Transcendentalism in Henry Miller

by Joe Szalinski

Transcendentalism was/is a creative, intellectual, and spiritual pursuit, primarily found in the field of literature, starting in the 1800's. Initially "founded" by the poet and essayist, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Transcendentalism drew upon sources from older time periods and other cultures, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and even the British Romantics. If Emerson was the impetus behind the movement, Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau were perhaps the movement's most vocal champions. Causing quite a stir amongst the relatively conservative populace of the time, the movement quickly attracted critics and opponents by challenging dogma and by presenting unusual alternatives. Transcendentalism prevailed and is still taught in school curriculums and can even be considered a thriving philosophy. The unapologetic musings on the human condition, the duality of life and death, and the relationship of man and nature, has inspired generations of writers to follow the example of Thoreau and Whitman, and write unabashed texts concerning environmentalism, quests of self-discovery, and even commentary on the metaphysical.

One such author, controversial and infamous for his no-holds-barred, autobiographical fiction, Henry Miller, is most remembered for his novel, *The Tropic of Cancer*. Throughout his work, Miller expounds upon his own philosophy, and the philosophy of others that helped shaped the man he became. A voracious reader since a young age, Miller read books on a variety of topics, including works that dealt with transcendentalism. In his 1969 book, *The Books In My Life*, Miller ranks Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience*, and Whitman's *Leaves of* Grass, among his 100 most influential books. He even includes a page of his favorite quotations (before the pages are numbered), one of which belongs to Ralph Waldo Emerson, "When the artist has exhausted his

materials, when the fancy no longer paints, when thoughts are no longer apprehended, and books are a weariness—he has always the resource *to live*" (qtd. in *The Books In My Life*).

Henry Miller continues with this idea later on in the text, detailing how, although rigorous study is beneficial, one must study life itself as the ultimate source for the human experience:

> Here an irrepressible impulse seizes me to offer a piece of gratuitous advice. It is this: read as little as possible, not as much as possible! Oh, do not doubt that I have envied those who drowned themselves in books. I, too, would secretly like to wade through all those books I have so long toyed with in my mind. But I know it is not important. I know now that I did not need to read even a tenth of what I have read. The most difficult thing in life is to learn to do only what is strictly advantageous to one's welfare, strictly vital. ("They Were Alive and They Spoke to Me" 23)

Miller discusses that too much learning, especially from the writings of others, can be a bad thing if overdone. Sure, to learn is wonderful, but do not let academic learning stop oneself from learning from the greatest teacher, life. A biased and perverted opinion of the world is formed in the mind of a reader after reading too many books. No pure, unadulterated vision can be seen; no absolute truth gleamed. The Transcendentalists (and Miller) were aware that everyone could be wrong. In the end, a person must live and gain knowledge that is appropriate and applicable to him or herself.

Thoreau, an influence of Miller's, shared his thoughts about reading and literature in his most famous work, *Walden*:

> However much we may admire the orator's occasional bursts of eloquence, the noblest written words are commonly as far behind or above the fleeting spoken

> language as the firmament with its stars is behind the clouds. *There* are the stars, and they who can may read them. The astronomers forever comment on and observe them. They are not exhalations like our daily colloquies and vaporous breath. What is called eloquence in the forum is commonly found to be rhetoric in the study. The orator yields to the inspiration of a transient occasion, and speaks to the mob before him, to those who can *hear* him; but the writer, whose more equable life is his occasion, and who would be distracted by the event and the crowd which inspire the orator, speaks to the intellect and heart of mankind, to all in age who can *understand* him. ("Reading" 83)

Thus, just because language can seem beautiful, doesn't make it beautiful. Words are not true beauty because they are simply constructions. Something like the stars, for example, are truly beautiful because they offer no opinion and simply exist. While something like language may seem beautiful, sometimes the purpose it serves, or the aim it achieves, is overly academic or dry in approach. Someone like an orator is already pandering to an audience, and is usually speaking of a recent event. Whereas a writer deals with the search for absolute beauty wherever it may be, and he (or she) is permitting anyone to engage the text in which musings on beauty are written.

Having the desire to be inundated with the beautiful (look at today's culture with models being "photo-shopped" and holding beauty to a standard), has given humanity a narrow framework to reference. It is by finding beauty in "the ugliness" of life that we begin to truly comprehend it:

> It is our great fortune sometimes to misinterpret our destiny when it is revealed to us. We often accomplish our ends despite ourselves. We try to avoid the swamps and jungles, we seek frantically to escape the wilderness or the desert (one and the

> same), we attach ourselves to leaders we worship the gods instead of the One and Only, we lose ourselves in the labyrinth, we fly to distant shores and speak with other tongues, adopt other customs, manners, conventions, but ever and always are we driven towards our true end, concealed from us till the last moment. (Miller, "Rider Haggard" 99)

Living in accordance with a pre-established "canon of truth" is detrimental to the human experience because it is very limiting. Various viewpoints exist, and are worthy of consideration and boxing oneself in diminishes the likelihood of finding any tangible truth. Thoreau has a similar approach, in the vein of "different strokes for different folks" makes the world keep spinning:

> As if Nature could support but one order of understandings, could not sustain birds as well as quadrupeds, flying as well as creeping things, and *hush* and *whoa*, which Bright can understand, were the best English. As if there were safety in stupidity alone. I fear chiefly lest my expression may not be *extravagant* enough, many not wander far enough beyond the narrow limits of my daily experience, so as to be adequate to the truth of which I have been convinced. ("Conclusion" 284)

What both authors are getting at is the idea that the Transcendentalists were addressing early on; that one's true self and living life purely were methods that were just as effective as, if not even more effective than, seeking traditional spiritual enlightenment through a priest. Emerson even acknowledges that so many ideas that "seek the truth" are only delaying us from finding the absolute truth. Manmade constructs, like religion and social mores and customs, strip away pure experience and exaltation. Thoreau is saying that nature (and the universe) is varied because a multiplicity of truths exist, and many modes of existence are governed by personal truth. One

uniform truth does not satiate everyone or everything; truths must be specific to a particular condition in order to produce profound meaning.

Still, people often believe that they have life figured out. A particular system (typically dogmatic religion) offers the delusional sense of comfort and superiority. Not only does it bar the follower from becoming privy to truths that may contradict the truths he or she holds dear, but it in turn establishes a hierarchical structure and it fosters an environment in which failure to abide by doctrine is punishable. In *Genius and Lust*, Miller speaks of his houseguest, Moricand, who is a peculiar fellow with a penchant for the unusual:

> Of course he had an answer to that. His great failing was that he had an answer for everything. He did not deny the power of faith. What he would say quite simply was that he was a man to whom faith had been denied. It was there in the chart, the absence of faith. What could one do? What he failed to add was that he had chosen the path of knowledge, and that in doing so he had clipped his own wings. ("Big Sur," *Genius and Lust* 518)

Although Moricand rejects religion, his strict adherence to "scientific truths" lends itself to his intellectual blindness. He forgets that reason and science are dependent upon skepticism and the questioning of everything. He just wantonly accepts whatever fits his narrative and offers the most personal solace, looking down on those who disagree. Whitman offers a similar idea:

> I do not despise you priest;
> My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,
> Enclosing all worship ancient and modern, and all between ancient and modern,
> Believing I shall come again upon the earth after five thousand years,

> Waiting responses from oracles….honoring the gods….saluting the sun, Making a fetish of the first rock or stump.…powwowing with sticks in the circle of obis,
> Helping the lama or brahmin as he trims the lamps of the idols, Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic procession….rapt and austere in the woods, a gymnosophist,
> Drinking mead from the skull-cap….to shasta and vedas admirant…. minding the koran,
> Walking the teokallis, spotted with gore from the stone and knife—beating the serpent-skin drum;
> Accepting the gospels, accepting him that was crucified, knowing assuredly that he is divine. ("Song of Myself" 3046)

What Whitman writes presents him as a person who believes in open-mindedness. In the passage, it seems as though that he is "covering his bases" for he does not know which ideology leads to truth. He even suggests that all philosophies are worthy of practice because, even if said ideology only offers one modicum of truth, it is still worthy of praise. Although the truth lies amidst a field of bullshit, it is sometimes that which grows upon the waste that produces the necessary insight.

In contrast, Moricand, the hermetic astrologer, brought with him an unusual philosophy. Not only did he look to the stars to spell out destiny and elements of predetermination, but he also thought that the celestial bodies were to only serve man, as if human existence gave them a purpose. Though he did not subscribe to dogmatic faith (he's told to be an atheist later in the book), he took the approach of stymied reason and staid logic. He did not consider alternatives to his worldview, and was just as fixed as those who ideologically opposed him (i.e. religious

fundamentalists). He boxed himself into one mode of thinking, failing to consider the plethora of possibilities and thoughts to entertain. He whittled himself down to what he viewed as essential and ignored the rest of existence, leaving himself unaware that almost the entirety of life was going on around him, while he remained relatively uninvolved.

Constructing one's own reality does not promote growth; if anything, it stifles it. If something makes sense in its apparent entirety, it is either a falsehood, or it has been overly simplified and elements are missing; ergo, the truth does not exist in its entirety:

> I talk now about Reality, but I know there is no getting at it, leastwise by writing. I learn less and realize more: I learn in some different, more subterranean way. I acquire more and more the gift of immediacy. I am developing the ability to perceive, apprehend, analyze, synthesize, categorize, inform, articulate—all at once. The structural element of things reveals itself more readily to my eye. I eschew all clear-cut interpretations: with increasing simplification the mystery heightens…I am living out my share my share of life and thus abetting the scheme of things. I further the development, the enrichment, the evolution and the devolution of the cosmos, every day in every way. I give all I have to give, voluntarily, and take as much as I can possibly ingest. I am a prince and a pirate at the same time. (Miller, "Reflections on Writing," *The Henry Miller Reader* 244)

Transcendentalists believe that one should be open, consider every avenue of thought and discourse. Being open to new experiences might lend support to one's previously established construct of the world, or it might annihilate it. Either way, one is being shown the truth. And being privy to that, one doesn't stand incorrect. However, those who are unflinching and stubborn must constantly deal with the prospect that they may be wrong.

Emerson discusses a similar idea in that interpretation is illusory, since we quantify what knowledge we are able to fathom, and dress it up with fallible, human logic:

> 1. Words are signs of natural facts. The use of natural history is to give us aid in supernatural history: the use of the outer creation, to give us language for the beings and changes of the inward creation. Every word which is used to express a moral or intellectual fact, if traced to its roots, is found to be borrowed from some material appearance…Most of the process by which this transformation is made, is hidden from us in the remote time when language was framed; but the same tendency may be daily observed in children. Children and savages use only nouns or names of things, which they convert into verbs, and apply to analogous mental acts. (Emerson, "Nature" 1714-1715)

William S. Burroughs claimed that "language is a virus" because it forces us to categorize things, assign roles, establish partitions, and strip the immensity of life away from itself. By lumping things into categories, we remove ourselves from true, unfettered experience. Languages, and tools of examination, do not allow us to become enraptured with the moment and the way things are. Having a developed brain is both a blessing and a curse. But by making these categories, we are adding to the flavor of existence. We are creating depth, by depriving ourselves of it. We are the universe finding a way to express itself in some perverse, palatable modality. Continuing on this theme, Miller writes:

> Life, as we know, is conflict, and man, being part of life, is himself an expression of conflict. If he recognizes the fact and accepts it, he is apt, despite the conflict, to know peace and to enjoy it. But to arrive at this end, which is only a beginning (for we haven't begun to live yet!), a man has got to learn the doctrine of

> acceptance, that is, od unconditional surrender, which is love…The whole fourth-dimensional view of reality, which *is* Howe's metaphysic, hinges on this understanding of acceptance. The fourth element is Time, which is another way, as Goethe so well knew, of saying—*growth*. As a seed grows in the natural course of time, so the world grows, and so it dies, and so it is reborn again…Many influences, of astounding variety, have contributed to shape this philosophy of life which, unlike most philosophies, takes its stance *in* life, and not in a system of thought. His view embraces conflicting world-views; there is no room in it to include all of Whitman, Emerson, Thoreau, as well as Taoism, Zen Buddhism, astrology, occultism, and so forth. It is a thoroughly religious view of life, in that it recognizes "the supremacy of the unseen." Emphasis is laid on the dark side of life, on all which is considered negative, passive, evil, feminine, mysterious, unknowable. (Miller, "Wisdom of the Heart," *The Henry Miller Reader* 254-256)

We are not independent entities converging in space in time; we are of one collective consciousness. We splinter in different directions, eager to absorb truth in a multitude of forms. In certain iterations, we are people, entities of ego; whereas in other iterations, we are simply trees or corn. We serve the same fundamental purpose, and that is growth. The whole of existence benefits from the growth of any of its members; the universe taking on a bevy of identities to discover more truth, and truth is all that there is to discover. It takes an entire ocean to make a wave, just like it takes the entire universe to make a blade of grass. For it is just as rich as the gestalt, but never any more valuable than the other, splintered manifestations of itself:

> Objections and criticism we have had our fill of. There are objections to every course of life and action, and the practical wisdom infers an indifferency, from the

> omnipresence of objection. The whole frame of things preaches indifferency. Do not craze yourself with thinking, but go about your business anywhere. Life is not intellectual or critical, but sturdy. Its chief good is for well-mixed people who can enjoy what they find, without question…We live amid surfaces, and the true art of life is to skate well on them. Under the oldest moldiest conventions, a man of native force prospers just as well as in the newest world, and that by skill of handling and treatment. He can take hold anywhere. Life itself is a mixture of power and form, and will not bear the least excess to either. To finish the moment, to find the journey's end in every step of the road, to live the greatest number of good hours, is wisdom. It is not part of men, but of fanatics, or of mathematicians, if you will, to say, that, the shortness of life considered, it is not worth caring whether for so short a duration we were sprawling in want, or sitting high. Since our office is with moments, let us husband them. (Emerson, "Experience" 1783-1784)

The end goal of any intellectual pursuit is to become more enlightened or learned that one was before. Just like how humankind perceives time (in a linear fashion), humankind views knowledge. It is something acquired, over time, through hard work and sacrifice. The idea being that if one surrenders him or herself to the goal of, "eventually I will understand", than he or she is missing out. Rather, we should relish in the moments of truth, for the essence of every other truth is contained within it. We must cherish the individual moments, for we squander them in order to find out why we have them, or if they are of any value. If we allow ourselves to become perceptive to "the now", we will learn far more than we can imagine.

Henry Miller discusses his perception of time and space. To him, reality is a Mobius strip; the end and the beginning are simultaneous:

> We stand in relation to the past very much like the cow in the meadow—endlessly chewing the cud. It is not something finished and done with, as we sometimes fondly imagine, but something alive, constantly changing and perpetually with us. But the future too is with us perpetually, and alive and constantly changing. The difference between the two, a thoroughly fictive one, incidentally, is that the future we create whereas the past can only be recreated. As for that constantly vanishing point called the present, that fulcrum which melts simultaneously into past and future, only those who deal with the eternal know and live in it, acknowledging it to be all. (Miller, "Of Art and the Future," *The Henry Miller Reader* 229)

Yet, humans are predisposed to attach themselves to the past or future. We are mortal beings who recognize our history, our pedigree, and therefore tout it like it is existent itself. We are conscious of the future, but act as though it is set in stone, whereas we treat the past like it is subject to alteration. Our primary concern is making sure we start off ahead; we care not for precautionary measures and thorough thinking when it's needed. We think to ourselves "If only we had the privilege of foresight, then we could not commit err." However, we have foresight now, and we just fail to recognize it.

In the end, life will spill back into itself and start anew. Emerson captures how toiling with past and future is merely a trivial occupation of our efforts, which could be better spent in the present moment:

> The other terror that scares us from self-trust is our consistency; a reverence for our past act or word, because the eyes of others have no other data for computing our orbit than our past acts, and we are loath to disappoint them.
>
> But why should you keep your head over your shoulder? Why drag about this corpse of your memory, lest you contradict somewhat you have stated in this or that public space? Suppose you should contradict yourself; what then? It seems to be a rule of wisdom never to rely on your memory alone, scarcely even in acts of pure memory, but to bring the past for judgment into the thousand-eyed present, and live ever in a new day. ("Self-Reliance", 1751)

Still, people have a tendency to rekindle the past, even when it is unhealthy to do so. They make a conscious effort to live with regrets, saddled by them, forced to ride to their last respective day with an unwanted companion. The classic example that immediately comes to mind is the once-promising football star who now lives a shitty existence in misery and woe, reliving the glory days. I know full well the burden of nostalgia, with each positive look into the past, comes a remembrance of a misdeed or misfortune. The important thing is to learn to move on, learn from mistakes, and be in the present.

The past, in certain instances, becomes reconstructed, forced to support a disillusioned narrative that the disenchanted ardently maintain. The past already occurred. It cannot be changed! However, many attempt to change it by performing "mental gymnastics" and convincing themselves that the events they wanted to transpire, transpired, as if they couldn't be held accountable, simply a victim of circumstance.

As much as we try to forget it, it is due to our past that we are the people we are; choices become habit, habit becomes character. We live with the past, though we shouldn't always

consciously reference it. Wield it when appropriate and applicable to the situation at hand. Conversely, the future is extremely malleable, and we are creating it this very second. The present moment seamlessly filters into what is to come. We must prepare ourselves, remind ourselves that present behavior will shape our future selves and outlook, and we must try not to make the same mistakes we regret making in the past. But in all actuality, time is a flat circle (of sorts), and rejuvenates itself temporally. It's through our narrowed experience, and limited scope of the universe, that we choose to perceive this all as linear.

Although we realize our faults when mulling over regrets, it is far from a rehabilitative practice. We muse that we could have done something different then; we ignore the present condition of the ego, still aware of it, but not wanting to be rid of it. We fail to recognize ego in the moment, being that ego is relatively pervasive, and instead see it as something that hinders us circumstantially, as opposed to constantly hindering the very nature of our being. We must strip away the ego; rid ourselves of attachment to pride in achievements, and shame in cases of failure. Guilt-trips are not healthy. Miller writes in "Tropic of Capricorn":

> To get beneath the facts I would have had to be an artist, and one doesn't become an artist overnight. First you have to be crushed, to have your conflicting points of view annihilated. You have to be wiped out as a human being in order to be born again as an individual. You have to be carbonized and mineralized in order to work upwards from the last common denominator of the self. You have to get beyond pity in order to feel from the very roots of your being…every man everywhere in the world, is on his way to ordination. (Miller, "Tropic of Capricorn," *Genius and Lust* 147)

Self-pity is the biggest indicator of indefinite defeat. We must come to realize that once the ego shatters, any cage we confined ourselves to, are now open. We can make ourselves how we wish, we can become god(s) if we so desire. Walt Whitman tells us of how he imagines himself:

> The known universe has one complete lover and that is the greatest poet. He consumes an eternal passion and is indifferent which chance happens and which possible contingency of fortune or misfortune and persuades daily and hourly his delicious pay. What balks or breaks others is fuel for his burning progress to contact and amorous joy. Other proportions of the reception of pleasure dwindle to nothing to his proportions. ("Preface to *Leaves of Grass*" 3000)

True poets, and not just those who take pen to paper, Whitman argues, are those with the ability to find humility in defeat, to see the upside even in dire situations. If we surrender to the dynamics of life, we can begin to analyze the elements of the good and the bad, and become informed on how to operate appropriately in any given situation. If we only allow ourselves to express interest in learning about life only when the conditions are beneficial, we will have learned nothing at all.

To Miller, artists see things the most clearly out of all of subdivisions of human beings. In order to be an artist, according to Miller, one must admit that everything he or she knows is wrong; that there are no conflicting points of view, everything is permitted; the self is a construct that must be destroyed, because it breeds ego; pity is just another dynamic of life, and negative emotions are the same as positive ones; everyone, conscious of it or not, is seeking and receiving some sort of enlightenment. This is especially comparable to the Transcendentalists' philosophy that absolute truth is derived from experience, and total submission to chaos, which is actually everything and nothing.

Acceptance of fallibility is crucial, because human existence is inherently fallible in itself. We are prisoners to biological processes, to clouded judgment, and bias. However, humankind is intrinsically godlike in the respect that we are of the universe. Bodies, our mortal instruments, are pawns to the operations of the world. Religious zealots view the body as a temporary cage where we wait on earth for our time to join god in some sort of nirvana or heaven. Only they ignore the notion that truth can be discerned from the human experience. The body allows us to have experiences pure thought cannot. By experiencing this aspect of life, we become knowledgeable of truths very few iterations of the universe are able to. This existence is just god made manifest in corporeal form. Everything is of god. God is fallible and imperfect, but in that is the crux of existence. If even god is fallible, than existence is absolutely fallible, and thus, fallibility is another method of acquiring truth. Miller, then, champions a new glorification of our corporeal shells:

> Mamma and Papa are now as peaceful as blutwurst. Not an ounce of fight left in them. How glorious to spend a day in the open, with the worms and other creatures of God. What a delightful entr'acte! Life glides by like a dream. If you were to cut the bodies open while still warm you would find nothing resembling this idyll. If you were to scrape the bodies out and fill them with stones they would sink to the bottom of the sea, like dead ducks. (Miller, "Sexus," *Genius and Lust* 321)

Whitman also suggests that the body is worthy of praise, and he justly praises it in his poetry:

> Through me forbidden voices,
>
> Voices of sexes and lusts….voices veiled, and I remove the veil,
>
> Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigured.

I do not press my finger across my mouth,
I keep as delicate around the bowels as around the head and heart,
Copulation is no more rank to me than death is

I believe in the flesh and the appetites,
Seeing hearing and feeling are miracles, and each part and tag of me is a miracle.

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touched from;
The scent of these arm-pits is aroma finer than prayer
This head is more than churches or bibles or creeds. ("Song of Myself" 3027).

The human body is worthy, not only of study, but of celebration. Like in "Song of Myself", Whitman glorifies the body, most notably the armpit. Miller unabashedly wrote about "sexual deviancy", using words like "cunt" and "cock". To Miller, our bodies were the only way we interacted with the material plane; otherwise, we were purely of spirit. Not saying that Miller denounced the body, or held it to lesser esteem that the soul, rather, Miller thought that a dualism permeated the universe. We, as humans, could attain ascension through physical means, if done properly. Or at least provide us with some brief respite from the daily grind of existence.

Miller also has no reservations about comparing man to animal, for man is a risen animal, the result of biological evolution. We should not be ashamed of being eaten by worms; after all, they are creatures of God much like humans are. Not only that, but they're of God. Omnipotence made manifest and plagued by mortal desires. We constantly recycle our material to other versions of ourselves in other forms, an auto-cannibalism (in a sense) of a true Eucharist. When

he writes, “What a delightful entr’acte!” he is speaking of the intermission between life and death. Really, there is no separation. It is all one, continuous cycle.

But being of material constitution, we are forced to interact with other material objects. Being able to make tools and develop social orders are ways we make use of our time on earth. Consequently, we have created opportunity for flawed systems to flourish. Capitalism runs rampant, stealing the concern we should have for other members of our species, and instead placing it on what we have created. Humans realize that we are finite, so we insist on creating legacies, whether that is creating a company or writing a book, we want to outlive ourselves. But any construction of human endeavor is riddled with imperfection. When we choose to immerse ourselves in these systems, we are swept up in dealing with imperfection and attempt to rationalize it as the only truth, since it so dictates our modes of operation. A system like capitalism is a second-hand iteration of the universe, and thereby cannot remedy itself or teach us anything of real value. It’s like language, a very constrictive lens for understanding the world. Henry Miller explains:

> It seemed to me that he was being slowly tortured and humiliated; they behaved as if he had committed a crime by becoming ill. Worse, it was as if my mother, knowing that he would never get well, looked upon each day that he remained alive as so much unnecessary expense…But it was all stupid—unnecessary labor for the most part. They *created* work for themselves. When any one remarked how pale and haggard they looked they would reply with alacrity—“Well, some one has to keep going. We can’t all afford to be ill.” As though to imply that being ill was a sinful luxury. (“Sunday After The War,” *Genius and Lust* 482)

Henry David Thoreau captures this equally well:

> Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them. Their fingers, from excessive toil, are too clumsy and tremble too much for that. Actually, the laboring man has not leisure for a true integrity day by day; he cannot afford to sustain the manliest relations to men; his labor would be depreciated in the market. He has no time to be anything but a machine. ("Economy" 5)

In society, work and industriousness tends to take precedence over comfort, health, and sanity. People work themselves to death; fulfill obligations to some bullshit, hierarchical machine that does not value any effort expended by the workers it maintains, before tending to their own, basic needs. Even caring for family members can cause tension and discomfort. When thinking in terms of expenses and those still apt to labor, a sick individual appears as an economic hindrance to financial stability.

Also, most of these jobs are run by men and are very much of the male experience. This is a very limited way of existing because it discredits any experience that deviates from it, particularly that of women. Though we are dualistic beings, being both male and female, in some sense, it's by ignoring women that we have ended up in hot water because we did not always get the sagest advice or the fresh perspective necessary to evaluate our condition. Miller explains why equality is necessary:

> When men are at last united in darkness woman will once again illuminate the way—by revealing the beauties and mysteries which enfold us. We have tried to hide from our sight the womb of night, and now we are engulfed in it. We have pretended to be single when we were dual, and now we are frustrate and impotent.

> We shall come forth from the womb united, or not at all. Come forth not in brotherhood, but in brotherhood and sisterhood, as man and wife, as male and female. Failing, we shall perish and rot in the bowels of the earth, and time pass us by ceaselessly and remorselessly. (Miller, "Of Art and the Future," *The Henry Miller Reader* 241)

We need to give credit where credit is due, and consider what women have to say. However, we mustn't permit women to become the ones who focus in on their limited experience, like men have been doing; equality is the only solution. Whitman also captures this:

> Every kind for itself and its own…for me mine male and female,
> For me all that have been boys and that love women,
> For me the man that is proud and feels how it stings to be slighted,
> For me the sweetheart and the old maid…for me mothers and the mothers of mothers,
> For me lips that have smiled, eyes that have shed tears,
> For me children and the begetters of children.
>
> Who need be afraid of the merge?
> Undrape….you are not guilty to me, nor stale nor discarded,
> I see through the broadcloth and gingham whether or no,
> And am around, tenacious, acquisitive, tireless….and can never be shaken away.
> ("Song of Myself" 3014)

Duality persists in the world despite humanity's incessancy to drive wedges into places they shouldn't be, and perpetuate schisms in what should be unified. While death and life are of the

same coin, man and woman are as well. We are distinct, yet equal; we are two, because we are one. Equality and working together will allow us to solve our problems, failing to do so will result in our tragic downfall. Transcendentalists, in the days of Emerson and Thoreau, began to tout the role of women in intellectual and creative circles. Margaret Fuller was a noted author and transcendentalist, who happened to attain prominence, even amongst her male contemporaries. Women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton were among the first people to be vocal about women's suffrage and equality amongst sexes and even races.

Failure to be open-minded has led many pockets of people to become set in their respective ways and establish microcosms in which to exist. Confined by geographic boundaries, these humans maintain that people of a certain area have to think or act a certain way. This creates schisms and promotes hostility towards dissenters and those who are different. Diversity withers and existence is rendered insular and static. Thoreau explains this impact in his description of "earth:"

> The earth is not a mere fragment of dead history, stratum of dead history, stratum upon stratum like the leaves of a book, to be studied by geologists and antiquaries chiefly, but living poetry like the leaves of a tree, which precede flowers and fruit,—not a fossil earth, but a living earth; compared with whose great central life all animal and vegetable life is merely parasitic. Its throes will heave our exuviæ from their graves. You may melt your metals and cast them into the most beautiful moulds you can; they will never excite me like the forms which this molten earth flows into. And not only it, but the institutions upon it are plastic like clay in the hands of the potter. ("Spring" 271)

Just like how Thoreau didn't recognize property, and sought to utilize the land as a partner, in a symbiotic fashion, Miller contemplates how perverted the idea of land became:

> What is vital here is land, just land. Why yes, *land*, that's it—I had almost forgotten it meant such a simple, eternal thing. One gets twisted, derouted, spavined and indoctrinated shouting "Land of the Free" et cetera. Land is something on which to grow crops, build a home, raise cows and sheep. Land is land, what a grand, simple word!" (Miller, "The Colossus of Maroussi," *Genius and Lust* 422)

Thus, there is more to life than fragmented ideology and groups. The land on which we persist becomes host, under such ill-conceived conditions, to abuse and being used only as a means to produce resources necessary to particular instances. In American society, land was owned and controlled by nations. Lands were free; while other lands did not have the luxury. Land existed before nations; it will exist even after them. Human constructs cannot erase what lands truly are, resources we (as humans) should use accordingly and appropriately. If we take care of the land, the land will take care of us. Thoreau thoroughly endorsed travel (whether by physical travel, or simply reading), and Miller becomes cognizant, at this point, of his responsibility and role as a citizen of the world. Divisions are arbitrary; everyone is in this together.

It is by being open-minded, by living in the present, and by being free of ego, that we attain ascension. The ideals of the Transcendentalists were disseminated before the Transcendentalists focused their concerted efforts on the world stage, and these ideals will exist indefinitely. Case in point, these ideals found their way into the work of Henry Miller. A man who challenged convention and the established order, because he understood where the absolute lay buried; in unfettered existence.

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