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The Autobiographical Act in the Exile Narratives of Marek Hłasko and Henry Miller

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All translations from Polish are my own, except for citations from *Killing the Second Dog,* unless otherwise noted. Thus the errors remain mine.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Serafima Roll of McGill University, for her invaluable guidance, critical insights, and sense of humour.

I also wish to thank my wife Sarah for her support and especially for her uncanny ability to crystallize ideas from a flurry of words.

–For Mary G.

Abstract

This study is an investigation of the autobiographical narratives of two authors, the Pole Marek Hłasko and the American Henry Miller. Though they lived in different times and places Miller and Hłasko share some remarkable features with respect to temperament, philosophies of writing, and modes of narrative output. In the chapters that follow I will examine both the biographical and the textual points of contact between these two men, concentrating on the problem of self-inscription in the autobiographical novels, and on the games played with identity that both men engaged in throughout their artistic careers, especially during their periods of exile.

The first section provides a recapitulation of relevant biographical data together with a summary of the social and historical contexts as these affect the personal ideology of each writer. I begin with an exposé of some parallels in the biographies and the autobiographical narratives of the two men, and subsequently turn to a summary of the broader polemics of authorial representation in works written in the first person. Here the traditional notion of equating the author of an autobiographical novel with its subject will be rejected in favour of examining the network of relationships that exist among the writer, the writer's cultural "persona", and the textual voice. Following this theoretical framework, I explore each author's personal script of emigration, his sense of self-understanding and self-positioning in the world, and the strategies of self-construction and self-invention undertaken both in the narratives and in the public arena. My analysis of each author's most representative autobiographical works of the exile period will finally suggest the conclusion that while the autobiographical impulse supplied the form for virtually all of Hłasko's and Miller's writing, it is the experience of exile that furnished the content for successful narrative self-revelation.

Résumé

Ce mémoire porte sur les récits autobiographiques de deux auteurs, le Polonais Marek Hłasko et l'Américain Henry Miller. Même s'ils ont vécu à des époques et dans des lieux différents, le tempérament, la philosophie d'écriture et les modes de production narrative de Miller et de Hłasko ont quelques points en commun. Dans les chapitres qui suivent, j'examine les points de contact biographiques et textuels entre les deux hommes en m'intéressant plus particulièrement à la problématique de l'auto-inscription dans les romans autobiographiques et aux jeux d'identité auxquels les deux hommes se sont livrés tout au long de leur carrière artistique et plus particulièrement pendant leur exil.

La première partie est un récapitulatif des données biographiques pertinentes accompagné d'une description sommaire des contextes sociaux et historiques qui ont influé sur l'idéologie personnelle de chaque auteur. Je commence par un exposé de certains parallèles dans les biographies et récits autobiographiques des deux hommes, puis passe à un compte rendu des polémiques plus vastes sur la représentation de l'auteur dans des oeuvres écrites à la première personne. Ici, la notion traditionnelle qui consiste à mettre sur un même pied l'auteur du roman autobiographique et le sujet sera rejetée au profit de l'examen du réseau de relations qui existent entre l'écrivain, la "persona" culturelle de l'écrivain et la voix textuelle. Fidèle à ce cadre théorique, j'examine ensuite le scénario personnel de chaque auteur au titre de l'immigration, de son sentiment d'auto-compréhension et d'auto-positionnement dans le monde et des stratégies d'auto-construction et d'auto-invention mises en oeuvre tant dans ses récits que dans le domaine public. Mon analyse des oeuvres autobiographiques les plus représentatives de chaque auteur pendant l'exil aboutit en dernier ressort à la conclusion que même si l'élan autobiographique a fourni la forme à pratiquement tous les écrits de Hłasko et de Miller, il n'en reste pas moins que c'est l'expérience de l'exil qui sert de fond à une auto-révélation narrative réussie.

Introduction

Henry Miller's and Marek Hłasko's autobiographical texts dating from the period of exile (respectively 1931-39 and 1961-66) will be approached from the premise that the traditional practice in the study of autobiographical writing of equating the physical author with the narrative subject is both erroneous and misleading. It is erroneous because it fails to account for the autobiographer's tendency to explicitly fictionalize some events and to transform others, according to the dictates of memory and to the strategic design of the account itself as a conduit of self-revelation. It is misleading because it implicitly assumes that an act of mediation of the self onto paper can ever attain consummate transparency and objectivity. At the same time, I will suggest that schools of criticism that espouse an almost total separation of the author from the narrative (such as post-structuralism), bisecting the spheres of the text and the writer into distinct entities with little relation to one another, have perpetuated a fallacy of another kind: the denial of authorial subjectivity in favour of autonomy of the product--the narrative.[1]

This work will aim to reinstate the primacy of the writer *vis à vis* the narrative, although the new relation will admittedly be mitigated by the very context of the intricate interdependencies that occur between the writer as a biological being existing in a particular time and space,[2] and the textual subject who ostensibly gestures back to its author and "originator". While paying heed to the self-reflexive impulse of the person who *produces* a text--the writer who works under specific social and historical conditions, and who seeks to articulate a defined set of objectives--this study will focus instead on the processes of self-creation and legend-making in exile narratives. Consequently, my examination of Miller's and Hłasko's texts will investigate questions of identity games and persona shaping in

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[1] See for instance, Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text" in *Image--Music--Text*, 155-64.

[2] In other words, the Bakhtinian "chronotope" in which the writer exists. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Creation of a Prosaics*, Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1990, 366-432.

the places of exile, two processes manifested in these narratives. By contrasting the autobiographical narratives of these two writers of different eras and traditions, and by analyzing the political and cultural forces influencing the configurations of the works, we may arrive at a broader awareness of the principal determinants of artistic becoming.

Hłasko's and Miller's autobiographical narratives make a compelling case (doubly so in conjunction) in support of Maurice Blanchot's observation that the state of exile, the "lack of fullness", and the need to wander [*errance*] are the essential condition of modern man (Josipovici, 16). For modern art and literature, therefore, to have real merit, according to Blanchot, they must reflect an acceptance--and indeed must rejoice in--a sense of perpetual restlessness and homelessness (Josipovici, 16). Modern art, therefore, is an "art of exile": it recognizes the existential anxiety of the uprooted creator, but does not indulge in obsessive searches for origins. It is my contention that the writings of Miller and Hłasko provide ciphers to such an agenda of individual recognition and acceptance of one's exile. In allegiance to a program of becoming wherein, through the formative experience of exile and by the means of writing *about* exile, both men attain to a mastery of their craft following a series of false starts and experimental fumblings. I shall show how, by capitalizing on the unique cultural status and linguistic experience of exile, each author was able to realize what he knew he truly possessed: an authentic, innovative voice, a voice in some respects unique in each writer's literature.

Of Hłasko's exile writings, *Killing the Second Dog* (1990) (*Drugie zabicie psa,* 1965), has been selected for critical examination. This work of fictional autobiography forms part of the cycle of what is referred to in Poland as "Cykl Izraelski" (The Israeli Cycle): a series of seven works set in Israel of the early 1960s but written in Western Europe between 1962 and 1966, following Hłasko's self-imposed exile in Israel in 1959 and '60. All seven could easily be (and often have

been) read as autobiographies proper.[3] Of the seven volumes, only two--*Dirty Deeds (Brudne czyny,* 1964) and *Their Backs Were Turned* (*Wszyscy byli odwróceni,* 1964)--employ third-person narration, and even here easily recognizable characteristics or symbols of the author are preserved in the portrayal of Abarakov and Dov Ben Dov, the auto-fictional protagonists. *Killing the Second Dog* was chosen over the other autobiographical novels of the Israeli Cycle because the author's narrative identity gaming is more adventurous and far-reaching in this work than in any other narrative--but also because, as the sole volume in the Israeli Cycle translated into English, it remains the only one of Hłasko's exile texts accessible to English-speaking readers.

Further for the discussion of Hłasko, the autobiographical novel *Converted in Yaffa (Nawrócony w Jaffie,* 1966), a sequel to *Killing the Second Dog,* and *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds (Piękni Dwudziestoletni,* 1966) are used as supplementary sources. Though Hłasko often claimed that *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds* represented a typical autobiography, a volume in the category of "the life and the work" of a writer, the work is actually representative of a sub-genre of highly aestheticized personal history. Stanisław Stabro, for instance, refers to the work as "a quasi-memoir, oscillating between a *belletrist* form of a diary and a typical autobiography, and displaying an unmistakable disposition for role-playing and auto-creation" (Stabro, 1985: 43). And indeed though at times the chronicle can be significantly ambiguous about factual events and occasionally is downright misleading (for instance the narrative is replete with conjecture about the political reaction to the author's enforced emigration), the volume remains an essential autobiographical document especially with regard to Hłasko's emigration, as two of its six chapters give an account of the author's vicissitudes in Israel.[4] Three other sections, those

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[3] See Rudnicki's summary of the autobiographical argument, 162-3 in his *Portrety Współczesnych Pisarzy Polskich: Marek Hłasko.*

[4] For instance, when writing about his emigration to Israel, Hłasko occasionally lapses into a narrative mode strongly reminiscent of that employed in *Killing the Second Dog* and *Converted in Yaffa.* These segments certainly read like fiction; the narrator's

devoted to his life in communist Poland between 1950 and 1957, are especially relevant as social and political analysis.[5]

In my selection of Henry Miller's narratives, I acknowledge Miller to be a writer of extremes, a proponent of undisciplined narrative flow. In particular the Parisian narratives, according to Gunther Stuhlmann, drew upon the refuse of the world--a newspaper article he proofread, an encounter with a mentally deranged prostitute, an idea culled from his favourite authors, a poster warning against venereal disease, a snippet of cafe conversation between pimps--and tossed them back into his work, a pastiche of juxtapositions and caricatures, a "sentimental garbage can" (Stuhlmann, xvi-xv). Given the philosophies that governed his writing and the sheer volume of text he produced, the narratives often appear uneven or somehow lacking in structure. Miller however accepts this quality as a function of the essential flux of life, a flux that he deliberately infuses into his writing.[6] Hence to distill the flavour of Henry Miller's exile experience and illuminate the process of his

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braggadocio, especially in the treatment of Hłasko's wife, Sonia Ziemann, recalls the tone of Jakub's dealings with Maria in *Killing the Second Dog* (See Chapter Three). Indeed in some places it is difficult to ascertain whether Hłasko is relating his own experiences or whether he is writing fiction, continuing the narration of those two autobiographical novels in the voice of Jakub-Hłaskower, their protagonist. In particular, the charming insouciance with which Hłasko relates his days *en marge* between publication advances even suggests that the author is drawing a character study to be used in some upcoming episode of Jakub-Hłaskower's adventures hustling wealthy tourists.

[5] Hłasko begins with a recapitulation of some of the factors governing his emergence as a writer in Stalinist Poland, subsequently embarks on a discussion of "free" Europe and his place in it as a roguish, irreverent émigré, and concludes at an unspecified juncture prior to the decision to emigrate from Western Europe to the United States. This chronological breakdown leaves a biographical lacuna of approximately two years (coinciding with the period during which the other narratives of the Israeli cycle were being produced) - a hiatus whose specific conditions can only be reconstructed from Hłasko's personal records.

[6] See *Tropic of Cancer*, 257-8, beginning with "Yes . . . I love everything that flows: rivers, sewers, lava, semen, blood, bile, words, sentences. . . . I love the words of hysterics and the sentences that flow on like dysentry and mirror all the sick images of the soul. . ."

self-revelation as a writer, I have selected the one work which most directly deals with the problematics of writing in exile (though he refers to his expatriation in practically all subsequent writings) and the creation of an artistic self: the first foray into self-revelation, *Tropic of Cancer* (1934).

Tropic of Cancer and *Killing the Second Dog* are the most characteristic of Miller's and Hłasko's oeuvre, and as such constitute ciphers to each writer's system of identity games and to the configurations of the narrative voices in exile. Additionally for Miller, *Quiet Days in Clichy* (1956), a variation on the theme of bohemia and Paris that constitutes a coda to his expatriation in France (Mitchell, xv), will be considered as a supplementary source. Written during the early 1940s in New York for an American collector of pornography, the manuscript for *Quiet Days in Clichy* remained unpublished for nearly a decade. The short novel in two parts contains a fictionalized account corresponding to the years 1932-33 when Miller, who was living with a fellow writer, the Austrian Alfred Perlès (Joey, Carl, and Fred in the Paris books) in the working class Paris suburb of Clichy, had just completed *Tropic of Cancer,* and was engaged in writing *Black Spring,* the second Parisian volume of self-revelation. The third Parisian book, *Tropic of Capricorn* (1939), will not be given consideration in this study because in that volume Miller would retreat to New York of the Twenties to reconstruct his seven-year long relationship with his second wife, June Edith Smith. The work closes with Miller's decision to flee the United States for Europe in 1930, effectively setting the stage for the writer's expatriate bohemian period which culminated with the publication in Paris of *Tropic of Cancer.* The other volume treated as a supplementary source for Miller is his critical study of the poet Arthur Rimbaud, *The Time of the Assassins* (1944), also written in the United States. The work is crucial to Miller's oeuvre as throughout his (biographical) analysis of the French *poète-maudit* Miller provides valuable hints and caveats with respect to his own struggles for artistic becoming.

Finally, where obfuscations of a biographical nature demand clear consensus, I will rely on personal letters and letters between third parties in an attempt to reconcile the legion inconsistencies and paradoxes which surround the life and work of Henry Miller and Marek Hlasko.

Chapter One: Marek Hłasko and Henry Miller: Personal Scripts and Textual Personae

Biographical and Narrative Correspondences

Although Hłasko's and Miller's cultural backgrounds, the loci of their exile, and the settings of their autobiographical writings seem to have little in common, their personal histories exhibit a number of fundamental similarities. Interesting analogies can be drawn with regard to the authors' attitudes to exile, their relationships to women, and their abandonment of traditional education and the concomitant engagement in street life. Most notably, the need for exile as a precondition of artistic freedom, articulated in the narratives and letters of both men, constitutes a central point of contact from which a network of correspondences radiates. Miller and Hłasko were confronted by analogous forces that campaigned against the emerging creative voice; in both cases the pressures were related to the impossibility of becoming an artist while remaining in the homeland. For Hłasko the impetus to leave Poland derived specifically from his inability to continue functioning as an artist while remaining faithful to the repressive ideology of the State, an ideology to which at this point in his life he still subscribed. For Miller, self-exile from America was precipitated by forces that had long been hampering his growth as an artist. Indeed, Miller chose exile (though he did not view it as a choice in 1930) because of the perceived *impossibility* of achieving success as a writer in his native New York or anywhere else in the United States.

More affinities emerge when the functional values assigned to exile by each writer are compared. Miller and Hłasko held in common the belief that severance from the homeland would produce radical personal change precipitated in large part by an unfamiliar environment. To both men exile is thus associated with hope, a palpable sense of rupture with the past, and even the possibility of a spiritual rebirth.[7] The similarities extend to the determinants of exile, in that the decision to

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[7] See, for instance, *Black Spring*, 185-6; see *Letters from America*, *passim*.

emigrate (in Hłasko's case, to remain and publish abroad, anathema for a Communist writer) would be predicated upon fundamental personal or societal crisis, or a nexus of both. Henry Miller's *crise*, played out in New York, would be experienced within the parameters of the private persona--a persona that had not yet received the public recognition that had been granted to Hłasko--even if it was grounded to a great extent in Miller's sense of alienation and his inability to conform to society. For Hłasko the compelling pressure would derive chiefly from the external powers of the Communist state, and would be effected upon the published writer's *public,* sanctioned persona. Where Miller differed from Hłasko was in his inability to realize himself as a productive member of society and in the resultant sense of alienation. But, like Hłasko during his decade-long exile, Miller was perpetually cognizant of his singular status as a displaced, anonymous *other.* "He did not 'belong'--not anywhere," Miller writes of the French poet Rimbaud. Then he adds: "I have always had the same feeling about myself" (*Time of the Assassins*, 6). This self-reflexive understanding of personal crisis and attendant sense of trauma--factors precipitating exile--would long taint the subsequent perceptions and memories of the homeland.

Circumscribing the scope of this comparison to a common pool of formative biographical experience, one finds that the first affinity between Miller and Hłasko concerns the parallels in temperament and sensibility. The "life scripts" of both authors converge on a proclivity for deliberate self-marginalization and an associated self-perception as outsiders, alone and homeless in an alienating world.[8] Integral to the peripheral existence both writers led were hunger, violence, and desperation, along with the threats to the self implicit in marginal existence, the

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[8] See Stępien 16-19, and Stabro 19-27, for two communist era discussions (1981 and 1985 respectively) of Hłasko's alienation and desire for social belonging (here treated with a typical Marxist bent). With respect to Miller, Sidney Finkelstein's article "Henry Miller: Alienation and Rebellion to Nowhere," in Mitchell, 121-8, provides interesting insights about the writer's perception of the social function of the creative personality *vis à vis* a conformist society, despite the author's blatant Marxist bias.

random acts of self-sacrifice deemed necessary for survival.[9] In both Hłasko and Miller marginality is co-extensive with a masochistic, self-destructive outlook on relationships. Prominent examples from Hłasko's period of expatriation, noted by critics such as Rudnicki and Stabro, center on the writer's quixotic decision to marry the well-known German actress Sonia Ziemann,[10] and settle at her home in Munich, and on an aberrant identification with a popular myth of the perpetual exile, epitomized by his impulsive travels--he also referred to these as "escapes"--between Western Europe, the United States, and Israel throughout the Sixties (Stabro, 1983: 39).[11]

The Israeli Cycle narratives, in particular, articulate Hłasko's struggle with a kind of double-edged self-immolation, wherein a chronic difficulty with intimacy is combined with an ingrained tendency to masochism. Both these personality mechanisms are illustrated on the corporeal level by Hłasko's marriage to Sonia Ziemann, whom he would from the start perceive as a central symbol of (German) oppression (Rudnicki, 127).[12] Yet Ziemann embodies an oppressive force that the writer will, ironically, both search for--insofar as he will remain in the relationship (intermittently) for nearly six years, every so often experiencing what Stankiewicz-Podhorecka has termed, perhaps jocosely, "a flare-up of emotions"--and attempt to evade (Stankiewicz-Podhorecka, 32). Later, in *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds* Hłasko

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[9] In particular, both Miller and Hłasko indulged in detailed descriptions of their states of starvation. See Hłasko, *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds* 206-208; see Miller, *Tropic of Cancer* and *Quiet Days in Clichy, passim,* but particularly 25-30 in *Clichy.*

[10] Linguistic incompatibility was the central problem - Hłasko's German was less than functional, Ziemann's Polish almost nonexistent.

[11] Hłasko had written on numerous occasions that Germany, in particular, was a country he felt "unequipped to deal with". Since Sonia Ziemann also owned flats in several other West German cities, most of Hłasko's "escapes" actually constituted escapes from Germany. Typically he would return to Germany penniless, seeking reconciliation with his wife. See Stankiewicz-Podhorecka, 40.

[12] In a letter to a close friend, Eryk Lipiński, Hłasko alludes to this by mentioning, *en passant,* that there had been Nazi officers in Sonia Ziemann's family and that he has the impression of living under German occupation. See Stankiewicz-Podhorecka, 198.

acknowledges in a offhand gesture, as if to efface any notions of an emotional involvement, that the marriage was chiefly motivated by money and hopes for stability of a sort: "Reflecting upon [her] from the perspective of a Romantic at heart, I made a hasty emotional self-analysis and, having concluded that I had absolutely nothing against West German currency, decided to wed her" (222). But immediately after, in accordance with a sado-masochist impulse of personal oppression, Hłasko appends the following: "I had graver concerns: the German occupation, which had ended quite a few years ago for most people, began all over again for me" (*Beautiful Twenty Year Olds,* 222).

Basing himself on such utterances, Rudnicki has suggested that as a result of living with a very popular movie actress, i.e.: someone who in a sense prostituted her image to audiences, Hłasko had developed a "chronic pimp complex", which would later find expression in narratives such as *On the Day of His Death* and *A Tale About Esther* (Rudnicki 127). Such a psychological assessment made by a literary critic may be valid, in part--for Hłasko's contradictory sentiments towards Sonia Ziemann constitute a specific symptom of a general attitude towards women which reverberates in his narratives and letters to male acquaintances. But while this attitude contains evident elements of misogyny, it is articulated through channels too convoluted and ambivalent for a diagnosis of typical, clinical misogyny to be satisfactory. Yet even though the psychological dimensions of Hłasko's attitudes to women lie beyond the scope of this paper, it should be noted that his brand of misogyny (for a lack of a better definition) tinges the content of his narratives and even their structure and for this reason deserves our attention.[13]

To take one example, Hłasko's complex attitude towards women is effectively negotiated in the uneasy and doomed relationship between Kararzyna (interestingly enough, a middle-aged German actress) and Abarakov in *Dirty Deeds.*

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[13] For one interesting--though largely negative--discussion of Hłasko's personality mechanisms from a psychological perspective by a critic of literature, see Stabro's "Hłasko: Sentymentalizm i Samozniewolenie," 39-44.

Their relationship, like Hłasko's own marriage, must fail because it is *a priori* destined--in other words, explicitly constructed in the narrative--to unequivocal failure (again like his marriage). Abarakov must choose between fulfilling his meticulous plan to avenge his friends Izaak's death, and abandoning it for one woman's desperate love. However, the notion of love freely given only problematizes the economic relation between wrongdoing and revenge which had consumed Abarakov (It also problematizes the other relations taken up in the Israeli Cycle narratives: sex and money, friendship and betrayal, good and evil). Abarakov's revenge on the pilot responsible for Izaak's death, exacted in order to sanctify his friend's memory, will become part of an inflexible destiny (Rudnicki, 132). Thus love, linked intimately with fate and tragedy as it typically is in Hłasko, no longer remains an independent force; and as such it then becomes flawed. Even if he were given a choice of action (which Abarakov will in any case expressly deny himself), he would refuse to deviate from the ideological purity of an eye-for-an-eye (here "death for death") program of retribution in any way that might accommodate love and clemency.

Hłasko's nearly decade-long courtship of Esther Steinbach, an Israeli stewardess whom he had met in 1960, provides another example. It was a commitment which, as one can surmise even from reading the "fictionalized" re-tellings of their affair in several of the Israeli stories that use a character named Esther (in particular in the eponymous *A Tale About Esther*), caused considerable anguish for the writer. Ultimately the "Esther affair" was never resolved, for Sonia refused to grant Hłasko a divorce.[14]

Similarly on the personal level, Miller's highly self-destructive, protracted marriage with June Edith Smith forms the functional equivalent to Hłasko's

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[14] See "Letters to Esther Steinbach" ("Listy do Esther Steinbach"), in Stankiewicz-Podhorecka 244-50. See also Hłasko's letters to Zula Dywińska, Esther's best friend in Israel, in Stankiewicz-Podhorecka, 227-40, especially letters dated from Jan. 28, 1966; Feb. 1966; March 1966; and 9 Feb. 1967.

emotional triangle with Sonia and Esther. For both men, these emotional entanglements and the recurrent need to evade them and later to justify the escapes, provided impetus for writing.[15] And as in the case of Hłasko, Miller's relationship continued in spite of the physical separation and in effect was resolved only following the palliative measures of his romantic and intellectual association with Anaïs Nin. Miller had found in Anaïs Nin a true kindred soul, and what is more important, a fellow artificer of literary monuments to the emerging creative self. As Nin's biographer Gunter Stuhlman suggests, she represented "the perfect embodiment of that cosmopolitan culture and open-minded, intellectual sensibility Miller had been searching for." [16] Nin was to remain Miller's closest confidante for the entire Paris period, and their voluminous correspondence continued until well after World War Two, following Miller's return to America and settlement on the West Coast. A central theme of their discussions was Miller's estranged wife June, who, according to the testimony of mutual acquaintances, was an object of captivation for Anaïs Nin.[17] In Paris, aggravated by the separation from June and by the evident impossibility of either ending the marriage or effecting a reconciliation, Miller now directed his rage outward at all women, expressing it most forcefully in *Tropic of Cancer*.[18]

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[15] See Stankiewicz-Podhorecka, 31-2, and Dearborn, xviii-xxii, for a discussion of Hłasko and Miller, respectively.

[16] See Stuhlman's Introduction to *Henry Miller: Letters to Anaïs Nin*, v-xxvi, p. xiii-xv.

[17] *Henry Miller: Letters to Anaïs Nin, passim.* Both the Miller-Nin letters and Nin's Diaries reflect the correspondents' preoccupation with June Smith. See also Brassaï, 85-95.

[18] In an uncharacteristic, particularly tender passage of *Tropic of Cancer* the narrator admits that he is suffering and impotent to change the situation: "When I realize that she is gone, perhaps gone forever, a great void opens up and I feel that I am falling, falling, falling into deep, black space" (178). The tone of this passage contemplating the narrator's separation with Mona (one of Miller's sobriquets for June, employed also in the volumes of *The Rosy Crucifixion*), is strongly indicative of a "slip" of the typically savage, embittered narratorial persona. See *Tropic of Cancer*, 176-85.

Following his return to the United States in 1940, Miller would embark on a monumental mission to capture the core of June's nature on paper. This narrative quest resulted in the *Rosy Crucifixion*, a trilogy comprising some 1600 pages and never fully terminated (according to the Miller's testimony), at times an unendurably prolix affirmation of personal suffering and fracture, a coda to the dissolution of the ego.[19] The majority of Miller's commentators judge all three volumes of the *Crucifixion* as close to failure, and some call it a gratuitous work, as June does not reliably *emerge* as a sovereign character despite the sheer volume of words devoted to her depiction.[20] Perhaps the sole exception to this litany of deprecation is Welch Everman's essay "The Anti-aesthetic of Henry Miller" in which the author argues that in the process of writing "an interminable account" of his life with June, "Miller. . . collapses the distinctions between art and life. His anti-aesthetic rejects the well-crafted novel of coherent characters in favour of association, digression and contradiction" (Everman, 332-3). In other words, stabilized meaning and consistent methodology of inscription is deliberately discarded in order to create a specular image of the artless, disjointed self with minimal distortion. The failure to capture June's essence in his *Autobiographical Romances* is therefore to be seen in light of Miller's ideational scenario outlined by Everman.[21]

A second point of biographical confluence pivots on both writers' thirst for experience and their tendency to reject certain formal aspects of the cultural

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[19] At the end of *Nexus* the narrator feels sufficiently dehumanized by his lover Mara's continued lies and deceits that he ceases to speak altogether. Yielding his autonomy and recognizing her role as his master, he proceeds to howl like a dog.

[20] See, for instance, Lewis, 192-214; Brassaï 85-101; Mailer, 181-94. Mailer writes that "no love in literature is so long recounted as [Miller's] affair and marriage and separation from his Mona [the name of June's character in *Sexus*]. The *Rosy Crucifixion* becomes one of the greatest failures in the history of the novel, a literary cake large as the Himalayas which fails to rise" (185-6).

[21] Likewise, Gunther Stuhlmann, in the Introduction to *Henry Miller: Letters to Anaïs Nin* (v-vi) emphasizes the lengths that Miller went to, in his an attempt to triumph over June, (and over the female as the "Other"), by writing about her precisely--even if the tradeoff for accuracy was formal elegance.

tradition. This drive becomes conflated in both with a tendency to perceive interactions with the world from an immediate attitude, on the level of instinct and pure emotion, devoid of intellectual distancing. These uncontaminated impulses and images would be subsequently recast into narratives, often with great expressive power.[22] Roaming spirits both, Miller and Hłasko thus appear for the large part to eschew the normative, civilizing efforts of formal education in favour of "self-education": the headlong immersion into the flux of life. It would seem that the numerous prejudices from which both writers suffered stemmed from an idiosyncratic world view related, to a large degree, to an incomplete classical, humanist education, an education which was at once anticipated and obligatory in their respective social milieux. The degree to which this sense of absence affected their perceptions of the world, the writing aesthetic, the positioning of the self in that world, indeed the entire epistemology of the self, can be reconstructed in the very writing style and the subject matter of the early texts.

It is not surprising, however, that the deficit in education should quickly be filled by an affiliation of another kind; the fact that Miller and Hłasko expeditiously associated themselves, intuitively or by default, with working class society, forms another biographical correspondence between these two men. In both cases, also, the conscious choice to abandon education is puzzling since both men were of solidly bourgeois stock, again particularly Hłasko both of whose parents had been trained as lawyers.[23] Miller's family, as Norman Mailer argues, was typically *junker*: Miller was raised in an environment that produced craftsmen and teachers (Mailer, 86). Even so, as Miller himself maintained on numerous occasions, his parents

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[22] See for example the opening paragraphs of *Tropic of Cancer*, which relate the narrator's joyous abandonment on the streets of Paris; for Hłasko, see especially the narrator's meditations on the nature of friendship and of betrayal in *On the Day of His Death*, 182-193

[23] Hłasko's formal education ends with primary school (not counting two years in trade school). Miller, on the other hand, does complete secondary school at Brooklyn's Eastern District High School, but soon abandons ideas for further schooling three months into an abortive semester at New York's City College.

expected him to acquire practical or vocational training sufficient to situate himself within a bourgeois milieu, the lifestyle of which would equal and preferably exceed their own (*Genius and Lust,* 86-87). Yet this chimerical bourgeois paradigm of his parents', as Miller insists, had little room for writers. As he would confess much later, his mother in particular was ashamed of the vocation her son had chosen for himself: "My mother would say, 'If anybody comes, a neighbor or one of our friends, put that typewriter away'. . . . Writing was like a crime I was committing" (*My Life and Times,* 200).

The fundamental shift in the ontological positioning of the self in the outside world--in a sense exchanging one genealogy for another, viewed as more romantic--is suggested in some of the early works of these two writers. These passionate experiments in self-creation and the construction of a personal ideology, despite their perhaps unavoidable, derivative literariness, exhibit a sense of genuine if understandably ambivalent sympathy and connection with people for whom the notion of free time, following exhausting and monotonous menial work, insinuated the possibility of genuine freedom. For in a remarkable convergence of judgment, both writers perceived in their working class encounters a pervasive attitude perhaps best described as an immediate emotional world view, liberated from both men's *bête noire*, the purgative and repressive objectives of educational institutions. The sense of nominal freedom appropriated by proxy through immersion in the working class environment and "the Street", in all likelihood seemed worlds apart from the sterile regulations of their own worlds. The world of the Street thus suggested an escape from the myriad prohibitions and complexes, and from the ingrained sense of rectitude attendant to bourgeois culture, be it--as in Miller's scenario--of the American late Victorian variety, or, as Hlasko's case illustrates, of a "proper society" imbued with a peculiar, Socialist kind of self-righteousness.[24]

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[24] To offer but one example of the crucial impact of the early impressions, Miller recounts in *Black Spring*: "In the street you learn what human beings really are; otherwise, or afterwards, you invent them. What is not in the open street is false, derived, that

Implicit in their formulations of rebellion was a growing conviction of the need for self-liberation: an escape, certainly, but one whose precise coordinates were as yet indeterminate. For both Miller and especially for Hłasko, the decision to abandon education seems to have implied the rationalization of a premeditated revolt against the expectations of their milieu. It is intriguing that the preoccupation with re-inventing one's roots would constitute for both authors the first among many recorded instances of manipulation of the persona and of the associated myth of the self. Moreover, this initial crisis of identity would find direct expression in the narratives, recast into the freer form of the autobiographical novel.

Central to the discussion of the relationship between the writer's social/cultural positioning and the emergent textual body is the mechanics of the creative process through which immediate, emotionally charged perceptions of the world, filtered by a rough fabric of individual sensibility, resulted for both authors in an "immediate" and emotional writing. Their narratives constituted in the respective cultures harbingers of a new genre of *écriture*, a mode of personal writing that welcomed and indeed celebrated the lower strata of society without a palpable sense of self-reflexive detachment. What is truly innovative in both Miller and Hłasko is the fact that neither author saw a need for a sustained analysis of the relation of the new environment to the authorial identity in the flux of its emergence. Unlike many of their literary predecessors, the protagonists in Miller and Hłasko do not attempt to indicate their difference from the working class, nor do they query the fundamental principles upon which the lower social strata operate. Many such previous efforts--George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* comes to

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is to say *literature*" (3). Also of note is the extent to which street dialogues and street scenes in general figure centrally in Hłasko's novels and short stories, especially in the first published volume, *First Step in the Clouds*. See, for instance, "The Noose" ("Pętla") and "The Holiest Words of our Life" ("Najświętsze słowa naszego życia") in that volume. For a particularly biting expose of Socialist self-righteousness, see the short story "Pissed Drunk at Noon-time" ("Pijany o dwunastej w południe") in *First Step in the Clouds*. For a bravado parody of Socialist-speak, see Hłasko's 1958 political novel *The Graveyard*.

mind--resulted instead in exegeses of the lower class' inherent vulgarity, almost in spite of their authors' best wishes.[25] Here the narrators simply install themselves in their milieux, prompting the curious reader to research the authors' past in order to ascertain--as critics of both writers sometimes felt compelled--that we are not in fact dealing with precocious truck drivers (an occupation Hłasko held in Poland and in Israel), and gravediggers (one of Miller's jobs in New York), but with *writers* first and foremost. [26]

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[25] Among the most profound literary influences for Hłasko we should count Dostoyevski, Joyce, Hemingway and Steinbeck; for Miller, they are Dostoyevski (whom Leon Lewis calls the ur-artist for Miller [109]) and Joyce again, as well as the American Transcendentalists such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Walt Whitman, and writers as far apart as Rabelais and Rimbaud. Dostoyevski, in effect, is an acknowledged spiritual father to both writers, equally in terms of narrative influences as with respect to the scope of vision which his writings resonate. The Russian writer was attractive to both Miller and Hłasko in large part due to the scope of his humanist preoccupations, conveyed by the desire to express his understanding of humankind with profound sympathy, yet without failing to expose and comment on human weakness, and the dark reaches of the human soul, from an acutely Christian moral perspective (Bratkowski, 1). For Miller, especially, Dostoyevski is an exemplar of how an individual vision can transform the world and imbue reality with personal and symbolic meaning (Lewis, 108-9). At some mythological, ideational intersection of Dostoyevski's psychological, didactic, and detective writing, both Miller and Hłasko found a role model for their own narratives. For the sources of Miller's fascination with Dostoyevski, see *The Books in My Life*, 138; 221-4 (And for an index of "The Hundred Books" that proved as the most lasting influences, see Appendix I in the said volume [316-7]).

However, considering Dostoyevski's influence on Miller and Hłasko it should be noted that their divergence from his didactic brand of social observation in favour of fuller immersion into the life they describe, constitutes another point of contact for a comparatist analysis. While Miller's literary influences include such observers and celebrants of the ribald "lower depths" as Rabelais and Céline, here too we find a key difference in the two approaches to their respective subjects (Mediaeval France and Twenties America): Miller's immersion was far less analytical, more headlong, always performed vis-à-vis his American curiosity. For a comparison between Miller's Paris narratives and Cline's *Journey to the End of the Night*, see Raoul Ibarguen "Céline, Miller, and the American Cannon", 489-490, 493-6.

[26] It evidently pleased socialist pundits in Poland to have in their midst an epitome of social-realist doctrine: a worker/writer, equally proficient at both "occupations"! And, as will be shown

The testimony of the narratives and of anecdotal accounts suggests that the piquant *otherness* of the working class milieu ultimately served as a catalyst for sustained evolution of the self towards an artistic sensibility. What is more, these deliberate immersions into the working world, the world of the street and the word of the gutter–the domain of the exotic *other*–would both trigger an appetite, and supply essential justification for the impulse to experience genuine foreignness: exile. In turn, life in exile would facilitate the construction of an integrated sense of a multifaceted self, the necessity of which for artistic development had been initially signaled by this act of intuitive (cross-class) bonding. In effect both writers cultivated a vividly individualistic theory of the self that subsumed the morality of the street into a philosophy of life which was highly charged with sentiment and reflective of an abject imperative for artistic engagement and for social belonging.

However, despite this outward posture of *engagement*, the majority of contacts with cultural agents and institutions, especially those in exile, were shouldered by what I will call an expressly manufactured public persona, created largely in an *ad hoc* fashion as a response to the many social roles and obligations in which each writer was obliged to partake. Meanwhile the true (latent artistic) identity was distorted and concealed in a web of subterfuge, intrigue, and elaborately woven personal mythologies and eagerly disseminated legends, typically to emerge only in private letters to intimates.[27] The process worked somewhat like this: Given both the complicated family circumstances (especially Miller's) and the tribulations of contemporary world history (as in Hłasko's case), it is none too surprising that both writers repeatedly assigned blame to social and family disorders for specific personal dysfunctions. In effect, faulting the monolith of "society" for legion personal problems, became an accessible panacea and for a time an effective one. But, when an accounting was called for, the *manufactured persona*

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later, it was in Hłasko's interest to deceive them for as long as possible.

[27] See especially Hłasko's letters to his mother from emigration, and Miller's letters from Paris to Emil Schnellock.

(the Actor) would bear the brunt of delinquency or failure, often in a wildly melodramatic, public manner, prompting further indiscretions and perpetuating the cycle of legend-making and self-mythification. For instance, already as an established literary figure Hłasko derived great joy from reading the accounts of his drunken transgressions in the Society section in newspapers (Kurpiewski, 1989: 13-17).[28] Versions of some of these episodes would subsequently be related in the narratives, either as information that the narrator disclosed about himself or alternatively as something bequeathed to another character.

Influences on Life and Art:

Along with the parallels in certain personal attitudes and choices described above, an additional set of affinities between Miller and Hłasko emerges in our consideration of questions of artistic sensibility. In these we find reverberations of lifestyle which seem to amplify the proximity of experience. Artistic sensibility as a construct here converges on three factors: a specific personal/creative vision; a set of functional responses to the culture of the place of exile; and a range of manipulations of identity undertaken for artistic gain.

First, Miller's and Hłasko's autobiographical fiction, especially from the exile period, reflects stubborn adherence to a catastrophic vision of the world.[29] While still living in the United States, Miller categorically condemns the capitalism of imperialist America which in his view has engendered pervasive personal alienation that in turn has led to social estrangement (Lewis, 25-6). During the mid 1920's, employed as a hiring clerk for Western Union's New York head office, Miller began to view himself as a victim *par excellence*, a necessarily diseased product of a

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[28] Among the literary and social circles in Warsaw, Hłasko's indiscretions (perpetrated, *nota bene*, by a youth in his early twenties) quickly became the stuff of indulgent legend. He even had his own corner at the bar of Warsaw's premier nightclub, "Kameralna" (Stankiewicz-Podhorecka, 15-16).

[29] For Hłasko, see especially Wyskiel 43-7; for Miller, see Karl Shapiro's Introduction (1961) to *Tropic of Cancer*, xix-xxx.

corrupt, disintegrating civilization. At the same time Miller gives voice to messianic messages related to his bouts of (melo-)dramatic suffering. Assuming the role of the madman who dances on corpses during a plague and alternatively that of a "Horatio Alger with a vengeance," or a Jeremiah proclaiming revolt, all the while insisting on his difference from a proto-modernist ethos that produced what he considered a mass society of de-individuated automatons, Miller the prophet of doom drafts a series of manuscripts for novels and stories. *Crazy Cock, Moloch, or This Gentile World*, and *Clipped Wings*, three impulsive, stylistically awkward, and clumsily didactic works, remained unpublished, perhaps with reason, for over a decade following Miller's death. Nonetheless, these pieces of juvenilia retain their value to Miller's champions and are instructive to students of his work, revealing as they do the depths to which Miller's outrage plunged, and the full sweep of his impotence to escape his life of failure and alienation and to realize himself as an author. [30]

Paradoxically, "while Rome burns", Miller is also capable of deriving an idiosyncratic sense of *personal* optimism that enables him to sublimate or satirize the dissolution of civilization underway. Although the vicissitudes of Miller's nearly seven-decade long career as a writer would eventually lead him to come full circle in this particular point, during exile in France his view of the world is uniformly pessimistic and premonitory of calamities. His narrator becomes increasingly egocentric and utilitarian. The sense of living amid catastrophe is manifested in the primacy of sustenance and drink in the hierarchy of fundamental realities. The pre-eminence of physical survival for Miller is articulated below in what constitutes one of the darkest passages of *Tropic of Cancer*:

> At this very moment, in the quiet dawn of a new day, is the earth not giddy with crime and distress?. . . . Tomorrow there might be a revolution, a plague, an earthquake. Tomorrow there might not be a single soul to whom

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[30] For an elaboration of the social and personal factors behind Miller's rage and paralysis, see Mary Dearborn's "Introduction" to *Crazy Cock* (published 1991) and *Moloch, or this Gentile World*, (1991).

> one could turn for sympathy. . . . It seemed to me that the great calamity had already manifested itself, that I could be no more truly alone than at this very moment. I made up my mind that I would hold on to nothing, that I would expect nothing, that henceforth I would live as an animal, a beast of prey, a rover, a plunderer. On whatever crumb my eye fastens, I will pounce and devour. If to live is the paramount thing, then I will live, even if I must become a cannibal (98).

In the midst of global disaster, Miller's narrator possesses sufficient resolve and murderous logic to commit himself to a life of absolute self-reliance and individual freedom unmitigated by guilt or responsibility:

> Heretofore I have been trying to save my precious hide, trying to preserve the few pieces of meat that hid my bones. I am done with that. I have reached the limits of endurance. As far as history goes I am dead. . . . 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 the lean spirits roam with sharp claws. If I am a hyena I am a lean and hungry one: I go forth to fatten myself' (*Cancer,* 99).

The next decade—Miller's expatriation in France—would give him ample opportunity to put these occasionally savage methods of survival into practice.

Hłasko's program of personal salvation is less pragmatic and is nowhere articulated with a lucidity and brutality equal to Miller's. A survivor of World War II, which broke out when he was a boy of six, the Polish author initiates his writing career against the unequivocally bleak backdrop of Stalinist repression and terror, and what he will later see as the false prophecies of socialism. His debut, *nota bene,* comes less than a decade after the end of Nazi occupation of Poland, the legacy of which remained in the ruins of Warsaw and Wrocław where Hłasko lived as a boy, and in the sharp memories of violence (*Letters From America,* 116). Coming to terms with his upbringing Hłasko reproached his youth in a totalitarian state for perceived deficiencies in sensitivity and intelligence. He saw these

reflected in the very problematics of his narratives. "I do not know whether I constitute a typical product," Hłasko writes in *Letters From America:* [31]

> but it is clear to me that I am a product of an era of war, hunger, and terror. Hence the intellectual poverty of my stories; simply said, I cannot conceive of a story that would not end in death, in catastrophe, in suicide or with prison. This is not a result of posing as a strong individual, as some like to charge. It is simply intellectual infantilism, deriving from an inability to accurately judge other human beings, from an absolute ignorance of the value of human life, of authentic human problems, and of true human drives and longings. . . it is a burden from which I will probably never be free (117-8).

The writer's clear awareness of an accountability left unresolved, and his antagonism to state systems would be invoked in later writings, although references to wartime and post-war Poland in these exile narratives would often be oblique and shadowy. The above segment constitutes perhaps the most unequivocal enunciation of the trauma. But as Rudnicki suggests, the experience of war remained immediate; Hłasko could neither mythologize war in the narratives, nor transcend it (Rudnicki, 176). He was only able to mythologize his particular responses: a general sense of mistrust, and the belief that every "other" is a potential adversary. This emerging philosophy is articulated with particular bitterness--and a twinge of existential malaise--in the novel *Next Step--Paradise* (1958). One of the principal characters puts it in this way: "God gave man one sole grace: the ability to be alone. Only those things which you can accomplish by yourself alone have any worth. Every other is an enemy. People cannot grasp this and so end up walking all over one another like spiders in a pile of dung" (146).

Elsewhere in Hłasko, the sense of suffering and injustice is typically sublimated through role-playing in the narratives and through manipulations of a character's memory (Wyskiel, 44-6); only very occasionally does Hłasko analyze his suffering. So while it is possible to ascertain the degree to which the narratives

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[31] *Letters from America* (1967) is a series of essays written nearly a decade after Hłasko's emigration from Poland and published in installments in the Polish expatriate monthly *Kultura*.

reflect eschatological sentiments that are founded on the witnessing of past calamities, and possible as well as conjecture as to which memories and historical events depicted in the narratives had been "worked through" and which had been left unexamined or repressed, the sense of metaphysical anxiety of the victim and the survivor in Hlasko eludes easy classification, even though this quality permeates some sections of the Israeli Cycle narratives--usually the rare explicitly self-analytical passages. Hlasko is too coy and evasive about his "real" past, too playful for any truly reliable biographical readings to emerge (I return to this point in the chapter on *Killing the Second Dog).*

However, what connects the two bodies of work is a unique set of responses to the alternatively threatening and alienating realities of existence, exacerbated in the unfamiliar places of exile. First, both artists choose to *return* to the basic problematics of survival for an individual exposed to hunger and the danger of bodily harm or, and this is seen as a graver danger, of palpable dissolution of identity. In consequence they both develop complex systems of impersonal dependence on others. Some of the means of procuring subsistence are blatantly parasitic in nature. After losing his temporary job with the Paris edition of the *Chicago Tribune*, Miller devises a weekly meal schedule whereby he secured a complimentary dinner by "rotating" among seven acquaintances (Brown, 12). In return for providing the meals, his hosts had the honour of Miller's "good company and conversation" (Wickes, 1989: 59). Such episodes seem symptomatic of a peripheral "feast or famine" existence. Interestingly, despite such maneuvers of self-marginalization, both writers at various stages of their lives enjoyed a devoted following of champions and supporters from artistic and literary spheres, and more often than not benefited from the company of accomplished mentors. Literary figures such as Anaïs Nin, Michael Fraenkel, Alfred Perlès, Lawrence Durrell, the publisher Jack Kahane, and other writers or publishers, many of them also expatriates in Paris, were equally instrumental in supporting Miller financially and in

nourishing his quest of identity formation. Such distinguished writers as Stefan Loś, Tadeusz Tyrmand, Igor Newerly, and especially Jerzy Andrzejewski, were Hłasko's counterparts in Poland.

In addition, we should consider the role that the foreign culture of the places of exile had on shaping the narratives. The discovery of the self as a "writing self"--the parameters of which are stipulated in the autobiographical act--is intimately linked to the writers' new pact with language. Miller's and Hłasko's struggles with language reflect and celebrate the concept of the *self*, an identity expressly constructed to contain and disseminate the authors' status as exiles. For two reasons, the linguistic influences in Hłasko's writing are more complex and indirect than they are in Miller. First, the Polish writer's exile is double: the distancing involved in his emigration to Israel is compounded by his travel from Israel to Western Europe, where the stories of the Israeli Cycle were actually written. Secondly, the phenomenon of linguistic "seepage" or mutation occurs from the native language into the native language in a new idiom: here, the agent of influence is the distinctive and flavourful Polish language spoken by the Jewish émigrés who had befriended the writer in Israel.

For his part Henry Miller, as Leon Lewis argues, was fascinated by the sense of freedom institutionalized in substandard language, the language of the street, and in the slang of the working class (Lewis, 43-5). A born storyteller, Miller would later come to excel at capturing the rhythm of the spoken word of the street. The imaginative idiom of the street, the liberties taken with the *structuring* of language in the name of experimentation (representing the textual parallel of Miller's "personally experimental" status in Paris), the mimicking of native French speech (often of the prostitutes whose French Miller translates into English, but whose Romance language structures he retains) and of the diction of other European expatriates in Paris--these form the framework of influences and at once indicate the objectives of Miller's research in language during the period of writing of *Tropic of Cancer* and

suggest the directions of the successive Parisian volumes.[32] The dominant mode of cross-cultural and linguistic flux in Miller's Paris narratives centers on the notion of *reverberation*. We find direct transcriptions along with more covert influences of the French language that are too numerous to mention. These occur mainly in the daily speech of the narrator and his circle of expatriate Americans. In addition the narrative develops an unprecedented, seemingly haphazard combination of the poetry and emotional flourish of the French language often *literally translated*, combined with a seemingly casual melange of late Victorian prose and slang, and at times its rather inelegantly labeled subspecies, "Gutter English". Instances of linguistic reverberation are scattered throughout *Tropic of Cancer*. Below is one such example, employing reported speech, in Miller's portrayal of a Madam of a Montmartre bordello. Following an incident in which the narrator's Hindu friend Nanantatee mistakenly uses the bidet as a toilet, the Madam's "cultural" outrage faced with the *faux-pas* gradually dissipates, replaced instead by sound business sense:

> "Frightful! Frightful!" she wails. "Never have I seen anything like this! A pig! A dirty little pig!"
> Finally the madam takes me to one side. She has become a little more reasonable now. After all, it was a mistake. Perhaps the gentleman would like to come downstairs and order another drink--for the girls. it was such a great shock to the girls. . . And if the good gentleman will be so kind as to remember the *femme de chambre*. . . . It is not so pretty for the *femme de chambre*--that mess, that ugly mess. She shrugs her shoulders and winks her eye. A lamentable incident. But an accident. If the gentlemen will wait here a few moments the maid will bring the drinks. Would the gentlemen like to have some champagne? Yes? (*Tropic of Cancer*, 92)

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[32] For Miller's experimental ventures in language, see especially his surrealist flights of fancy in the chapter entitled "Jabberwhorl Cronstadt" in *Black Spring* (129-47); see sections of *Quiet Days in Clichy* devoted to Nys for a rendering of a prostitute's regional (Provençal) French into English (15-24); see also *Tropic of Cancer* (167-8; 213-6; 297-306) for further evidence of linguistic experimentation in Miller's translation practices. For a detailed analysis of Miller's linguistic experiments in the Paris narratives, see Leon Lewis 43-50.

The third and final point of contact in Miller's and Hlasko's sets of responses to exile is that the places of exile are consistently shown to radiate a sense of *belonging* despite all their unfamiliar qualities. Miller's Paris is a Paris of refugees from other parts of Europe and beyond. Even though his desperation distinguishes him from the crowds and doubly marks him as an outsider--for even in a city that was home for as many desperadoes as Paris had been in 1930, Miller is considered a curiosity and does not "fit the picture of an American" (Patouchinsky, 9)--he feels at home almost immediately (*Letters to Emil*, 18-29). Miller's appearance in Paris signals the emergence of a rare phenomenon, virtually *sui generis* at the time: "a penniless Yankee with neither name, reputation, nor fixed abode," and as such an object of intrigue if not necessarily of compassion (Brassaï, 5). It is significant that Miller was not another "typical rich American" living in Paris on family money, and decidedly *did not* belong to the famed Fitzgerald-Hemingway exodus (that generation of artists and socialites had fled from France following the 1929 stock market crash). It was that sensation of difference which exhilarated Miller about his new status as an exile (Brassaï, 8).

The theme of belonging resonates strongly in letters Miller wrote during his first year in Paris to his best friend and mentor in America, Emil Schnellock. For the first several months of his stay he responds passionately to "*everything* he encounters": the beauty and the squalor of Paris, the corner bistros and cafés filled with revelers until early morning, the range of dialects and languages of the street (Wickes, 1989: 16). After all, according to the testimony of the Hungarian photographer Brassaï, who had met Miller in 1930, "everything about Paris" was intriguing to this American who was "looking at Paris with fresh eyes" (Brassaï, 20-6). "I am overwhelmed by the multifarious, quotidien, anonymous, communal, etc., etc., *life!*", Miller exclaims. "Each day I will see a little more of Paris, study it, learn it as I would a book. What eloquent surprises at every turn of the street. To get lost here is an adventure extraordinary. The streets sing, the stones talk. The houses

drip history, glory, romance" (*Letters to Emil,* 17-18).[33] He wants to stay forever, for in Paris even the misery is "pleasant" (*Letters to Emil,* 16). Period photographs, the aforementioned letters to Schnellock, and certain less guarded passages in the Paris autobiographical novels, also suggest that in his private life and in the public eye Miller became infatuated with acquiring an air "d'un vrai Parisien" (*Letters to Emil,* 64). For example, exile in France inaugurates Miller's interest in the Epicurean traditions, which had been ignored in his family and in his New York circles. He would henceforth preach to his American friends (as would the narrators of the Parisian "autobiographical romances") about the role food and its enjoyment plays in the pursuit of the healthful life. The portrait of the artist-gourmand would be enhanced, finally, by the carefully cultivated posture of a Parisian bohemian inhabiting a Spartan studio, and even in his physical appearance, complete with the tailored suits from his father's shop and the heavy Mexican cane brought from America (Brassaï, 69-70). [34]

Miller also enveloped himself in the contemporary *literary* trends with great ardor, as his experiments in genre fusion demonstrate in the Paris narratives, though these at times transcend mere imitation to slip into self-conscious excess or farce. The time spent in France is punctuated by enthusiastic, though ultimately short-lived affiliations with various avant-garde movements. Miller himself often remarked that following the creatively stifling years in New York, he was reborn in Paris.[35] Little wonder then that he should find the artistic circles in the City of Light fascinating. And, after a while, the allure of the new and the unfamiliar would be combined with a largely superficial affirmation of the dominant ideologies, which translated itself as extensive textual experimentation with avant-garde artistic

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[33] Letter of March 6, 1930; *cf.* George Wickes' "Introduction" to *Letters to Emil,* 15-16.

[34] Brassaï's photographs of Miller circa 1931 (inserts between pp. 116-7 in Brassaï's book) document his bohemian look.

[35] Interestingly, the voyage in March 1930 which resulted in a decade long expatriation in France, had Spain as its ostensible destination.

modes, dada and surrealism in particular. Consistent with Miller's philosophy of "obedience to flow", then in the process of elaboration, such experiments were undertaken in all aspects of art and life, extending also to letters written during this period.[36] Some of these letters, especially those dating from 1930-31 to Emil Schnellock, also supplied blueprints for passages in the emerging autobiographical novels. In fact, there are sections of *Tropic of Cancer* which are lifted almost verbatim from some of them (*Letters to Emil,* 59). [37]

Miller even began to paint in the mode of the surrealists. He illuminates his fascination with the visual arts in one of his letters to Schnellock (himself a painter): "In front of me--on the Rue Bonaparte side--there are various groups of painters. And they have a fashion of putting their canvasses out to dry--face front." Miller elaborates his decision with frank, disarming insouciance. "What's to stop me from doing likewise? Nothing brother, nothing. Downstairs is the most wonderful art shop for supplies. It makes me feel that I want to chuck this crap about being a writer and go in for the painter's life." [38]

In retrospect, however, the apparent shallowness of Miller's engagement indicates a posture of experimentation for its own sake, revealing his embrace of the then principal motifs of European contemporary literary movements, but without fully adopting the Modernist ideology that determined both the content and the structure of narratives (Bartlett, 318-20). The type of logic that had produced expressionism, dada, surrealism, and other movements in which the American dabbled, were to remain exotic rationalizations, inherently foreign to his more earthy

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[36] For the progression of Miller's experiments with form and genre, see *Letters to Emil,* 38-90. These early, exceptionally honest letters from Paris (written in the spring of 1930) provide penetrating insights into the motivations of Miller's experimental ventures.

[37] See, in particular, Miller's letter of Feb. 16th, 1931 (*Letters to Emil* 70-7); its subject is Irene, the self-described Russian princess from Russia who appears in *Tropic of Cancer;* and August 24, 1931 (pp. 80-85), especially the sections devoted to the portrayal of American journalist Wambly Bald, who appears as Van Norden in *Cancer.*

[38] *Letters to Emil,* 16. Letter dated March 6, 1930.

sensibilities. Thus Miller, whom Jeffrey Bartlett has dubbed an "unwitting dadaist" would remain distinctly on the margins of European modernism, despite having formed associations with many of its luminaries, all the while reveling in the literary and intellectual smorgasbord that characterized bohemian Paris between the two world wars (Bartlett, 320).[39]

Another component of Miller's emerging exile identity that intertwines with his experimentation with European artistic movements is his insistence on playing the role of the physically healthy, virile American living among the gutters and pissoirs of Paris. This stance, which is at odds with the desire to blend in either with the Parisian *ouvriers* or the artists, suggests that Miller was unable to completely detach his American persona from the exile identity. But the position did reflect a desire for a kind of belonging. Miller's attitude to life was earthy, practical, slightly naive, and as such rather endearing to pure intellectuals such as Michael Fraenkel and Walter Lowenfels, American expatriates who accepted Miller into their circle as a sort of precocious, vital force of genius that needed shaping: a potential disciple (Fraenkel, 54-5). Needless to say, Miller enjoyed sabotaging their philosophical discussions through his insistence on abandoning the level of ideas in favour of the level of experience. "I have only physical, biological problems," Miller reported to Fraenkel in a letter urging him to leave the musty attic of philosophy and to *live*.[40] Indeed, Miller's core interests during the initial stages of his rebirth in Paris, or at least those articulated with the greatest insistence, seem to have consisted of food, sex, and stimulating conversation: "A good talk, a good meal, a good fuck," the narrator rhapsodizes in *Quiet Days in Clichy*. "What better way to spend the day?" (61) (All three pursuits, however, were tinged with nostalgia for America in the narratives,

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[39] Bartlett (317-21) points out that Miller's spirited and boisterous personality in fact was in resonance with Modernism's more "playful" movements.

[40] Their correspondence was published in 1943 in two volumes under the title *The Hamlet Letters*. *Cf.* "Rimbaud restored literature to life; I have endeavored to restore life to literature" (*The Time of the Assassins*, 5).

invariably contrasted with expositions of American attitudes to these rather elementary needs, pleasures, and indulgences). However, through his alignment with intellectuals such as Lowenfels and Fraenkel, Miller gained access to the company of English-speaking men of ideas, and it was this sense of a common language, more than the ideas themselves, that likely provided an emotional crutch during Miller's more isolated moments in France.

This last component of Miller's exile identity, the pose of the insouciant expatriate and outsider who revels in the company of fellow self-described victims of life and whose nonchalance amid social and political upheaval in Europe is greeted with uneasy admiration by Europeans, emerges most vividly in the Paris writings in the "Le Havre episode" in *Tropic of Cancer.* Here Miller describes, with great comic economy, a weekend of debauchery with two expatriate conspirators, Collins and Filmore (*Cancer,* 199-208). I write "pose" in reference to Miller's exilic identity because even here, in the midst of festivities of truly Rabelaisian (and carnivalesque) proportions, Miller is unable to overcome his nostalgia for the American soil. Nor does he successfully transcend the residual traces of his identity as an American: "Le Havre looked gay, sunny; the air was bracing with that strong salty tang which almost made me homesick for New York" (199). And later, as the narrator bids his two friends farewell at the train station, vague, shadowy America comes into sharper focus:

> The last thing we talked about, as we stood there waiting for the train to pull out, was Idaho. . . . We were getting sentimental, as Americans do when it comes time to part. We were getting quite foolish about the cows and the sheep and the big open spaces where men are men and all that crap. If a boat had swung along instead of the train we'd have hopped aboard and said goodbye to it all (207-8).

This nostalgia for America is the stuff of idealism, and Miller's protagonist occasionally rises to the occasion to expose the idealist (or the unwitting patriot) in him. "It's best to keep America like that, always in the background, a sort of picture post card which you look at in a weak moment. . . It doesn't exist, America. It's a

name you give to an abstract idea" (*Tropic of Cancer,* 208). Yet this does not make the myth of America any less pressing or authentic. It remains a powerful cultural and personal icon: "Like that, you imagine it's always there waiting for you, unchanged, unspoiled, a big patriotic open space with cows and sheep and tenderhearted men . . ." (208). [41]

Such a range of responses, oscillating as they do among incarnations of the New American in Paris, the quasi-Parisian artist, and the Parisian pure and simple, responses negotiated within the wider field of ongoing identity formation, are at the root of Miller's reaction to his separation from America. They also reflect the strength of his desire to flee the threat of becoming a "monstrous automaton" that he experienced in America, a fear articulated in the early texts, *Crazy Cock* and *Moloch*. Ultimately, as if to show to all who might take note that he has finally and irrevocably shed the image of himself that had accompanied him from America, following the uncertainty of the first several months in Paris, Miller explodes with energy and vitality. Life, the protagonist of *Cancer* proclaims, is to be lived, "to the hilt" (99). His successive experiments with art and with life during the decade of his exile in Paris will all stem from this personal philosophy.

Like Miller, Hłasko--a gentile in Israel--feels an outsider even among outsiders.[42] While his emigration from Poland in effect began in 1958, his exile configurations underwent decisive metamorphosis only after 1959, once he was in Israel. Hłasko arrived in Israel during one of the first waves of Jewish repatriations, the exodus from Eastern Europe. Yet he shared with the newly arrived Jews a sense of exile and wandering (Blanchot's concept of *errance*): he had been uprooted, persecuted. Both Miller and Hłasko wanted to belong; both were

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[41] The idea of America, already central to Miller's iconography of the self at the time of writing of *Tropic of Cancer,* will assume an even more dominent role in the later works such as *The Rosy Crucifixion.*

[42] See Hłasko's letter to actress Zula Dywińska lamenting the fact that he is a goy, in Stankiewicz-Podhorecka, 238-9.

welcomed in the respective country of exile on their own terms; no one, at least at the outset, accorded them any special treatment as artists.

Thus in the suitably exotic context of the Holy Land, a new identity, "Hłaskower," emerges, representing a kind of amalgamated persona. The name itself, a Yiddish variation of the surname, became Hłasko's nickname during his stay in Israel. Hłasko's use of the name for the protagonists reflects a tension between the writer's inclination to retain the comforting sense of identity carried over from the homeland, and the desire to experience the places of exile in a structured, engaged way. For "Hłaskower" is an umbrella sobriquet, a signifier capable of accommodating the integral components of identity.[43] On the one hand, the *foreignness* of this name to Polish ears is reflective of the chief objectives of Hłasko's exile identity: the desire to make Israel the new home. On the other, Hłasko's incarnation of a wandering Pole in Israel--itself a mirror reversal of a popular myth--is comprised in equal parts of classic native (Polish) and more typically Jewish sensibilities.[44] Under the native rubric, "Hłaskower" signifies a polyvalent persona that carries the author's identification with several of the different roles he played in his own life. One of these is the role of the charming ladies' man (this is a theme that recurs in many Polish exile texts).[45] "Hłaskower" also "embodies" a suffering spirit to whom the comforts of the Motherland are denied by malicious powers.[46] Finally, in an identification with a certain working class stereotype, "Hłaskower" is associated with someone who is no stranger to vodka and to alcohol-induced violence and deceit. Hence, in a distillation of authorial

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[43] The narrator of *Converted in Yaffa* is explicitly identified as Hłaskower, and not, for example as Marek Hłasko or by any "fictional" name.

[44] I am not concerned with historical Judaism but rather with a kind of Jewish myth, which Hłasko would have acquired mainly from second-hand testimonies and through selective biblical readings.

[45] See for instance the writings of Stanisław Dygat such as *Karnawał*, and Jerzy Kosiński's *Steps*.

[46] But actually the narrative "Hłaskower" in works such as *Converted in Yaffa* suffers from expatriation less often than he does from hunger and hangovers, or as result of being swindled by other hustlers.

attitudes and ideologies, the narrator in the Israeli Cycle emerges sometimes as a semi-permanent fixture in nightclubs and bar terraces, sometimes as a pimp (*Beautiful Twenty Year Olds*, 56-8; 127-34). As in Miller's case, Hłasko's nostalgia for the homeland is tinged by scorn; often it seems to embody nothing less, and little more, than nostalgia for a nightmare, an alcoholic's chimera.

The set of acquired, Jewish sensibilities is demarcated by an appropriated, though clearly identifiable sense of homelessness (*errance*) and alienation implicit to the denial, or the disappearance, of the homeland (analogous to the promised land). Additionally, Hłasko's playfulness with language has its origins in his contacts with Polish Jews in emigration, some of whom spoke in a specific accented dialect; for a time, Hłaskower (the protagonist) appropriates their manner of speech.[47] In the later narratives, such as *Converted in Yaffa,* the protagonists--who also embody a testimonial to an unspecified *loss* of stable centre--articulate simultaneously these Polish and Jewish directions of the author's explorations of identity (This tension between the native and the exotic will also animate the narrators of Miller's Paris narratives). In the earlier Israeli Cycle narratives, Hłasko's protagonists incarnate the tension to varying degrees, the later the date of composition the more pronounced the division of authorial identity into the indigenous and familiar on the one hand, and the exotic, acquired constituents on the other.

Hłasko's sense of misplacement and "otherness" in emigration, and his increasing reliance on a sort of artificially grown identity, are exacerbated by his ever-strengthening spiritual faith. Particularly in the letters to his mother and close friends, invocations to God for a speedy resolution of the impasse of exile and return to Poland, are frequent and troubling.[48] These epistolary writings, themselves icons of loss and monuments to faith, and the exile narratives, appear to constitute

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[47] Hłasko experimentally reconstructs this dialect (now all but vanished) in *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds* (182). In addition, several minor characters in *Converted in Yaffa* speak a similarly playful and instinctive--if not necessarily grammatically correct--Polish.

[48] See Stankiewicz-Podhorecka, *passim,* in particular Hłasko's letters to his mother.

the sole viable framework for Hłasko's spiritual searches.[49] The function assigned to these narratives thus seems to confirm the therapeutic properties of writing: the author has an opportunity to renegotiate some of the trauma of his experience by voicing its effects on paper (Jay, 25-6). But Hłasko's artistic *atelier* also relied on direct channeling of "authentic" emotion and "unaffected" impulse through immediate inscription, internalizing experience to rapidly articulate it in the narratives. In other words, the praxis of writing was analogous to that of acting (as defined by Jerzy Grotowski), epitomized by the pursuit of a direct artistic impulse--and sometimes going on a limb--and the surrender to this impelling force to shape expression within a set of defined objectives and within a distinct lexicon of meaning (Barba, 50-2). At the conflux of these two (seemingly almost contradictory) impulses of artistic self-expression are mapped out the *narratological* parameters of the persona of "Hłaskower", a byline employed with equal facility to designate both Marek Hłasko the writer--whose personality could well be characterized as that of a polyvalent actor--and the narrator of texts written in emigration.

Thus on the biographical level, the autobiographical (authorial) figure re-configured in exile, and the narratological, fictionalized construct of the self born or discovered *through* exile, would intersect and gradually combine to invade Hłasko's

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[49] Later on, as Hłasko's hopes of ever returning to Poland faded, these quests would evolve into peculiar searches for the "unnecessary good"--acts of altruism committed despite oneself. Ironically, Hłasko's narrator wishes to destroy all "unnecessary good" that he encounters--the reverse of the author's position--because any acknowledgment of good will or good intentions would clash with the parameters of Hłaskower's "acting persona." This is how the protagonist of *On the Day of His Death* justifies killing the diplomat's dog that had befriended him, i.e. eliminating the very embodiment of good will and altruism: "All of it was unnecessary. It was all his [the dog's] fault.... The fact that Eve jumped out of the window when the cops rushed into the room to get her, and the fact that Grisza and I had gone around starving for two months. But how much we had suffered because of him; and why couldn't I grasp this earlier?" (192). Hłaskower's murder of this (first) dog, which closes the narration, ushers in the next installment in the Cycle, ergo: *Killing the Second Dog*. *Cf.* Rudnicki 125-6.

fundamental sense of self, problematizing the distance between the author and the narrative "I" by blurring it by degrees in successive stages. The process of identity conglomeration increases with each consecutive novel or story of the Israeli Cycle, to the point where it becomes truly difficult for the reader to isolate--most tangibly in some sections of *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds*--whether Hłasko is writing about himself and personal experience, or indeed about some aspect of the plural personage, the not-quite-autobiographical "Hłaskower." [50]

For both writers, then, the formal considerations for writing would be supplied by the biographical genre, especially its subspecies, the autobiographical novel and the fictional autobiography. But historically implicit to autobiographical inscription was the belief that mediation of self onto paper can be accomplished conclusively, in its entirety, as a part of a process of self-revelation wherein writing about life experience would designate a closure. Not surprisingly, the great confessions of European authors of the last century, which figured prominently on both writer's reading lists, provide the essential blueprint for Miller's and Hłasko's autobiographical novels.[51] But it is only as a result of exile, where the writer is confronted with the very vastness and uncategorizability of experience, that both abandon the confessional impulse in favour of narrative self-invention and the creation of more experimental auto-fictional characters and personae. While many observers have commented on the fact that autobiographical writings create as well as record the shaping of the self, this study is concerned to underline the role that exile can have, and in the case of Miller and Hłasko, has had in this process of identity formation. The liminal state created by the separation from familiar

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[50] Bogdan Rudnicki (110) designates this occurrence as "Narastanie cech wspólnych autora i bohatera" ("The gradual agglomeration of common features between the author and the hero").

[51] For Miller, see the *Books in My Life*, 316-7; For Hłasko, see the list of books he was searching for in Polish translation, in Stankiewicz-Podhorecka, 92-3. In a nexus of literary influences one such work for both authors is Dostoevski's *Crime and Punishment*.

environments would present a peculiarly fertile field for the formulation of the new artistic self. [52]

However, the residual obsession with transmitting the artistic self through the text--as opposed to *creating it in the text*--caused Miller and Hłasko at times to write excessively and narcissistically about the self. In particular in Miller's case it helps account for the tiresome prolixity of his later writings, for the material to write about, i.e.: his life, naturally augmented in quantity. Still, the reader is confronted by two remarkable documents, and these constitute perhaps the key point of contact between Miller and Hłasko: both men left behind a continuing, relatively unciphered, consistently coded, and already cross-referenced (due to the inherent intertextuality of the successive narratives) record of the unfolding self and the associated emerging artistic sensibility.

These life-long processes of self-creation--the formulation of a stable image of the self on the one hand, and a mythologized persona on the other--complied with a script which was similar in both cases. First, Miller and Hłasko both indulged in intricate games of identity manipulation in the public domain. While Hłasko could boast a particularly far-reaching penchant for persona manipulation and a refined talent for *ad hoc* self-creation in the public sphere, both he and Miller were engaged in continuous adjustments of identity. Furthermore, the problematics of these texts also substantiate the contention that both Miller and Hłasko actively sought to realize themselves in the plurality of being, a possibility which was initially illuminated, on the one hand, by the severance from the social and ideological familiarity of the homeland, and on the other, through specific cultural pressures of exile, primary among which was the obligation to operate in a foreign language (and perhaps to assimilate a new linguistic consciousness). Hence, the fundamental

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[52] The anthropologist Victor Turner discusses liminal states of experience--periods characterized by transition and subjective receptivity--in his *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: an Anthropological Perspective,* New York: Columbia University Press, 1978. *Cf.* his *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society,* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974.

preoccupation with manifestations of public and private personae would assume a more central role to the artistic quest, once the authors are confronted by the new realities of exile. Therefore, it seems that the interest in the possibilities of identity was not merely a motif to which these two writers gradually became *sensitized* while living and writing abroad; rather, in exile the captivation with the chief questions of identity evolved to acquire new sets of meanings, ones reflective of and congruent with new parameters and implications that the concept of selfhood would carry for each author.

The structure and content of their exile narratives also support the proposition that by re-figuring their autobiographical worlds both Miller and Hłasko sought consciously to capitalize on the notion of "selfhood" as an interplay between emerging and waning, multiple selves. In Miller's writing, in particular, the belief that writing as self-*inscription* is accomplished primarily as an act of personal liberation from society and from the limitations imposed on the public persona, echoes strongly throughout. The celebration of a new triumphant self, liberated or reborn through escape, is articulated with remarkable bravado in the opening of *Tropic of Cancer*: "It is now the fall of my second year in Paris. I was sent here for a reason I have not yet been able to fathom. I have no money, no resources, no hopes. I am the happiest man alive. A year ago, six months ago, I thought that I was an artist. I no longer think about it, I *am*" (*Tropic of Cancer*, 1). This notion of personal becoming through self-enforced exile is particularly persuasive in the case of Miller, since Hłasko was by the time of his self-exile an established author, a subject of growing legend.[53] Instead, for the Polish writer the conditions regulating the modes of narrative expression were intimately related to the degrees of restriction imposed

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[53] This general pattern remains valid even if the writing occasionally exhibited schematic and derivative traits, as though expressly designed to appeal to a censorious, traditional audience. These minor blemishes were also ascribed to the writer's youth and inexperience; but from the outset it was clear that great things were expected from Hłasko. See Kurpiewski's Introduction to *Marek Hłasko: Stories (Opowiadania)*, 13-9.

on the work by the power structures. He found that the censor's red pen worked arbitrarily and with little regard for artistic content or creative integrity (*Beautiful Twenty Year Olds,* 159-71).[54] Henry Miller's plight was in truth somewhat less complicated, and he articulated the choices left to him accordingly. As he put it, it was either flight from America--a decisive act which would along the way generate the necessary artistic jolt and bring about his "birth" of a writer--or madness, the lunatic asylum, and the end of selfhood: suicide.[55]

Thus the powers forestalling artistic self-liberation were both institutional and personal in nature. In both cases exile was selected from a roster of limited options. And, emancipated from oppressive systems of governance, both Miller and Hłasko would subsequently articulate a new liberated voice uncovered through the highly specific experience of the émigré, incidentally producing a body of work that constituted decisive rupture from the previous attempts at writing. For the desire to become a writer (particularly for Miller), tied intimately as it always is to searches for the essence of selfhood, ultimately aimed towards discovering a mode of expression which the author deemed veridical and authentic and a personal style of narration which illuminated his principal existential preoccupations: his *own voice.* Emigration thus made possible the conditions necessary for self-revelation, and confirmed the legitimacy of an initial creative instinct.

Hence, the exile stage is for both writers marked by efforts to refine the aspects of personality congruent with the cultural and linguistic aspects of life in emigration. Yet, paradoxically, neither man would truly relinquish his intimate identification with his manufactured protective public personae, the permutations of which over time communicated a range of responses to the pressures and demands of survival abroad, or, in brief, to the degree of cultural acclimatization. The ever-

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[54] Here is one such instance: when Hłasko challenged the powers that be to explain why his *Graveyards* were rejected, he was told by his regular publisher simply that "the Poland that you describe does not exist" (*Beautiful Twenty Year Olds,* 178-9). The work would be published in Paris, in a way sealing Hłasko's fate to exile.
[55] See *The Time of the Assassins* 3, 12-14.

present conflict between the act of forging connections on the adventive soil and the paralysis of nostalgia is played out equally in public behaviour--via the implications of émigré status upon the aggregate meanings of the self--and in the narrative dramatizations of the self in texts dating from this period.

In the sections which follow, I turn to an examination of the exile narratives. In the next chapter, the theoretical framework, I will be situating the texts of Hłasko and Miller within a fluctuating relation between three constituents: the corporeal author, a historical identity grounded in and determined by matters of history and culture; a "writing self," a construct of the self (or a persona) which is gradually developed through interactions with the culture (including that of the places of exile) and through the act of text production itself; and the "I" voice articulated within the narrative fabric. My investigation of the two writers' narrative voices, therefore, will be *contextualized* within the system of epistemologies of exile that animated the artistic quests of both men.

Chapter Two: Authorial Persona and its Textual Inscription: Theoretical Framework

European post-structuralists such as Maurice Blanchot, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Paul de Man, and others, were the first to undermine the privileged status of the author as a unified subject--to whom all questions about the text can be referred and by whom all contradictions engendered by the text can be resolved--and to shift the focus of critical attention to textual phenomena *per se*.[56] By calling into question the traditional notion that behind a given text stands an "author," traditionally seen as a Creator, as a recipient of Inspiration or of the Muses, these critics initiated a debate that continues to resonate in autobiography criticism about the status of the writer versus his narratives, especially with respect to works in the first person.[57] Foucault in particular suggested that the long-standing definition of the subject of the author has in effect been little more than a matter of expediency, or an ideological agreement as to conveniently assigned values of identity and utility (Foucault, 102-7). Both Foucault and Barthes called for the devaluation of the author to the status of scriptor deprived of any relevant origins, and thence to anonymity and finally silence.[58] Since all writing is an activity of fictionalizing (it concerns itself with creating a record of life and individual experience), the post-structuralists alleged that the writing subject ceaselessly disappears "into a web of

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[56] At least in the West. Russian Formalists several decades earlier had also recognized the fragmentation of the writing subject in an autobiographical text (as had American New-Critics after World War Two), and had likewise questioned the nature and then the possibility of total specular representation (see Boym, 20-3). The French critics, however, were the first to extensively theorize and agree on working definitions of these phenomena. See for instance Roland Barthes' seminal text "What is Writing?", in *Writing Degree Zero and Elements of Semiology*, 11-17. *Cf.* Barthes, *Image--Music--Text*, 142-4, 158-61.

[57] See Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?", and Roland Barthes, "Death of the Author." Both texts derive from a 1955 essay by Maurice Blanchot entitled "The Death of the Last Writer" (See *The Blanchot Reader*, 76-89).

[58] Specifically Barthes considers the act of writing "an obliteration of all origins" (*Image--Music--Text*, 142).

artifice" which is of his individual linguistic and ideological design (*Image–Music–Text*, 142-5).

Foucault's and Barthes' call for the "removal" of the authorizing author came in tandem with the re-instatement of the reader as the focal point in literary study. The emphasis in criticism of literature effectively moved from the activity of text *production*–where the personality and persona of the writer is now reduced to a system of tropes, the "language of the metaphor"–to the pleasurable pursuit of text *consumption* by the reader (de Man, 929-30).[59] The post-structuralist thinkers ultimately aimed to degrade the very *figure* and meaning of "author" to that of "scriptor," arranger of words and narrative situations using a palette of the already familiar language (*Image–Music–Text*, 146-148). They maintained, further, that the status of author as Creator, derived from Romanticism's emphasis on individual creation (Bürger, 47), signaled a construct which was itself *fictional*, false, and unstable. For the term "author" as a signifier for both "the corporeal writer of a text" and "the figure who speaks in the text," constituted neither a precise nor a reliable representation of the person who originated an artistic process; Foucault even suggested that the designation *author* should henceforth be replaced by the more general *author-function* (Foucault, 112). Thus instead of speaking of authorial self-reflexivity or authorial representation, we should concern ourselves with determining the degree to which a writer approaches, or deviates from, an "accurate" portrayal of his or her individuality (and not creative genius).

The notion of author as Creator, in the view of the post-structuralist school, undermined the fictional (and fictionalizing) nature of writing, but more importantly it neglected to account for the *distance*, temporal and psychological, established

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[59] Barthes suggests that the ideological space left by the "death" of the author (including the disappearance of the Creator Myth) should be filled by the birth of the practice of *reading*. Barthes defines this new type of reading as a pleasurable re-creation or re-construction of narratives, a practice that affirms the *reader's* individuality (interpretive ability) at the expense of the author's (*Image--Music--Text, 163-4*).

between the writer as a person in history and the writer's voice, disembodied, as it were, once inscribed into a narrative form. In an attempt to qualify the difference between author and autobiographical voice, the post-structuralists thus demanded the recognition of a split or *divided* subject as a consistently observable phenomenon. Hence Barthes, in his autobiography *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*--perhaps the term anti-autobiography is more fitting, as the text appears to abolish form and genre in favour of ceaseless fragmentation both of the narrative itself and of its voiced subject--not only takes for granted the divided status of the writing subject, but stresses the need for further exploration of the nature of this division.[60] In fact, even the term *division* itself is suspect; the subject is not merely divided but rather something like *shattered*:

> when we speak of a divided subject, it is never to acknowledge his simple contradictions, his double postulations, etc.; *it is a diffraction which is intended, a dispersion of energy* in which there remains neither a central core nor a structure of meaning: I am not contradictory, I am dispersed (143; *emphasis mine*).

Proceeding from a similar set of assumptions about the properties of the textual voice in first person narratives, Foucault in his landmark essay "What is an Author?" outlines a system of relations between the physical author, the writing self (the authorial persona), and the textual voice:

> In a novel narrated in the first person, neither the first-person pronoun, the present indicative tense, nor, for that matter, its signs of localization refer directly to the writer, either to the time he wrote it, or to the specific act of writing; rather, *they stand for a second self whose similarity to the author is never fixed* and which undergoes considerable alteration within the course of a single book. It would be as false to seek the author in relation to the actual writer as to the fictional narrator; the "author-function" arises out of their scission--in the division and the distance of the two (112; *emphasis mine*).

Hence the textual self does not reflect any solid, integral identity; and although it represents the author, Foucault and Barthes both propose that it does so obliquely,

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[60] See Jay, 19-20, 176-8.

indirectly, distanced both by language and by the nature of narrative self-inscription. Specifically, Foucault argues that there appears a second, shadow self or alter ego (or indeed any number of shadow selves or alter egos) which takes its place in the text as the end result of a *dispersion* that the writer necessarily undergoes and institutionalizes in a narrative when its production commences. He thus splits the writing subject (employing the same strategy as Barthes) into two largely independent entities or spheres of influence: an ego which narrates (the textual voice) and an ego which observes (the physical writer). Foucault's postulation supports a near total severance of the subject of a discourse from its ostensible object and argues for the removal of the former from an *a priori* posited status of creator, as an appendage of little consequence to be discarded in a kind of ideational fog. In practice, however, as Foucault's example of the mathematical treatise illustrates, more typically a plurality of *interdependent* egos can be isolated in one narrative:

> The self that speaks in the preface. . . and indicates the circumstances of the treatise's composition--is identical neither in its position nor in its functioning to the self that speaks in the course of a demonstration, and that appears in the form of "I conclude" or "suppose." In the first case, the "I" refers to any individual without an equivalent who, in a determined place and time, completed a certain task; in the second, the "I" indicates an instance and a level of demonstration which any individual could perform, provided that he accepted the same set of symbols....We could also, in the same treatise, locate a third self, one that speaks to tell the work's meaning, the obstacles encountered. . .(etc.); this self is situated in the field of already existing or yet-to-appear mathematical discourses (111-2).

The designation *author,* then, signifies a confluence of discrete forces, intentions, and influences that compose a complex voice or alternatively, a complex or nexus of voices. Although these voices or egos can justly be said to have been deployed and dispersed simultaneously (during the actual production of a text), they are structured to inhabit disparate spatio-temporal coordinates. In a text narrated in the first person, for instance, the physical author located in historical time and in quantifiable space is necessarily a separate subject from the "I" construct re-created

textually (who does not exist outside the spatio-temporal demarcations assigned by the concept of "text"). Further, even if the plurality of egos or selves coexists and competes within the polemical horizon of one text, the *direction* of their discourses varies. The first "I" in Foucault's mathematical tract speaks (approximately) for the past, the second for the present, and the third for the future, as each delineates the arguments and speculations of the designated segments of the text over which it presides.

Foucault's analysis largely circumvents the point of origin of a text, shifting its focus to a recapitulation of the status of the writer over time and to the politics of dissemination of already existing, or yet to be produced, narratives. However, I suggest that the widespread notion of the writer as inspired "creator" and originator, descended from the exegeses of poetry and fiction of the Romantic era, cannot be completely dismissed. It is my contention that some of the authorial "creative" powers can be said to have remained relevant and meaningful despite the post-structuralist reassessments. For no matter how limited his responsibilities may be, the author of autobiographical works constitutes the subject of his own understanding (Jay, 21), and remains the agent answerable for the *release* of a text, that is, for that "transformation of life facts into artifact" which wills a narrative into existence (Nalbantian, 39). Even though the subject in question may appear fractured, mutable or opaque, depending on the resources which the author brings to the endeavour, it is the writer's great struggle--as a writer--to confer *personal* meaning to subjectivity and to literary self-representation.[61]

In effect, in the émigré works of Miller and Hlasko, the notion that the author "refuses to go away," both as a biographical figure of postulated status and clear artistic origins, and as a valid and valuable cultural symbol, insinuates itself repeatedly. In these texts, the figure of the corporeal author possessing a unique personal program and philosophical outlook (its chief element is social *engagement*

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[61] De Man, 919; see also Jay, 22-32.

articulated as full-scale immersion in one's society, be it the Israeli underclass or impoverished Parisian bohemia), and at times a mask or shadow of that person, looms large over the work, saturating the work with an unmistakable individual stamp. Contrasting the narratives with the material contained within the more intimate (for the most part, epistolary) writings has illuminated the instinctive possibility that the author cannot be written out of narrative analysis, since particularly those texts which overtly aspire to autobiographical verisimilitude, be it by form or by the author's articulated intention--as the narratives selected here do--are perfused with the accumulated content of personal memory and experience.[62]

The caveat is that in order to make a return to the author productive, we must be willing to reconfigure the author's positioning *vis-à-vis* his texts. Without resorting to the problematic expediency of equating the narrative voice with the writer, the critic is obliged to begin to view the figure of the author in a new relation to the narrative, to historicity, and to culture. Therefore, it remains useful to return to *biography* and to the historical/corporeal author. Such a structured return may be accomplished by analyzing the intricate relationships which exist between the historical author, the writing self, and the textual voice, and those queries that accrue from the existence of the work which seem to be outside an author's intentionality.

One viable direction for biographical research has been suggested by critics of autobiography such as James Olney and Paul John Eakin. These American contemporaries of the post-structuralists have largely chosen to sidestep the debate about the writer's position versus the produced work, instead proposing that the problem of the relation is far more complex than had been previously admitted, and as such, worthy of detailed investigation. Their work has aimed towards a subtle reconfiguration of the psychological dimensions of the relationship between

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[62] Henry Miller has often echoed this position, here in a letter to Lawrence Durrell: "I don't care who the artist is. If you study him deeply, sincerely, detachedly, you will find that he and his work are one" (*Art and Outrage*, 28).

autobiographical texts, their authors, and the "writing voices." Olney and Eakin advanced the argument that by the very nature of the genre, through the policies governing the deployment of the narratological "I", textual self-inscription in autobiographical writing (and in autobiographies proper) simultaneously reveals *and* conceals the historical author.[63] More specifically, the autobiographer's impetus to disclose the "truth" about his or her life by producing a transparent biographical text and a candid recording of the self, assumes an ambivalent character at some moment during the writing. The revelatory nature of the autobiographical genre is manifested in the confessional mode which the narrative "I" engages, for the history in question here is individual, *personal.* Hence the very existence, or even the potentiality, of the text itself supplies an exploratory form, "an uncharted terrain of self-discovery and self-representation," furnishing a writer with the means of accessing a higher level of self-understanding or self-justification.[64]

However, the author's freedom to reveal, implicit to a working definition of autobiographical novels, is circumscribed by two formal considerations which may help account for the ideational multivalence of such texts and the narratological voice(s) deployed therein (to recall Foucault). Narratives conceal, first of all, because of the tacit ideological and temporal distance between the writing subject and the textual projection, a distance which, as has been noted, precludes the possibility of the former engaging in any immediate, active "speaking" in the text. In some narratives, this distance may recede to a degree; there are texts that may even impart the illusion that there had been none in the first place. A good example of this is the genre of the diary, in which experience is inscribed with negligible

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[63] See James Olney "Some Versions of Memory/Some Versions of Bios: The Ontology of Biography", 237-67; see also Paul John Eakin, *Fictions in Autobiography,* 222-7.

[64] Nalbantian, 39-40; 194. Nalbantian's study of aesthetic autobiography is predicated on the notion that modernist writers were the first to shift the focus of (auto)biographical writing from the self's positioning in--and exploration of--the outer world, to more a more exclusive "exploitation of inner resources" (43).

temporal lag, almost "as it happens." [65] Second, the text conceals because, as Paul John Eakin has argued in *Fictions in Autobiography,* autobiographical writing is to a great extent a psychic and psychological activity--an integral manifestation in an evolving process of self-invention and self-configuration (Eakin, 225). Therefore, the past evoked by the writer is not simply recalled--it is *re-negotiated;* personal, narrative truth is not synonymous with historical truth. The practice of autobiography thus constitutes for the author a reenactment of a "certain drama of identity formation" (Nalbantian, 38), and "not merely the passive, transparent record of an already completed self" (Eakin, 226). Such narratives conceal, then, because the events of the past tend to bear to one another a relationship of "perceived significance, rather than one of strict chronology," a relationship that aids the erosion both of historical authenticity and textual referentiality by introducing a further degree of distance between the author of a text and the narrative projection(s) (Olney, 246-7). [66]

Assuming from the outset that autobiographical truth is naturally composed of certain fictions, Eakin contends that in an effort to faithfully present biographical information, authors often incorporate fictive elements (or leitmotifs) appropriated from memory, as dictated by the specific requirements of the writing consciousness. Since personal memory tends towards selectivity--what we choose to recall depends largely on the prism of the vantage point taken, as well as on our self-reflexive perceptions of the present--the textual self that emerges in autobiographical writing may be justly described as an attempt to negotiate the distance or to resolve the conflict between the personal past as it factually unfolded and the past as it potentially might have (or, should ideally have) unfolded (Eakin, 225-7). The implicit goal of these manipulations of privileged information, then, is an

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[65] See Brassaï 52-6, where the exceptions to this general tendency are proposed with regard to Anaïs Nin's *Journal Intime.*

[66] For further discussions of the psychological dimensions of narrative self-creation, see Olney 240-247.

attempt at attaining deeper understanding of the self-in-the-world for the author (Olney, 245-7).[67]

In a specific type of narrative, however, self-inscription is motivated by an opposed drive to circumvent what Cheryl Walker has termed "the bitterness of self-understanding" (Walker, 117). Here authors take deliberate measures to falsify the personal past and to disperse the traces of the self, in large part because the contrary alternative, simply to record what is perceived as objectivized truth, implies excessive psychological trauma for the writer (and occasionally to others, implicated by coded or transparent characters in the narrative). Hence in both types of autobiographical inscription, the very act of writing implies the fabrication of a façade. While in the first situation the most traumatic personal facts are either concealed, overlooked, or transformed in a sustained effort to imbue private history with meaning, in the latter the strategy is overtly deceptive. In these instances the narratological self is purposely adorned or otherwise embellished or, alternatively, presented in disparate fragments, while the textual fabric provides a convenient subterfuge that frees the emergent "I" from questions and implications of referentiality. Moreover, by compounding self-*misrepresentation* with chronological chicanery and semantic gaming, the author is at a liberty to further distance his or her identity from the spatio-temporal realities of the work (Nalbantian, 42). The processes of narrative self-inscription thus never attain absolute transparency: pieces of evidence are invariably withheld from the reader.

This study is concerned less with the steps an author may take to camouflage himself in the textual fabric than with the socio-cultural content of his

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[67] As such, the practice of autobiography constitutes a form of self-analysis. Thus acts of self-inscription may have elements in common with the process of psychoanalysis, and specifically with Freud's notion of the "Talking Cure." For an discussion of such commonalities and possible parallels, see Paul Jay, pp. 21-8. Jay ultimately cautions against excessively psychological and "psychoanalytic" readings of autobiographical literature, emphasizing that the significance of writing lies in individual deviations from pattern, rather than the facility of fashioning such patterns in the first place.

signature, and with the codes and narrative figures which the writer designs for himself as part of his identity creation, given that he is the subject of his own understanding and of his art. These ciphers and textual personae tell us significantly more about the processes of self-inscription and about authorial intentionality than do biography or text *sensu stricto*. The critical program that seeks to encapsulate the complex relations between the corporeal writer, his textual presences, and the subtle interplay between culture, personal myth, and history, as these come to bear upon the content of the works, has been termed "Persona Criticism." [68] The concept of analysis of the authorial persona seems particularly appropriate for this study of Miller's and Hłasko's autobiographical novels from their periods of expatriation.

As I have suggested, in the case of both Miller and Hłasko, the chief questions of personal and artistic intentions are intimately linked to each writer's reaction to the inexorable march of impersonal, alienating history, and to the inability (or the impossibility) of remaining faithful to an individual artistic vision while living in the homeland. In practice, their intentions manifest themselves in active opposition to uniform and stifling society, as outright personal rebellion. Not surprisingly, then, in exile both writers produce the most crucial chapters of self-inscription. For Miller, in effect, it is precisely abrupt change in lived experience which makes writing *possible* (Wickes, 1992: 104-5). *Bios* thus becomes the determining factor in structuring not only the configurations of narratives, but more importantly also their content. However, the narrative voices which emerge in the autobiographical writings of Miller and Hłasko are not univocal; rather, they are laden with ciphers and cloaked in ambiguity. At times, as will be seen, the sense of a relation between the writer and the protagonist in these autobiographical accounts will appear strained and tenuous indeed. At other times it may appear that the writers *must* be

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[68] So far as I know, this phrase was first put to use by Cheryl Walker in her 1990 article "Persona Criticism and the 'Death of the Author'." In Epstein, 109-21.

talking directly about themselves. Despite the manifold referential gaps and omissions implicit to the inscription of a textual "I" in aestheticized (i.e.: explicitly fictionalized) autobiographies, a structured inquiry into the biographies of these two authors can benefit the task of delimiting the parameters and the functions of the narratological subjects in their autobiographical novels.

To sum up, while this study draws on the dynamics of self-inscription mapped out by post-structuralist scholars, and acknowledges both the critical value of purely textual analyses and the problem of distancing of the writing subject in autobiographical writing, it is mainly concerned with determining the dynamics established between the narrative figures of Hlasko's and Miller's exile autobiographical texts, and the personal and historical forces that animated these figures. It is hoped that a partial re-instatement of the corporeal figure of the author within the complex interrelations among writer--writing persona--narrative voice will allow us to better examine the objectives of Hlasko's and Miller's self-inscription in exile. The results of this endeavour with respect to their autobiographical works of the exile period are elaborated in the next chapters.

Chapter Three: Marek Hłasko: The Configurations of Identity and Exile

The unique reading experience in post-war Polish literature which Hłasko's stories and novels embody has largely been treated in criticism as an era-specific phenomenon, classified uneasily within the margins of a fairly monolithic framework of Social-Realist fiction. In the Post-Stalinist context of historical reassessments,[69] Hłasko's place has been that of an unexpected revolutionary, a writer instrumental in fracturing the mold of Social Realism, exposing its ideological bankruptcy (Pyszny, 76), subverting both its form and its content while still operating ostensibly within the parameters stipulated by the genre's doctrine (Stępien, 16-17). Hłasko has also been commonly seen as an artist of secondary magnitude who simply appeared on the literary scene at the right time and in the right place, and due to his precociousness and engaging personality, became the ideal candidate for a generational legend, bridging the imperfect past and the still hopeful future with the youthful audacity of his narratives (Stabro, 1985: 4-6). It is only in the last decade that prominent critics in Poland have begun to concern themselves with the subversive motifs in Hłasko's narratives, and the novel techniques of authorial self-creation and biographical manipulation therein employed. Censorship is one reason: with the lifting of the publication ban in the early eighties, and with the end of formal censorship in the late eighties, Hłasko's case again became a *cause célèbre* in his homeland.

The beginnings of Hłasko's writing career coincided with a unique period of post-Stalinist reexaminations undertaken in the carnivalesque atmosphere of the short-lived social and political thaw of the mid-1950s in Eastern Europe (Stabro, 1985: 3). Hłasko's role as an emerging *littérateur* was initially that of a typical product and, somewhat later, of an *enfant terrible* in an orthodoxy: a counter-revolutionary agitator (*Ibid*, 5). In effect Hłasko belonged to a transitional generation

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[69] Stępien (20) calls the mid-fifties an era of "ideological revisions in Poland" ("Rewizje ideologiczne").

which clung to the sun-bleached ideology of the socialist regime in the face of an increasingly grim reality. Following the death of Stalin, the ideology could no longer sublimate the reality and the reality could no longer endure the ideology; first innocuous tears, and soon gaping holes, began to appear in the banners of Communism.

As had been noted earlier, Hłasko's formal education was protracted: when he joined the workforce at age sixteen, he immediately associated himself with physical labourers, violent, rough men often twice his age whose combined life experience in all likelihood appeared formidable and intriguing. Indeed it was precisely that unquantifiable sense of "experience" Hłasko detected in his associates which drew him to their company, perhaps because their life stories provided a stark contrast to the official Stalinist conception of the working class of the five year plans--labourers whose efficiency as a group and whose loyalty to the party line as individuals was never questioned. In reality the men in Hłasko's acquaintance were often petty thieves, provocateurs, and shrewd black market racketeers, as he was quick to point out, especially in *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds*.[70] Evidently affected by their defiance, their insistence on individuality, and by the tumultuousness of their "life stories", he began to employ their specific lexicon and their idiom in his own vocabulary and, what is more significant, in the stories he wrote on his free evenings (Stabro, 1985: 11-2).

In its thematic and stylistic considerations the early work published in Poland is fairly representative of the orthodox Socialist-Realist convention as propounded by Zhdanov (Kurpiewski, 1989: 14-6). These pieces of juvenilia are paeans to honest hard work and to brotherly communist love in a collective, yet hierarchically structured, social system. With genuine conviction Hłasko, the inadvertent proletarian, meditates on the moral fiber of the party and its local leaders, and dispenses punitive measures upon the malcontents and malingerers from the as yet

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[70] See *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds*, 10-15; 30-1; 38-40.

uncontaminated perspective of a utopian youth acutely receptive to the idea that life is difficult at present, but will shortly take an inevitable turn for the better. The search for happiness, for an idyllic state which seems to forever remain just out of reach, provides the thematic framework in all the early stories in the debut volume, *First Step in the Clouds* (1956). Yet here at least, idylls and utopias are still in theory attainable for the narrator. Rudnicki suggests that during this period the ideological positions of the protagonists in *First Step in the Clouds* and the writer's own can be shown to be in a remarkable confluence, as biographically the years 1956-57 are marked by Hłasko's "posture of social engagement and enthusiastic activity": Hłasko performed hard labour as a truck driver and published a great deal (Rudnicki, 50).

However, the purity of Hłasko's involvement would soon become compromised. The shift is reflected in the change of attitudes of the narrator to the *other* (the transformation is easy to determine as Hłasko at this time writes in installments for periodicals): the protagonist discovers self-interest, indifference, and competition all around him--a sort of flip side to the idyllic drive; he notices also that "people like to shit on everything and everyone else." [71] This period of disillusionment coincides with an awakening from political lethargy (and security), as Hłasko becomes sensitized to the ideological bankruptcy of the communist monolith when it collides with the urgent drama of the single individual. Soon for the protagonist, "the personal crisis of the commonest of men" will be sufficient to "explode all the grandiose proclamations, all the great words" (Rudnicki, 50). Hence the discovery of individuality, coming on the heels of the discovery of human evil--but which was more troubling, of evil in the socialist man and worker--further undermines Hłasko's sense of ideological integrity.

There is a near unanimity among commentators on Hłasko that as a young man he truly wanted to believe in the doctrine; the subsequent "descent into an

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[71] Maciąg, 277; for an incisive analysis of Hłasko's loss of illusions, see Rudnicki, 48-57.

existentialism of a kind" was all the more difficult because it was for the most part a fall from the "refuge of ideology." [72] The later narratives begin quite explicitly to subvert the Social-Realist genre, with regard both to the structural considerations and to the doctrine's ideology and problematics, shattering the perverse hopefulness and the whitewashed narrativization expected of the genre, particularly in works by literary acolytes. Also present is a type of narratological play with questions of identity status and with stable role systems. For instance the opening work in the debut collection of stories, "The First Step in the Clouds," depicts suburban Warsaw's working class, a group heretofore honoured and lauded by Hłasko in his essays and magazine articles, as a pack of bitter lumpenproletarians and voyeuristic sexual deviates, devoid of any ideology whatsoever, least of all the saccharine utopian socialist one.[73] The remaining narratives would portray even grimmer figures, almost grotesque subversions of mythic communist workers, supervisors, soldiers, fathers.[74]

With the publication of the novel *The Eighth Day of the Week* (1957), Hłasko became nothing less than an idol to his generation. The state-owned media sanctified him as a *wunderkind,* a twenty-year old transport truck driver who, in the words of one reviewer, "suddenly exchanged the steering wheel for a quill pen, his truck for a writing desk" and who "jolted the entire literary establishment" with a single book (Gąska, 8). Simultaneously, the "legend" of Hłasko as rebel and voice

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[72] Maciąg, 278-80. Thematically and structurally, the sense of rupture appears to correspond to the time of writing of the latter half of *The First Step in the Clouds,* which is written in a somber, far more pessimistic and malicious tone than the former.
[73] It is not the earliest work chronologically, and its placing at the beginning constitutes a departure from the norm in the volume.
[74] There were a few early voices of critical dissent during this period, slandering Hłasko for, among other grave violations, "ideological disorientation, brutality, pathological nihilism" and "moral indifference with a view to 'épater les bourgeois'." But the legend of the writer grew until its zenith in late 1957. See Rudnicki, 77-9, for a broader summary.

of his era, began to form, stoked by the writer's own immoderate behaviour--drinking bouts, frequent arrests, society scandals. [75]

The cycle of the writer's public ascent and decline (culminating in exile) is noteworthy in itself due chiefly to its rapidity. Hłasko's fall from literary and political grace began in early 1958 (*Beautiful Twenty Year Olds*, 5). During a state-sponsored sojourn in Paris, Hłasko gave a series of interviews in which he unequivocally condemned the specter of censorship in Poland--perhaps to account for his earlier decision to publish two novels in the Paris-based Polish émigré journal *Kultura*.[76] The spotlight which the press in France and West Germany kept on Hłasko, and the writer's derisive remarks about communism in the interviews, prompted some observers to seize upon some of his less guarded statements.[77] In a marked deepening of tensions several dailies made accusations of "patent anti-patriotism." Since Hłasko remained silent and unapologetic, a directive from the Embassy in Paris was issued ordering the writer's immediate return to Warsaw. Initially he refused to comply. But when he applied for a return visa some months later, his passport was revoked with no explanation: Hłasko was now a refugee.

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[75] News of the precocious talent and rumors of the extravagant persona promptly reached the West. Lauded as a communist James Dean, Hłasko was linked to the beat movement in America on the merit of a common ideology of personal defiance. In Europe, he was proclaimed communist Poland's response to England's "angry young men". See also Thompson Bradley's Introduction to *Killing the Second Dog*, 8-9.

[76] The decision to publish in *Kultura* was in fact the sole remaining option, as no publishing house in Poland was willing (dared?) to accept the novels. However, the decision was dangerous politically since writers were not permitted to publish work abroad, away from the censor's pen, a fact which did not escape the scrutiny of Hłasko's detractors. Since his actions were unequivocally denounced as a deliberate decision, most observers could justify further accusations of the writer's anti-communist leanings.

[77] These interview fragments were reprinted, with decidedly hostile commentary, in every major newspaper in the country. Shortly thereafter, as the post-Stalinist détente abruptly came to an end in Poland, a belated aftershock of the events in Budapest, the official government mouthpiece the daily *The People's Tribune (Trybuna Ludu)* unequivocally reversed its indulgent, lackadaisical treatment of Hłasko's indiscretions.

Criticism in Poland grew harsher, extending far beyond the habitual considerations of literary merit or didactic value for new generations of budding socialists.[78] Indeed, in some circles of the propaganda machine Hłasko was spoken of as a traitor to socialism, a pronouncement which for dissidents could presage imprisonment and torture.[79] Now Hłasko could not go back. An unsuccessful search for asylum led him finally to Israel on the advice of a well-connected diplomat acquaintance. Thus following nearly two years of peripatetic existence in Western Europe, a period marked by profound linguistic isolation, material privation, and the rapid fading of hopes of returning to Poland, Hłasko traveled to Tel Aviv in January 1959 with the intention of making a semi-permanent home in the exotic new setting.

The desperate tone of his letters from this period suggests that the experience of official negation of status by state mechanisms, and the concurrent canard led by literary spokespersons--erstwhile champions who had created the legend of a bard of his generation less than a year earlier (!)--greatly exacerbated the initial alienation in exile.[80] While already by the time of publication of *First Step*

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[78] The most scathing article during the year-long campaign of "reassessments" appeared in the April 5, 1958 edition of *Trybuna Ludu*. The pseudonymous author charged that for Hłasko to remain in Paris was akin to committing an act of treason. "SKIZ" also went so far as to allege that following in the "footsteps of Orwell himself, the propagandist of nuclear annihilation" (and several other Western writers officially on the black list), Hłasko had "joined the international anti-communist conspiracy" that aimed, among other things, to incite chemical warfare in Eastern Europe.

[79] In *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds*, Hłasko "exposes" Minister of Internal Affairs Tykociński, who in West Berlin attempted to persuade the writer to return "temporarily" to Warsaw: "The man I had spoken with was one of Europe's foremost specialists in kidnapping people from Western Europe and delivering them to the East. He himself asked for political asylum a few months ago, grounding his request on "moralist" argumentation. His plea was successful, and now he will no longer be ogliged to testify about all the people whom he sent to their death; nor will anyone remind him about the lives he destroyed, nor about all those whom he sent to waste away in prison" (200). For an account of another writer's imprisonment, see the story of Stefan Loś in *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds*, 31-4.

[80] Hłasko's sense of bewilderment to the events of 1958-59 is perhaps best conveyed in his letter to writer Maria Dąbrowska, who was one of his few defendants during the "Hłasko affair"

in the Clouds Hłasko was evidently ambivalent about the possibility of continuing writing under censorship, it was only later, reflecting in *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds* on the possibility of a return to Poland prompted by "nostalgia for a nightmare," that he characterized the existence of a writer in communist Poland as an existence amid perpetual fear of threat from every direction (*Beautiful Twenty Year Olds*, 31-7). Writers in communist countries, Hłasko alleged, were as a matter of daily business confronted by backstabbing and betrayal, by the impossibility of trusting others, and by the sheer magnitude of the stakes involved in the official creation--or demolition--of a writer's sanctioned status (*Beautiful Twenty Year Olds*, 32).

Therefore, only in exile, freed from the burdens of censorship and silence, did Hłasko find himself surrounded by sufficient psychic space to negotiate the consequences of official manipulations of lives and of identity. Only then, moreover, did the need to resolve the implications that the possession of power had on making or breaking human lives, and the repercussions of this fact on the life of any public figure living under communism, intimate itself as a direct function of exile and the loss of stable ground. On a strictly prosaic level, quite aside from his artistic career, the last of Hłasko's cultivated illusions about life in the Polish People's Republic, were irrevocably shattered. "He already knew then that he was finished in Poland," concludes Rudnicki, echoing Hłasko's letters of this period to acquaintances in Western Europe (specifically to the staff of the Parisian *Kultura*) (Rudnicki, 115). In consequence his perception of the self-in-the world was to undergo turbulent revolution; specifically, the various "survival" skills cultivated in response to the experience of personal displacement would be transcribed in a new, ideologically symbolic dimension to the protagonists of novels and stories written after 1959.

(Stankiewicz-Podhorecka, 154-5). For a detailed account of the manhunt in Polish press following Hłasko's emigration, see Stankiewicz-Podhorecka, 17-18 and 21-5; for a general index and brief synopses of major later reviews (dating from 1969 to 1989) see Pyszny, 13-74.

The evidence of the texts and letters dating from 1959-61 strongly suggests that shortly after his expatriation, Hłasko succumbed to a widespread kind of socialist paranoia, and began to view himself as living under threat. Various personal insecurities illuminated by emigration ushered in an *a fortiori* justification of a rudimentary personal philosophy of resistance, elaborated following the experience of loss of (communist) illusions. The writer's new politics of the self-in-the-world upheld a fundamental egotism of survival as the dominant operational principle. His *modus operandi* appears to have mandated itself as follows: given that the self was endangered by the very nature of the cosmic order, as evidenced by the biological violence of humanity and supported by the ethos of a brutalized childhood and adolescence, it followed that in order for one to survive, immediate and drastic steps of self-preservation were in order.[81] Hłasko's penchant for identity games and self-mythification was accordingly applied to the realization that the essential flux of an identity is its finest protection. The willful playfulness with the public self that Hłasko would exhibit during this period, and the narrative manifestations of this philosophy, demonstrate the breadth of the ideational field on which the politics of camouflaging and other maneuvers with public identity were played out.

It is matter of general agreement that following his protracted sojourn in Israel Hłasko would produce what is generally considered his most successful work. The first volume of stories published from this period reflected the dynamic of a man reborn as a separate amalgamated identity (Hłaskower). In the first one, *Searching for Stars* (1961), Hłasko retreats into the time of childhood, possibly his own--for the first time in his writing the protagonist is of a demonstrably different age than the author--to search for appropriate material to weave a generic war-time narrative of traumatized youth, and to create a script of brutalized adolescence. Brutalized youth becomes the subject matter of the second story in the series, the third-person *The*

[81] See Rudnicki, 211-3, for a more detailed analysis of Hłasko's identity adjustments following exile.

Month of the Holy Mary (1961). In structure, both narratives pay heed, albeit only outwardly, to the formal constraints of Social Realist writing. The final textual installment in what Rudnicki had termed Hłasko's period of transition (Rudnicki, 123), *Tell Them Who I Was* (1961), is intentionally symbolic of the cycle of death and rebirth. Suspending his standard practice of locating his narratives within a specified time and demarcated space, and in a radical departure from his trademark (Social or quasi-socialist) realism, Hłasko provides nary a clue to the location of the events (Rudnicki, 121). A distinguished actor is invited to give a eulogy at the funeral of a well-known writer, his good friend. After a minute or two of professedly pained recollection about the other man's accomplishments, the actor lapses into a monologue about his own life, each episode prologued by a promise to return to the ostensible purpose of his speech. But in effect, the narrator is intent only on prolonging his own life, his own dramatic persona, his own memory. This last transitional piece, published prior to the genesis of the "Israeli Cycle" (inaugurated by the 1962 publication of the short story *On the Day of His Death*) forges the ideological space necessary for the transformation about to take place of the writer's own sense of identity. In these short texts, the actor/author can be seen choosing from a set of potential voices and refining his mature voice, as he prepares for his great performance to come.

Hence, by the time that Hłasko had fully engaged the new narrative mode that blossoms in the Israeli cycle, the sense of direct connection and the palpable lack of distance between the youthful author and the narrators (through which he acquires mastery over the world and over the Word), a relation that characterized the short stories and novels written and set in Poland, is rejected and replaced in favour of a more complex system of interdependence. This system functions as a nexus of three agents, all played off one another: the writer as an exiled Pole; the mythologized persona (a multivalent actor: an exiled legend); and the narrative protagonist ostensibly reflecting the first two, often amplifying them through the

dimension of secondary myth-making and self-creation in the texts. During the period of the production of the eponymous "Israeli Cycle", Hłasko is reborn and emerges as "Hłaskower," a *persona* that spans all three agents and is perhaps most accurately defined as *Marek Hłasko under the influence of a perpetuating self-myth and of Israel*. As a narratological construct, "Hłaskower" testifies to a sense of an identity that had been re-formulated and is now very closely congruent with and dependent upon the formative experiences in Israel, resonating all the spices of the East, even though the narratives were in fact produced in Western Europe several years after Hłasko's departure from the Middle East. This spatiotemporal lacuna between experience and inscription, a gap amenable to numerous ontological manipulations, provides yet another dimension for the maneuvres in self-camouflaging and in self-(re)creation in that crucial passage of raw life experience into narrative form.

Hłasko's attitude to his environment in Israel has justly been characterized as a duality of passionate *engagement* and acute observation (Stępien, 29-30). In particular, the stance of emotional involvement would be countered by, and played out against, the dilemma of self-perceived "otherness" so conducive to simply observing the world. As was suggested above, Hłasko's sense of social obligation and the drive to belong was a natural outgrowth of the youthful world view as a writer, wherein social togetherness was seen as a means of attaining a utopian state. The new compulsion to observe emerges as a result of contact with an exotic and fascinating foreign culture which, while occasionally overwhelming with its inherent *différence,* at the same time offered some of the comforts of home, language for one. Hłasko would soon able to bridge some of the *cultural* distance. At the time, many Jewish immigrants were arriving from Poland and some, especially in the artistic circles to which Hłasko had occasional access, had

common acquaintances.[82] However, unable to secure immigrant status, Hłasko was forced to take on illegal work, and it was in this subculture of refugees, physical labourers and petty crooks (a group which is a *functional* parallel to the working-class Poles of some years earlier), that he discovered a temporary home and, more significantly, a rich and virtually endless source of narrative inspiration.[83] That he should again have gravitated to such an environment is not too surprising also because by then the steamy underbelly of society and its existential preoccupations had become a naturalized narrative idiom. However, the accounts based on these contacts would echo the sense of a separate experience, not comparable to his immersion in the Polish underworld. The work may have been similar, but the contexts had changed; Hłasko was after all a foreigner:

> A good friend of mine, Jerzy Buchbinder-Press, found an excellent job for me in a steel mill. It was pure hell, of course. . . and in addition I had no legal work permit. Now everybody at the mill knew very well that my name was not Joram Buchbinder-Press, but simply Hłasko. A few months later I got a better job and went back to the mill to bid a fond adieu to my former co-workers. And suddenly one of them refused to shake my hand.
> "And why not?"
> "Because you're no Joram Buchbinder-Press. You're a goy."
> "You had six months," I said. "Why didn't you go to the cops and tell them all about it?"
> "I saw when you came here that you were hungry and that you needed work. But I will not shake your hand. May God damn you, and your people, and the land you came from" (*Beautiful Twenty Year Olds,* 71).

The above reaction, one gathers, constitutes an extreme. But Hłasko indicates that he had little choice in the matter; he had to survive somehow. As an exiled and

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[82] See Hłasko's letters to friends and relatives in Poland, in Stankiewicz-Podhorecka, in particular 194-5 (letter to Zygmunt Hertz); and 228-9 (letters to Zula Dywińska).

[83] This setting would be explored to greatest advantage in *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds,* which tends to merge truth and fiction into an amorphous narrative space. See 70-2, 204-8. "Versions" of some episodes from *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds,* concerning factory and construction work, and the narrator's alleged hospitalizations in asylums following fabricated suicide attempts (111-8), can also be found in three Israeli Cycle narratives: *On the Day of His Death, Converted in Yaffa,* and *Killing the Second Dog.*

condemned writer, an outsider in Israel, a gentile familiar with only a few phrases in Hebrew, but who operated fluently in the other erstwhile unofficial languages of Israel, Polish and Russian, and as a type of author predisposed by temperament to immerse himself headlong in the currents of the lower depths, Hłasko seemed almost destined to play out his identity configurations exclusively on the fringes of Israeli society.

Yet the two years spent in Israel would constitute the most creatively fruitful period: Israel would not only reveal itself as a perpetually fecundating ground and the source of an absorbing array of material; Hłasko's contact with the Holy Land in effect produced something of a spiritual catharsis, an event closely reflected in the very problematics of the Israeli Cycle. Of the numerous personal revelations in Israel, likely the single most important was the author's rediscovery of his native tongue. In an ironic reciprocity, the stimulus was provided by the specific idiom of Israel's Polish Jews, a group whose equivalent could no longer be found in Poland. Their vibrant, distinctively accented use of language made an indelible impression on Hłasko; more importantly, however, it prompted renewed explorations into the cultural divisions of language and its idioms and jargons, themes which were first articulated--tested though they were against the collectivist language of Socialist-Realist ideology--in *The First Step in the Clouds*.

The influences and linguistic patterns found in the narratives range from simple idioms and turns of phrase to more indirect forms of adaptation of the foreign language upon the native, for instance *structural* imitations made even at the cost of grammatical correctness. Hłasko's texts reflect the process of linguistic *assimilation* and the recognition of linguistic polyphony as the rule governing narrative inscription. (In Miller's case, by contrast, the presence of the residual structures of the French language in the narrator's speech is set up in accordance with the principle of linguistic *reverberation*. The two situations, however, are not entirely analogous. For although the narrator of *Tropic of Cancer* and *Black Spring* exhibits

traces of the French linguistic constructions in his speech, his everyday language is English. And in the cross-linguistic flux, some of the resonance is attenuated. The difference between the two bodies of work is perhaps best ascribed to the fact that the Israeli Cycle narratives constitute an artistic manifestation of the writer's confrontation with the singular phenomenon of his *native language* as spoken by Poland's Jews).

Second, Hłasko's émigré writings are richly interspersed with references to popular Western culture. The experiments in language use in these stories are shaped by the author's contacts with American films of the time, with contemporary theatre, and by other encounters with popular culture during peregrinations in Europe and Israel. Of special note here is Hłasko's life-long fascination with westerns, and particularly his adoption of the genre's formal structure for the novels and stories in the Israeli cycle: in the simplicity and unambiguous nature of conflict resolution between forces representing unequivocal good and unconscionable evil, Hłasko's narratives often parallel the plots of the gangster films and potboilers of the era (Kurpiewski, 1983: 4-5).[84] Further, references to Hłasko's favourite actors figure prominently in the texts; their screen monologues are even sometimes transcribed almost verbatim into the dialogues, and many dialogues follow the staccato rhythm found in some star vehicles of the 1950s. Later, Hłasko would present a kind of outline to this intertextual practice in *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds* (106-19; 121-7), providing the reader with valuable interpretive keys, though in an indirect distanced fashion reminiscent of Vladimir Nabokov's anecdotal magician who, for the benefit of his audience, explains a trick he had just performed by conjuring up another (Nabokov, 313). The motivations of Hłasko's artistic rationale, for example, are never articulated with clarity; one concludes that they are a manifestation of identity

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[84] As if to affirm the cinematic qualities of the narratives, many of Hłasko's stories have in fact been adapted into films, in Poland, in Western Europe (to date, four Polish-West German collaborations have been produced; one of these, *The eighth Day of the Week*, starred Sonia Ziemann), and in Israel; for an index of the productions, see 4-6.

gaming, the writer's identifications with popular male archetypes. Hłasko had formed strong identifications with some of his screen heroes while still living in Poland as part of a defiant process of appropriation of the very symbols of freedom and success: "Imitation is the ultimate, most pathetic form of rebellion," he writes in of this period in *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds*.[85] "Since we cannot be free [in Poland] the way people do in other countries, let us at least to duplicate their way of life" (177). It appears that Hłasko sought to repeat his free-world heroes' on- and off-screen exploits both in art and in life, with an almost pathological persistence, in a murderous game involving persona and text. For adventures of this kind represented precious freedom at its logical extreme: pure freedom, unwed by responsibility. Finally, the Israeli Cycle narratives resonate a marked influence of American twentieth-century fiction, albeit often in their second-rate, Bowdlerized Polish translations, especially in dialogue and character development, and in scene shaping (Rudnicki, 175).

From its inception, the "legend of Marek Hłasko" had been composed of two interdependent variables: the writer's own intermittent forays into self-mythification, and the heavily manipulated and mythologized media portraits of Hłasko as a rebel, a proletarian prodigy, a brutalized youth, a lost innocent, Socialist Poland's *cause célèbre* in the West, etc.[86] Hłasko's applications of a specific personal mythology to everyday existence have been exceptionally far-ranging; often the legend effectively eclipsed the literary work (Sobeczko, 51). And in both the early Polish narratives and those dating from exile, the amorphous domain for maneuvers in auto-creation is broad and heterogeneous. These practices range from the creation of author-composites--prompting questions about the degree of authorial self-reflectivity in each successive role and incarnation (*Next Step--Paradise*)--to biographical

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[85] For example, in *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds* Hłasko relates a sordid story about Humphrey Bogart and a prostitute whom the actor burned with a cigarette in a night club. Hłasko, evidently compelled by Bogart's example, was arrested in 1962 for committing a similar act in a nightclub in West Germany.

[86] See Kurpiewski, 1989: 5-7; see also Sobeczko, 50-51.

substitutions (in accounts where the narrator retreats to the past, for instance); from negotiations of one event or episode from a different perspective in each successive work (several stories in *First Step in the Clouds*, themselves drafts for later novels), to dispersions of the writing subject into two or more characters who reflect disparate facets of the author's personality and give voice to varied obsessions and complexes.

A particularly fitting instance of the last practice can be found in the structure of *Their Backs Were Turned*. Here the protagonists Dov Ben Dov and Israel are so configured as to respectively incarnate the author's masculine qualities (Dov practically overflows with machismo, operates with grim soldierly resolve, and embodies both chivalrous and quixotic tendencies) and his delicate, more feminine characteristics (Israel is weak, indecisive, paralyzed by nostalgic yearnings).[87] In this case, the confluence of character traits and of common biographical features between the textual protagonists and the writer himself works against our understanding of a consolidated authorial identity. Instead, we are confronted with an arsenal of masks and a compendium of interchangeable roles. The real author, in the sense of the notion of a stable identity of an *author*, recedes out of focus and, as additional information about new characters is introduced into the narrative, splinters into fragments, while simultaneously looming uncomfortably close to the textual fabric, permeating the narrative with a phantasmagoric stamp of his persona. Thus the narratives are typically pulled in two directions, embodying opposed fields of experimentation. On the one hand, the author is attempting to articulate the veridical qualities of autobiographical writing; on the other, he is simultaneously engaged in subtle self-distancing and deceptive manipulations of the narratorial persona.

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[87] See *Dirty Deeds*, 17, where Dov's moneylender friend describes Israel Berg as an ugly, weak girl with whom Dov keeps company solely in order to emphasize his own relative prowess and *savoir-vivre*. For further discussion of Hłasko's authorial dispersion into the characters in *Their Backs Were Turned*, see Kurpiewski, 1989: 26-7.

Finally, the production of the Israeli stories also marks the discovery of a point of saturation in the experience, that is an absorption of the specific flavour of the locality. This discovery designates that decisive phase of the experience of exile wherein the writer's identity is permanently, irreversibly affected by the condition of exile, a condition which is both social and temporal. In the Israeli Cycle narratives, the authorial "stamp" takes the shape of an intense fascination with reality. Rudnicki, for instance, refers to this as "zachłyśnięcie się realiami Izraela"--a phrase that suggests an inebriated, partly irrational, and wholly excessive infatuation.[88] And Stabro, while setting out to ultimately enumerate Hłasko's personal conflicts and general dangers of life in Israel, admits that these mundane complications nevertheless did not prevent Hłasko from "experiencing authentic love for this country and from making Israel the subject of a grand, perpetuating literary myth" (Stabro, 1985: 39).

Pursuing this critical path, we find that Hłasko's contacts with Israeli *culture* can be broken down into three main epistemological rubrics. The first is the author's encounter with a sort of everyday heroism--very much devoid of hubris--which characterizes the Israeli people. The colorful and tragic personal histories that he encounters in his wanderings in the countryside confer upon their fictionalized counterparts an aura of honour and charisma, resonating a melancholy beauty. Moreover, in addition to their inherent attractiveness as narrative subjects, Hłasko's interlocutors are also consistently able to rise above their particular situations in order to provide astute commentary on the self and upon the state of their corner of the world. This narratological saturation of self-reflexive "race" wisdom bestows on the four novels and the three stories in the Cycle a subtle aura of verisimilitude and authenticity, even if on occasion events and characters depicted attain mythic proportions or ascend to the level of archetype. Particularly Robert in *Killing the Second Dog* and *Converted in Yaffa* emerges as a classic embodiment of that

[88] Rudnicki, 122. "A gasping intake of the realities in Israel", in my inelegant but literal translation.

nexus of philosopher-prophet-vagrant, weighed down with the baggage of culture and hard-earned wisdom (with the evident irony that he uses these attributes to rather malevolent ends).[89]

The second key component of Hłasko's contact with Israel is linked to the discovery that Israeli society is truly unique, as a nation and a culture which continued to thrive despite the immense odds against it (Stępień, 29).[90] In significant ways, the Jews' heroic efforts at national preservation paralleled his own struggles for haven and personal safe conduct following his banishment from Poland. The most tangible point of contact, blending the historical with the personal, was the component of "the game." As the writer saw it, life in Israel appeared as a game played against unknown opponents for the very highest of stakes: life itself. It was a game, moreover, that could end at any time. For Hłasko, who observed it though through a tattered cultural veil, the essential object of this life-game was to forestall death by inventing and sharing narratives, thus preserving the memory of the self, and of one's name, in the midst of a culture of death. Life, when "played" in this fashion, on occasion departed from the scripts of the mundane and the prosaic in order to again aspire to legendary and heroic dimensions (Rudnicki, 127-30). But this is precisely the appeal of storytelling, and Hłasko's adaptation of these mechanisms for narrative purposes informs the structure of his storytelling in the Israeli cycle. What is more, the praxis of mythification of life (perhaps the one most important lesson the writer would receive in Israel), woven into the narrative fabric, is congruous with and indeed perpetuates Hłasko's penchant for legend making and self-creation, a practice which throughout his career operated on the twin principles

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[89] See Stępien (29-30) and Miklaszewski (1,8), for a sociocultural analysis of the interplay of myth and reality in the Israeli Cycle storytelling.

[90] In Hłasko's time these odds were indeed overwhelming: the regimented horrors of the Holocaust, the wars with Arabs over the safeguarding of the new state of Israel, and, specifically in the case of refugees from Eastern Europe, the arbitrary terrors of Stalin's henchmen.

of mythification of the self and *ad hoc* autobiographical manipulation for the benefit of audiences whose sympathy was not always automatic.

While the mechanics of myth-making described here are woven into the plots of most of the texts in the Israeli cycle, nowhere do they emerge more clearly than in the novel *Dirty Deeds.* Here Hłasko transcends his trademark mythification of character with the portrayal of Abarakov, a former Russian soldier and now an immigrant in Israel. Typically, as in the case of Dov Ben Dov in *Their Backs Were Turned,* Hłasko's living legends-heroes are models of machismo and easy charm, part Cary Grant and part Humphrey Bogart (both were acknowledged cinema heroes to Hłasko), usually combating a haunted past as well as some quixotic behaviour trait--a "fatal flaw". While these traits are preserved intact in Abarakov, they exist in a submerged form and are invoked *indirectly* by the third-person narrator.[91] On the surface, however, Abarakov's heroic status is articulated neither by the author, nor by other principal characters in *Dirty Deeds.* Instead, the figure of Abarakov as a legend-hero can be installed as such for the reader only to the extent that the Russian's memory is venerated by two crippled beggars who had earlier witnessed his shoot-out death at the hands of the police. Their account of the confrontation, narrated in the style of Samuel Beckett's existential vagrants Vladimir and Estragon, concludes the novel. The tramps' highly reverent narration of this incident leaves no doubt in the reader's mind that half of Tel Aviv would soon hear about Abarakov's exploits. But although here Hłasko *exposes* the mechanics of myth-creation, the account also possibly aims to parody, or at the very least to supplement, the still-prevalent cultural legend of Ben Gurion and his ethos of fighting till the bitter end, because *this* legend will be disseminated by grotesque characters with no status and with little credibility. Among other, more legitimate

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[91] *Dirty Deeds* also contains several segments in which Abarakov speaks in the first person (he talks about his past). Their appearance suggests that Hłasko was unwilling to completely distance himself or his persona from the "action" of first-person narration and from the evocative power of the personal pronoun.

textual representations of heroism--though still second-hand (as opposed to genuine traits, *earned* through action through the course of the narrative)--are Izaak, Abarakov's soulmate-double in *Dirty Deeds*, and Grisza in *On the Day of His Death*.[92]

The third and final main element of Hłasko's Israel experience is its Old Testament background. The biblical narratives are a profound influence on Hłasko's narrative modes, often interspersed with passages concerned with more quotidian issues. In effect the adaptation of biblical super-structures and meta-narratives, a conscious adherence to a narrative format and to a linguistic program formally imposed on the storyline--as well as a certain fastidiousness in scriptural interpretation (Rudnicki, 127)--constitutes the ideational horizon of the works in the Israeli Cycle. These moral questions are transferred to modern realities of life in a chauvinistic, fledgling state of Israel, and then further filtered through the author's sensibility which oscillates between his identity as a socially engaged artist and an exiled outcast.

Fundamental biblical problems Hłasko will engage in the Israeli Cycle include the figure of Eve, the female prototype, typically configured to form an opposition to her inverted counterpart, the ubiquitous "holy prostitute" (Stabro, 1983: 44). Both are figures which make up the foundation for the character named Esther who appears in several stories; typically women are debased, possibly in punishment for having accepted the forbidden fruit in *Genesis*. Only the prostitute, whose exchange relation is unaffected and unambiguous, and who is presumably free of illusions about love and the human condition, is sacred. As such she is respected by the

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[92] David Ben Gurion, who at the time of Hłasko's writing had stepped down from his position as Israeli Prime Minister, is revered by characters elsewhere in the Israeli Cycle narratives (and to an extent by the author who clearly seems to have appreciated the implications of a Prime Minister who had served as an officer in an anti-terrorist army unit). The Ben Gurion ethos of militancy and direct response (as opposed to diplomacy and compromise) in particular holds special appeal for macho native Israelis with military backgrounds, such as Dov Ben Dov in *Their Backs Were Turned*.

narrator for the "hard labour" she performs.[93] Other recurrent scriptural themes include the reworking of the parable of Cain and Abel with regard to the question of betrayal and revenge (in particular the motif of the "Mark of Cain") (Konkowski 13-5), along with wider considerations of the problem of evil in humankind, as well as meditations on the problem of brotherhood and on the sacrifices that are often performed to sustain it.

The protagonists' affinity with the prostitute, in particular, is founded on the belief that every "other", as every client, functions as a potential if not a *de facto* opponent (*Converted in Yaffa, 130*). The relations between oppositely charged others are economic relations only; because they are seen as normative, they can be exacerbated solely by truly cynical deceit.[94] Any manifestations of love, physical and spiritual, or of the "unnecessary good", only complicate this relation between agents and shatter the protagonist's calculated equanimity; and this is why in *On the Day of His Death*, when presented with the choice between Eve's love and the pimp's money (which was then to be given to his friend Grisza for food for his wife and daughter), he unhesitatingly chooses the latter (185-8). The conflict over a woman's love for one of two men--who are in fierce competition with each other over still other issues--undermines the doublets between male characters.[95] But in every instance the male bonds--even though these are subject to internal tension and testing over other issues--retain a sovereign primacy in face of the challenge

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[93] See the descriptions of Eve in *On the Day of His Death* 160-2, 170-4; in *Converted in Yaffa, 129-31;* and of Esther in *A Tale About Esther,* 212-4.

[94] Rudnicki, 125-6. For example Hłaskower easily accepts being hustled out of all his money by the "film producers" Alfabet and Zyskind in *Converted in Yaffa;* deceit, after all, is one of his own job descriptions (147-9). However, under no circumstances can he stomach being exposed to the lies of his pimp-prostitute relationship with Eve in *On the Day of His Death*: "I cringed: she had hit dead on. She could have spared me this. You only truly begin to understand them when they are truly leaving you" (187).

[95] Such triangles of love and death are at the nucleus of all narratives in the Israeli Cycle. For a listing and analysis of the specific couplings and triangles in Hłasko's émigré writing, see Wyskiel 44-6.

(Wyskiel, 44). Nowhere is this arrangement more apparent than in *Killing the Second Dog* where Hłaskower relinquishes a bona fide opportunity to restart his life with Mary in America because of the overriding prior commitments to Robert and to the scripted performance which he headlines.

A further theme deserving mention is Hłasko's appreciation of spirituality which reflects the belief that he is living in a holy place, a land where God can be found in all things. The following is taken from *On the Day of His Death*, set in Haifa and Tel Aviv. It is one of several passages in the narrative which freely exhibit the ecstatic, intimate idiom in which the narrator portrays nature's splendors in Israel. While sharing a cigarette on the side of the road with his friend Grisza early one morning Hłaskower, soothed by the stillness and the relentless heat, lapses into contemplation of his temporary home :

> I sat down beside Grisza and leaned back against the fence. We lit up and I immediately felt better. I sat sprawling beside Grisza, and I thought that in this country you don't need much to be happy with life. At first, when I arrived here, it seemed to me that I would not like this country. But later, when I got to know it a little better, I realized that I had made an error. The error lay simply in the fact that I had loved this land all along without even knowing it. And I will never cease to love it: the fields, over which fountains of water dance and twist, the orange groves that smell so sweetly that you don't want to believe it; and the gentle hills of Galilee, and the small towns on which you descend suddenly, and where the Arabs speak a dozen languages, equally badly, with equal poise and dignity. I believe that God is alive there, and that he has never abandoned that place. And I will continue to believe this even if ten new calamities should befall this country, because only there did I ever feel His presence. [96]

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[96] *On the Day of His Death*, 154-5. As a reference to readers of Polish, I include the original text:
"Usiadłem koło Griszy i też oparłem się o sztachety. Zapaliliśmy i było od razu lepiej. Siedziałem rozwalony obok Griszy i myślałem sobie, iż w tym kraju niewiele potrzeba, żeby cieszyc się życiem. Z początku, kiedy tu przyjechałem, zdawało mi się, że nie lubie tego kraju. Ale potem, kiedy go już trochę poznałem, pomyślałem sobie, że się pomyliłem. Pomyłka polegała na tym, że kochałem ten kraj, sam o tym nie wiedząc. I nigdy go nie przestanę kochać: tych pól, nad którymi unoszą się i krecą pióropusze wody, pomarańczowych lasów pachnących tak pięknie, że człowiek boi się w to uwierzyć; i łagodnych wzgórz Galilei, i tych małych miasteczek, do których

This fascination with the realities of life in Israel and with its people commingles with an enchantment with nature, which heretofore was of only secondary interest for Hłasko, as a manifestation of a divine presence (Rudnicki, 123). The very earth and air of the country are marked with the stamp of spirit. Likewise, in the blood of the Israeli people--including, one feels, the many crooks Hłasko portrays--the thick plasma of ancient religion courses undiluted. Although the narrator of *On the Day of His Death* is guided by cynicism in daily business, he nonetheless observes daily life from the perspective of the passionate outsider who desires to be included.[97] On the level of spirit, at least, he feels that he at last has a chance of gaining access to an exclusive community in Israel.

As a corollary to this affirmation of the self, the experience of rejection from Poland as the homeland and the locus of a supportive audience, combined with the resultant loss of illusions about the communist system, is effectively consolidated in Israel. The Old Testament "scripts writ large", meta-narratives of betrayal and revenge, that Hłasko encountered pointedly in Israel, fell on prepared ground. As a product of Catholic upbringing, he retained a specific national spiritual perspective. In Poland communism had largely failed to undermine the people's spiritual base, an ardent Catholicism, and the *pre-installed* Christian ideologies remained intact in the post-war generation. It would seem, in fact, that the cataclysms of World War Two had affirmed, rather than weakened, the collective faith of this profoundly religious culture.[98] Thus it may be that Hłasko's direct encounter with the land of the life-

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zjeżdza się nagle i w których Arabowie potrafią mówić dziesięcioma językami; jednakowo źle, z jednakową łatwościa i powagą. Wierzę, że tam mieszka Bóg i że nigdy stamtąd nie odszedł. I będę w to wierzył nawet wtedy, jeśliby ten kraj spotkało dziesieć nowych nieszcześć, bo tylko tam Go czułem."

[97] Hłasko affrims his fascination for Israel and its people when he writes in *Letters From America* Hłasko that every *true* Christian should wear around his neck the Star of David along with the Cross (72).

[98] Incidentally, religious faith of the people fueled by messianic impulses of the poets and revolutionary leaders, is the main reason why the nation was able to preserve its identity and language during the 19th century, when sovereign Poland ceased to exist.

affirming biblical scripts, and with the people among whom these documents were recorded--a contact which functioned as a personal revelation--needed to be played off against those other bleak and nihilistic assumptions which had their roots in earlier betrayal and banishment.

Certainly, Hłasko's texts (those set in Poland and in Israel) often emphasize the graphic elements of war, the continual witnessing of deaths, torture, and other horrific, invasive images, pointing as they do to the permanent imprint made by the war on a child's psyche.[99] Nor is it unusual that the interpretation and later narratological negotiation of this wartime trauma is accomplished, in the main, within the guiding spirit of Christianity, and not in compliance with the wholly secular (and frequently historically revisionist) framework of Polish socialist propaganda. The above is true for all of Hłasko's narratives, even if on occasion either the doctrine or the imagery of Catholicism would be queried, subverted or rejected outright. A particularly vivid example of manipulation of Catholic doctrine is the tale *The Month of the Holy Mary,* a striking short story set in Warsaw during World War II, centered on four young men in the Polish resistance, and framed around the leitmotifs of youthful idealism and revenge from patriotic motives. A young Polish girl, guilty of having fallen in love with a Nazi officer, is brutally murdered by the four young partisans amidst the general merrymaking of the feast of the Virgin. What is truly troubling in the script of revenge is not that they sentence her to death for treason, but the method of execution. One of the young men inserts an empty vodka bottle into the victim's vagina, and breaks it with the of butt of his rifle. She is then left to bleed to death. Rudnicki calls this story blasphemous, "not only in the standard sense, or *vis à vis* a specific stereotype [of Polish partisans], but principally due to the explicit 'martyrdom' of the victim" (120).

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[99] A brutally honest exposition of the consequences of the war and of the subsequent Stalinist regime on Hłasko's generation can be found in *Letters From America,* 116-9.

To sum up, the three years spent in Israel have an immediate and lasting impact on identity. The writer's emergent world view, including his sense of moral ambivalence towards the paradoxically sought after "other", as well as a troubling sense of potential antagonism towards all "others", articulated in the texts is formulated conclusively through this time of trials and tribulations. The influences of Israel and the directions of self-exploration undertaken while in Israel will moreover be reflected in the parameters of the experimental, auto-fictional figure of "Hłaskower," the writer's Israel-specific persona. In the next chapter we will see how Hłasko's expatriation and the problem of self-creation and self-mythification are negotiated in *Killing the Second Dog* through its protagonist Jacob-Hłaskower.

Chapter Four: The Israeli Cycle: Exile and Self-Creation in *Killing the Second Dog*

Killing the Second Dog introduces the reader in the most direct manner to the problem of self-invention in exile. The novel problematizes the processes of self-creation in exile by the attempted blending of the persona of a writer and a protagonist into an indistinguishable, fused identity--an operation which in turn becomes a metaphor for the desire to achieve verisimilitude in writing and accounts for the superficial sense of immediacy between the author and the protagonist. Jacob-Hłaskower, the narrator of *Killing the Second Dog,* as well as in its companion volume, *Converted in Yaffa,* is more closely 'related' to the author in terms of biographical and philosophical points of contact than are the protagonists of the other volumes in the Israeli Cycle.[100] However, the problem of narrative self-representation in this work is further complicated by authorial strategies of self-revelation and self-concealment. I will aim to establish an appropriate positioning of Hłasko (the author) *vis-à-vis* the text's protagonist, and propose that the writer's use

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[100] The distancing between the writer and the textual voice is amplified--mainly through explicit role playing--in the less linear short stories, and in *Dirty Deeds* and *Their Backs Were Turned,* both of which are narrated in the third person. In *A Tale About Esther* Hłasko exposes the mechanism of narrative gaming more directly. Chronologically, the last of the texts in the Cycle, this short story is less than overtly autobiographical. In effect it constitutes a case study in textual involution, a metaliterary exercise that problematizes the notion of narrative construction and self-projection, as well as the mysteries of artistic inspiration, and which queries the *telos* of storytelling itself in a tightly constructed scheme which repeatedly folds and collapses onto itself. As the storyline unfolds, a tale "about Esther" is being formed in the protagonist's mind. The plot itself is a story "instigated" and played out by Esther, the subject and ostensible object of the protagonist's narrative. Her actions depicted in the text are intended to constitute a self-described response to the narrator's challenge made earlier that "there are no books with believable female characters anymore" (221). By initiating a string of events ostensibly for the sole reason of giving the protagonist narrative material for the construction of a story, a tale "about" Esther, Esther attempts to refute the protagonist's statement precisely by acting out the role of a strong, independent female; that is, she plays herself and requests that the narrator literally follow her around Jerusalem as she "constructs" a plot with her actions.

of devices such as distortion, distancing, and narrative involution in *Killing the Second Dog* reflects the *impossibility* of direct representation of the writing self in a literary work. This representation or re-inscription of self must be understood as transcending ordinary dissemination of biographical data and relevant historical facts into a narrative. I am concerned, rather, with the communication of a particular writing consciousness as articulated by Eakin and Olney. Specifically, by means of dividing the creative impulse that propels the plot into two constituents embodied in the relationship between Jacob and Robert, the novel's two protagonists, Hłasko raises questions with regard to the control a writer can have over narrative inscription of autobiographical elements. Through the device of distancing, the author will appear to leave the motivational force of the story in the hands of these two experimental, auto-fictional characters, allowing them to "create" a theatrical scenario--Jacob's deceitful seduction of a tourist--which will unfold with running revisions and fill in the parameters of the quasi-autobiographical narration.[101]

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[101] While the work is not autobiography in the strict sense of the term, it may be described as an *autobiographical novel,* since its subject matter draws directly from the author's experiences between 1959 and 1961. Set in Tel Aviv at a time when waves of East European immigrants were arriving in a fledgling state in the midst of economic crisis, the work alludes to a vaguely anarchic climate that allowed the less scrupulous of the newcomers to engage in quasi-legal enterprises with relative impunity--particularly when the swindles were perpetrated on other foreigners. The story unfolds over a fortnight during the height of the tourist season, and follows the adventures of two petty criminals--Jacob and his jail pal Robert--as they execute an elaborate scheme to deceive Mary, an attractive but emotionally fragile American tourist. With his movie-star good looks Jacob approaches his victim in the pitiful "role" of a frustrated academic, an émigré reduced to the status of a luckless migrant worker by a series of unfortunate events. Robert, a would-be theatre producer, directs the "performance": Jacob pretends to fall in love with Mary, but later declines to return with her to America, citing a job offer in a mine--which in his indigence he feels obliged to accept. Employing the lexicon of theatre, Robert masterminds a set of intriguing circumstances, alternate scenarios, each designed to compel Mary to part with some of her money on the promise that Jacob will join her in America as soon as he can afford to buy back his passport from his many creditors. Ironically, genuine love develops between predator and prey, and Jacob finds himself torn between Mary and a sense of obligation to both his friend and to their jointly

Numerous questions necessarily arise with regard to the narrator's posited identity in *Killing the Second Dog.* Given that the "I" voice employed in the text does not refer directly to the actual author, and yet bears an irrefutable resemblance to that person, how should we characterize the sense of distance between Marek Hłasko the novelist and the protagonist? What are the implied correspondences, and at what moment(s) do we perceive rupture between the author and his textual projection?

Evident points of contact are the locale of the novel corresponding to the Tel Aviv, Yaffa and Haifa of Hłasko's personal experience, and Jacob/Hłaskower's marginal existence and creative means of self-employment. These echo the situation of the author who, upon landing in Israel in 1959, saw himself compelled to take on various disreputable jobs for lack of necessary papers. From a long list of such occupations, the most infamous was a stint as a pimp in Jerusalem, he would later depict in both *On the Day of His Death* and *A Tale About Esther.* Professor Thompson Bradley, who authored the introduction to the Cane Press edition of *Killing the Second Dog,* has a degree of difficulty with equating the narrator with the author concerning this claim (Bradley, 8). His reaction on this point calls into question, perhaps justly, the reliability of autobiographical novels, for the sole recourse in assigning historical authenticity is most commonly to eye witnesses, intimates of the author. However, even such a practice problematizes the quest for veracity, for there is no reliable method for verifying the reliability of third-hand accounts (In *Converted in Yaffa* Hłaskower again fondly remembers the period of

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conceived plan. In the end cynical, deadly theatre triumphs: Jacob chooses to persevere with the hustle. The plan fulfilled, the reader is left with little doubt that the entire scenario will inevitably soon be re-staged; in fact Robert has already located the next victim, an American divorcée convalescing from a nervous breakdown in another seaside town (*Converted in Yaffa* continues the story, and begins at the moment when Robert and Jacob are congratulating one another for that second successful "performance").

earlier short stories and to the world of his "Tel Aviv whores." In this case, too, no reliable information exists to aid in assigning a subject to these recollections.).

Second, the reader is confronted with the ontological ambiguity of the protagonist's name Jacob: it is the writer's middle name. Hłasko's correspondence was frequently signed Jakub in lieu of Marek (Stankiewicz-Podhorecka, 68-69; 250), and several of his articles published in Poland prior to his emigration bore the by-line Jakub Hłasko. (*Ibid.*, 17). Likewise the Yiddish variation of his surname, "Hłaskower," employed explicitly in *Converted in Yaffa*, has its origins in Hłasko's stay in Israel between 1959 and 1961. The fact that some of his letters (in Polish) to Jewish friends in Israel are signed "Hłaskower" is testimony to the extent to which certain identifiable characteristics of an ostensibly fictional persona were appropriated and subsumed into the writer's own sense of identity.

Thus, one may be tempted to suggest, echoing the critical position that had reigned in Poland for over two decades, that the two narratives explicitly strive for partial autobiographical transparency at the very least. Indeed, authorial hints at direct referentiality had apparently been sufficient for a majority of Hłasko's critics in Poland to categorically justify an equation of the protagonist of *Killing the Second Dog* and *Converted in Yaffa* with their author, and even to allege that both works are to be read as autobiographies (Pyszny 105-6). Given the writer's often repeated determination to reveal the naked truth about himself through ostensibly fictional writing (and in light of the silence imposed by censorship, which prevented the exiled author's own positions from being widely circulated in Poland), such interpretations may have appeared persuasive. For instance, in a famous letter of reply to his official critics in Poland, entitled *Chwileczke, Grabarze* (1958; the title may be translated as *Wait a Second, Undertakers*), written in Paris when the "Hłasko affair" back home was just gathering momentum, he had defended himself from the charges of "sensationalizing and defiling actuality:"

> This is the world I inherited. . . And it seems to me that I still have not written anything. . . about the current order of things, that I have always spoken too

> quietly, and that the things I have been witnessing in my life have been much more terrible and far more grim than anything that I have written (Stankiewicz-Podhorecka, 189).

Hłasko would reiterate the maxim of truth telling in virtually all his polemics with the Polish literary establishment throughout the years.[102] However, while to assert total identification of Hłasko with the narrator Jacob-Hłaskower would be highly misleading, it is worthwhile here to offer a brief illustration of the reasons for this claim, and to comment upon its modes of operation, evident equally in the criticism of Hłasko's work and in the more strictly biographical appreciations of the man and the legend.

In effect statements that may well have alluded to personal memory are deployed throughout the narrative. For example, in a key dramatic scene, Jacob's composure as an actor fails; he blunders under the weight of his role and discloses to Mary that his identity as an abject migrant worker is no more than a pose and simultaneously no less than a trap. Pursuing a self-destructive impulse, he exposes the machinations of his game and reveals to the incredulous Mary that she constitutes the unwitting audience of an elaborate performance. As the words pour out, Jacob is overpowered by a need for liberation from the weight of his role, and in a spontaneous confession lays bare in front of her his "real" past:

> It would have been a relief to tell her everything. . . to tell her about the Jewish family hiding next door until they were murdered by the Germans. . . . When their bodies were lying on the ground, the Germans stopped some men walking by and ordered them to piss on the corpses; an officer called me over and I pissed, too, shaking with fear, while the Germans photographed the living profaning the dead. This happened when I was eight. And it would have been a relief to tell her how one day when I was walking to school, the Germans blocked off the street and made us watch them hang people from balconies. No one moved or screamed, not those watching nor those being hung . . . . But I think that she would have asked me to shut up after my very first words (95).

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[102] See Stankiewicz-Podhorecka, 21-5. See also *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds*, 12-14, where an impassioned defense of this writing philosophy is offered to his émigré Polish readers (I should note that this work was available in Poland in an uncensored form only after 1990).

The critical import of these reminiscences, of course, extends far beyond the torment they cause the narrator. As in many other postwar Polish novels (and this quality is in no way exclusive to Polish literature) concerned with memories of wars and which are written by their survivors--no matter how abstract the narrative structure or impersonal the subject matter--historical references such as this one invariably include elements of great personal significance. In effect, Jacob's internal soliloquy transcends the situation of the novel, and refers directly to the author who, in the process of committing these events onto paper for the first time, attempts to negotiate his memory of the atrocities committed during his childhood, without repudiating them or enshrouding them in a nostalgic fog. Insofar as Hłasko is a Pole, too, these horrors, be they narrated or simply left to rest in memory, form part of the collective memory of the nation. And Jacob's soliloquy is another in a line of outraged screams, though curiously here it is sublimated into the memory of a frankly amoral, cynical hustler whose implicit aim in the "romance" with Mary is to commit another act of cruelty, perpetuating the cycle of violence--and thus perhaps achieving closure in a sense. These memories, then, installed in the text through the memory of the protagonist, establish a monument which, immortalized in *écriture*, functions to absorb and sanctify the horror of both the personal and the collective past. Despite the author's socialist indoctrination before the emigration from Poland, this monument is now completely severed from the communists' revisionist, oxymoronic agenda of fighting for peace, espoused by the party brass and by sanctioned writers alike. It is hence largely irrelevant which particular incidents recalled by Jacob belong to the fold of the author's personal experience and which ones had been narrated to Hłasko and subsequently applied to Jacob's history because, once institutionalized into the text, they commemorate and testify to actual events in history.

Interestingly, in an interview just prior to her death in 1985, the author's mother supplied clues which both testify to the possible authenticity of the segment

cited above, and illuminate the *universality* of the experiences narrated by Jacob to the collective experience and memory.[103] For instance, she recalled that during the occupation, Nazi soldiers periodically organized executions on her street, and forced the neighborhood children to attend them (Wasilewski, 92). She also remembered an instance in 1942, when nine year old Marek "literally burst into the house to inform me how, just a moment before, together with a few friends he had hidden a Jewish woman with her daughter in a cellar next door" (Stankiewicz-Podhorecka, 12). Yet, in opposition to the biographical argument, the true significance of Jacob's soliloquy lies elsewhere: the involuted projection of personal memory through a coded symbol, the universal wartime image of the Jewish family whose horrific fate Jacob recalls, constitutes a key instance of composite memory, blending psyche, personal fate, and historicity in an elaborate game of mirrors.

A parallel relation governs many other allusions to personal memory in the narrative, which commonly surface in the form of *anamnesis* (or are prompted by it)--a sensation of remembering generally devoid of specific facts because it has room only for feelings--a flashback in other words (Codresçu, 31). Episodes of this sort beg the question of referentiality. Is it Hłasko the writer or Jacob the hustler who remembers thus? For example, as Jacob awaits a visit from Mary in his hotel room, he experiences a series of involuntary flashbacks triggered by his contemplation of Chekhov's theatre: "My mind was in a total shambles and I couldn't concentrate on anything. *All of a sudden* I remembered the day Stalin died. *Then* I thought of the day Patterson beat Johansson, and of winning a bet from some guy who never paid up..." (76-7; *emphasis mine*).

At an earlier moment, while Jacob and Robert discuss the monetary details of the planned hustle with a potential backer, another train of thought is precipitated by an image of "a dark-haired girl in uniform sitting by the window" (37). The woman

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[103] Also of interest is Maria Hłasko's interview with Piotr Wasilewski in *Hłasko nieznany*, 83-102, where Wasilewski attempts a historical verification of Hłasko's war-related narrative segments.

reminds Jacob of someone long-forgotten who "had once invited me to her house and whose mother had fainted when she saw me because I looked exactly like some guy from the SS who had killed her uncle and his kids and forced her to watch" (37). Could this also refer to the author's memory? Here, as with other wartime images narrated by Jacob, the sense of distance implicit in the relationship between Hłasko the author and the protagonist again seems effaced. In instances such as this one, the strong likelihood that the narrator's recollections had been culled from the inner sanctum of the writer's memory and transferred directly to paper without any (anticipated) authorial commentary or narrative distancing, provides further fodder to some of the more uniformly biographical readings.

The manipulation of distance and memory is reinforced in Hłasko's treatment of the protagonist's parents. Whereas Jacob remembers his father as a "good and gentle man who died when I was six" (46), Robert, acting on a dramaturgical impulse modifies Jacob's genealogy by supplying an archetypal malevolent parent for the scripted performance: "Your father has to be straight out of Dickens. Perhaps even a religious fanatic who drove your mother to an early grave. Leave your parents to me" (46). In a perpetuation of this game of narrative misrepresentation, a third version is supplied: in a later conversation with Mary, Jacob implies that at the outbreak of World War Two (when Jacob was not yet six), his father was murdered by the Nazis (63). The historical record confirms Maciej Hłasko's death in 1939--but as a result of tuberculosis. It appears that perhaps in order to justify or to reconcile himself with what was for a six year old an incomprehensible event, Hłasko sought to revise the death by investing it with the mark of tragedy. Such a reading tends to support Eakin's proposition of self-inscription as the articulation of a desire to span the distance between the past as it was and as it could (or ideally ought to) have unfolded (Eakin, 226). Thus the retrogressive distortions of historical data may ultimately have served the goal of

self-revelation: the reworking of the father's death would have helped to confer a degree of meaning to the senseless loss.

On the other hand, the emergent textual figure of the mother tends to support speculations of the deliberate *transparency* of Hłasko's autobiographical act. There are only a few references in the text, the most explicit of which is projected as another of Robert's theatrical revisions to Jacob's lineage: "I soon learned that I was the illegitimate son of a poor washer woman who knew nothing about my father except that he was a corporal on summer maneuvers" (49). The utter implausibility of this phantasm will in all likelihood fail to register its intended pathos with the reader (though we are told that on a different occasion another of Jacob's and Robert's female victims had been moved to tears [49]). Yet, the seemingly off-hand statement is significant because it illustrates the mechanics of Hłasko's trademark preoccupation with self-camouflage and self-mythification, undertaken in life as well as in his writing. In reality, Maria Hłasko had read law at Warsaw University; so Hłasko had simply manipulated orthography, obtaining "praczka" (washerwoman in Polish) by removing the middle syllable from "prawniczka" (lawyer).[104]

Actually, this genealogical transmutation, and others similar to it, had been in operation for some time prior to the publication of *Killing the Second Dog*: as early as 1956, in a membership certificate from the Polish Literary Society, Hłasko had written under the rubric "parents" that his mother was a "washerwoman" and his father a "fireman." [105] Possibly this act of subversion was perpetrated for no reason other than to simply play the pose of the stereotypical social-realist writer and to

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[104] "Prawniczka" is a rural colloquialism for lawyer--another linguistic *blague* on behalf of the author. It is rarely heard, and even less commonly seen in writing. The more proper usage is "Pani Prawnik."

[105] As his health declined, the writer's father was obliged to seek less strenuous employment. In the mid 1930s he had quit the bar, ato work until his death in 1939 on the City of Warsaw Natural Disasters Task Force (it dealt with fires, floods and other natural disasters). Apparently, "fireman" on Hłasko's membership form refers to Maciej Hłasko's employment with the Task Force (The reference to the death also implies that the author and the protagonist are of the same age).

assimilate a more ideologically correct background.[106] Perhaps Hłasko's reasons had been tactical after all, for working class credentials might help avert suspicion from the communists whom his writing was shortly to parody. Whatever his motivations, the joke was taken seriously by the communist literary pundits, thus initializing a new twist to the writer's mythologized public persona then in formation. Hłasko was officially transformed from a descendent of a well-read bourgeois family to a proletarian prodigy who, in the words of one contemporary reviewer, suddenly "as a twenty year old, abandoned his transport truck in favour of a writing desk, exchanged the steering wheel for a quill pen, and within months became the critics' star pupil." [107] The playful reference in *Killing the Second Dog* to this youthful caper can serve as a reminder that identity is permanently in flux, and can never be stipulated definitively by any "other"—a reminder that, it appears from retrospect, was lost on the majority of Hłasko's critics in Poland until the early 1980s.

In effect, the wholesale identification of the writer with his narrative persona was in part predicated on Hłasko's penchant for precisely this type of *ad hoc* biographical creation. Hłasko's manipulations of his own genealogy and those of his "fictional" characters were, as I have mentioned, deep-set and extensive. They are further convoluted by the intertextuality of the successive narratives. For example, the motifs of the washerwoman and fireman occur in several earlier works; conversely, *Killing the Second Dog* lifts a number of phrases and even dialogue verbatim from other Israeli Cycle narratives and from the works published in Poland. Of course, the existence of such a linguistic "estate", in addition to some *ideological*

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[106] Later, when Hłasko was employed as a truck driver in the Carpathian mountains, many people, including those who should have known better, expressed surprise that his parents had been lawyers, so well had he assimilated a working class demeanor. For a particularly humorous exchange about his genealogy between Hłasko and a security agent, in *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds*, 18.

[107] Gąska 4. Referring to the carnivalesque, fluctuating atmosphere of the mid-fifties, Gąska mentions that very few of the Society's members were familiar with Hłasko's actual family background; however, during the "thaw" years 1956 and 1957, nearly all exulted his "amazing, unprecedented ascent" (Gąska 4).

proximities between the writer and the protagonist in the Israeli Tales, tends to cause the writing to be more transparent by pointing to its own genesis--and to the figure of the author as literary executor who looms large over these texts. It also helps explain the reasons why the ideational focus of Hłasko criticism in his homeland--the cult of the author and associated notion of "the man and his work"--had persisted for such a long time.

This is not to say that voices urging a shift of focus from the man to broader considerations of the writing process, and at least affirming the need for a modicum of textual autonomy, were entirely absent from the debate. They were, however, infrequent. Leopold Tyrmand, a contemporary writer, was in a league of one when he characterized Hłasko as a born liar, fundamentally an artificer whose texts nonetheless imparted essential truths despite the ubiquitous departures from verisimilitude: "Even when he lied in the narratives, and he was composed of little fictions--sometimes filthy lies, sometimes spectacular lies, at times nonsensical lies, and occasionally beautiful lies--in all cases he managed to transmit the truth about himself in his work. And it is, in the end, only the work that matters..." (Wasilewski, 21). So Tyrmand was very much alone in attempting to focus critical attention on the mysteries of that curious process of *self-inscription* in which truth about the self is conveyed despite errors of fact or deliberate fabrications, as opposed to focusing on the biographical person/persona. The ideational core of Hłasko polemics, meanwhile, remained exclusively on the historical author, and on questions of historical veracity and ideological rectitude of his texts (or its lack, particularly in the exile narratives). Certainly, many critics seemed to appreciate that the various falsehoods that tended to infiltrate narratives were intrinsic to the process of textual self-inscription. Nevertheless, the prevalent critical agenda lay in *overcoming* obstacles in the form of demonstrably fictional elements within the narratives and, having distilled the correspondent "truths" among the fictions, in subsequently

pointing the finger to the figure who had directed the literary spectacle--the author, presently stripped down to a system of interrelated devices.[108]

These stratagems were facilitated to a degree by the identification of traits common to a substantial portion of Hłasko's oeuvre (his narratives written in exile were gradually made available during the late seventies and early eighties), the delineation and juxtaposition of which comprised an unmistakable literary genealogy.[109] Thus the classification of character types, the demarcation of a "common capital of experiences" and of the "behavioural convention" employed in their narrative depiction (Koźniewski, 8), led prominent critics such as Stabro to conclude that Hłasko was throughout his literary career engaged in writing and rewriting one work (though with variation in setting and--less commonly--in genre), an epic whose hero was invariably himself (Wyskiel, 46-7). And, because Hłasko's protagonists often engaged in disreputable behaviour with unapologetic, existential cynicism (Hłasko's critics would have substituted "nihilism" here), the more didactic critics felt warranted in condemning the author on moral grounds, through the simple expedient of reading his work as one reads a memoir or a diary--since once the overtly fictional elements in a text had been isolated and discarded, the "reminder" of the organic narrative "I" was generally deemed to manifest autobiographical transparency.[110]

The writer's exile, certainly, problematized the immediacy of this relation, even for staunch proponents of the biographical thesis. For even a cursory reading of the Israeli cycle narratives, but especially of the two novels related in the first person, reveals a striking and, in the context of the author's separation from the homeland, a remarkable absence of standard expected references to the physical

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[108] For a comprehensive analysis of these critical practices, see Pyszny 13-18, 98-102.
[109] Wyskiel, 44. See also Koźniewski, 8, for a "psychological" appendix of Hłasko's auto-fictional (and fictionalizing) system.
[110] For a particularly virulent attack on Hłasko's approaches to autobiography, questioning the need for "interminable, egotistical, solipsistic writing" from a purely biographical perspective, see Stabro, 1985: 39-44.

aspect of emigration and to the subsequent problematics of personal displacement. How does one account for this phenomenon? On the surface, it may appear that Hłasko sought to achieve a complete break with Poland, the functional parameters of the rupture having been articulated within the narratives themselves. Hłasko's praxis of negotiating exile and separation, then, placed him in opposition to Miller's model, as the latter derived his rationale for exile almost exclusively from a passive compliance with flow. In conformity with this philosophy he would arrive in Paris in 1930 "for a reason [he had] not yet been able to fathom" (*Tropic of Cancer*, 1), only to feel compelled, somewhat later, to devote whole sections of his autobiographical romances to open contemplation of homesickness and nostalgia.[111] Why would Hłasko embrace such a total severance?

In *Marek Hłasko* Bogdan Rudnicki suggests that the writer was forced to undergo a process of self-effacement, when confronted with the necessity of self-reconfiguration attendant to exile and the functional assimilation into the culture of the host nation (123-5). Whether or not this was Hłasko's stated intention, it appears that in the very process of inventing an identity effective for his existence in Israel, "Hłaskower," the writer allowed some of the identifying signs of the new persona to override or fuse with his own personality, thus effectuating a second significant blurring of the distance between the corporeal author and the authorial persona inscribed into the autobiographical texts. However, while I agree that this shifting, vague, fluctuating distance makes for a more difficult reading, it appears that the maneuver is linked to negotiation of the past (that is to say, the experience of exile), and not its disavowal--nor any other mechanism of authorial or broader, personal, self-effacement. Nonetheless, the question why is it that Hłasko chose to omit the relevant information about the mundane realities of exile must be

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[111] See, for example, the passages about America as an "abstract idea" in *Tropic of Cancer*, 207-8. The first and fifth chapters of *Black Spring*, "The Fourteenth Ward" and "The Tailor Shop," also deal exclusively with the idealized America of Miller's youth. *Cf.* Lewis 105-15.

addressed. Were Hłasko's reasons predicated on the fact that the intended audience in Poland was shuttered in by censorship and hence unapproachable? (Moreover, a segment of this potential audience was quite hostile to a writer who, as the official line read, had betrayed his homeland by "escaping.") According to this scenario, Hłasko would have been compelled to search for a new audience, a trans-nationalist group united not so much by common experience (of exile and a history of oppression) as by the willingness to share the writer's sense of wonderment with the newly regulated, but still wild Middle East--an enchantment rendered with such passion and acuity in these narratives. Or is the answer instead encapsulated in the personal drama of exile itself? In other words, is the lack of clues itself a clue?

It is noteworthy that when exile as a concept is referred to in the Israeli cycle stories, be it by the protagonists or by minor characters who themselves are often exiles, it is often transmuted into *parallel experience,* one not wholly the writer's, but which on the other hand is quite common to the cumulative experience of early 1960s "new" Israeli society. For Hłasko links exile to the Jewish tradition, posits it, as it were, within the large script of the Polish-Jewish, and occasionally, the Russian-Jewish experience. The self-described expatriate in *Their Backs Were Turned,* Israel Berg, a reluctant recent political refugee from Poland, typifies the first arrangement. Grisza, the protagonist's barrack-mate in *On the Day of His Death*, and to a lesser degree--because by proxy of his Jewish double and best friend Isaac--Major Abarakov in *Dirty Deeds*, exemplify the second scenario.

The marked absence of the profoundly personal kind of inscription in a work written in, and undeniably about, exile, that is the inscription of a personal program of exile, and its replacement in plot mechanics by the *indirect account*, is all the more striking given the protagonist's assertion in *Killing the Second Dog* (64), that he is longing to be back in Poland. Of course, the heavy braggadocio of Jacob's role allows him only to resort to euphemism: he tells Mary that he experiences a "flowering of patriotic sentiments" most strongly when he finds himself financially

destitute. But in an aside directed to the reader, Jacob slips out of his hustler role for an instant and clarifies his position. This suggests a process of naturalization or assimilation so thorough and multifaceted that the narrator finds himself enmeshed in the reality of the adoptive land to a degree where the very notion of "homeland" no longer represents an autonomous ontological reality, and can be referred to only accompanied by an ironic detachment. It is very likely that this attitude to the past--it is in part the author's attitude, too: in some of his letters from Israel Hłasko sounds all but like the auto-fictional Jacob--may have been triggered by his realization that a return to Poland was all but impossible. [112]

Still, the question of Poland does not recede, and this is true equally of the protagonists in the Israeli Cycle and of Hłasko himself; he will return to this point, almost despite himself one feels, in *Beautiful Twenty Year Olds,* and later in *Letters From America*. In both works the loss of the homeland is suggested by the sheer volume of words devoted to reminiscences as much as by their subtly nostalgic tone. In contrast, the inscription of emotionally charged leitmotifs--paralysis due to nostalgia, longings for the period of stability experienced in Poland--seems forcibly suppressed in *Killing the Second Dog* and *Converted in Yaffa*. Yet the mechanisms of repression are not fully successful. For when the memories of Poland are triggered, the resultant flashbacks, as was shown above, usually center on highly emotional or even traumatic events, and are almost invariably coupled with the childhood experience of World War II and Nazi occupation of Poland, or with the psychological legacy of post-war Stalinist terror. The depiction of such forces and monuments of the past that campaign to overwhelm the writer's memory content eventually achieves the perverse effect of saturation on the reader's perception of Hłasko's (in)ability to come to terms with the paralyzing memory of the War, particularly with the Nazi atrocities committed on Poland's Jews. The operational

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[112] See, in Stankiewicz-Podhorecka, Hłasko's letter to Eryk Lipiński (198), several letters to Jerzy Press (200-8), and to Roman Polański
(224-6).

mechanics in this deeply concealed trauma are unveiled through their textual negotiation in the Israeli stories, and particularly in *Killing the Second Dog*, where Jacob-Hłaskower's created memory--a device that facilitates the process of self-inscription through an act of distancing--instead becomes a monument to the suffering caused by the Nazi occupation, without *directly* (precisely because of the distancing involved in its narration) implicating the author as having suffered, and thus exposing Hłasko's personal wartime trauma. However, the mask of cynical bravado that the writer had donned expressly for the retelling of the stories of his exile period, sometimes slips--in a process analogous to Jacob's crisis with Mary--divulging a confessional tendency, through which the "authentic" experience is revealed amidst maneuvers in personal mythmaking and self-creation and the more dissociative identity games of the "writerly persona" and its auto-fictional protagonists.

In general, then, it seems that Hłasko's critics in Poland were correct to credit his program of textual sincerity and self-transparency because the narratives often manifest a minimal concealment of the ontological self; and the Israeli Cycle works, in particular, are characteristic for the author's frequent reliance on a thinly veiled confessional mode. Yet their conclusions, quite aside from the common ideological program of denouncing a banished writer, are not so much mistaken or naive as simply outdated, considering recent inquiry conducted into the relationship of the historical subject and his textual configurations.[113] It is my contention that while the

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[113] This is to say that the more subversive of Foucault's or Barthes' writings, including those cited in my study, were made *officially* available to the Polish cultural establishment generally only after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The tone of the most recent debates in the Polish publications reflects this development. Moreover, even if individual scholars had been able to obtain these potentially subversive texts, for instance during travel abroad, it is unlikely that they would have been allowed to refer to them in published work. Instead, they typically fashioned their arguments employing a roster of orthodox, almost interchangeable, sources. Media censorship only ended in Eastern Europe with the institution of democratic rule, and even then only gradually. For this reason,

compulsion to faithfully relate the self as located in a particular spatio-temporal reality appears to be the author's guiding mode of self-inscription, at some specific moment in writing Hłasko must have experienced a rupture between himself as the writing subject and his narratological projection. I suggest that in a cathartic realization of his own subjective "otherness" following exile from the homeland, perhaps when confronted with the urgent need that attends any refugee, any involuntary newcomer in an unfamiliar place, for the reconfiguration of personal status, Hłasko had come to accept the impossibility of direct representation in texts. And although it would be futile to isolate any such moment from the myriad traces left behind after the author's death, I would propose that the modes of rapport between the two protagonists of *Killing the Second Dog*, Robert and Jacob-Hłaskower, reflect the artistic manifestation of this rupture, of the impossibility to fully inscribe the self into a text. In effect, the mechanics of narrative self-inscription--the incidents of willful suppression of facts and memories; the selection between several alternate scenarios of varying impact on the audience (reader/Mary) for communicating events; the very fictionalization of events--will be made increasingly transparent, as we read the book, by the intermittent adjustments and reconfigurations applied by Robert to the persona of Jacob and to the scenario *of their making*. Further, employing the metaphor of narrative doublets embodied by these twin protagonists within a specific theatrical lexicon, Hłasko dramatizes his own identity games undertaken in the public sphere.

On the first, purely biographical level of operation, the figure of Jacob-Hłaskower is a metaphor for the elderly actor from the short story *Tell Them Who I Was* during a moment of triumph--for *Killing the Second Dog* is the great performance that had been anticipated in the mood of the earlier "transitional

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nearly all the Polish writings referred to in this paper inevitably bear the mark of either the "internal" or the official censor.

stories" (Rudnicki, 123).[114] And Mary, the victim of Jacob's and Robert's elaborate production which as it were propels forth the narrative, constitutes on the same level a functional equivalent for the unwitting media and other "victims" of Hłasko's self-mythification and legend-making over the years. The fact that "Hłaskower" is in a sense an actor is also significant because acting remained for Hłasko a great unrealized dream (*Beautiful Twenty Year Olds, 179-81).*

On the second, more literary level of the metaphor—in a fashion reminiscent of Foucault's notion of the split of the writing subject into the physical author who observes and comments, and the "I" voice inscribed into the narrative—we witness in the narration of *Killing the Second Dog* an organic fissure of the scripted performance (that is, the plan to hustle the tourist, i.e.: the plot) into the subject who directs/observes, Robert, and the subject who performs/narrates, Jacob. This arrangement is institutionalized early in the novel during a "rehearsal" (21-26) of the ready scenario that had been prepared for a specific performance. In the passage that follows, Robert justifies his role as director and puppet master and muses on the pleasure of "artistic" creation:

> One thing is really funny. Sometimes I wake up at night and I start choking from laughter when I think about all of them, when you talk to them of love and the life you'll start together. And none of them will ever find out that all these texts were invented by a fat old Jew who has a double hernia and who gets ill even after eating raspberries with cream. . . . No son. I am no loser. I invented you *and this entire theatre* (26). [115]

Further, just as Hłasko saw it fit to "rewrite" his parents by demoting them from their solid middle-class situation to one that was distinctly working class, in order to subsume their lives into a "faux-proletarian" paradigm that the writer favoured at the time (and which was moreover encouraged by the authorities since

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[114] The opening paragraphs of *Converted in Yaffa* indicate that the swindle in *Killing the Second Dog* is considered a full success by Hłaskower - as had the successive hustle of another tourist.
[115] Translation and emphasis mine. The Mirkowicz translation abbreviates this passage by two sentences and omits the important theatrical reference.

working class writers, the theory of Socialist Realism held, were indispensable to the construction of a communist utopia), so in *Killing the Second Dog* the protagonist's lineage undergoes continual adjustments by the author-director Robert to harmonize it with the requirements of the role. Hłasko was well acquainted with the rewards of identity manipulations; as we have seen, the proletarian author swiftly became the "star pupil" of the critical establishment and found considerable enjoyment in the new impersonation. Robert similarly derives considerable "creative" pleasure from his authorship of Jacob's on-stage persona and shares (not only financially) in the fruits of its success.

And while rehearsing the preliminary act of the hustle, Robert reinforces his posited function of an *author* who stands in front and outside of his work. He gently demonstrates to Jacob the specific intertextuality of his role by comparing him to a cartoon character: "Try to imagine that I created you from scratch. Disney created Donald, but he probably doesn't believe it himself anymore. Same thing with Goofy. Goofy's got his own life now. That's the way you should picture yourself" (15). The empty form of the hustler role is thus figuratively filled by a multivalent actor embodied by Jacob. In Robert's view, success depends on absolute economy of utterance and an associated economy in scene shaping. Consequently the main character's "personal" memory, the psychological aspects of individuality, his desire, the accumulated sociocultural content of his nationality, and all the other constituent elements of "textual" Jacob which are deemed superfluous to his portrayal of a migrant worker, are vigorously suppressed. Here Robert asserts his control as a creator: "The way I present you is modern. I show you only in those situations which are essential to your character--when you're in despair, in love, or seething with fury. She can figure out the rest for herself" (102). "Don't worry," he admonishes elsewhere. "It'll show you in the best light" (129).

Yet despite the stentorian directives, Jacob's completed persona, like the two Disney characters, on occasion enjoys a vestige of autonomy versus its "author".

Sporadically Jacob escapes from Robert's control, and those normally suppressed constituents of selfhood resurface. These departures from the prepared scenario supply final proof for Robert as *the author* that the created product did not, and perhaps can never, emerge precisely as the author/director had intended. What is more, Jacob inadvertently falls in love with Mary, something so beyond the stipulated boundaries of the role that Jacob, ever the method actor, is astonished by his emotions. And although he ultimately denies himself the experience of love because he considers it his principal duty to adhere to the script prepared and finalized by Robert, he does not fail to inform his director of this tension: "You know, Robert, you weren't there yesterday and I forgot my text. . . so I told her that *this whole thing is theatre* and that we're trying to rip her off. . . . It worked perfectly. She didn't believe me, of course. I'll always use that line from now on" (104).[116] The perceived disparity between intention and result, then, constitutes the final metaphor, in this case for that moment of rupture when a writer reflexively becomes aware of the *distance* separating himself (as a psyche) while he is writing, from the voice configured in the narrative that articulates his individual self-understanding. Hłasko appears to demonstrate that this recreated, narratological self, though equipped with familiar outward characteristics, has in effect attained a certain subjective referentiality, or, textual autonomy.

Indeed, just as in autobiographical writing the produced text and its narrative voice can be said to be functions of the simultaneous contradictory impulses to expose the truth through art, and to elide the confessional act, so in *Killing the Second Dog* the composite self of Jacob results from the tension between director and actor with regard to the components of the narrating self that are to be dissimulated during the performance (in effect the "text") and those best suppressed. The process of selection between several potential plots--making manifest both the storytelling ethos and the creative process of inclusion or

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[116] Here too, the translation is mine. Mirkowicz again leaves out Hłaskower's reference to theatre.

exclusion--is especially evident in the scene where Jacob, left alone with Mary, finds it impossible to conform Robert's plan (90-7). Hłasko seems to indicate that in places he possesses no higher a degree of control over the narratological "I" than Robert has in his own endeavour to determine Jacob's potentiality. For it is precisely those parameters of the emergent identity which Robert insists on concealing that Jacob reveals, at times inadvertently, and perhaps even unwillingly, in circumstances where external pressures prove too great for the improvised self to overcome in silence, when the prefabricated authorial guidelines (i.e.: intentionality) suddenly lose their relevance and contextual meaning.

Has Hłasko then summoned the character of Robert as a textual device in order to draw parallels to the problems of self-inscription in autobiographical writing, to make manifest his struggle with direct communication of the writing self onto paper? Having discreetly concealed himself behind the puppet master Robert, Hłasko has scripted the latter to function as a legitimate author-agent in command of the construction of a transparent acting/narrating self that is Jacob, and to "supervise" the actor's narration, as it were. And, by diverting the focus from the motivations of self-inscription that propel a text into existence, to the actual mechanics of self-creation portrayed in the story, the author has--in a final ironic involution--in the meantime disappeared into the anonymous darkness of Robert's shadow.

Chapter Five: Henry Miller
Exile, Space, and the Program of Self-Liberation

Henry Miller, harbinger of the movement against social repression bequeathed by the Puritans, and a champion of the literature of self-liberation, has typically been viewed as a writer of secondary magnitude. Most critics grant that his role in American twentieth century-literature has been unique, and that he represents a kind of roguish character, a latter-day Mark Twain. Commentators often charge that with the insistence on self-revelation in his confessional narratives, he is a figure almost of another era, the Romantic.[117] Nearly all writers on Miller corroborate the importance of Miller's transgressions of the perimeters of the autobiographical act in English-language literature, and credit him for advancing the cause of personal liberation through narrative self-revelation. However, despite some critics' pronouncements to the contrary, Miller's reputation (such as it is) still rests almost entirely on his having had the daring, the bravado sufficient to write explicitly and candidly about sexuality and the essential needs of physical survival. Because Miller's narratives have been so intensely and single-mindedly personal, critics have generally found it difficult to separate the work from their author. Miller polarizes opinion. As a result, rather than evaluating the intrinsic worth of the texts as autobiographical documents bearing witness to a certain era, much of the criticism of Miller has fallen into one of two categories (this is especially true of the reviews written before his death in 1980)--either "for" or "against" the man and his literary message (Lewis, 7). In addition, many such critiques and appreciations had been authored either by "close friends" of the writer, by members of the West Coast cult of Miller or, alternatively, by those who did not know him personally, had no desire or interest to make his acquaintance, and were unwilling to offer him a forum to defend his artistic beliefs. Given such emotional proximity to their subject, the objectivity of these writings frequently suffered.

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[117] For a comprehensive review of the positions commonly articulated by both camps, see Lewis 1-20, "Acolytes and Adversaries".

In marked opposition to Hłasko's, Henry Miller's career as a writer seems to have been the product of a frenzied, and occasionally extravagant quest for substance, a search for stable identity, and the attendant literary success and personal freedom. The dichotomy of success and failure serves to illuminate the writer's rationale for emigration to Paris in 1930. Lewis, for instance, views Miller as a peripatetic outsider who required extensive personal space to conquer himself as an artist (Lewis, 55). Indeed, Miller's emergence as a writer follows the trajectory of escaping a world of failure and defeat: having renounced his stultifying past Miller will forcefully emerge from the void of experience that thus far had characterized his life, into a creative world of image and idea. In turn, the discovery of such a self-sufficient and fecundating environment would offer unexplored vistas, both physical and narrative (artistic). The motivations for exile are therefore not so much socio-political, which is to say, external, as they are personal. By contrast, Hłasko's search, we recall, was predicated upon a categorical rejection of a ready-made set of realities and praxes based on an opposition to official, sanctioned prescriptions for writing, and his official status as a *communist* writer. Thus while Hłasko's exile is characteristic of an entire generation of Eastern European artists who chose expulsion over censorship, Miller's expatriation (and associated search for self which it animates) is to some extent illustrative of a major trend in Western writing in our century.

The conditions of exile in France, particularly the absence of societal pressures to conform to the bourgeois paradigm that he encountered at home, liberated Miller to a degree sufficient to allow him to express the central problems of the self, eventually leading to the articulation of the inner voice, the tool of "authentic" expression. Exile re-awakened the autobiographical impulse that lay dormant since the abandonment of *Clipped Wings, Moloch* and *Crazy Cock,* and sensitized Miller to the essential story that he wanted to tell: *his individual* story, presently rendered infinitely more pressing by the tribulations of expatriation. Since

the writing was motivated in the first place by the desire for self-liberation, the experience of exile was indispensable to Miller both as a phenomenon of social rupture and as a personal milestone. For in freeing him of the yoke of the inglorious past, exile enabled Miller to augment his knowledge of the self as a writer by introducing a new, experimental dimension to the inscription of identity; it provided, further, the physical and *psychological* space requisite for self-reconfiguration as an expatriate, and the accompanying revelation of the self undertaken in the narratives. Miller's search for the self was thus propelled by an agenda not uncommon in contemporary Western autobiographies of the first half of our century.

Miller's troubling sense of confusion regarding the centeredness of identity appears to pivot on two matters: a profound and multi-faceted sense of social alienation, discussed earlier, and grave personal dysfunction. Miller's feelings of loneliness and isolation can be linked directly to his immediate family, presided over by an unloving, repressive, emotionally unresponsive mother, and a weak, uninterested "absentee" father.[118] For instance Norman Mailer, reflecting on the implications of Miller's "unmothering" on his emerging sexual identity, would argue that "Miller came out of a milieu where sex [had] something wrong with it if it [was] not sordid" (Mailer, 175). "The last contractive spasm" of the Victorian age in America may have hermetically sealed the sexuality of Miller's parents' generation, Mailer suggested, "but the children were loose. Sex and filth were components of the same equation. . . tender sex was a flower you shoved up a girl's ass" (175). Sexual identity, coupled with an absence of viable role models, was thus *a priori* combined with a hatred of a sort, with sadism and with conquest.

In fact what makes Miller's quest for substance and artistic becoming, as well as the implicit need for attention and acceptance ("the esteem of 'success'"), a subject worthy of detailed investigation is precisely its primary focus: self-discovery

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[118] Mailer, 86-88; 173-7; See also Miller's own thoughts on his upbringing in *My Life and Times* 198-201, and *Time of the Assassins*, 15-17.

is overwhelmingly related to aspects of sexual exploration and subjugation of the partner. Kate Millett contends that Miller, who "by the ethos of American financial morality was a downright failure," through a transference of acquisitive impulse was able to affirm his masculinity through "making women. . . if he can't make money" (Millett, 147-8). The loci of the search are native New York and Paris, where Miller would exile himself in 1930; its main catalyst and the agent of the eventual catharsis was Miller's seven-year long, off-again on-again relationship with his second wife June Mansfield-Smith. June would, with time, reveal herself as a personality that Miller would be unable to understand let alone contain (though her very changeability was initially a source of fascination); and in turn, she would envelop him in a web of self-absorbed subterfuge, bewildering deceit, incessant role-playing and daily maneuvers in dramatic self-creation.[119] The prowess and vitality of her (bi-) sexual identity initially alarmed and eventually emasculated Miller, while her devouring nature (in all aspects of experience, not solely intercourse) surpassed even his own Rabelaisian appetites and the contents of his most pollutive fantasies.[120]

It would appear that the key to reading Miller's autobiographical romances lies in our understanding of the rules and the parameters of the game played in the domain of sexual identity and sexual experience. It should be noted, however, that Miller's obsession with the inscription of these experiences in the narratives often appears to have been largely for their own sake. And this function of his writing, as

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[119] Mailer characterizes June as a classical narcissist, and a better hustler than Miller besides. In June, Henry the "Brooklyn stud", would meet someone "more than his equal" (183; 189-91).
[120] See Mailer's account of Miller's relationship with June, 178-90. Mailer argues that June, whom he describes as "Junoesque", had emasculated Miller to the point where, within less than a year of living together, he would gladly stay at home and cheerfully do the dishes and the housework, while she would indulge in riotous adventures in Greenwich Village, and bring home "presents" from male admirers (183-4). June also insisted that he stay at home in order to write, and that she would support them (in mysterious and never fully accounted for ways) until the manuscript for Miller's masterpiece was completed.

Norman Mailer suggests, constitutes a form of braggadocio with telling psychological implications about the status of selfhood (the later works, where erotic depictions abound, seemingly in mere pornographic arrangements, confirm the validity of Mailer's assertion) (Mailer, 89-94). Aside from adding a degree of chaos to the already disordered, non-linear narratives, the erotic passages--and particularly the sheer amount of space devoted to swaggering depictions of intercourse--seem to make their appearance primarily as a bolster to a fragile ego, as crutches to an uncentered sense of the self. The fluctuating perception of sexuality, intimately linked as it is to the degree of self-worth, is particularly disturbing. Like a house of cards, such an arrangement is (psychologically) precarious since any failure or adversity in matters of sexuality and relationships can easily disbalance identity, and in extreme cases demolish the whole construct and undermine his concept of the self. The implications of sex and notions associated with sexuality as they determine the self-reflective status assigned to selfhood suggest themselves almost automatically: is personal insecurity the main reason why the writer appeared so strongly compelled to associate such a large component of identity with sexuality?

The impression of sex as a crutch and as a bypass for addressing the fundamental questions of the self at times overwhelms a perception of any other dimension in the text. This is so marked, in fact, that the dominant narratological mode of the initial foray in self-revelation, *Tropic of Cancer*, has been frequently characterized as "erotic buffoonery"--as though Miller were attempting to draw attention away not only from artistic becoming, but also from the central questions of sexuality itself (Widmer, 1971: 118-9). Even more troubling to any discussion of sexuality in Miller is the fact that numerous blatantly misogynist depictions of women and of intercourse, wherein women are used as "mere cunts," seriously undermine

the equally vociferous claims made by Miller's champions of the writer's humanism and his professed insistence on the equality of the sexes.[121]

Yet, given that the traumas of Miller's childhood are later portrayed in an ambivalent manner, in broad strokes distanced by nostalgia and mediated by authorial self-pity, how ought one to examine those events that shaped Miller as a writer and that led him to his idiosyncratic perceptions and tormented conclusions about the state of the world? Moreover, was Miller doomed to eternal, compulsive negotiation of his sexual anxieties in fantasy (if not in reality), as an exorcism that never quite expels the demon, and which must therefore be re-enacted eternally (generally expressed as the struggle to conquer *the other,* most commonly a woman)? As Miller admitted in one of his post-Paris works, the impetus to write was rooted in failure and in suffering on a grand scale (*The Time of the Assassins,* 1-5). Evidently, then, an investigation of the period prior to his emigration to France can provide valuable clues to the factors which precipitated the startling "explosion of radiant spirit and exuberant anger" which takes place on the opening page of *Tropic of Cancer,* the writer's first foray in self-revelation (Lewis, 75).

While most commentators concur in referring to Henry Miller as a figure of secondary magnitude, nearly all concede that his exact place in American literature is difficult to stipulate.[122] Miller has been often considered an embodiment of a particularly American affirmation of the individual with his faults and complexes, an affirmation made as easily and naturally as one might endorse one's inalienable rights and freedoms. As such, he is seen as a descendent in a long line of libertarians and transcendentalists epitomized by Walt Whitman and Thoreau (and Miller, for his part, acknowledges both as shaping influences) (Shapiro, 1960: 79-

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[121] See Lewis (44-5) for analysis of Miller's "eroticism" that his "male street-hip slang" articulates. *Cf.* Kate Millett for a feminist reading of Miller's Paris narratives. Her analysis of the narrator's "men's house attitude" and the "brothel atmosphere" of the accounts is of particular interest (Millett, 148-52).

[122] For an overview of shifting attitudes to Miller in criticism, see Gottesman, ed., 1-23; Mitchell, ed., xiii-xviii.

83). However, Miller in addition required a considerable amount of space in which to play out his drama of *personal* becoming, a process which was thwarted in America. His escape into exile, it may be argued, provided him with that requisite psychological and social space.[123]

The need for personal *distance* as a precondition of artistic becoming is strongly echoed in the narratives, particularly the autobiographical novels. The preoccupation with "space" as the keystone of both an individual program (or destiny) and a personal philosophy of the world, is reflected most vividly in the language and structure of the Parisian books, seemingly fluid, undisciplined narratives which ramble, erupt, spew forth. In reality however, as Leon Lewis notes, the narratives are governed by a complex kind of anti-formal structure (Lewis, 61), a notion Miller confirms by mentioning in a letter that he desires to write a book--*Tropic of Cancer*--which is subject to a system of "eternally changing formless forms" (*Letters to Emil,* 28). In *Tropic of Cancer* and the two further installments in the trilogy of self-revelation, *Black Spring* and *Tropic of Capricorn,* Miller would refine an anti-formal approach which indeed disregards many conventions of writing: syntax, tense consistency, and a traditional sense of chronology, to arrive at a style of writing symbolically as peripatetic as the man himself.

However, it must be noted that the very sensation of anarchy and "subterranean flow" (Nin, xxxiii) that the reader encounters especially in *Tropic of Cancer,* nonetheless forms part of a meticulous design, itself in turn the result of extensive narratological experimentation. Lewis finds that in *Cancer,* "temporal flow is expanded, compressed and distorted as [the characters]--including the "I" narrator--live simultaneously in different moments in their lives. The reality of their existence is determined primarily by their reaction to the narrator, and they are frozen in the frame in which they are alive..." (Lewis, 29). The secondary characters do not exist at all, therefore, except insofar as they affect the solipsistic protagonist,

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[123] For further discussion, especially of the American origins of Miller's quest for liberating space, see Lewis, 24-5; 33-5.

who often enjoys a laugh at their expense (as in the Van Norden episodes). Alternatively, the failures of the others serve as contrast to the narrator's self-promotions, and as such attest to the success of his utilitarian "lean hyena" program of personal salvation (*Tropic of Cancer*, 99). The orbits of these incidental personages are drawn in chalk, and only through their intersections and contacts with the narrator's own unpredictable path do they acquire any dimensional parameters. This self-reflexive narratological practice rests firmly in the author's insistence that the text should, as accurately as possible, seek to represent on paper a reflection of the corporeal Henry Miller's experience and perception of this period.

Miller's ruminations on the essential human necessity of space as a building block of freedom in the last paragraph of the *Tropic of Cancer* are as vivid a declaration of "spatial" independence as one can encounter in any individualist writer: "Human beings make a strange fauna and flora. From a distance they appear negligible; close up they are apt to appear ugly and malicious. More than anything they need to be surrounded by sufficient space--space even more than time" (318). Yet aside from this philosophical admission, it seems that Miller also required sufficient space in which to play out the potentialities of his persona, without the threat of punishment or further social alienation. For the first decade of his search for freedom in America, the goal had always been elusive, unquantifiable, never properly recognized, as Miller moved among a succession of easy jobs and easy relationships, but through it all dangerously anchored, chronically dependent. Nowhere is this pattern more in evidence than in his marriage to June, in which "the Brooklyn stud" became domesticated in short order. In part, Miller's malaise and inactivity was self-inflicted; many commentators suggest that in order to become an artist Miller indeed needed to be jarred, piqued, removed almost by force from what was to him a sterile environment and a stultifying routine.[124]

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[124] See, for instance, Brassaï 19-21; Brown 9, Wickes, 1989: 15. Interestingly, in a remarkable symmetry, Miller's French

In Paris the ever-present anxiety that his experiments in self-making might miscarry, quickly fades; in Paris, further, where his anonymity and freedom from observation by bourgeois society are guaranteed, Miller will ostensibly be free to "rise above the esteem of [his] neighbours" into an amorphous exploratory space (*Black Spring,* 242). And, since an individual needs first to be accepted by a society (even if one's standing is that of an exile) before being able to detect one's own identity and status, in a sort of self-perpetuating reciprocal relationship, Paris, an impersonal metropolis which has seen the "Lost Generation" of Americans arrive following the first World War, and return home when the aftershocks of the Great Depression reached Europe, thus afforded Miller the necessary space and comfort in which to develop a persona of the outsider American artist while preparing his explosive literary debut. That his own expatriation at least initially paralleled the experience of many of his countrymen a decade earlier is irrelevant to the functions of his exile for determining the modalities of individual artistic expression. The universe of Paris, for its part, contained sufficient space to accommodate yet another outcast and pariah: this time an "Americain fou." For Miller, outsider status in a city full of outsiders was exciting, not debilitating; it implied further "difference" and joyously affirmed his individuality (as opposed to the *bland* anonymity in New York). Thus if it is the affirmation by society of one's worth that allows "becoming" to be deemed worthwhile and to become implemented in the mechanics of the self, then France, with its societal savoir vivre, its Epicurean traditions, its fascinating language, and its enchanting Capital with its phantasmagoric *arrondisements,* had a spellbinding effect on Miller. For instance, according to Brassaï (22-4), the names of the various regional foods "exerted almost a magical power over him"; the

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contemporary Céline found the same dirty, impoverished boroughs of New York that Miller sought to escape, fascinating fodder for his own narrative "celebration" of the marginal self, the *Journey to the End of Night* (1934). Céline loved New York more than any other city, not least because of its bracing ocean air. He despised Paris, which to him "stewed in an asphyxiating basin of its own sewage" (Brassaï, 111-2).

appellations of the *vins ordinaires* "transported him into dreamlike states"; and even the sounds of water trickling down in the urinals captivated his attention. Curiously, Miller's first voyage to the City of Light with June in 1928 left him with negative impressions, despite Schnellock's accounts of carnivals and wonderment. He needed to experience it as an exile and a *desperado*. On the first trip, as Brown suggests, Miller was merely an indifferent tourist on a year-long tour of Europe, a succession of "pointless stops" set according to his wife's agenda (Brown, 7).[125]

Shortly after his arrival in Paris, Miller embarked on a process of assimilation of the superficial traits of the French bohemians, with time developing a new sense of exile-identity that facilitated participation in the life of the city and in many of its cultural possibilities. Language was one such marker of esteem and self-confidence; and Miller's intense joy, expressed in a letter to Schnellock, when the owner of a Parisian bistro Miller frequented one day commented that the writer had become *"tout à fait Parisien maintenant"*, demonstrates that the rewards of self-creation were as valuable to Miller as they had proved to Hlasko (*Letters to Emil*, 64). On a separate occasion, Brassaï recounts Miller's satisfaction following another test of the durability of the new exile-identity: a Clichy shoemaker, at whose shop the writer had commissioned a pair of sturdy work shoes, took him for a local *ouvrier* and not an American tourist (Brassaï, 70).[126] This is not to say, however, that Miller was either prepared to abandon all vestiges of his American roots and sense of identity; on the contrary, America which Miller despised, and New York where June had remained, continued to collect emotional ransoms.[127]

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[125] On that first European voyage, Miller favoured the more decadent Vienna and Budapest, where the residual Imperial attitudes were still in evidence, as well as Barcelona and Andalusian coastal resorts. See Brassaï, 7-9.

[126] *Cf. Letters to Anaïs Nin* where Miller gives his account of the event (88).

[127] See *Letters to Emil*, particularly those from the latter half of 1931, devoted to June or his New York friends (87-95). See also Letter of May 19th, 1933, written after Miller has learned that June would seek a divorce (120-6).

Yet the Parisian society that Miller encounters in 1930 would retain for him its role of an ideal safehouse for playing out the existential self-drama. This was not solely due to the air of tolerance that the myth of Paris exuded, nor simply because of the American perception of the city as a bohemian and artistic haven. Miller had first become fascinated with Paris after hearing his friend Emil Schnellock describe his voyage there (Schnellock, 36-7). Further, the myth of Paris as locus of the expatriate coming of age, the Paris of Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Fitzgerald and others, still found circulation in the somewhat shabbier bohemia of Depression and Prohibition-era New York. Thus Miller's exile to Paris was motivated by the very real possibility of acquiring a new identity, a persona whose adoption might eventually coincide with, among other things, the stature of being a successful published artist, which until then had eluded him in America.

Through this process Miller succeeded in approaching his core as a creative artist. The pretentious, baroque narratives of the New York novels like *Crazy Cock* and *Moloch* were abandoned in favour of a form which would soon become the legendary trademark; we encounter the first intimations of the detonation to come—the discovery of an authentic narrative voice--in a letter to Schnellock dated Saturday, May 10, 1930. Here is an excerpt from this letter, describing Miller's run-in with a Rive Droite prostitute:

> Another night. . . Champs Elysées. . . a little lit up. . . the world spinning, thinking of Ned and what a grand letter I would write him about this street. Topnotch form. I am grabbed, after dodging six in a row. Walk a long way to the hotel. Twenty francs, the room. Preservative, five francs, tip to the maid, two francs. Price for the dame: 150 francs. . . . But she was a lulu. The wildest thing you ever saw, jabbing at me continually, rolling her tongue, grunting, groaning. . . Start off by letting her get down on me. She has it down to a science. But when the thing goes off and I hear her hawking it up, looking a little bilious, I lose all my passion and get up and get dressed. She looks at me mournfully. "Don't I please you?" she asks. "Are you tired?" No, I answer, I'm just sad (*Letters to Emil,* 51-2).

In the crucial shift to first person narration, appropriated from the genre of the personal letter, "Miller's writing [swells] to the epic proportions of his mature style. . .

a style based on the magnificent, the hyperbolic, the overblown, and the *outré*" (Dearborn, xiv). Giving free reign to a sort of self-perpetuating autobiographical fantasy in which the nihilistic and despairing protagonist rambles on about himself in an extravagant style that aspires to be "uncensored, formless--fuck everything," Miller will liberate his voice and communicate its boundless, fervid energy (Dearborn, xiv).[128] Equally important, it is a voice which succeeds in transmitting an authentic impression of his spoken language: the dialect of the expatriate Brooklyn rogue combined with the parlance of the emerging "experimental" artist. Here is an example of the mature Miller style--note the accumulation of staggered nouns, as Miller goes about producing one of his famous "lists":

> When I think of this city where I was born and raised, this Manhattan that Whitman sang of, a blind, white rage licks my guts. New York! The white prisons, the sidewalks swarming with maggots, the bread lines, the opium joints that are built like palaces. . . the lepers, the thugs, and above all the *ennui,* the monotony of faces, streets, legs, houses, skyscrapers, meals, posters, jobs, crimes, loves . . . . A whole city erected over a hollow pit of nothingness. Meaningless. Absolutely meaningless. And Forty-Second Street! The top of the world, they call it. Where is the bottom then? . . . . Rich or poor, they walk along head thrown back and they almost break their necks looking up at the beautiful white prisons. They walk along like blind geese and the searchlights spray their empty faces with flecks of ecstasy (*Tropic of Cancer,* 68).

It should be noted, however, that the exile in Paris that produced this mature voice was neither homogeneous nor linear. It resembled, rather, a continuously evolving process of alternating moments of self-expression and dissociation. Miller's exile could therefore be described as a pyramidal experience, constantly growing onto itself and simultaneously distancing itself from its base:

> It was only this morning that I *became conscious again of this physical Paris of which I have been unaware for weeks.* Perhaps it is because of the book which has begun to grow inside me. I am carrying it around everywhere. I walk through the streets big with child and cops escort me through the

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[128] Letter to Schnellock of August 24, 1931, in *Letters to Emil,* 80. Miller is referring to *Tropic of Cancer* then being written.

> streets . . . . Nobody pushes me rudely any more. I am pregnant (*Tropic of Cancer,* 26; *emphasis mine*).

Miller is extremely perspicacious in noticing that he has not noticed. For in order to become, that is to say, *to realize himself* as an artist, Miller is obliged to detach himself from the key manifestations and parameters of his previous selves, in particular those most recent. As a writer, his natural idiom and playing field for achieving such a detachment was the created domain of the narrative. By reflecting on a previous self, outlived and therefore clinically separated--in this case a self infatuated with physical Paris and all its attractions--and by endeavouring to transcend its parameters, to *forget* it in the writing, he forged the space or vacuum requisite for the creation of a new identity. Thus, now that Miller has consciously rendered the past clearly evident, and has allowed exposure of his previous self understood as a construct belonging to the past only, he attains the freedom to advance to a new stage of selfhood.

There is, in the successive novels set in Paris, an ongoing negotiation of past events, experiences, and most importantly, attitudes. For example, the last thematic installment, *Quiet Days in Clichy,* renders a portrait of the Henry Miller that existed in *Tropic of Cancer* and especially in *Black Spring*. In *Quiet Days in Clichy* Miller returns to the time and space in which he had written *Black Spring,* in one place to declare that 1935, the year he spent living in the working class district of Clichy, was the happiest of his life (*Quiet Days in Clichy,* 41). In addition, by the time *Quiet Days in Clichy* had been written in New York, Miller, it appears, had developed sufficient perspective to contrast the two cities in a distanced fashion devoid of emotional colour, as he does in the opening paragraphs of *Quiet Days in Clichy:*

> On a gray day in Paris I often found myself walking towards the Place Clichy in Montmartre. From Clichy to Aubervilliers there is a long string of cafés, restaurants, theaters. . . and bordels. It is the Broadway of Paris corresponding to that little stretch between 42nd and 53rd Streets. Broadway is fast, dizzying, dazzling, and no place to sit down. Montmartre is sluggish,

> lazy, indifferent, somewhat. . . sleazy-looking, not glamorous so much as seductive, not scintillating but glowing with a smoldering flame. Broadway looks exciting, even magical at times, but there is no fire, no heat--it is a brilliantly illuminated asbestos display, the paradise of advertising agents. Montmartre is worn, faded, derelict, nakedly vicious. . . . It is, if anything, repellent rather than attractive, but insidiously repellent, like vice itself (*Quiet Days in Clichy,* 7).

The exile to France, also, acts as an agent of liberation potent enough to allow Miller to come to terms--at last!--with his *bête noire:* his inability to view sex as anything other than a mercenary act, never as a wedding of equals. Here he accepts this condition from a comfortable ideational distance, as simply a phenomenon which is part of the world, without the rancor and bitterness that characterizes many similar passages in *Tropic of Cancer* and *Black Spring.*[129] To cite further from *Clichy:*

> There are [in Montmartre] little bars filled almost exclusively with whores, pimps, thugs and gamblers, which, no matter if you pass them up a thousand times, finally suck you in. . . . There are hotels in the side streets leading off the boulevard whose ugliness is so sinister that you shudder at the thought of entering them, and yet it is inevitable that you will one day pass a night, perhaps a week or a month, in one of them. You may even become so attached to the place as to find one day that your whole life has been transformed and that what you once regarded as sordid, squalid, miserable, has now become charming, tender, beautiful (7-8).

Precisely! There is a tone of hard-won sincerity that permeates the narrator's explanation of why he enjoys the company of prostitutes. Not unlike Jacob-Hłaskower, Miller's narrator allows himself to be seduced by the simplicity of the economic relation and by the "charming" ubiquity of readily available flesh. The narrator in *Clichy,* in addition, finds himself enticed by the fact that these transactions occur in the open, thus denuding sex of its inherent mystery and sexuality itself of the complications of any durable authentic emotion: "The insidious

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[129] See especially *Black Spring,* 99-103, for a succinct example of the narrator's reductive maneuvers with respect to his wife--"one of my first ones"; for passages in a similar vein, see for example *Black Spring* 95-96, where the narrator gleefully describes a particularly distasteful seduction of a recently widowed woman.

charm of Montmartre is due, in large part, I suspect, to the unconcealed traffic in sex. Sex is not romantic, particularly when it is commercialized, but it does create an aroma, pungent and nostalgic. . . glamorous and seductive" (8). For Miller, too, part of the charm of sex is that it is so easy to describe biologically, detachedly. The following citation (indeed the entire Book One of *Quiet Days in Clichy*) is ample testimony to Miller's surgical skill. The narrator presently lapses into a purely pornographic mode, and proceeds to give a rendering of a sexual encounter with a Montmartre prostitute:

> I undressed quickly, washed my cock out of politeness, and dove between the sheets. The *bidet* was right beside the bed. When she had finished her ablutions. . . she pushed me back into bed and, leaning over me, made a quick dive for it with her warm red mouth. I slipped a finger inside her to get her juices flowing. Then, pulling her on top of me, I sank it in up to the hilt. It was one of those cunts which fit like a glove (*Quiet Days in Clichy,* 19).

Miller's narrator possesses a real talent for keen observation: nothing is spared or left to the imagination. The narrator is pragmatic, at times seemingly obsessed with transmitting experience fully; he can conceive of no reason not to report on his experiences in their entirety, "guts and all." What emerges, meanwhile, is that women are clearly accessories of pleasure. They are respected--praised even--for their capabilities, but otherwise there is little to draw the focus away from *biological* descriptions. Here is another passage from the same volume:

> "By the way, Eliane seems quite stuck on you. Why don't you look her up? She's not a bad lay, I can vouch for that. You don't have to waste time on the preliminaries; just whisper a few kind words and push her over. She's got a cunt that works like a suction cup. . . ."
> With this he beckoned to Corinne, his acrobatic friend, to join us. "Turn around," he said, "I want to show him your ass." He rubbed his hand over her rump appraisingly. "Feel *that,* Joey," he said. "It's like velvet, what?" (*Quiet Days in Clichy,* 145).

However, despite the apparent obscenity of the expositions cited above, Miller's foray into the realms of intensively personal writing demonstrated in *Quiet Days in Clichy* reflects a more mature perspective than that shown in *Tropic of*

Cancer and *Black Spring*.[130] After all, Miller's French period did not constitute the final word in the program of self-liberation; on the contrary, it was its first, arguably most fruitful, and narratologically the most passionate and volatile stage. The odyssey to the Greek Islands in 1939--Miller left France reluctantly, in large part to avoid Hitler's invasion--would offer a new, distinctly more peaceful and less catastrophic perception of life developed, ironically, even while a good part of Europe was in flames! Miller's new *cosmic* attitudes developed in Greece are a mixture of world-weary tenderness and personal optimism and acceptance. This last quality had in effect been latent in the writings, but was at last articulated with real conviction in the *Colossus of Maroussi*.[131] Moreover, a good part of Miller's rebellious demeanor is defused when he encounters the idyllic, pastoral way of life of the Greek Islands. Thus upon Miller's return to America in 1941, only faint echoes remained of that sense of rage and revolt which had kindled the initial outbursts of *Tropic of Cancer*. The somewhat torpid quality of the subsequent fiction even suggests that once Miller had negotiated his rage in this way, there was little left to animate the artistic self. [132]

As a final installment of the cycle of experience--distancing--perception, Miller's voyage to Greece in the summer of 1939 conclusively terminated his

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[130] See Lewis, 105-15, for further discussion of the protagonist's rediscovery of the past in the Paris narratives, and for an analysis of such reminiscences in *Black Spring*. Lewis sees these as idealized projections, "sentimental and heavily weighed with nostalgia", a fact that at times "work[s] against Miller's aims" as some segments are "too corny to take seriously"(105).

[131] *The Colossus of Maroussi* is a very useful index of the directions and orientations of the later writings. The work also sees the inception of a certain posture of Miller as a transcendentalist guru, a pose which he would exploit after World War Two living on the West Coast. *Cf.* Lewis 132-62.

[132] Over the years, many critics variously disposed towards Miller work have noted the gradual fading of Miller's narrative talents following his return to America and the concommitant embrace of the philosophy of acceptance. As a concrete example, Kingsley Widmer's monograph *Henry Miller* employs this idea of withering as as its central thesis. See also Kostelanetz, 349-50, and Gottesman, 7-8, for a general discussion.

infatuation with France. In Greece Miller became particularly disillusioned with the mentality of the French petit-bourgeois. "[I]n a way I am cured of Europe", he writes to Anaïs Nin (*Letters to Anaïs Nin*, 151). "I feel indifferent toward the French", he says elsewhere in a letter addressed from Corfu in September 1939. "I know they will win [the war] eventually. But I have no hunger to return, to resume life there. They are sufficient unto themselves--and I am sufficient unto myself. . . . We equal each other out" (*Ibid.*, 186). The time spent in Greece, on the other hand, constitutes an idyll, a 19th century reality. Greece is a pre-modern land whose people have retained their hospitality, modesty, and good humour. It is also a place of serendipity: whereas the experience of cheerful bohemian self-exile to Paris was akin to cherishing a cyclical idyll-nightmare scenario, the experience of Greece promotes both the life-affirming notion of self-unity through contemplation and equanimity, and the sense of detachment necessary for the writer to embark on the next stage of self-becoming, in the process peeling off another layer of rage and cosmic anxiety.

Employing an analogous *psychological* mechanism, upon his return to America Miller will be able to look back in *Quiet Days in Clichy* to the time-frame of *Tropic of Cancer* and renegotiate some of its events through fictionalized accounts. Again to draw attention to Eakin's notion of autobiographical writing as a psychic and psychological activity and a means of bridging some of the distance between historical events and their idealized versions (Eakin, 225-6), in the rewriting of the scenes with Carl's teenage mistress in *Quiet Days in Clichy* (31-6; 62-72), Miller can be seen attempting to reconcile historical events with imagined favorable outcomes. In *Clichy* Miller incorporates the girl into a communal sexual fantasy that eventually turns sour. Incidentally, there are no mentions of this girl in *Black Spring*, during the production of which she presumably lived with Carl (Alfred Perlès). It is only in *Tropic of Cancer* (289-91) that the reader will be presented with what appears to be

a more realistic approximation of the factual events.[133] However, even here the account is still channeled by a narrative voice bent on the subversion of forms and the destruction of norms: the girl is victimized as a subject of nothing if not male scorn and verbal malice. For instance, when prodded by the narrator for more details of the imbroglio, Carl turns indignant: "You don't ask a cunt how old she is before you lay her, do you?" (290). Then Carl wonders how long the girl "will be able to go without a lay?" (290). After all, "She was a virgin when she came here. . . . She couldn't get enough of it when she was here. She almost wore me out" (290). Statements such as the one cited above and others in a similar vein disappear in the retelling in *Quiet Days in Clichy*. The tone of narration becomes by degrees richer in literary allusions, altogether more benign, and seemingly anecdotal.[134]

To be sure, the storytelling urge remained intact in Miller, and together with the confessional impulse motivated the later writings. However, something that had figured centrally in Miller's Parisian writings would be missing from the American narratives: the enraged, desperate quality of Miller's voice had dissipated following his return to the United States and self-installment as a West Coast guru. In his search for respectability Miller had in effect became a *littérateur*. [135]

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[133] In the version presented in *Tropic of Cancer*, during the girl's stay with Carl the narrator is away in Dijon teaching English at a lycée. He hears of the incident from Carl upon his return.

[134] There is also a mention of this girl in a letter to Schnellock written from Clichy. Miller again dishes out invective: "He's got a little cunt in there--Paulette. We don't know what to do with her. We had to show her how to use a douche-bag" (*Letters to Emil, 101;* Letter of July 12th, 1932).

[135] Jay Martin's biography of Miller, *Always Merry and Bright*, offers some intriguing vignettes of Miller as an established and influential writer (with a capital W) in California. See 349-456.

Chapter Six: The Iconography of the Self in *Tropic of Cancer.*

Tropic of Cancer, *Black Spring*, and *Tropic of Capricorn*, three autobiographical novels Miller wrote in Paris, have traditionally been seen as a trilogy in self-revelation, produced in response to a creative impulse itself rooted in an obedience to the flow of experience. Miller himself often insisted that his Paris auto-novels should be read as *autobiography* (He invented the term *auto*-novels) (Brassaï, 143). Yet a close reading of these three works insinuates the opposite view: the fact remains that as a skilled artificer, as a storyteller, Miller was at times more enamored of the tale than of the truth (Brassaï, 142); and that Henry Miller as the subject of a story was not the same person as the figure who wrote it. Is it possible then, that Miller did not realize or was unable to convince himself that literature does not constitute a neat mirror image of the self, no matter how the conception of "self" is constructed, or which at any rate does not reflect the entire self in all the implicit potentialities and contradictions--a notion that Hłasko would elaborate in *Killing the Second Dog* when faced with the same problem of self-representation. And could it be that these narratives, in their departures from verisimilitude and concessions to fact, are manifestations of the author's grappling with the concept of direct mediation of the truth about the self? Since language moderates the modes of self-representation in text, the question we need to be asking is how, in what ways, does the self represented in text change (become distanced) through language? Even though with Miller the energy exchange occurs on the primary level of language, emphasizing direct, immediate contact, and pure, lucid emotion, elements of distancing are always present. These distortions tend to be dramatic and extravagant, as if by giving urgency to certain experiences or events Miller was endeavouring to make them more compelling, and thus more real to the reader (Brassaï, 138-46). Yet, ultimately, Miller was aiming to render the truth about himself--a truth composed, naturally, of many fictions and creations revolving around a shifting, ever-expanding, perception of reality.

Tropic of Cancer represents Miller's first foray into self-revelation undertaken in Paris. Of the three Paris volumes, this is the one in which Miller is most vocal and enraged. The book follows the narrator Henry Miller--on the surface posing very much as himself, a middle-age expatriate writer and occasional mendicant--through the streets of Paris and briefly, Dijon. The book is broken into four segments, corresponding roughly to the four seasons, and into fifteen sections.[136] The latter are not chapters, exactly, but rather rough sketches and essays (Lewis, 81). The whole represents an assemblage of anecdotes, surrealist expositions about the city of Paris and its nightlife, erotic fantasies--"what you will" as Miller says. According to Leon Lewis, the work should not be approached as a novel, for that term "confuses the issue and tends to induce expectations that are not satisfied. . . . The narrative consciousness of the artist/hero gives [the plot] some continuity," Lewis admits, but finds that *Cancer* lacks "a chronological linear progression. . . or any dramatic denouements or even a 'conclusion' that ties things up"--features, he notes, commonly associated with the genre of the novel (Lewis, 81-2). To search for the genesis of the philosophy of writing that had produced such a subversive work, in effect an *anti*-novel, we are obliged to revisit the environment in which Miller's early writings took shape, and then briefly return to the America of his youth.

Most of the commentators on Miller suggest that the writer was encouraged by his Paris circle, including Nin, Perlès, and Michael Fraenkel, to write from the gut, impulsively and subversively. The work that is generally considered to be the most important influence during Miller's expatriation to Paris--and which constituted a genuine introduction to the autobiographical and confessional genre--was Anaïs Nin's *Journal Intime* (Stuhlmann, xiv). Through his contacts with the volumes of Nin's diary and through the indirect exposure to her creative process and self-editorial rationalizations of inclusion or exclusion of fact and sentiment, wherein certain life experiences were transmitted into a narrative corpus while others were

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[136] For an engaging analysis of the seasons motif in *Tropic of Cancer* see Brown, 19-24.

discarded, Miller became sensitized to the mechanics of the autobiographical formula. He also saw the various channels though which reality could be transformed when a confessional mode and an almost obsessive autobiographical focus were allowed to inform the narrative. The fact that Nin was depicting the very milieu in which he too existed made the point all the more strongly. Nin's multivolume diary also helped convince Miller that in his own writing he no longer needed to rely on the omniscient perspective of nineteenth century authors (Lewis, 35). Accepting the logic of the confessional impulse from which the tomes of the *Journal Intime* drew their expressive force, Miller thus decided to compose his own Parisian autobiography in the form of a memoir.[137] As we shall see below, the possibilities that this personal narrative mode offered would be explored and interpreted in iconoclastic ways.

According to George Wickes, one of Miller's earliest supporters, even though Michael Fraenkel subsequently took excessive credit for his role in the creation of *Tropic of Cancer,* Fraenkel's portrait of Miller's artistic aspirations provides perhaps the clearest insight into Miller's creative impulse and methodology (Wickes, 1992: 116). Fraenkel, it appears, understood quite well Miller's motivations for coming to France, and he sympathized with his assertion that Paris was offering him his last chance to establish a personal narrative mode, to "find himself" as an *expatriate* writer. Exile was the only choice remaining after a decade of abortive attempts in America. But Fraenkel also noticed that Miller's monumental quest was undermined by a telling lack of direction and a general confusion about content and techniques, the how and what to write. Wickes contends that Fraenkel was the first of Miller's acquaintances to perceive, having read the manuscript for "Crazy Cock" which Miller had brought to Paris, that Miller's writing strove to please the publishers, not himself (Wickes, 1992: 116). And it was finally Fraenkel who advised his fellow

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[137] Martin, 250. Initially Miller referred to the emerging text as the "Last Book". As the manuscript progressed, this working title was abandoned in favour of *I Sing the Equator,* and finally *Tropic of Cancer.*

expatriate to dispense with the niceties of polite society and bourgeois high literature and to concentrate instead on producing an unadulterated portrait of a raw man tormented by his complexes and by his past:

> *Crazy Cock* was the queerest mixture of bad and good writing I had ever seen. (. . .) Between the long dreary stretches of inexecrably flat, sterile writing, there were passages here and there of amazing directness and power: certain lines, phrases, passages, exploded like rockets. . . I told him to tear it up and forget it. I told him to be himself, to stop trying to be Henry Miller, the successful writer and robot. By this time I knew the sort of person he was, impulsive, erratic, anarchic, a mass of contradictory moods, ideas, feelings, and I told him to sit down before the machine and white paper and write anything and everything that came to his mind, as it came, red-hot, and to hell with the editors and the public.
> *Write as you talk, I told him. Write as you live. Write as you feel and think.* Just sit down before the machine and let go; you've got all the material you want, right in what you are thinking and feeling and going through now. Forget the fancy stories and novels and that sort of thing. Write about yourself, your life. Get all this pent-up emotion out of your system. Evacuate the trenches! A writer's first duty now is to himself. . . to come alive. No time for anything else. Anything else is literature—with a bad smell!" (In Gottesman, 58; *emphasis mine*).

In *Tropic of Cancer* Miller will heed Fraenkel's advice, ecstatically commingling his curiosity about sex, his love for literature, and his engrossment in experience. But he leaves no doubt as to the hierarchy involved:

> A man, when he's burning up with passion, wants to see things; he wants to see everything, even how they make water. And while it's all very nice to know that a woman has a mind, literature coming from a dead corpse of a whore is the last thing to be served in bed. Germaine had the right idea: she was ignorant and lusty, she put her heart and soul into her work (*Tropic of Cancer,* 47).

To hell with the editors and the public, indeed!

Fraenkel's initial assessment of Miller's artistic prerogatives also confirms the notion that the writer's motives for exile are, in retrospect, rather uncomplicated. The sole roles Miller had been able to forge for himself in American society were mere functional façades which had begun to smother his vitality and creativity. Miller

often repeated that in reality he did not feel a sense of belonging anywhere in the United States, least of all in his native New York. Since the homeland provided no channels leading towards self-realization, and since the desire to be a writer coincided with the desire to maintain sanity, all indicators pointed at exile, initially metaphorical, soon factual.[138] Miller writes in *Black Spring:*

> I could not believe, being a man of the American continent, that there was a place on earth where a man could be himself. . . . Things happened to me in my search for a way out. . . . By force of circumstance I became a Chinaman--in my own country! I took to the opium of dream in order to hide the hideousness of a life in which I had no part. As quietly and naturally as a twig falling into the Mississippi I dropped out of the stream of American life (185).

Fraenkel had also realized that in Miller's quest for personal liberation and artistic becoming, the need for escape and attendant re-configuration of identity in exile was closely intertwined with the desire for the realization of a writing self:

> He came to Paris, and would stay in Paris, because he was determined now more than ever to gather and integrate and fuse round himself that which he recognized as truly his . . . He would insist on staying Henry Miller. That was the meaning of his flight from America. . . . He would make a fresh start, make a life for himself round that. He wanted to write, to be a writer. He saw in writing a way to this integration (Gottesman, 59).

According to Jay Martin, author of one of the most detailed of Miller's biographies, the theme of mortality had another significant effect on Miller's search for a new substance in exile (Martin, 251). Faced with the inevitability of death (death, both physical and spiritual, was a constant topic of conversation between Miller and Fraenkel, the self-described "death cultist"), Miller was propelled to begin writing feverishly about his life. While he wished to leave behind a personal record, there was in all this, a semi-concealed element of willful playfulness: "And here and there I'm deliberately putting down a lie. . . just to throw the bastards off the track"

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[138] This must have been a realistic concern given the extent of mental illness among Miller's blood relations. In *Black Spring* we find several moving, uncharacteristically tender passages about his mentally ill relatives and their occasionally inhumane treatment by the rest of the family.

(*Art and Outrage,* 55). Miller further justifies his somewhat noncommittal attitude to facts thus:

> History lies. Biographers lie. Facts are the greatest falsehoods. Life is both more terrible and more wonderful than any or all accounts which we mortals can possibly conjure up. Yet each man, in relating his own experience, voices the truth. The story teller is always nearer the mark than the dismal scholar or the flatulent historian (*International Henry Miller Letter* no. 6: 5).

Hence Miller's games with historical reality are in marked contrast to his outright insistence elsewhere on the *veridical* qualities of the auto-novels. But, in fact, departures from verisimilitude should not be taken lightly. There is historical truth and there is metaphysical truth; this latter truth, the truth of experience and of artistic creation, is far more dear to Miller than the former. As Norman Mailer cautions (*Genius and Lust,* xii-xiii), the reader of Miller's autobiographical novels is not confronted with a true likeness of the author; this, of course, is impossible. What we are given, instead, is the end result of raw experience transformed by the artistic mind; Miller's narrator in the auto-novels is "like a transparency laid over a drawing, copied, and then skewed just a little. He is just a little different from his work. . . . In that difference," states Mailer, employing the idiom of post-structuralist criticism but arriving at a symmetrically opposed conclusion, "is all the mystery of his own personality, and the paradoxes of a great artist" (xii). Here Mailer as a literary critic is making the admission that it is indeed creative genius which channels life experience into a narrative format. In all fairness, whether the critic regards autobiographical novels as products of individual creativity or as the function of tensions between psyche, history and text (and of an oscillation between truth-telling and fictionalizing), it matters little how the he or she chooses to characterize the phenomena that propel texts into being. As long as there is some prior recognition (which Mailer to his credit also gives) of the magic that is afoot which transforms experience into artistic work and makes the self the subject of a work, the critic is free to attempt to furnish narratives with interpretive meaning.

Brassaï's intriguing analysis of a chapter in *Tropic of Cancer,* which depicts the conversations between the photographer and the writer during their excursions into the Paris night life, provides another example of the subtleties in the relationship between art and artifice (Brassaï, 127-40). Brassaï's excellent memory facilitates the task of demarcating the elements of truth and fiction as he comments on the possible reasons for Miller's departures from the veridical mode. It is instructive to any reading of *Tropic of Cancer* to recall that Brassaï insists that he is not in reality the grotesque, plague-obsessed Viennese decadent that Miller had painted. His suggestion is that the revisions made to his identity were in keeping with Miller's own conception of the shadowy figures that populated the Paris nights (Brassaï, 133-5). Very likely, the unsavouriness of the other characters in the book, in particular the American journalist Wambly Bald (Van Norden in *Cancer*), was similarly exaggerated.

In exile, moreover, Miller's anarchic approach to literary form intensified. It would appear that Miller was not entirely satisfied with some aspects of the Modernist program, notably their confidence in the future and their emphasis on "formalism." For Miller the future was inexorably linked with eschatological catastrophe. He did not share the European avant-garde's optimism: in one place he characterized the future as belonging to the automatons, as culminating in the atomic bomb and the destruction of civilization (*Assassins,* xi). In fact, Miller seemed well aware of the fallacy of international (early) futurism: its love of progress and of machinery was doomed from the start because it allowed no form of reciprocation. And what better example in Miller's mind of the failed, perverted promise of the Machine Age than the grandiloquent emptiness of dehumanized, cancerous New York. Thus, the repercussions of Miller's complete failure in America as a writer and perhaps more importantly as a husband, a father, a *man*, provided additional intellectual fodder for narrative rebellion against form. Because "there [is] no future" (*Assassins,* xi), Miller comes to view the destructive, outraged

voice that he formulated in *Tropic of Cancer* as the (anti-)literary mode of the future and, for a time, the work itself as the "last book" and himself as the "last man on earth" (Mailer, xiv).

One of the central notions of the self that Miller will articulate in *Tropic of Cancer* is the sufferer stripped to the core of his essence. Such a self-assessment strongly resonates with the writer's artistic vision as reiterated by confidantes such as Nin, Perlès, and Fraenkel, as well as by later commentators. For example, Fraenkel's succinct account of Miller's formula for becoming an author compares Miller to an eternal exile who has already lost everything and for whom therefore nothing is taboo:

> He had discovered the vantage point from which he could see all around him, see the road ahead. He had only to take it. On this road, stripped and shorn as he already was of everything, of home, family, children, money, possessions, accustomed as he already was to being naked, on this road he needed no other baggage than himself, *Henry Miller the naked suffering man*. He did not have to be a philosopher or thinker, he had only to be himself, the man with deep urgent emotions who saw and felt and understood from the blood, with the heart and nerves,. . . who had known life first-hand, and knew what a terrible and lovely thing it was. His was not to understand and reflect, but to witness and report" (Gottesman, 59, *emphasis mine*).

Fraenkel's notion of the "naked suffering man" in particular seems useful when examined within the context of Miller's rebirth. Indeed, most of the sympathetically disposed Miller scholars stress the obstacles and difficulties the writer confronted during his early years. Norman Mailer, for instance, goes so far as to suggest that it is on the order of a minor miracle that Miller "didn't end as a rapist, a suicide, or a monk" given the adversities of his childhood, in particular the "homegrown family strictures against sexuality" (Mailer, 176). To be fair, however, the disturbed family background probably played a greater role than did his parents' attitudes to sex. And Mary Kellie Munsil considers the despairing, and in places hateful and offensive language of *Tropic of Cancer*, to be an accurate reflection of the author's sexual and economic failure in America, iconic of a wider failure of the

American Dream and of "middle-class aspirations" (Munsil, 289). But, although the psychological and psychoanalytic questions lie beyond the scope of the present study, it seems reasonable to suggest that Miller's upbringing, and particularly the symptomatic "cold, repressed mother" along with the prevalence of mental illness in his family, all were powerful sources of the anxieties and personal demons, at least some of which were to be later transformed into artistic form. Miller's "death" in America, of course, made rebirth in France a possibility. Yet finally how durable was this (spiritual) rebirth? After all, at eighty, Miller would produce this troubling portrait of his mother's cruelty to his mentally retarded sister, Loretta:

> My mother was not meant to be a teacher. She was terrible. She used to scold [Loretta], crack her, fly into a rage. She'd say, "How much is two times two?" and my sister, who hadn't the faintest idea of the answer, would say, "Five,
> no--seven, no--three." Just wild. BANG. Another slap or crack. Then my mother would turn to me and say, "Why do I have to bear this cross? What did I do to be punished so?" asked me, a little boy, "*Why is God punishing me?*" (*My Life and Times,* 198).

It needs stressing that Henry was by no means the favoured child. Miller's accounts of his childhood years in Brooklyn suggest the opposite was true: there were no favourites. Yet only much later would he have the opportunity to put into perspective his discovery that his home environment had been oppressive rather than healthy:

> I never felt any warmth from [my Mother]. She never kissed me, never hugged me. I don't ever remember going to her and putting my arms around her. I didn't know mothers did that till one day I visited a friend at his home. We were twelve years old. I went home from school with him and I heard his mother's greeting. "Jackie, oh Jackie," she says, "Oh darling, how are you, how have you been?" She puts her arms around him and kisses him. I never heard that tone of language--even that tone of voice. It was new to me. Of course, in that stupid German neighbourhood, they were great disciplinarians, really brutal people (*My Life and Times,* 199).

As we can easily surmise, then, childhood was a time of great psychic pain for Miller. The imprint of the past on his adult identity, moreover, was alleviated only in part and not permanently by his escape to Paris. In *Black Spring,* in which the

narrator's returns to his native Brooklyn are mitigated by the twin palliatives of nostalgia and surrealistic flights, only the most subtle of hints of his mother's brutality can be detected.[139] We may therefore contend, joining hands with Kate Millett, that Miller's artistic workshop ultimately lacked the tools necessary for the kind of sustained self-analysis he needed to examine the emotional impact of his miserable childhood judiciously and sincerely (Millett, 161-2). Or perhaps, on the contrary, Miller may have believed such an undertaking to be trite, his philosophical outlook being one of benign acceptance of his faults as a consequence of the aforementioned obedience to flow, and equally important as potential material for future books of the self.[140] Miller's trademark utilitarian egotism therefore may have actually prevented him from proceeding beyond narrative exposés of his failings. As a corollary to this model of negotiating the events of his early life, on occasion his masochistic behaviour would be portrayed as genuine suffering. Brassaï's report on Miller's bouts of manic-depressive behaviour during the years that the writer lived in Paris gives credence to claims of emotional substitution:

> Miller's penchant for exaggeration can be found in his moods; he was either deliriously happy or deeply depressed. . . .He had both "delusions of grandeur" and "delusions of debasement". . .grandiosity would give way to the feeling that he was a failure as a man and a failure as a writer [which] sometimes pushed to the point of suicide, even toward embracing the idea of total annihilation--no memories, no traces (Brassaï, 189-90).

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[139] By contrast, even though in Hłasko's case some insurmountable traumas were to remain untouched, his exile narratives would occasionally attempt to directly negotiate the coagulated repercussions of his traumatic childhood and brutalized adolescence. But even here instances of an inability to go beyond, to forget, can be isolated. The most explicit instances are in *Letters from America*, where Hłasko reflects on horrific images from his childhood, and admits that the five years of witnessing death and destruction had taken their toll: for they account for the cruelty of both the narrators of his exile works and the Polish texts.

[140] Brassaï, 167. See his characterization of Miller as the "delicious rogue" for whom all is permitted if it can be used for art, 162-70.

The narratives and letters dating from this period also support the notion that Miller occasionally enjoyed his bouts of suffering and crises of melancholy. For these were experimental emotions first and foremost, sensations to be exploited or manipulated: "It was like taking a cub to bed with you. Once in a while he clawed you--and then you really were frightened. Ordinarily you had no fear--you could always turn him loose, or chop his head off" (*Tropic of Cancer,* 9). Here as in other instances, Miller posits his protagonist *a priori* as master of his suffering, deriving this prowess from his purported mastery of the self. From such a position *vis à vis* one's psychology and one's complexes, despite the implicit danger that suffering poses to the self, Miller insists that whatever may happen, he is able to remain in firm control of his suffering. This is so, the narrator suggests in *Tropic of Cancer,* because as a "healthy Gentile" he suffers without neuroses (unlike the Montparnasse Jews such as Borowski and Boris), and hence his suffering in the end is nothing if not a tamed and benign beast (*Cancer,* 9). Hence, despite Fraenkel's characterization to the contrary, it seems in effect that Miller, when he is said to suffer, often sets himself to suffer deliberately, as if aiming to exacerbate the emotional *frisson* which the various acts of self-immolation will afford him, distilling and refining the creative impulse. In other words, he does not place himself in unfavourable circumstances solely in order to gather material about the fascinating underbelly of society.

Certainly there are notable deviations from this personal script. Following the publication of *Tropic of Cancer* and *Black Spring,* Miller's philosophy of the self underwent a process of fluctuation and refinement which soon transcended the initial parameters of the egotism of survival of the suffering Paris persona. In *The Colossus of Maroussi* and *The Time of the Assassins* (Miller's treatise on Rimbaud) it becomes clear that Miller's evolution would lead from rebellion, hatred and contempt toward acceptance.

Particularly in *Assassins,* the reader becomes aware how long the road was that Miller had to travel in his quest for artistic becoming. We also see the marker that the experience of exile constitutes in his process of self-transformation.[141] As he explores Rimbaud's poetry and its subtexts, Miller is clearly still wallowing in the unresolved pain rooted in the traumatic relationships with his mother and with June.[142] The French poet is revealed to Miller as something of a kindred spirit, a fellow outsider, and this discovery in turn facilitates the eventual inner negotiation of the debilitating feeling of personal failure. The short work, written in the late forties when Miller was in his mid-fifties, retains its value as an enlightening comparison of his existential confusion with that of a fellow sufferer for art. Rimbaud's psychological torment, and the creative fruits it bore, functioned both as the theoretical manifesto and an act of practical justification that Miller had sought (largely in vain) during the formative periods of his artistic career. His *à rebours* appropriation of the script of Rimbaud's suffering, the precocious literary eruption, exile, and purported self-liberation through the transcendence of art, produced an ideological catharsis that in turn allowed Miller to overcome his perceived limitations as a writer, and fueled the impetus to dissociate himself from the ponderous legacy of literary predecessors, to begin writing in a rough-cut voice, uniquely his. The philosophy of the self which would view one's purpose in life to be indefatigable engagement, that is, as a writing self--and, in the ultimate triumph of becoming, as a self writing about the self--would prove to be a keystone of Miller's writing formula

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[141] In *The Time of the Assassins,* Miller reiterates the position that had already been articulated in the *Tropic of Cancer:* "If that season in Brooklyn represented my *Season in Hell,* then the Paris period... was the period of my *Illuminations* (*Assassins,* 3).

[142] The Millers' Brooklyn roommate and sometime lover of June's, Jean Kronski, is invoked in *The Time of the Assassins* (as Thelma) as the person responsible for introducing Miller to the legend of Rimbaud: "An absorbing book about Rimbaud was lying around the house but I never glanced at it. The reason is that I loathed the woman who owned it. In looks, temperament, and behavior she was, as I later discovered, as near to resembling Rimbaud as it is possible to imagine" (*The Time of the Assassins,* 1).

for virtually all the major texts which followed the initial raw outburst of the exiled artist in the throes of self-revelation, *Tropic of Cancer.*

If Miller's formula for writing was grounded, with remarkable singleness of purpose, in epistemological explorations of the self, then the explicit aim was self-revelation *on all levels* as a means of attaining to "the marvelous" and to greater, fundamental truths (*The Books in My Life*, 125). Miller insistently envisioned himself as a harbinger of a new type of literature (anti-literature?): the "book of the self" or *auto-novel.* "I do not use heroes, nor do I write novels", Miller wrote in a famous letter of reply to Edmund Wilson's review of *Tropic of Cancer.* "The theme of the book. . .is myself, and the narrator, or the hero, is also myself. . . . I have painstakingly indicated throughout the book that I am the hero and the book is myself" (Wilson, 93). Now aside from Miller's insistence that the critics have misjudged his first published book, there is a deeper justification for the abandonment of traditional literature in favour of auto-novels: profound wisdom can be gained from writing about the self:

> The autobiographical novel, which Emerson predicted would grow in importance with time, has replaced the great confessions. It is not a mixture of truths and fiction, but an expansion and a deepening of truth. It is more authentic, more veridical, than the diary. It is not a flimsy truth of facts which these autobiographic novels offer but the truth of emotion, reflection and understanding, truth digested and assimilated. The being revealing himself does so on all levels simultaneously" (*The Books in My Life,* 169).

Thus the essential first phase of Miller's program of artistic self-reconfiguration in France involved venturing in a direction opposite to that suggested by his literary influences (which he scrupulously lists in *The Books in My Life).* In fact, his commitment to overthrowing the colossus that was the European and American literary establishment was integral to a candid representation of the artist/hero (Leon Lewis' term for the narrator) inaugurated in *Tropic of Cancer.* After all, his previous attempts to produce Literature with a capital "L" had resulted in unpublishable failures. As Fraenkel suggests, and as Miller would later admit

himself, the act of rebirth which followed the exile from America thus necessitated the destruction of all residual, traditional, derivative, literary styles. Miller viewed this process of stripping and rebuilding anew as akin to regression to a certain pre-civilized level. Interestingly, the transcendence (or abolishment) of the past, of influence and of *Literature*, was for Miller closely linked with the establishing of a new iconography. He puts it this way:

> I want to regress, yes, become more stupid with every day, as stupid as plants and animals. To get rid, once and for all, of the effects of five thousand years of history, gods, religions, books, great men. . . You cling to your idols. . . I have mine, too, a whole pantheon of them, but *I would offer them all up to the conflagration, every single one of them.* [143]

Accordingly, *Tropic of Cancer*, the actualization of this new philosophy and simultaneously a diary of the man who is presently forming it, opens with a stern caveat to those readers who are expecting a "traditional novel" or even a generic autobiography:

> Everything that was literature has fallen from me. There are no more books to be written, thank God. This then? This is not a book. This is libel, slander, defamation of character. This is not a book, in the ordinary sense of the word. No, this is a prolonged insult, a gob of spit in the face of Art, a kick in the pants to God, Man, Destiny, Time, Love, Beauty. . . (*Cancer,* 1-2).

The narrator feels he has no more dues to pay. He is like a man with a flame-thrower let loose in a decayed metropolis. The "heroes of yesteryear" are bankrupt; they are already dead "or are killing themselves" (*Cancer,* 1). The new iconography of the self thus revolves exclusively around the inscription of the self; there are no saints just as there remain no martyrs. Miller might have wished to add "America" as a final entry in the list of the constituents of the murdered past; but perhaps as a recent exile, he is too directly "of" it to reject it outright. Actually, by remaining open to the drama of exile and by scrutinizing his relation to America he will be able, in

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[143] Cited in Brassaï, 37-8; emphasis mine.

Helena Filipowicz's apt phrase, to translate the "exilic loss into aesthetic gain" (Filipowicz, 157).

The shadowy contours of America are left in behind in the narrative; meanwhile there is only the self, the artist/hero, existing in the present. And in this simple relation, Miller suggests, lies concealed the key to his survival and also his artistic self-realization. Anticipating his readers' reactions to his nihilistic dismissal of literature and of culture, Miller then recapitulates his program for writing what can only be described as *anti*-literature for a putrefying world: "I am going to sing for you, a little off key perhaps, but I will sing," he writes in *Tropic of Cancer.* "I will sing while you croak, I will dance over your dirty corpse. . . . The essential thing is to *want* to sing. This then is a song. I am singing" (2).

Miller, it seems, is no longer concerned about the inadequacy of his narrative voice; and he is no longer content to operate within the limits of traditional narrative modes. His song in *Tropic of Cancer* is a desperate man's anthem to an awakening from the shadows of the past to re-experience an appetite for the fundamental realities: the physical self and its essential needs and desires. During the four seasons which provide a rough chronological frame of the work, the narrator will shout this philosophy aloud; it is largely irrelevant whether anyone takes notice. As an artist in the very throes of *becoming*, the narrator no longer has "any allegiance, any responsibility, any worries, any prejudices" (*Tropic of Cancer,* 153). This insistence on autonomy recalls the mantras of a certain kind of the émigré writer, the *poète maudit* who in the break with the conformity of the homeland celebrates "a final triumph of independence" (Filipowicz, 157). Thus the narrator's sole duty is to himself, to survive until tomorrow while he is "pregnant" with all the future books inside him, projects which must patiently wait their turn (*Tropic of Cancer,* 26). Art, and Destiny, and Beauty, meanwhile, are meaningless concepts in a world which is doomed anyway. He intends to do away with all of them, each in its due time.

However, in the process of Miller's transformation from aspiring *auteur* to

anarchistic murderer of Art, some of the language of the classics would be preserved. Indeed, a narrative trademark of *Tropic of Cancer* as well as of the later Paris books is the mixing of high literature with vulgar forms in a free-flowing design wherein didactic and meditative passages and references to great writers are interlarded with scatological or blatantly pornographic imagery, or with surrealist burlesques. The following "rant" contrasts Goethe with Walt Whitman, whom Miller acknowledges as his greatest influence aside from Dostoyevski:

> In Whitman the whole American scene comes to life, her past and her future, her birth and her death. Whatever there is of value in America Whitman has expressed, and there is nothing more to be said. The future belongs to the robots. . . . He is almost indecipherable today, a monument covered with rude hieroglyphs for which there is no key. . . . There is no equivalent in the languages of Europe for the spirit which he immortalized. Europe is saturated with art and her soil is full of dead bones and her museums are bursting with plundered treasures, but what Europe has never had is free, healthy spirit, what you might call a MAN. Goethe was the nearest approach, but Goethe was a stuffed shirt, by comparison. Goethe was a respectable citizen, a pedant, a bore, . . . but stamped with the German trade-mark, the double eagle. The serenity of Goethe, the calm, Olympian attitude, is nothing more than the drowsy stupor of a German bourgeois deity. Goethe is an end of something, Whitman is a beginning (*Tropic of Cancer,* 239-40).

Here is another effusion, this time on a personal level, prompted by a meditation on Matisse as an exemplar of a healthier, pre-modernist era:

> The wallpaper with which the men of science have covered the world of reality is falling to tatters. The grand whorehouse which they have made of life requires no decoration; it is essential only that the drains function adequately. Beauty, that feline beauty which has us by the balls in America, is finished. To fathom the new reality it is first necessary to dismantle the drains, to day open the gangrened ducts which compose the genito-urinary system that supplies the excreta of art. The odor of the day is permanganate and formaldehyde. The drains are clogged with strangled embryos.
> The World of Matisse is still beautiful in the old-fashioned bedroom way. There is not a ball bearing in evidence, nor a boiler plate, nor a piston, nor a monkey wrench. . . . Even as the world falls apart the Paris that belongs to Matisse shudders with bright, gasping orgasms, the air itself is steady with a stagnant sperm, the trees tangled like hair. On its wobbly axle the wheel rolls steadily downhill; there are no brakes, no ball bearings, no balloon tires (*Tropic of Cancer,* 165-6).

Miller's narrator finds solace in the Word. His verbal gusto sustains his spirit through moments of self-doubt or adversity. The book contains many such examples of self-healing; and there is little doubt that they are effective for the narrator. For instance, immediately after this discussion of Whitman and Goethe the narrator seems to regain energy, and snaps back into his "always merry and bright" mode of expatriate existence.

Tropic of Cancer, this strange pastiche of omnibus ideas, opinions, superstructures, and genres, remains an engaging work even half a century after its publication. This is perhaps so because it is a work that forces the reader to reexamine his or her own notions about what a novel should be, about its functions and shapes. Through these queries, the reader becomes an active part of Miller's experiments and configurations, and shares in the author's creative process of discovery.

Conclusion

Following the Second World War and the failure of international (left) modernism in face of the fascist threat, Western readers began to search for alternatives to a high modernist literature, which had become detached from social praxes and was no longer reflective of the set of common problems that had in the past animated artistic expression (Bürger, 49-50). Literary criticism, too, embraced a wave of renewed interest in the ostensible subject in autobiography, the individual, as he/she related to society. The autobiographical sketch, the diary form, the memoir of a down-and-out writer or poet--these subgenres had assumed a central place in collections and critical studies alike. While interwar writers like Proust and Kafka, and later Hemingway and Fitzgerald, perpetuated the self-exploration begun by early modernists such as Lawrence and Joyce, Miller in effect came up with something innovative: the "auto-novel" as an amorphous domain for the roving self, as an experimental and subjective "garbage can" of rough sketches, often banal observations, and reports about the minutiae of the author's personal life. Writing to please himself, not his potential publishers or the public, Miller spearheaded a new, anti-literary agenda of self-inscription that would inspire such diverse post-war movements as the Beat writers and the New Journalism.[144] Hłasko, who apparently had read some Miller in France, and was more than likely influenced by the American writer's experiments in narration and self-inscription, came roughly at the chronological midpoint between these two movements.[145]

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[144] For a recent summary of Miller's infuences on two generations of artists, see Berthoff 281-3.

[145] Interestingly, Hłasko has little positive to say about the innovative qualities of Miller's writing. For example, in *Killing the Second Dog* Robert expounds: "We have television, cars and washing machines you can buy on credit, but there is no Art anymore. It doesn't exist anymore. There is Henry Miller and Sartre. Sartre has come up with the astonishing discovery that a man's underwear sometimes happen to be dirty, and for this reason he will be immortal. He'll probably be awarded the Nobel Prize" (57; trans. mine). It is doubtful that Miller would have much cherished such an outright dismissal, even though it is mainly directed at Sartre.

The new narrative subject that Miller advanced has features that qualify it as one of the more intriguing alternatives to the modernist understanding of the artistic self. In effect, Miller understands his voice to be fractured and plural, resonating with the *post*-modernist conception of the narrative subject concealed behind a system of masks, cultural roles, and myths of the self, and frequently emerging more than slightly ambivalent about its own coming into being and its own objectives (Walker, 109-13).[146] Thus with his interest revolving around the social function of the creative personality and the articulation of *all* aspects of the self, Miller prefigures postmodernism in some important ways;[147] Hlasko, writing first in the context of Social Realism and later in opposition to it, seems to fit some of the attributes of postmodernist literature, though working towards the model from an opposed set of assumptions regarding the relation of authors to their societies.

Miller's strategies of multi-level narrative self-realization and the concomitant articulation of new self-knowledge, were intended for the benefit of the reader as well for himself. The parameters imposed on the concept of selfhood in turn implied a return to social praxis (employing Bürger's definition), since the writer, existing in very prosaic settings, fraternizing with the lower strata of society, was primarily concerned with the mundane level of existence. One of Nin's criticisms upon reading the manuscript for *Tropic of Cancer* was that the protagonist was a being possessing "only a stomach and a sex." [148] Mailer, however, suggests that Miller's self-reflective narrator was eventually able to progress in the successive Paris texts

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[146] Svetlena Boym refers to these discrete forces exerted on both the reader's understanding of the artistic work and its "creator", and equally the writer's self-reflective understanding his/her text articulates, as "clusters of significance". See Boym 27-32.

[147] *Cf.* Everman who contends that "It is important to bear in mind that postmodernism designates not simply. . . a historical moment but a consciousness that opens to question the givens of our culture and that seems to be able to hold apparent contradictions in place without the need for resolution. If postmodern thought questions, blurs, or collapses so much of our traditional thinking, then, for better or worse, Miller is a postmodernist" (331).

[148] In Mailer, 373.

from his preoccupations with his appetite and sex drive, to polemics with the past, and finally to a wider concern for society and for the "other" (Mailer 371-3).

Initially, of course, the problems of exile and the concern with the social functions of art were important, though supplementary issues, destined to be addressed in later texts.[149] Meanwhile, the essential for Miller was physical survival, as it had been for Hłasko during some of the darker moments in Israel. In fact, for both writers artistic reflection followed naturally once the basics had been adequately met. That these primary considerations often yielded captivating and engaging narratives is an unexpected benefit. However, we ought to keep in mind that for these two writers the primacy of life over art was clear and indisputable. This pattern, present to varying degrees in all of Miller's texts written in Paris, and in all of Hłasko's "Israeli Tales", constitutes a 180 degree turn away from the high modernist practice of art for art's sake. Indeed, both writers desired a palpable connection to the praxis of life in the lands to which they had been exiled.

While breaking through the dictates of Social Realism, Hłasko's narratives nonetheless relied on the polemics about physical work for their ideational horizon and, initially at least, overtly stressed a need for community and for brotherhood of like-minded men.[150] But even later on, Hłasko's exiled protagonists, marginalized first by their cultural status, and second, by their association with figures on the shadowy boundaries of society, rarely retreated into introspection; on the contrary, they appear to us to be fully, joyously *engaged* in society, even when searching for contact with the occasionally threatening "other".[151] While this sense of engagement may have betrayed a residue of the communist dictum that proclaimed social togetherness as a means of attaining a utopian state, in exile it also served another, purely artistic purpose. It rendered Hłasko sensitive to other victims of life or of

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[149] Specifically in sections of *Black Spring* and in *Assassins*.
[150] Rudnicki calls *On the Day of His Death* a parody of what was for Hłasko the greatest tale ever written about *work*, Hemingway's *Old Man and The Sea* (124).
[151] See for instance Israel Berg's desperate attempts to befriend Dov's businessman friend in *Their Backs Were Turned*, 24-9.

circumstance, to their maneuvers with identity and their strategies for self-preservation, through communal accounts which would be incorporated into narratives devoted to an *individual's* search for substance.

This study shows that in the case of both authors the urge to preserve individual memory was brought to the point of urgency when they were confronted with either:

a) Social and political forces intent on either silencing the individual creative act or sublimating it in emotionally sterile forms; or,

b) The threat imposed by what were perceived as alienating or repressive social milieux, environments which in their extreme forms could seem to menace the self with emasculation or annihilation. Both these situations provoked the artist's outrage and brought into being the passion of his individual voice.

Exile, whether self-imposed or necessitated by outside forces, is the connecting factor that bridges the personal narratives of these two sometimes very different authors. As we have seen, the genre of *Autobiography* provides the requisite forum for the exploration of self, and guides the content of Miller's and Hlasko's "documents of the self." The practice of narrative self-inscription, also, affirms both the shifting, expanding sense of identity and the emergent artistic sensibility of emotional engagement. The experience of *Exile*, as has been shown, supplies for Miller and Hlasko the *impetus* needed for textual dramatizations of experience, while providing justifications for narrative experimentation as an analogue to the reconfigurations of identity that both writers had undertaken in order to access the social and cultural landscapes of the new milieux. Finally, it is exile which affirms the very act of writing as precisely a means of preserving the memory of the self, as a defense against one's possible disappearance into the vortex of conformity and inertia to leave behind only traces; as a safeguard against fading into anonymity and thence to silence.

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