in several passages throughout *Tropic of Cancer*. Ranging from exceedingly complimentary representations to grotesque imageries, these inconsistent portrayals are demonstrative, whether intentional or not, of the search for *the unconfined third eye* by way of perceiving beyond and between opposites or contradictions (one and two), which is also present in Nietzsche's writings and within Zen-Buddhism. Examples of clashing sentiments in *Tropic of Cancer* are evident throughout the text, and although Miller's use of the words *cunt* and *slut* (TOC 18) when describing particular women may seem pointless aside from providing material for serious feminist analysis and critique, Miller's various views of women are often

inconsistent. Additionally, while it is important to note that there is considerable room for critical, feminist analysis of both *Tropic of Cancer* and Nietzsche's works to take place amongst theorists today, emphasis will not be placed upon feminist theory within this discussion. For further considerations regarding feminist theories of Nietzsche's works, essays by Barbara Helm and Lewis Call approach his texts from differing feminist perspectives. In turn, although Katy Masuga's article "Henry Miller and the Book of Life" discusses some feminist concerns regarding Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, there is still substantial room for further feminist explorations of Miller's works to take place in scholarly circles today.

Regarding Miller's written representations of womankind, one example of his clashing images of women occurs early in *Tropic of Cancer*. For example, it may appear Miller's intentions are clear when he proclaims he's "dancing with every slut in the place. But we're leaving in the morning! That's what I tell every cunt I grab hold of – leaving in the morning!" (*TOC* 18), but what makes this ostensibly frank and arguably crude description of women contradictory to other sentiments expressed in *Tropic of Cancer* are the passages which speak of a specific woman (often Tania) as an angel, as a potential soul-mate, or as a "lover" (19, 29, 55-58, 109, 173, 204, etc.). Miller's statements of adoration contradict other sentiments he expresses when he refers to women as "sluts" and "cunts" (18, 31, 46, 113, and 120-123, for example). Furthermore, all of the passages in *Tropic of Cancer* which glorify women, a particular woman, or the image of women, paired with passages which deface women, which crucify their image, play with the inherent and conflicting dualities of love, sex, and interpersonal affairs.

To draw added focus to the differing descriptions of women in *Tropic of Cancer*, Miller's language when describing women changes later on in the novel when a woman named Tania, a pianist and the lover of a dramatist, enters the scene:

To think that a poor, withered bastard with those cheap Broadway plays up his sleeve should be pissing on the woman I love. Calling for red wine and revolving drums and croutons in his pea soup. The cheek of him! To think that he can lie beside that furnace I stoked for him and do nothing but make water! My God, man, you ought to get down on your knees and thank me. Don't you see that you have a woman in your house now? Can't you see she's bursting? (*TOC* 58)

While Miller declares his contempt for Sylvester, begot by Sylvester's inattentiveness and inability to recognize Tania's ability to play the piano and to do so with feeling, Miller reveals an interesting inconsistency within his own views of women; at one moment, the women he intends to "dance" with are "sluts." The next moment, Tania is the woman he loves. This "*woman*" is not only bursting, Tania also has a name; she is not a "slut," according to Miller, because Miller defines her as "*a woman*," and places further emphasis on her distinction from "sluts" and "cunts" as "*woman*" with the use of italics when stating "you have a *woman* in your house now" (58). With this in mind, Tania has also shown a kind of "value" or "worth" to Miller, a "worth" which Miller finds to extend beyond sexual gratification and any "value" he places on her physical form; she is a pianist, a musician, an artist, and her performances move Miller to the extent that he expresses loving sentiments for her, referring to Tania as "the woman [he] loves..." (58). Miller's emphasis on Tania's status as *woman*, coupled with the fact that Tania is an artist, assists to explain Miller's conveyed ideals.

Miller is interested in art; he is interested in the artist; and, in a related turn, “he believes that the ideal is silence (he prefers music above all other arts ‘because it tends towards silence’)” (Muller 314), unlike “the cheap Broadway plays up [Sylvester’s] sleeve” (*TOC* 58). Unlike Sylvester, Tania creates and performs music without words, and the importance Miller places on music’s *tendency towards silence* is also a Buddhist principle dating back centuries. According to Buddhist doctrine and suggested by other religions in similar style, silence is necessary for achieving Satori, Zen, enlightenment, and furthering metaphysical clarity. Often referred to as monastic silence, a willed silence is a means to gain self-knowledge, understanding, and to live in harmony with oneself and one’s surroundings (Nagatomo, sec. 2). In comparison, Nietzsche, who lived a large portion of his life in isolation, often wrote regarding the importance of music, and the music Nietzsche and Miller (in this circumstance) refer to involves instrumental and non-lyrical compositions. The stress placed upon music which is devoid of a lyrical language employing words also correlates with Buddhist theories of monastic silence, which illuminates reasons why it may be beneficial for the individual to detach themselves from language in an effort to achieve inner peace, Satori or Zen.

Further accentuating the influence of music in Miller’s life and work, and as described in direct opposition to the ideals and importance of art, music, and silence in Miller’s philosophy, Sylvester symbolizes several negative characteristics of mankind as understood by Miller. Along with Sylvester’s insistent banter and ceaseless chatter, Miller’s true contempt for Sylvester erupts after Sylvester criticizes Tania’s value as a pianist. In response to Tania’s playing, Sylvester remarks, “Yes, play something with those big thumbs of yours. Play the adagio since that’s the only goddamed thing you know. Play it, and then cut off your big thumbs” (*TOC* 57). Although Miller’s frustration with Sylvester may occur because he does not

appreciate or respect the music that Tania plays for them, as Miller points out, Sylvester is not worthy of this *woman*, partially because he does not value Tania's musicianship. Miller also emphasizes that Sylvester carries a dualistic view of the situation as well, and as Miller suggests, possibly every situation:

You telling me with those strangulated adenoids of yours – ‘well now, I’ll tell you...there’s two ways of looking at that...’ Fuck your two ways of looking at things! Fuck your pluralistic universe, and your Asiatic acoustics! Don’t hand me your red wine or your Anjou...hand her over...she belongs to me! (*TOC* 59)

This passage suggests that one of Sylvester's faults is his lack of care and consideration for his musical lover, and Miller's disdain for him escalates when Sylvester says “there’s two ways of looking at that...” (59). In an explicit attack on Sylvester's dualist mode of thinking, Miller declares, “Fuck your two ways of looking at things!” The idea that there are only two ways of looking at a situation (or “things”) is the essence of dualistic concepts such as good and evil, love and hate, life and death, and so on. Miller's direct dismissal of this dualistic “ways of looking at things” is also found in Buddhist doctrine, stressed in Japanese Zen-Buddhism, and emerged within Nietzsche's philosophy prior to Miller's birth.

Miller's Song and Nietzsche's Lies of the Sorcerer

Furthering the discussion of Miller's use of music in *Tropic of Cancer*, there are numerous references to music, often orchestral performances, throughout the text (on pages 30, 62, 77, 151, 164, 173-174, 181, 204 and 273, for example), and Miller uses the theme of music to describe varying, and sometimes contradictory, emotions and experiences. In one moment, Miller describes music in relation to food when stating, “The meal is never complete without music” (62), and in another instance, Miller examines his surroundings in relation to the music

he hears while at a Symphony Orchestra performance (77). Later in *Tropic of Cancer*, Miller uses the theme of music to describe the sights and sounds of the streets of Paris, stating the busy street sounds create “music all around [him]” (151). Miller even includes a French song in one passage while recounting events taking place at a “refectory” (271-272), but perhaps the most pertinent reference to music in *Tropic of Cancer* appears in the book’s opening passages. Miller explains:

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... To sing you must first open your mouth. You must have a pair of lungs, and a little knowledge of music. 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)

To understand this passage, understanding of the non-dualistic principles of Zen Buddhism is necessary. Miller declares he is not interested in perfecting his writing for the sake of Art; he is not interested in creating “great art” for the sake of Art alone. Instead, Miller is writing to simply partake in the act of writing, and doing so in pursuit of the honest creation / recreation of the Self, as well as challenging and reconstructing socially accepted concepts of Art.

Furthermore, for Miller, “The essential thing is to want to sing” (2). To sing (or to write / create) in order to fill the gap and blur the lines which separate “good Art” and “bad Art” is to write with a will towards deconstructing dualism (the separation between “good Art” and “bad Art”) and creating Art simply to partake in the act of creation; thereby creating and recreating the

Self as well. As Miller explains, *Tropic of Cancer* is “a kick in the pants to God,” and a “glob of spit in the face of Art” (2), and both God and Art, in this sense, are receiving harsh criticisms, in part, because of their dualistic nature. Miller is not concerned with matters of the “moral and “immoral” or “good” and “bad” Art (one and two), Miller is challenging social constructions of what God and Art are. Accordingly, Ranganath Nandyl explains, “Miller was essentially a Satyanveshi, a truth seeker like Mahatma Ghandi, he too believed that art was the only means to a fuller life” (1); therefore, as Miller “spits in the face of Art” (*TOC* 2) he is doing so with an eye towards seeking truth and developing a fuller and more complete life rather than attempting to simply write a “well-written” and “good” piece of literature.

With his “gob of spit,” Miller skews the classically created conceptions of Art by intertwining images of the obscene with the sublime. In the same breath Miller says, “I will sing while you croak, I will dance over your dirty corpse” (2) moments before he politely details how one *can* sing by elucidating, “To sing you must first open your mouth. You must have a pair of lungs, and a little knowledge of music. Is not necessary to have an accordion, or a guitar. The essential thing is to want to sing” (2). According to this passage, anyone can sing if they have the will to sing. By intentionally disregarding what is socially defined and accepted as “good” or “bad” (“one” or “two”), Miller is rejecting the dualistic notions of “good” and “bad” (“one” and “two”) and instead, “sings,” writes, and creates simply because he has the “want to sing” (2). Miller also does not refer to his writing as *writing* or as *Art*, instead declaring he is “singing,” or, perhaps, attempting to create from the *unconfined third perspective*, not writing nor endeavoring to create “Art” with a capital “A” (“not one” nor “not two”), but “singing” (2).

With an effervescent “kick in the pants to God” (2) and “Spit in the face to Art” (2), Miller purposefully informs the reader that he has “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” (11). Miller is quite directly stating his intent. He is *not interested* in preconceived notions of what Art is, or what is socially deemed “good” or “bad” (or “not good” nor “not bad” / “not one” nor “not two”) because, as Miller declares, “It is the triumph of the individual over art” (11). In the creation of *Tropic of Cancer* itself, Miller is writing with the desire to *triumph over*, or attempting to move his perspective beyond, Art. In moving beyond all notions of what Art is and what it should be, Miller does so by attempting to exist and create his work from *the unconfined third perspective*. As Miller says, *Tropic of Cancer* “is not a book” (2). Rather, it is an attempt to write an honest exploration of the present moments Miller exists in, a challenge to dualist and non-dualist (“not one” nor “not two”) notions of God and Art, and an attempt to create from a perspective outside of those same socially constructed and accepted concepts. In other words, Miller is “singing” (2).

Also concerned with music, art, and the unconfined third perspective, Nietzsche uses the theme of music in significant moments within *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as well, moments which also theoretically relate to Zen-Buddhist philosophy, whether Nietzsche directly intend to do so or not. Additionally, prior to Nietzsche’s literary career, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche’s mentor, expresses in *The World as Will and Idea* that “the subjective knowledge of one’s body...was represented most purely by the art of music” (qtd. in Faber xxix). In consideration of the importance of music in Nietzsche’s life and works, Nietzsche unmistakably expresses his intense relationship to music in *The Antichrist*, where he places song on such a high plateau that he wrote “Without music, life would be a mistake” (10). While this passage from Nietzsche’s *Anti-Christ* is notable, the theme of music, or more relatedly “singing,” plays an important role in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*.

Throughout Zarathustra's travels, he encounters various characters, all of whom Zarathustra names according to his perceptions of them. For example, a man whom Zarathustra calls "The Sorcerer," appears before him as "a trembling old man with staring eyes..." (*TSZ* 264) who "Eventually, however, after much trembling, quivering, and self-contortion, he began to wail..." (265), performing a song which Zarathustra does not abide. After the Sorcerer sings the final lines of his song, "Oh come back, / My unknown God! My pain! My last – happiness!" (lines 99-100, 267), Zarathustra erupts with fury because:

Zarathustra could restrain himself no longer; he took his stick and struck the wailing man with all his force. 'Stop!' he shouted at him with furious laughter, 'stop, you actor! You fabricator! You liar from the heart! I know you well!' 'I will warm your legs for you, you evil sorcerer, I well know how to make things warm for such as you!' (267-268).

In this passage, Nietzsche describes an artist or "sorcerer" who sings a woeful song, and he "was doing it only in fun!" (268), but Zarathustra sees through the sorcerer's lyrical enchantments and lies, confirming that the sorcerer is a "fabricator;" thus, Zarathustra physically beat "the wailing man with all his force" (267-268) for manufacturing false artistic creations. The "evil sorcerer" begs Zarathustra to "beat [him] no more" and admits to his lies "from the heart" (268), confirming Zarathustra's condemnations of the evil sorcerer.

Similarly, Miller's description of "those cheap Broadway plays up [Sylvester's] sleeve" (*TOC* 58) in *Tropic of Cancer* irritates Miller as well; therefore, both Miller and Nietzsche are particularly appalled by art which is "fabricated" with lies "from the heart" (*TSZ* 268), or produced as though it was preconceived and manufactured on assembly-line rather than created by *bursting* such as Tania did when playing piano in Miller's company (*TOC* 58). Although Miller did not physically assault Sylvester like Zarathustra beat "the evil sorcerer" for his

musical fabrications, for Miller, Tania represented the kind of artistry Miller preferred; Tania performed with “veins...bursting” (*TOC* 59), or “with blood” (*TSZ* 67). Miller and Nietzsche were not simply challenging conventions of Art, God, and so on; they were specifically interested in doing so with the utmost honesty and in *bursts of creation* rather than contrived performances which “fabricate” false feeling, “bursting,” and “truth.”

In agreement, while Miller wrote Tania’s “veins are bursting...” and Sylvester’s “talk is all sawdust” (*TOC* 59), Nietzsche’s Zarathustra was also offended by false talkers, and “liars of the heart” (*TSZ* 268). Additionally, Nietzsche elucidates early on in his work that one should “Write with blood: and you will discover that blood is spirit” (67), or in other words, Nietzsche insists one should write with conviction, with honesty and truth of Self (“blood”). Furthermore, in *Henry Miller on Writing*, Miller writes of *Tropic of Cancer* itself, stating it is “a sort of human document, written in blood...” (119), highlighting Miller’s inclinations to write honestly and at the *true heart* or nature of oneself, much like Nietzsche as well.

While neither Miller nor Nietzsche are impressed with liars “from the heart” (*TSZ* 268) or “those cheap” (*TOC* 58) compositions up “the sleeves” of liars whose “talk is all sawdust” (59), they are enthusiastic with art which, according to Miller and Nietzsche, *bursts* or develops spontaneously and in earnest from within its creator. In other words, Nietzsche discusses song, Art, and creation in terms of creating, writing, or *singing* beyond dishonest fabrications and *with blood* (*TSZ* 67), while Miller argues the same, stressing the importance of creating and thinking from outside “two ways of looking at things” (*TOC* 59). As the Rinzai School of Buddhist philosophy might say, Miller and Nietzsche both emphasize creating with the freedom attained from “an action arising out of self on its own. This action then carries a sense of spontaneity, much like the spontaneous creative act of living nature” (Nagatomo, sec. 8.2), or rather, from the

unprompted attainment of Satori and Zen from *the unconfined third perspective* (“not one” nor “not two”).

With *the third eye* still in mind, as Miller “sings” for us in *Tropic of Cancer*, Zarathustra also sings his own tune after Nietzsche employs song to describe the nature of the characters Zarathustra encounters. The “evil sorcerer” returns with another melody toward the end of the text as well, performing “The Song of Melancholy” (TSZ 308-311) which causes a stir amongst Zarathustra’s other followers. In addition to the sorcerer, Zarathustra meets “The wanderer and shadow” (315-319) who also perform a poetic tune, but the most relevant appearance of lyrical song in Nietzsche’s *Book for All and None* is “Zarathustra’s roundelay!” (333), when Zarathustra performs his own composition. Earlier in the work, Zarathustra performs a rougher version of his “roundelay” (243-244) as though he was creating the song in present time, but the final form is found at the end of the text (333), revealing another of Nietzsche’s theoretical outlooks related to Zen-Buddhist philosophies, that of *eternal recurrence* and perpetual joy.

Chapter 4: The Death of God, Freedom, Joy, and Eternity

Before considerations concerning Nietzsche's *joy* and *eternal recurrence* can resume, Miller and Nietzsche, much like in their rejections of the Lutheran faith, also spoke of God with similar dismissals and denunciations. The death and defiance of God (and conventions of Art) is another prominent theme in both *Tropic of Cancer*, as well as in Nietzsche's works. As Miller "spits in the face of Art," the same God which Miller "kicks in the pants" (*TOC 2*) is the very God Nietzsche unapologetically criticized. The monotheistic God is, as Nietzsche declared in *The Anti-Christ*, "Dead" (181) or as Miller embellished, *insufficient* (*TOC 96*). Bearing striking resemblance to Miller's "kick in the pants to God" (*TOC 2*), Nietzsche, writing decades prior to Miller, proclaims:

God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him. Yet his shadow still looms. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: Who will wipe this blood off us? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? (*The Gay Science* 181)

Concerning himself with questions derived from conditions defined by Godlessness, Nietzsche asks what we must do now that God is dead; how will we control and comfort ourselves now that God is unavailable? Furthermore, Nietzsche declares that not only is God dead, but we ourselves have murdered God; thus, Nietzsche asks what the murderers of God shall do now that "we have killed him" (181). In other words, what shall Nietzsche and Miller do now that they've assassinated God, or rather, found God to be inadequate?

Similar to Nietzsche and Miller's search for truths outside of the socially accepted truths of *dead* and *inadequate* God(s), the Buddha also sought answers outside the guidance of the predominately accepted Gods prevailing in the Buddha's society during his era (circa 450 BCE). Mark Siderits explains that "the Buddha, who rejected the authority of the Vedas..." (sec. 1), knew that "there was some degree of dissatisfaction with the customary religious practices [of the Vedas] then prevailing in the Gangetic basin of North India" (sec. 1). As Siderits clarifies, the Buddha, like Miller and Nietzsche, turned away from the prevalent religions of their eras, and all three truth-seekers were left facing the question: what shall they do now that the Gods are *dissatisfactory, inadequate, or dead?*

Uniting "Lean Spirits" and God's Inefficiencies

In further consideration, because the Judeo-Christian God is, by Miller and Nietzsche's definitions, *dead* or *insufficient*, both authors were faced with significant questions about the purpose of life when there is no fear of the eternal damnation which the conventional concepts of hell promise. In the following passage, Nietzsche suggests we "become gods" and comfort ourselves when he asks "Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?" (*The Gay Science* 181), but Miller offers another Nietzschean-related insight into this problem:

As far as history goes I am dead. If there is something beyond I shall have to bounce back. I have found God, but he is insufficient. I am only spiritually dead. Physically I am alive. Morally I am free. The world which I have departed is a menagerie. The dawn is breaking on a new world, a jungle world in which lean spirits roam. (*TOC* 96)

Miller uses similar phrasings of his roaming *lean spirits* to Nietzsche's definition of *the free spirit* in *Human All Too Human*, where he classifies *the free spirit* as people who are "the very sign of *great health*" (7), spending life in experiment and committing themselves "to

adventure...” (7-8). Of course, it can then be argued that Miller, like Nietzsche’s *free spirit*, lived a life full of experimentation and adventure during his expatriate explorations abroad and extensive travels throughout the United States. Furthermore, and in congruence, Nietzsche’s *free spirit* appears again in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, whom Nietzsche names “Übermensch” (German for Superman, Overman, or Beyond-man) representing a near “beyond human” freedom of the spirit or soul, while Nietzsche himself spent many years of his life nomadically. Likewise, for Miller, “lean spirits roam” (TOC 96) because he (like many during the 1930s as well as Nietzsche before him) is “morally free” (96) as those lean and free spirits have “found God, but he is insufficient” (96). Freed from the carrion of dead and insufficient Gods, Miller and Nietzsche’s “Godlessness” caused a stir amongst their respective critics as well, theorists who mistakenly dubbed both authors as merely nihilists.

Because of the tone and, at times, graphic language in Miller’s writing, and perhaps because Miller declares God to be *insufficient* in *Tropic of Cancer*, critics question whether or not Miller was a nihilist, or in other words, a person who believes that existence (actions, feelings, suffering, joy, morals, belief, truths, etc.) has no inherent meaning, and this question is a rather complex one in the case of Miller and Nietzsche alike. Nietzsche, for example, believed in an individual’s attempts to deconstruct old, outdated values in order to create a *tabula rasa* (a blank slate) with which the individual may begin to build their own systems of beliefs, interpretations, morals, and ideologies, necessary for the honest creation of the Self. In the construction of new meaning, which Nietzsche called “active nihilism,” the individual will overcome nihilism (Gemes 337-345). Furthermore, Nietzsche’s *free spirit* or *Übermensch* may be seen as his literary depiction of an *active nihilist*, one who has transformed and transcended both the *insufficient* ideals of God and the nothingness which precedes the death of that God.

Rather than waste time inside the belief of nothing, which is often recognized as inherently contradictory, Nietzsche suggested that we unite to create and reconstruct meaning, morals, values, truths, laws, as well as the significant metaphors we assign to develop our truths (Gemes 337).

To clarify, theorist Ken Gemes argues that “Nietzsche agrees with the postmodernists that unity is not a pre-given, however he would disavow their rejection of unity as a goal” (337). Gemes further explains Nietzsche disapproves of “disunity [because it is] a form of Nihilism” (337) and instead promotes “the creation of a genuine unified subjectivity,” or united recreation of reality “to those few capable of such a goal” (337), those few being Nietzsche’s *free-spirits* and, perhaps, Miller’s roaming *lean spirits* (TOC 96). Comparatively, the theoretical framework of Nietzsche’s *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense* paved the way for many postmodern theorists and earned Nietzsche’s title: “the godfather of postmodernism” (Cahoone 109). By definition, and according to the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, postmodernist theory is “characterized by a rejection of ideology and theory in favour of a plurality of values and techniques” (*Postmodernism, n.*), and Nietzsche, like Miller, admittedly refused to adhere to written doctrines of the Judeo-Christian religions, or idealisms present within culture during his time. In fact, as noted by Herbert Muller, Miller believed that any organized faith or creed is a sign of “impotency, all imitation is suicide” (Miller qtd. in Muller 313-314), providing further evidence of Miller’s chosen removal from the Lutheran faith.

By the same token, and with God presumably dead, Nietzsche also stresses the importance of questioning other communally assembled constructs which are socially, and sometimes blindly, accepted as truths, asking:

What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force. (*On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense* 753).

To briefly summarize, in this passage Nietzsche was attempting to convey that truths are metaphors and symbols which we, as a society, have deemed to be true, and after these truths are used for many years, they become “transferred, exaggerated, and embellished” (753) while they are passed on generation after generation until people forget that these truths are inherently metaphors and symbols to which we attach meaning and importance. Nietzsche, living within a society which he saw trapped by the decaying religious dogmas of the 19th century, sought to inform people that we must question authoritative institutions and re-examine the truths which we may have accepted as truths without considering said “truths” are social constructs or “metaphors.” Then, as Gemes explains, “unite” together with other free or lean spirits to recreate and reimagine a “unified subjectivity” (337) or integrated and cooperative, subjective reality, because, as Nietzsche explains, reality is subjective and “Truths are illusions” which we both assign meaning to and drain “of sensuous force” (*On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense* 753). Of course, because Nietzsche *believed* such pursuits of ideological and theoretical deconstructions and re-creations are worthwhile, for any reason, one cannot simply conclude he is a nihilist or one who is absent belief.

Comparably, Nietzsche’s call to re-examine the metaphors and symbols which were collectively assigned and enforced as “immovable truths” in *Tropic of Cancer*, Miller declares

that “On the meridian of time, there is no injustice: there is only the poetry of motion creating the illusion of truth and drama” (96). Miller’s assertion directly echoes Nietzsche’s critique of the socially prescribed and accepted truths dictating mass ideals within the eras in which they lived. Miller, in a prose similar to Nietzsche’s, explains that in the macro perspective of time, within the “meridian” or the imaginary line of time, there is no injustice; there are no truths except those which “the poetry of motion” creates. In other words, Miller implies that truths which are socially designated and accepted as truths are the result of actions or “motion” (96), suggesting that truths are not fixed or immovable, but move and change throughout time. Such understandings of truth, which asked those who engaged Miller and Nietzsche’s works to question the indoctrinated truths of their society, led to many misunderstandings and confusion for some of their readers, critics, and fellow scholars.

In adding to the evidence of Miller’s Buddhist inspirations, Indian Buddhist philosopher Shakya, or Rongtön Shakya Gyaltzen, “rejects the reality of conventional truth by treating it as a projection of the conventional mind – it is the ignorance of ordinary beings,” and connects conventional truths with “the appearances of nonexistent entities like illusions” (Thakchoe, sec. 3). Parallel to Nietzsche’s conclusion that “Truths are illusions” (753) in *On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense* and Miller’s “illusion of truth[s]” (TOC 96), or rejection of the socially constructed truths of Miller’s time, Shakya concludes much the same, stating that “Conventional truths are like reflections of the moon in the water—despite their nonexistence, they appear due to thoughts” (qtd. in Thakchoe, sec. 3). In other words, the Indian Buddhist philosopher Shakya, writing several centuries prior to Nietzsche and Miller (1367-1449), came to similar conclusions regarding the nature of *truth*, and is in agreement that *truths* are often, if not always, socially constructed both in thoughts and actions.

Whether or not Miller and Nietzsche were aware of this Indian-Buddhist ideological relation is unknown and is a question deserving of further research; however, as noted earlier, Miller and Nietzsche both researched Eastern religions frequently during their lives. Relatedly, both authors also strove to deconstruct rigid, socially constructed institutions such as religious establishments, for example. To explain further, Katy Masuga insists that Western philosophers and writers became interested in Buddhism because the Buddhists also accentuate deviating from dogmatism, and “Such a declaration of anti-dogmatic transcendental self-expression – couched in existential and intellectual paradox – appealed to creative artists and thinkers in search of a method outside of Western rationalism” (Masuga 76). With this in mind, Miller and Nietzsche both came to similar conclusions as the Buddhist philosophers writing centuries before them: it is imperative to the development and creation of the Self to challenge social constructs.

In turn, the previously mentioned passage from Nietzsche’s *On Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense*, held in comparison to his many works which ridiculed and disputed Christianity, resulted in many misunderstandings and misinterpretations of Nietzsche’s philosophy. Several scholars misread Nietzsche as being a nihilist, and a similar fate would befall Miller. This is no surprise as the agreed upon understanding of nihilism itself, as well as its many definitions, is sometimes hazy. Nietzsche, for example, did not agree with Buddhists when he stated his belief that Buddhism represents “a nihilistic withdrawal from existence and a desire for a different mode of being” (Elmen 679). Nietzsche, unlike his description of Buddhists who sought transcendence from the material world, tends towards acting on changing and improving the individual Self and their physical world rather than seeking escape from it through nirvāna or transcendence into (what is referred to by practicing Buddhists as) another realm or dimension of existence beyond the material world existing outside dualism and non-dualism (“not one” nor

“not two” (Nagatomo, sec. 1)). Comparatively, yet in contrast, it can be argued that Nietzsche employed the Buddhist principle of the *unconfined third perspective* (“not one” nor “not two”) to deconstruct and recreate socially constructed concepts such as Art and God with intent to restructure, and potentially improve, the physical world rather than seek transcendence from it by using the same principle as the Zen-Buddhists used to gain said otherworldliness, *the unconfined third perspective*.

In related examination of the concept of Nietzsche’s *free-spirit* (or Miller’s *lean spirit*), Nietzsche and Miller both made the distinction that only a few will ever attain the free, lean spirits’ (or *Übermensch*’s) level of joy and transcendence. In other words, both authors insisted that few are, or will become, the *lean* and *free spirits* they each discuss in *Tropic of Cancer* and *Zarathustra*. For Nietzsche, these statements would lead to grave misunderstandings of his works. As mentioned previously, twentieth century fascist anti-Semites misunderstood Nietzsche’s writings and misapplied his philosophy, twisting Nietzsche’s intentions, leading to the ironic and arrogant delusions that they (the Nazis) were / are the physical embodiments of Nietzsche’s few, *free-spirits*; thus, tainting Nietzsche’s name and works.

One example of the delusional and vastly egotistical misinterpretations the Nazis made concerning Nietzsche’s works regards Nietzsche’s description of the aforementioned *free-spirit* and *Übermensch* as “the few,” suggesting only a few are capable of attaining Nietzsche’s vision of true enlightenment. However, due to the fact Nietzsche was openly concerned about his sister’s anti-Semitism, and his relationship with Wagner deteriorated, in large part, due to Wagner’s anti-Semitic involvements (Kaufmann 8), it is quite likely Nietzsche’s intended meaning of “the few” was closer to the doctrines of Satori and Nirvāna in Zen-Buddhism than related, in any way, to the false and fascist notions of twentieth century anti-Semites. For

Nietzsche and Zen-Buddhists alike, “the few” represent the shared notion that most people are incapable of attaining Satori, Nirvāna, or enlightenment, so their spirits are not *free*. In the case of Nietzsche, these spirits are not free because they are incapable or unwilling to deconstruct socially accepted constructions (such as religious organizations and authoritative institutions, for example). In fact, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche designates anti-Semites as “a people whose type is still weak and indefinite” (187), emphasizing that anti-Semites are “weak”. Although Nietzsche was in no way kind to the Jewish religion (or any religion), as he openly criticized all organized religions, including Christianity, Buddhism, and Judaism, this evidence assists to further dismiss notions that Nietzsche’s *Übermensch* (or *free-spirit*) was ideologically aligned, in any way, with the Nazis whom Nietzsche regarded as “weak” (187).

Due to this information, Nietzsche’s intended meaning when he stated only a few may attain *Übermensch* and / or free-spirit status is, quite likely, another of his philosophies relating to Buddhism, which dictates that “Only fully enlightened beings are capable of escaping from the potentially unending and painful process of death and rebirth” (or the Wheel of Life / Eternal Recurrence) (Teiser 139), stressing that said levels of enlightenment, Satori, or Nirvāna are only attainable by a “few.” To further explain, Buddhist scholar Stephen Teiser notes “Representations of the Buddha’s passage in to final nirvāna typically show him exercising full control over his last transition, in contrast to his unenlightened disciples...” (139) who have not reached the Buddha’s level of enlightenment, noting that even Buddha’s own disciples were not “fully enlightened beings capable of escaping...” (139) the physical world through transcendence or *final nirvāna*. Similarly, Nietzsche and Miller state the same in *Tropic of Cancer* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, with Miller declaring, “Only those who can admit the light into their gizzards can translate what is there in the heart” (*TOC* 163), and only the few who “are

sensible to the alchemy of sound and sense, are capable of transforming the negative reality of life into the substantial and significant outlines of art” (163). In this passage Miller emphasizes that few are capable of attaining his vision of transcendence, in agreement with Buddhists, highlighting again that Miller’s primary method for attaining transcendence or enlightenment was through *Creation* and *Art*.

Likewise, Nietzsche conveyed the belief that the few, “free spirits” should seek to improve the self and unite together to redefine, create, and assign meanings to Life and Truths, and Miller’s *lean spirits* insist upon the importance of honest self-creation as well. In *Henry Miller on Writing*, Miller elaborates, “my feeling is that whatever metamorphoses are to occur will manifest themselves in the realm of action, in conduct and example...”(119), emphasizing a similar call to “action” as Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra*, while also declaring, “Like every man I am my own worst enemy, but unlike most men I know too that I am my own savior” (119), further highlighting the Nietzschean related ideal of improving the self by stating that only he can “save” himself. With this information in mind, the following section of this chapter will focus on both Miller and Nietzsche’s incorporated considerations of the Buddhist theory of *the Wheel of Life* or, as Nietzsche reimagined, *Eternal Recurrence*, and how those incorporations assist to display Miller and Nietzsche’s shared will towards improving the Self through the honest creation of Art and Joy, and, in some instances, improving their physical world as well.

Eternal Recurrence, Everything that Flows, and the Wheel of Life

In further reflection of Miller’s “active nihilism” in *Tropic of Cancer*, another Nietzschean theme appears when Miller pronounces his love for “everything that flows” (*TOC* 258), including that which is deemed good and those things which are commonly declared bad. Miller declares, “I love everything that flows, everything that has time in it and becoming, that

brings us back to the beginning where there is never end...” (258). In this passage, Miller alludes to what Nietzsche describes as Eternal Recurrence, and what Buddhists call the Wheel of Life or Wheel of Karma. In proclaiming he loves “everything...that brings us back to the beginning where there is never end” (258), Miller represents, whether consciously or not, both Nietzsche’s Eternal Recurrence and Zen’s Wheel of Life, both of which “flows” bringing “us back to the beginning where there is never end” (258). Nietzsche’s Eternal Recurrence, in summation, theorizes that an individual’s life reoccurs in exactly the same way, over and over again, for all of eternity (Roderick 14:00-18:05). In other words, Nietzsche asks the question: what happens if all that ever happened occurred again and again in the same, equivalent way as it happened the last time (and the time before that, and the occurrence before that, etc.), and did so for all eternity, endlessly reoccurring in perpetuity?

By the same token, one description of what Buddhists believe happens to an individual at the end of their lifetime “is that until final deliverance is achieved, each death is followed by a rebirth” (Teiser 139), and according to theorist Stephen F. Teiser, “Only fully enlightened beings are capable of escaping from the potentially unending and painful process of death and rebirth” (139). Miller described his experience traveling in France as a similar process of death and rebirth, stating that in his first year in Paris he “literally died, was literally annihilated – and resurrected as a new man” (*Henry Miller on Writing* 119). Unlike Buddhists who sought “passage into final nirvāna [or satori]...” (Teiser 139) and transcendence from the physical world, “escaping from the potentially unending and painful process of death and rebirth” (Teiser 139), Nietzsche argued acknowledgement of this eternal, “painful process” offers the opportunity to recreate a joyful life, one which can be relived and repeated jubilantly for all eternity, or so in theory (*Eternal Recurrence*). In doing so, Nietzsche also places strong importance on the idea

that one should not seek transcendence, Satori, or “final nirvāna” (Teiser 139) from the material world, rather, one should strive to create a Self or existence worth repeating.

In place of lamenting the pain of existence and seeking transcendence from said pain (such as the Buddhists according to Nietzsche), Nietzsche argued one should seek to change existence rather than seeking complete removal from an eternally recurring reality (or the Wheel of Life). In his work *The Partially Examined Life*, Nietzschean theorist Rick Roderick insists Nietzsche’s Eternal Recurrence has little care for, or relation to, the Buddhist Wheel of Life, but appears as only a problem to the creation of the self (13:35-13:50); however, as previously demarcated, Nietzsche’s Eternal Recurrence is certainly inspired by the Buddhist Wheel of Life. Beyond existing as a problem to self-creation, Nietzsche also insists the Wheel of Life (or Eternal Recurrence) is a starting point to the creation of a *joyous* existence honoring the physical world and the physical life itself; therefore, Nietzsche’s Eternal Recurrence exists as a problem on a global scale, as well as on the individual level concerning the creation of the Self. Nietzsche’s argument that we should cherish life in the physical world rather than seek escape from it through transcendence or death may then be valuable rhetoric for environmental rights activists and organizations as well, assuming they haven’t already considered Nietzsche’s arguments in favor of the physical world and physical existence, of course. Furthermore, the concept of *Joy* in both Miller and Nietzsche’s writings will soon be discussed in greater detail, highlighting Miller and Nietzsche’s shared interests in the aforementioned Buddhist theories, as well as the related themes of *Joy, Creation, and Art* present in *Tropic of Cancer* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* alike.

Furthering the discussion regarding the concepts of Eternal Recurrence, the Wheel of Life and Joy in relation to Miller and Nietzsche’s works, in *Zarathustra*, the theme of music /

song (as was previously addressed) enters the text again at the end of the book when Zarathustra performs his “roundelay” (*TSZ* 333), offering a closer look into Nietzsche’s Eternal Recurrence, as well as his suggestions for what the individual should do with all of eternity. Zarathustra’s roundelay, performed by Zarathustra in the presence of his various followers (including “the sorcerer” formerly discussed) is one of several examples of Eternal Recurrence in his text, but on this occasion Zarathustra, similar to Miller’s “singing” (*TOC* 2), is also singing a *Song*. Thus sang Zarathustra:

O Man! Attend!

‘What does deep midnight’s voice contend?

‘I slept my sleep,

‘And now awake at dreaming’s end:

‘The world is deep.

‘Deeper than day can comprehend.

‘Deep is its woe,

‘Joy – deeper than heart’s agony:

‘Woe says: Fade! Go!

‘But all joy wants eternity,

‘Wants deep, deep, deep eternity!’ (*TSZ* 333)

While singing, Zarathustra first explains he has “slept [his] sleep,” but has now awakened, realizing “joy wants eternity,” or, rather, hinting at the stress Nietzsche places on both themes of Eternal Recurrence (“deep, deep, deep eternity!”) and Joy. Zarathustra even declares that “Joy” is “Deeper” or more powerful than pain and “heart’s agony,” highlighting the depth of

Nietzsche's desire for, and theoretical appreciation of, the concept of Joy, while also hinting at the power of "Joy" itself, which is "deeper than heart's agony..." (line 8, 333).

Similarly, Miller also experiences a moment of comparable awakening "at dreaming's end..." (line 4, 333) regarding both the joy-rousing and agonizingly painful aspects of life. While describing examples of the dualistic concepts of "good" and "bad" ("one" and "two") Miller also insists upon living life by way of creating joy, explaining:

Today I awoke from a sound sleep with curses of joy on my lips, with gibberish on my tongue, repeating to myself like a litany – "fay ce que voudras!.... fay ce que voudras!" Do anything, but let it produce joy. Do anything, but let it yield ecstasy. So much crowds into my head when I say this to myself: images, gay ones, terrible ones, maddening ones, the wolf and the goat, the spider, the crab, syphilis with her wings outstretched and the door of the womb always on the latch, always open, ready like a tomb. Lust, Crime, holiness: the lives of my adored ones, the failures of my adored ones, the words they left behind them, the words they left unfinished; the good they dragged after them and the evil, the sorrow, the discord, the rancor, the strife they created. But above all, the ecstasy. (*TOC 252*)

In this passage, and in resemblance to the beginning lines of Zarathustra's Roundelay (*TSZ 333*), Miller begins by explaining that he "awoke." In waking, Miller finds "joy on [his] lips" upon arising with the grand realization that he can "Do anything" in life so long as it "produce[s] joy" and "ecstasy" (*TOC 252*). Additionally, and on a related note, Miller again employs dualistically opposing concepts such as "gay" and "terrible" when describing the various things in his life.

When discussing his *adored ones*, Miller explains he is thinking of both "the good they dragged after them and the evil, the sorrow, the discord, the rancor, the strife they created. But

above all, the ecstasy” (252), realizing that although his loved ones “created” awful things (including “sorrow, discord, rancor, and strife”), of the numerous negative images which “crowd into [Miller’s] head...” (252), images of “the ecstasy” his “adored ones” produced filled his mind most of all. It can, therefore, be argued that Miller’s *Joy* and *ecstasy* are also “deeper than heart’s agony” (TSZ line 8, 333), akin to Nietzsche’s representations of Joy in *Zarathustra’s roundelay*.

In accordance to Nietzsche’s noted promotion of creating or producing joy as a solution to the problem of Eternal Recurrence, Miller also awoke with the realization that life should consist of the creative manifestation of joy and ecstasy; therefore, in examination of what it is that Miller actually does throughout *Tropic of Cancer* to create the joy he and Nietzsche both stressed, insights into how Miller and Nietzsche possibly manifested and / or endeavored to feel joy can be expanded. The section to follow examines resemblances in the described actions of Miller in *Tropic of Cancer* and *Zarathustra* during his travels, focusing on the related themes of *poverty, dance and laughter*, as well as *Joy and Creation* in each work, while denoting similarities in the theoretical insights of Miller and Nietzsche alike, observing that Miller’s concerns also extend beyond the creation of the Self and Art, particularly after the publication of *Tropic of Cancer*.

Chapter 5: Bed Bugs, Balance, and Unity

While Miller declares that one can simply “Do anything” so far as the outcome of that action produces “joy” and / or “ecstasy” (*TOC* 252), looking closer at what Miller spends his time doing in *Tropic of Cancer* offers a glimpse into what Miller did to create joy within the scope of his novel, descriptions which are, again, complementary to themes present in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as well. First, it is well known that Miller spent a great deal of his time in both the U.S. and France in poverty prior to his rise in fame after publication of *Tropic of Cancer*, and Miller discusses both poverty and hunger, sometimes at great lengths, throughout his work. In one passage, Miller describes his good health despite his hunger, saying, “I don’t deny it. I have health, good solid, animal health. The only thing that stands between me and a future is a meal, another meal” (49). In addition to this expression of “good health” despite his obvious hunger and sporadic periods of starvation represented in other passages in *Tropic of Cancer*, a few pages earlier, Miller complains of his companion’s seeming lack of gratitude and excessive neediness despite her arguably understandable frustrations with their situation, grumbling, “Meanwhile we pick bedbugs out of each other’s hair. Nervous. Mona is losing her temper. Must have a bath. Must have this. Must have that. Must, must, must...” (21). Throughout *Tropic of Cancer*, Miller makes clear he is both hungry often and frequently only has a meal to eat and a place to sleep due to the assistance of his friends and fellow authors / artists, but Miller also articulates his “good solid, animal health” (49) despite this poverty.

Furthermore, Miller expresses a sense of gratitude which escapes Mona, a person whom Miller describes as needy and “Must, must, must...” (49) *have* this and that. In other words, Miller articulates that his needs are, perhaps, not as trivial or excessive as Mona’s despite the fact that Mona’s complaints are arguably reasonable considering they are picking bedbugs off of each

other and Miller will soon be in search of his next meal once again. Moreover, Miller also expresses his profound happiness despite his destitution on the first page of *Tropic of Cancer*, insisting he has “no money, no resources, no hopes... [but he is]... the happiest man alive” (1), again reaffirming Miller’s great joy in spite of (or, perhaps in part, because of) his lack of material possessions and wealth, as well as his lack of “cares” (1), concerns, or worries.

Similarly, *Zarathustra* also begins his journeys begging for food, because “he grew hungry himself. So he stopped at a lonely house in which a light was burning” (TSZ 63). When Zarathustra reached the house, “An old man appeared...” (63), so Zarathustra asked the man for food. The man fed him and soon Zarathustra continued on his way, announcing soon afterwards, “A free life still remains for great souls. Truly, he who possesses little is so much the less possessed: praised be a moderate poverty” (77). This “moderate poverty” Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* speaks of is related to Miller’s descriptions of his “great health” despite his hunger and poverty, and both share philosophical similarities to principles sustained by specific sects of Buddhism as well. For example, Indian and Tibetan Buddhist scholar Charles Goodman notes, “Theravāda monks, who live by begging, are expected to eat whatever food is placed in their bowl, including meat, without preference or discrimination” (sec. 5). The specific Buddhist perspectives of the Theravāda monks which Goodman refers to share comparable views on “begging” as those expressed by Nietzsche’s “moderate poverty” (TSZ 77) and Miller’s “good health” (TOC 49) despite his recurrent dances with destitution.

Secondly, although the presence of “health” despite hunger and the importance of *music* in both *Tropic of Cancer* and *Zarathustra*, as previously discussed, are themes both novels share, the theme of *dance* and *dancing* is also visible throughout both novels. In *Tropic of Cancer* alone, Miller refers to himself, others, or in allegorical passages as “dancing” or in relation to

“dance” over 40 times, asserting in one instance that the artist Matisse is a “bright sage, a dancing seer...” (164). Miller later refers to himself and other *lean spirits*, asserting, “Let the dead eat the dead. Let us living ones dance about the rim of the crater, a last expiring dance. But a dance” (257). In this passage, Miller connects the activities of the “living ones” (or *lean spirits*) to dancing and joy, declaring that “dead” or “non-lean spirits” should be left to “eat the dead” (or destroy themselves and each other), while Miller and his *lean spirits* simply “dance.” Miller also dances in the opening passages of *Tropic of Cancer* as well, and does so by performing a “dance over your dirty corpse...” (2), or in other words, by challenging the constructs of God and Art through the honest exploration of the Self by “singing” a “song” (2) in the Creation of *Tropic of Cancer* rather than simply writing a book. As denoted earlier, Miller deconstructs the ideas of God and Art not only by singing, but by dancing upon the carrion of “insufficient” Gods as well.

Correspondingly, Nietzsche also refers to dance and dancing over 50 times throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, with one segment titled “The Dance Song.” In this brief section, Zarathustra sings for and dances with the “meadow girls” he meets on his travels (*TSZ* 130-133), “But when the dance had ended and the girls had gone away, he grew sad” (133), perhaps suggesting Zarathustra could not sustain his joy on the company of women and dancing alone. Additionally, Nietzsche also emphasizes his appreciation of dance early in Zarathustra’s travels, declaring he “should believe only in a God who understood how to dance” (68). Not only does Zarathustra dance with “meadow girls” (130-133), but his “Gods” must dance as well. In addition to the presence of dance in Miller and Nietzsche’s works, the theme of laughter and laughing appears throughout both *Tropic of Cancer* and *Zarathustra* over 60 times in each text,

and almost always depicts Zarathustra and Miller laughing themselves, denoting a similar desire to laugh and dance, actions which (simply put) both create and exude joy.

Beyond laughing and dancing their way through eternity, the deconstruction and recreation of the Self and Art sustained as one of Miller and Nietzsche's primary concentrations relating to their often congruent ideas of transcendence and enlightenment, and for Nietzsche and Miller both, *Creation* is designated as the highest task for *lean* and *free spirits* alike. Miller explains:

Behind the minutiae, the chaos, the mockery of life, he detects the invisible pattern; he announces his discoveries in the metaphysical pigment of space. No searching for formulae, no crucifixion of ideas, no compulsion other than to create. Even as the world goes to smash there is one man who remains at the core, who becomes more solidly fixed and anchored, more centrifugal as the process of dissolution quickens (*TOC* 164).

According to Miller, in moving beyond "the minutiae, the chaos, [and] the mockery of life," one has "no compulsion other than to create..." in what Miller describes as "the metaphysical pigment of space" (164), emphasizing the central role *Creation* plays in Miller's philosophy. This process of creation is, according to Miller, manifested in the creation of the Self through Art, with great importance placed on Music. After all, Miller is "singing," not writing, and *Tropic of Cancer* is not a book, but a "song" (2). Miller also refers to Nietzsche as singing in his essay "The Universe of Death" (1938), stating, "Nietzsche sings in *The Birth of Tragedy*" (*HMR* 206). While Miller describes himself as singing in *Tropic of Cancer*, he portrays Nietzsche singing as well, highlighting both Nietzsche's importance to Miller and the significance of *Song* in the process of creating (and / or recreating) the Self and his works.

In the case of Miller, he has “no compulsion other than to create” (*TOC* 164), and the stress Miller places on *Creation* is also shared by Nietzsche. In *The Birth of Tragedy: Out of the Spirit of Music (TBOT)*, Nietzsche explains he is “convinced that art is the highest task and the real metaphysical activity of this life...” (17), directly relating to Miller’s urge to *Create* in “the metaphysical pigment of space” (*TOC* 164). For Miller and Nietzsche, *Creation* is the “highest task” of the living or the true mission (“the real metaphysical activity of this life...” (*TBOT* 17)) for *free* and *lean spirits* alike. In addition to the weight Miller and Nietzsche both place upon the necessity of Music, Art and Creation, acceptance and love for the physical world, as briefly addressed formerly, was also of great importance for both authors.

To clarify, Nietzsche insists at the conclusion of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* that everything is interconnected and forever dependent on each other; he proclaims, “All anew, all eternally, all entangled, ensnared, enamored – oh, then you loved the world. Eternal ones, love it eternally” (qtd. in Elmen 678). In resemblance to Nietzsche’s philosophical ideals, the final pages of *Tropic of Cancer* end as Miller calmly describes how “The sun is setting. I feel this river flowing through me – its past, its ancient soil, the changing climate. The hills gently girdle it about: its course is fixed” (*TOC* 318). Similar to Nietzsche’s expressed conclusions in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the sun, the land, and the climate are all integrated with the river’s flow. The river’s “course is fixed” (318) because each of these natural elements is working in unison, dependent upon each other, and forever entwined, “ensnared” and “enamored” (Nietzsche qtd. in Elmen 678). Due to the interdependent, interconnected, and theoretically perpetual existence of all things, Nietzsche also considered solutions to the eternally recurring pains of existence. In consideration of these eternal entanglements, Nietzsche concludes that we should “[love] the world. Eternal ones, love it eternally...” (qtd. in Elmen 678), expressing his strong love for the

physical world, and if necessary, for all of recurring eternity, while also insisting that people should no longer look towards the possibility of worlds beyond our own (such as “heaven” or other concepts of afterlives), but love our physical *Earth* instead.

Likewise, Miller offers a similar, though somewhat differing, portrayal of his acceptance of the present moment and his existence within the physical world in *Tropic of Cancer*, passionately expressing that he has done away with sadness because he’s “lived out [his] melancholy youth (*TOC* 50). Declaring he no longer worries about the past or the future, Miller states, “I don’t give a fuck any more what’s behind me, or what’s ahead of me. I’m healthy. Incurably healthy. No sorrows, no regrets. No past, no future. The present is enough for me. Day by day. Today!” (50). In this passage, Miller expresses happiness in stating he is “Incurably healthy,” in part, because he no longer “give[s] a fuck” (50) or cares about the past or present. Miller is living his life “Day by day” (50). Of course, the practice of living day by day with emphasis on focusing on the present moment, as Miller describes, is related to Zen-Buddhist principles, and confirms the notion that a significant aspect of Miller’s active creation of the Self, Art and Joy consists of doing away with worries for the past or future by focusing on the present, and Miller claims he is “Incurably healthy” for doing so.

Despite his expressed enthusiasm for living “Day by day” (50) or moment by moment in *Tropic of Cancer*, Miller would later concern himself with both local and global affairs extending beyond the individualist pursuits of the Creation of the Self and Art. Though this would seem to be contradictory to Miller’s existentialist and individualist driven philosophy present in *Tropic of Cancer*, Nagatomo notes, “what motivates the Zen person to action is a *thrust* he or she feels, surging from the creative source in the bottomless ground” (sec. 8.2), explaining that although Buddhists are highly involved in individual activities, such as the path

to Satori and Nirvana, Buddhists also recognize a call to action outside of the Self, arising in a “*thrust*” or push from what Nagatomo describes as “surging from the creative source in the bottomless ground” (sec. 8.2). Whether or not Miller felt a call to action from “the creative source” is unknown; however, it should be noted that Miller was involved in several anti-censorship lawsuits in the United States, resulting in social and political progress relating to free speech issues in the States.

Relatedly, similar to the abominable misuse of Nietzsche’s works by the Hitler and his Nazis, Buddhist philosophy was (and still is) abused and misapplied with malicious intent, most notably on the island of Burma. For the Buddhist leaders of Myanmar, Burma, the “call to action outside of the Self” (sec. 8.2) arose from hate-filled, and arguably non-Buddhist, intentions. Furthermore, the actions of the Myanmar Buddhists stand in direct contradiction to fundamental tenants of Buddhism. To clarify, after 1962 “A ‘xenophobic,’ anti-colonial nationalism has characterized the military governments...” (Foxeus 207) of Burma. The government of Burma recognizes and supports Buddhism as the principal religion in the region, actively and violently persecuting non-Buddhists (predominately Muslims) since 1962, with acts of violence escalating in recent years (2012 to the present) with an increase in “anti-Muslim riots breaking out in various parts of the country and ultra-nationalist monks disseminating anti-Muslim propaganda” (Foxeus 213). Theorist Niklas Foxeus explains that the actions of the Buddhist monks of Burma contradict both a vital Buddhist tenant (which dictates one should no harm to any living creature) and “reinforces the organization’s dualistic world view of good and evil” (212). As previously mentioned, the actions of the Burmese monks (and other individuals of authority) are in direct opposition to the Buddhist goal of attaining enlightenment, which exists beyond both dualism (“one and two” or “good and evil”) and non-dualism (“not one” nor “not two”).

Far removed from the violence of the Myanmar monks, Henry Miller's "call to action" extended beyond his anti-censorship efforts and subsequent legal victories. Miller also voiced humanitarian concerns, expressing worries and frustrations relating to the state of his home country and the rest of the world in various works following *Tropic of Cancer*, notably in his essay "Of Art and the Future" (from *Sunday After the War*), published in 1944. In this essay, Miller voices disquiets ranging from his thoughts on World War II, where he insists Hitler was "hardly the brilliant imaginative demon we credit him with being. He merely served to unleash the dark forces which we tried to pretend did not exist" (*HMR* 234), to discussing issues related to slavery and civil rights in the United States. After insisting that "The human fundament is in the East" (235), Miller avows, "We cannot have a real brotherhood so long as we cherish the illusion of a racial superiority..." (235), and concludes that the United States government and people "have not even begun to put the Emancipation Proclamation into effect" (235). With his thoughts regarding the national and global issues pertaining to *times of war* and "illusion[s] of racial superiority..." (235), Miller articulates other concerns throughout this essay, and also makes predications for the future of the physical world, as well as for the future of Art, concluding, in his own way, that the future is female, or at the very least, the female (feminine) will be in *balance* with the male (masculine).

To explain, Miller writes, "If it is a greater reality we are veering towards then it must be a woman who points the way" (241). Displaying a desire for a more gender-balanced future, Miller imagines a woman "who points the way" to "a greater reality" (241), or perhaps, to a better ("greater") world and existence. In another passage, Miller expresses his belief that the gender roles of men and women (or the feminine and the masculine) will and should shift to become equally *balanced*, and even *in balance* within the Self. Miller clarifies:

With the concomitant emancipation of woman, entailed by this great change, the awakening of the love instinct will transform every domain of life. The era of neuters is drawing to a close. With the establishment of a new and vital polarity we shall witness the birth of male-and-female in every individual. What then portends in the realm of art is truly unthinkable. Our art has been masculine through and through, that is to say, lop-sided. It has been vitiated by the unacknowledged feminine principle. (239)

While casting the prediction that all men and women will eventually embody both the feminine and the masculine simultaneously in forecasting “the birth of male-and-female in every individual” (239), Miller also recognizes what he describes as the “lop-sided” balance between men and women, particularly within the Arts. Miller adds to this predication by reaffirming his focus on Art and Creation, saying, “There is nothing but art, if you look at it properly. It is almost banal to say so yet it needs to be stressed continually: all is creation, all is change, all is flux, all is metamorphosis” (240). Although this passage again stresses Miller’s belief that Art and Creation is *the highest task* (in agreement with Nietzsche), declaring that “all is creation” (240), Miller concludes his essay with a call for *Unity* and *Balance* as well.

Announcing that we, as members of the human race, must “Come forth not in brotherhood, but in brotherhood and sisterhood, as man and wife, as male and female...” (241), Miller, quite clearly, calls for *unity* of the duality of (or socially constructed divisions between) woman and man, but he also adds a warning as well. Miller cautions that if we do not unite the two (female and male, or “one” and “two”), “we shall perish and rot in the bowels of the earth, and time pass us by ceaselessly and remorselessly” (241), stressing the importance of uniting the sexes and developing a gender-balanced society, as well as gender-balanced individuals who embody both the feminine and masculine. In contrast, it should be noted that although Nietzsche

discussed global concerns, and at times to great extent, his physical involvement in political and social action was virtually non-existent, and of course, Nietzsche also made no such predictions or statements such as Miller's relating to the need for a gender-balanced society. While it is possible that Nietzsche's persistent struggles with various physical ailments played a role in Nietzsche's physical inaction, Nietzsche called for *free spirits to unite and love the world*, emphasizing that humans should love the physical Earth and physical Life for all of recurring eternity.

Harmoniously, three years prior to the publication of his essay, "Of Art and the Future" in 1944, Miller first published a collection of essays titled *The Wisdom of the Heart* in 1941, which reaffirms many of his sentiments expressed in *Tropic of Cancer* related to the creation of the Self and Art in his essay "Reflections on Writing." Miller again refers to writing as an abstract process of creation, explaining that writing is "a "voyage of discovery." The adventure is a metaphysical one..." (*HMR* 242). Miller later reinstates his related philosophies of recurring eternity to that of Nietzsche's Eternal Recurrence and the Buddhists' Wheel of Life, maintaining, "One can only go forward by going backward and then sideways and up and then down. There is no progress: there is perpetual movement, displacement, which is circular, spiral, endless" (245), again highlighting both the Nietzschean and Zen Buddhist connections within his philosophy and works several years after the publication of *Tropic of Cancer*. Furthermore, in "Reflections on Writing," Miller emphasizes his Zen-Buddhist allied concerns regarding the *unconfined third perspective* existing outside of both dualism and non-dualism ("not one" nor "not two") once again, explaining that "Most artists are defeating life by their very attempt to grapple with it. They have split the egg in two" (*HMR* 247). The artist is defining life in terms

of “good” and “bad,” (“one” and “two”) by dividing “the egg” (life, concepts, truths, things, people, etc.) right in two.

Additionally, Miller also clarifies for his readers and critics that he does not consider writing, or the process of the honest creation of the Self through Art, as escapism, explaining that “Writing was not an ‘escape,’ a means of evading the everyday reality...” (251). Rather, “it meant a still deeper plunge into the brackish pool – a plunge to the source where the waters were constantly being renewed, where there was perpetual movement and stir” (251). In this passage, it is possible that “the source” Miller describes is akin to the “creative source” described by Zen-Buddhists which “*thrusts*” the Zen person to action (Nagatomo, sec. 8.2), and Miller’s sentiments again echo that of Nietzsche’s Eternal Recurrence and Zen’s Wheel of Life, or what Miller describes in this passage as “perpetual movement and stir” (*HMR* 251). Miller’s recurrent emphasis on the Nietzschean and Zen-Buddhist related concepts of Eternal Recurrence (or the Wheel of Life), as well as his focus on *lean* and *free spirits* deconstructing and recreating conceptions of the Self, Art and God highlights the profound role Nietzschean and Buddhist theory played in Miller’s life and works. Miller’s profound emphasis on the importance of Music and Joy is also evident throughout *Tropic of Cancer* and Nietzsche’s notorious *Book for All and None*, assisting to further understanding of Miller’s infamous and often misread *Song*.

Conclusion

Throughout this exploration, the presence of significant Buddhist philosophies is shown in the works of Miller and Nietzsche alike. While both authors emphasize the honest assembly of the Self through the truthful construction of Art, they also draw importance to matters extending beyond individualist pursuits, and insist upon uniting with other elated, *lean* and *free spirits* to deconstruct, recreate, and continue to manifest a joyful existence, which is not developed in, or marred by, the confinements of dualist and non-dualist perceptions, but established from within *the unconfined third perspective* where Zen, Satori, Nirvāna and Enlightenment reside. Concluding that we should not seek out the possibilities of worlds beyond the physical Earth, the ferocious philosophies of Nietzsche, as well as the poetic works of Miller, noticeably insist upon equally accepting all the pains and joys of physical existence through the honest Creation of the Self and Art, and in succession, Joy.

Although it should be said that many of Nietzsche's theories often contradict when viewing his texts in their entirety, these contradictions appear in many forms in both Nietzsche and Miller's works, serving to describe the incongruities of dualist (not one) and non-dualist (not two) modes of thinking. Additionally, Miller and Nietzsche's considerations, appropriations, and reconstructions of Zen-Buddhist philosophies are significant to developing further understanding of their vast and varying works. Above all, Miller and Nietzsche mutually agree that if life must be spent reliving the same existence perpetually, one should spend eternity creating, recreating, and repeating the sounding Joy by actively accepting and embracing the physical earth and existence, as well as creating a life worth repeating, insisting that other *balanced, lean* and *free spirits* unite to love the world. Love the world eternally.

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