On *The Colossus of Maroussi*: A Meditation on the End of War

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In 1939, with fascism hanging as a rancid cloud over Paris, Henry Miller left that city where he had completed his first novels, *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn*. Exhausted from a decade of concentrated effort, he boarded a ship for Greece to meet his friend, the writer Lawrence Durrell. For Miller, forty-seven years old and needing a break from writing, Greece was to be a vacation, his intention to revitalize himself in preparation for the long journey to Tibet where he hoped to find a monastery to begin a "spiritual life". While he never made it to Tibet, Miller's time in Greece came to inspire his impressionistic travelogue *The Colossus of Maroussi*, a book Miller himself believed his best, and along with such classics as Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain*, and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, may be considered one of the more remarkable mid-century chronicles of spiritual journey.

By the summer of 1939 war had not yet been declared, but most of Europe could sense the tide of violence ready to sweep the continent. Greece was clearly feeling the tremors, and those wealthy enough escaped to America. For the majority who stayed behind, patriotism was the song of the day, and even Durrell spoke of joining the resistance to fight the Italian fascists in Albania. Miller wasn't convinced. He could understand a man killing in the

throes of passion, blood burning with jealousy or vengeance, but couldn't begin to fathom the indiscriminate cold blooded killing required of war. For Miller, war was a deep failure of the human enterprise, the mechanization of our condition, and an act that invariably exposed a festering tumor at the heart of a dying world. As a sensualist, as one who prized raw experience and energetic person-to-person exchange, Miller saw the problem of war as one of abstraction. Only from a distance can we exult in the feverish rhetoric supporting such violence. Those who actually fight, who lose limbs and eyes, whose flesh is singed to the bone, who breathe toxic clouds of gas, whose bayonets spill the guts of strangers, do not glorify war. Miller could see this well enough in the ghostly stares of World War I veterans aimlessly wandering the streets of Paris, fighting stray dogs for scraps of meat tossed in the gutters, the warrior once glamorized now unsaddled, disarranged, forgotten.[1]

The obvious question at the time, what about the Nazis? What to do in the face of such insidiousness? No easy answers. Even Lewis Mumford, a prominent anti-militarist, advocated war as a means to stop Hitler, rallying Americans to "resist the fascist barbarian's dynamic will-to-destruction."[2] Miller wasn't persuaded: "Nothing can bring about a new or better world but our own desire for it," he said. "Let every man search his own heart."[3] And for Miller, the best way to go about the search was to enter a mythical landscape in the spirit of celebration, open to the infinite possibilities of any given moment, to what he would come to understand as a "starry light" rising from the center of the earth, a light that, once embodied, connects humanity to the cosmos.

As is the case with so many spiritual journeys, epiphany is at the heart of Miller's experience in Greece. It is said that spiritual epiphany—the manifestation of the divine—occurs most readily for those prepared to receive it. If this is true, Miller's preparation came by way of years of hunger (an extended fast, to be sure), a cleansing best portrayed in *Tropic of Cancer*, the fictional account of Miller's early days in Paris. In this autobiographical novel, the narrator, after days of hunger and at the point of absolute hopelessness, is pushed to the limits of his existence, finding himself "naked as a savage," born anew to the sensual earth, vulnerable and open to all its evolutionary processes. In this moment of abysmal emptiness, he defies the idea of an all-powerful deity pulling strings from behind the scenes, and in doing so, drops any pretense of commonplace morality, seeking instead to survive by any means possible. Profanation? Crime? Cannibalism? Nothing is simple. And rather than God being dead, as Nietzsche argued, Miller offered the more troubling view that God is "insufficient,"[4] that God alone cannot sustain us. We need the earth as we need the sky; we are nourished by dripping springs just as we are inspired by the exhaustion of stars. Even Dante, who ends his journey in Heaven, knows to travel to the earth's molten center to enlarge his moral sympathies, the same center where Miller discovers "the sun in the form of a man crucified."[5] Ah, sweet middle earth burning, suffering is what we make of it, right? And is it too bold to suggest that the flow of earthly lava illuminates as bright as any galactic cluster?

1 From the early 40s on, much of Miller's writing addresses in one way or another the mechanization of humanity and war. See *Remember to Remember* (1947) and the three volumes that make up *The Rosy Crucifixion* for several direct references.

2 Lewis Mumford, *Men Must Act*, Harcourt Brace, l939. p 172. In *The Myth of the Machine*: *Technics and Human Development* (1966) Mumford warns of the dehumanizing effect of technology, arguing, "Capitalism, mining, militarism, and mechanization—along with megalomania—went hand in hand." Mumford continued his argument against mechanization in the second volume, *The Pentagon of Power,* a book popularized in the early 70s as a Book-of-the-Month Club selection, and one that landed in my mother's bookshelf and happily passed along to me.

3 *The Colossus of Maroussi*, New Directions, 1941, p. 83.

4 *Tropic of Cancer*, Grove Press, 1961. pp. 98-99.

5 *Colossus,* p. 57.

So it is that Miller, hungry and naked and open to earth, detaches from any idealistic notion of an orthodox God, and in doing so, accepts the world as it is, for what it is. In fact, Miller is always less concerned with the God of orthodoxy than with the orthodox *man*, the fellow who privileges such a God without question, who obeys the law however unjust a law might be, who refutes change for fear of losing what he doesn't own to begin with, bowing forever at the altar of capitalism, communism or the church. Miller understands that the orthodox man is a victim of his own fear, dominated by the will of others, a man who resigns his conscience to so many priests and kings, and finally, to the confines of the most rigid sectarianism. The orthodox man conforms every day of his life, in every decision, and in doing so, becomes a featureless cog in a machine lubricated by piety, authoritarianism, and war.

The opposite of orthodoxy is flow, and it is the flow of "rivers, sewers, lava, semen, blood, bile, words, sentences" that the Henry Miller of *Tropic of Cancer* seeks to participate in fully. The river, "like a great artery running through the human body," is the metaphor that carries Miller to the story's end. For Miller, the river is body, the river is movement, the river is time and history, the river is cleansing and, ultimately, the river meets the ocean where it dissolves and dies. If God is to be any part of the river, God must flow too, and as God is life God must also be death. Death, in fact, is the only real boundary of consequence. Whereas the orthodox God perpetuates repression and restraint at the promise of immortality, God reconstituted as the river becomes life on earth itself, a flow out of which rises light and dark, earth and sky, despair and hope, humility and defiance. That is, God is the force and friction of tensions, so many dangerous boulders in a stream that wake us to our certain dissolution, a recognition that, when taken to heart and carried on the shoulder, teaches us to live more abundantly and to relish each moment as if it were our last. And as Miller steps onto Greek soil, unencumbered by possessions, regret, or malice, he is nothing if not filled with the bounty of a man seeking abundance in the grace of a moment. And such is the nature of the epiphanies that mark his trail as he makes his way from one end of Greece to the other and back again.

The occurrence of epiphany in the traditional story, whether revealed in a film, novel, memoir, opera, or in the earnest dirge of a friend, is usually located near the peak of the narrative in close proximity to the story's climax. Such an arc is often created by a series of increasingly dramatic events rising to a singular moment of understanding or perfection, or for the spiritualist, a moment where eternity intersects with time. The biblical story of Christ follows such a line. Of course, this structure mimics a common definition of history as the struggle of opposing forces powerful enough to influence events, a struggle which leads humankind—one baptism, one confession, one battle, one war at a time—through progressive stages toward a particular goal, usually apocalypse or utopia, Augustine or Marx, take your pick. If Nietzsche's 19th century challenge to such a view of history wasn't convincing enough, humanity was given World War I, and with millions dead and no one knowing exactly why, even the most zealous defender of human progress had to give pause.[6] As that conflict plodded on, such avant-garde movements as Cubism, Dadaism, and Surrealism slipped in through the cracks. Miller was heavily affected by such waves, just as he was by Joyce, Proust, Rimbaud, Celiné, and Zen Buddhism. Oswald Spengler, who in

6 Nietzsche's *eternal recurrence* was not the first idea to challenge apocalyptic and utopian readings of history, only the most influential. See R.A. Herrera's *Reasons for Our Rhymes* (2001) and Eric Voegelin's excellent *Anamnesis* (1978) for cogent summaries on the philosophy of history. For the record, philosophy of history is not commonly associated with narrative structure however evident the parallels appear to me.

Decline of the West (1918) redefined history as a steady process of decay, made an important impact.[7] And perhaps most influential were Whitman, Emerson, and Thoreau, all of whom challenged the orthodox thinking of their time, allowing that spiritual liberation came not by following strict puritanical codes but by means of immediate—and often spontaneous—contact with the flesh and swamp of mongrel earth.

Rather than a journey leading to a single climatic revelation, Henry Miller's in *The Colossus of Maroussi* is structured by a series of epiphanies that leave him on the steps of revolution, moving as a "citizen of the world . . . dedicated to the recovery of the divinity of man." The epiphanies manifest as a flow of lyrical ramblings, rising from Miller's experiences in such mythic spots as Athens, Eleusis, Poros, Epidaurus, Hydra, Mycenae, Knossus, and Phaestos. Each stop along the way has an accompanying revelation, all flooded with light. In Athens, the birthing place of democracy and Miller's launching and landing point, light appears in the form of Katsimbalis, the "colossus" of the story. Katsimbalis, so much like Kazantzakis's Zorba, is a great talker, eater, and drinker, a man who doesn't believe in moderation of any kind, embodying a world of sensual delight. Katsimbalis serves as one who affects life without imposing his authority upon it, an emancipated being who transforms the picking of a roadside flower into a "great event" simply by infusing the gesture with "all that he thought and felt about flowers, which is like saying—a universe." For Miller, to pick a flower is to pick a flower; the universe passes through all without regard for definitions. And just as life is movement, Miller also understands there is no teleology to the drift, nowhere we need to get to, no goal. "Voyages are accomplished inwardly," he says, "and the most hazardous ones, needless to say, are made without moving from the spot."[8]

From Athens Miller makes his way to Eleusis, seat of the cult of Demeter, the Great Mother Goddess and Mother of the Corn. "This is not a Christian highway," he says, entering the city. "There is no suffering, no martyrdom, no flagellation of the flesh connected with this processional artery." In Eleusis Miller is penetrated by the light of mystery, a light that "makes one naked, exposed, isolated in a metaphysical bliss which makes everything clear without being known." He is cleansed by light flowing through his naked body, stripping him of the "barnacles which have accumulated from centuries of lying in stagnant waters," or what he calls "Christian humbug."[9] It is in this brightened state he realizes "there is no salvation in becoming adapted to a world which is crazy," which is to say, the world preparing for war.

Juxtaposed with the naked and crazy of Eleusis is the light of the "hushed still world" of Epidaurus, the kind of world "man will inherit when he ceases to indulge in murder and thievery." In this quietness Miller discovers a deep peace, and in peace, surrender. To surrender is to let go of clinging of any kind, and especially "clinging to God," because "God long ago abandoned us in order that we might realize the joy of attaining godhood through our own efforts." Those who cling to God cling to war. It is only when we let go of our clinging, of our will to possess and be possessed, we enter into a "new life" defined only by ceaseless flow where self-consciousness dissipates, where the borders of Buddha and Christ,

7 Miller, Henry. *The Books of My Life*, New Directions, 1969, pp. 124-25.

8 *Colossus* pp. 238-41.

9 Ibid, p. 45. While Miller had great respect for Christ, he saw little good in orthodox Christianity. "By emphasizing the soulful qualities of man Christianity succeeded only in disembodying man," he wrote later in *Colossus*. For Miller, the key to happiness is the incarnation of spirit into flesh, which is radically opposed to the orthodox notion of separation of body and spirit. No doubt, there is a long tradition of Christians who see Christ as manifesting in the human heart, and who, in turn, stand for non-violence and peace. Bless the Christians who walk with an open heart. May we gather at the river.

heaven and hell, earth and sky disappear. By surrendering we become indifferent, enter a "continuity of existence,"[10] a primordial soup that links us to everything that breathes and, ultimately, to everything that doesn't. Following Epidaurus, Miller meets up with Katsimbalis in Mycenae where the two men make their way to Agamemnon's tomb. From the trail Miller sights a shepherd and his flock on the mountainside. The shepherd is as old and enduring as the hills, and for Miller, the manifestation of the earth song that has risen through humanity from the beginning. It is at Mycenae, upon crossing the bridge above Clytemnestra's grave, that Miller, so inspired, falls into a gap of time, a break where he experiences the world as "pure spirit." Miller understands such a spot to be a kind of *axis mundi*, a point at which the entire world fans out in all directions. It is in this dazzling lapse of borders, in this high tide of eternity, that Miller gains insight on the murder, war and human sacrifice ushered into the world by Agamemnon, the king of Mycenae, and leader of the Greeks at the siege of Troy. Before Agamemnon, Miller historicizes, "there were gods who roamed everywhere, men like us in form and substance, but free, electrically free." However, upon the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia to Diana, the Trojan War, and the murder of Agamemnon by his wife, Clytemnestra, the gods deserted the world, taking with them the secret to freedom and eternity. Miller concludes that the secret of the gods can be ours, but only *"when we cease to murder"* [italics his].[11]

Just as he discovered in Eleusis and Epidaurus, Miller comes to understand at Mycenae that no amount of searching will bring us closer to God, that indeed paradise resides within, and that war—whether it be the external condition of institutionalized violence, or the self-loathing created by orthodox morality—will forever keep us from experiencing the most fertile ground, that is, the earth below our feet so nourished by the bones of our ancestors, mythic or otherwise.

After similar epiphanies in places like Knossus and Phaestos, Miller returns to Athens where he visits an Armenian soothsayer who lives in the most destitute part of the city, noting that in the "midst of the most terrible poverty and suffering there nevertheless emanated a glow which was holy."[12] Only in sorrow and suffering, Miller comes to believe, "does man draw close to his fellow man; only then, it seems, does his life become beautiful." And so the soothsayer, beautiful as beautiful can be, reads Miller's life, wakes him to the fact that he has created many enemies from his writing, and caused much harm and suffering to others because of it. Miller also learns that he has all the signs of divinity about him, and that his feet are chained to the earth. The soothsayer sees Miller living a charmed life and tells him that if he never gives up he will be saved. Also, no matter how desperate Miller's needs become, he will always have friends. The soothsayer tells Miller to have no misgivings about the future. In the dark days to come, forget about money, for money will do nothing to protect against the iniquities of the world.[13]

While Miller is chastised, he also finds liberation in the soothsayer's reading, in the understanding that art can never be greater than life itself, and that his devotion to his

10 The term "continuity of existence" comes from Georges Bataille's *Erotism* (1957). While I don't know that Miller and Bataille ever met, or were even aware of the other's work, they shared similar thinking in regard to the body being primary to mystical experience.

11 *Colossus*, pp. 91-5.

12 It's interesting to note that Miller's circle back to Athens and to a place that is "holy"echoes Thoreau's return from his journey in his essay "Walking," where he ends famously, "So we saunter toward the Holy Land, till one day the sun shall shine more brightly than ever he had done, shall perchance shine into our minds and hearts, and light up our whole lives with a great awakening light, as warm and serene and golden as on a bankside in autumn."

13 *Colossus*, pp. 200-7.

writing, which up to then had always been about the future and what tomorrow will bring, is the "highest and last phase of egotism." Miller doesn't regret the course of his life, doesn't regret his devotion to his practice, but accepts it fully as his own. In accepting writing for all it is (and isn't) he can let it go, never has to write again, and in letting go, in surrendering, he opens to the art anew. As we now know, Miller continued writing well into his eighties. What changed wasn't the act of writing itself but his perception of it.[14] Art, for Miller, became a spiritual practice, an initiation that, finally, had nothing to do with personal identity and ego, but everything to do with the ability to open the pores of his being, a process that permitted him to give and receive freely. Near the end of *Colossus*, Miller writes:

> It is not until I look about me and realize that the vast majority of my fellow men are desperately trying to hold on to what they possess or to increase their possessions that I begin to understand that the wisdom of giving is not so simple as it seems. Giving and receiving are at bottom one thing, dependent upon whether one lives open or closed. Living openly one becomes a medium, a transmitter; living thus, as a river, one experiences life to the full, flows along with the current of life, and dies in order to live again as an ocean. [15]

To open. To live as a river. To flow. To die. To live again. And in this eternal process, in living openly, the cosmos passes through us just as we pass through the cosmos. To be sure, Miller's ontological rendering is not unlike Emerson's, where in "Nature" he writes, "Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God."[16] When considering Emerson's transparent eye-ball or Miller's ontology of flow, it's helpful to remember that both men understand direct experience as primary to personal awakening. While philosophy might work as a trail to the river, the trail is given up and disappears at the water's edge, at the very spot where Buddha sits, where borders fade in the rhythms of heartbeat and breath. Most of us test the river without jumping in, never relinquishing a foothold to the land, to our various creeds and prejudices. There's no shame in this; the river is frightening and threatens our safety. At least we imagine it so. Miller, however, believes we're tricking ourselves when trying to anchor to the land, agreeing with another of Emerson's famous maxims, "There are no fixtures in nature. The universe is fluid and volatile. Permanence is but a word of degrees. Our globe seen by God is a transparent law, not a mass of facts."[17]

An ancient practice, this opening to the world. Throughout Miller's work he often mentions the "true revolutionaries" and "inspirers and activators" of such practice, including Jesus, Lao-Tse, Buddha, St. Francis of Assisi, and Krishnamurti. As previously noted, Emerson is of such a body, and exhorts us, as do all such pilgrims, to walk into the dark

14 From *Henry Miller on Writing*, 1944: "Writing, like life itself, is a voyage of discovery. The adventure is a metaphysical one: it is a way of approaching life indirectly, of acquiring a total rather than a partial view of the universe. The writer lives between the upper and lower worlds; he takes the path in order to eventually become that path himself."

15 *Colossus*, p. 206.

16 *Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, Oxford, 1990, p. 6.

17 Ibid. p. 166. Quotation is from the essay "Circles," a piece that heavily influenced the American Pragmatism of William James, et al. As always, Emerson calls for constant transformation by way of self-reflection. "The life of man is a self-evolving circle," he writes, "which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without ends."

forest, hone in on the underside of loamy earth, and in the process of intense focus, release our mean egos, if only temporarily, if only in a cloud. Miller listens to Emerson and moves on. If anything, Miller is a walker, pausing from time to time to bend, kiss, caress. Though place is important to Miller, he never stops walking, never stops passing through, never stops making love. Miller pays attention to the lips he kisses and the lips kissing back. It is in contact that we become most naked, that the here and now is unveiled and released. Ah, to release a moment from the confines of time, to break the dams, unclog the veins, open the pores, break the doors from the jambs. Lips touch, breath shared. What light, Whitman, what light, Emerson, what light, Thoreau. Jesus, the light of the world. Buddha, Mohammed, Krishnamurti, shine on.

Henry Miller's path through Greece is that of a spiritual anarchist. While understanding that all things are connected in a web of life, that we depend upon one another for survival, he also knew that we must, in the end, walk alone. Teachers are helpful, yes, but if not abandoned will only throttle the instincts needed to negotiate the borders of existence. In the years just preceding the war (and many that followed), Krishnamurti, another great influence to Miller, was not shy in asserting that we should seek no guides, counselors, leaders, or fall into systems of belief. For Krishnamurti, the only revolution is the revolution of the self. Lead your own life, he professed. Discover your own strength. No one can save you, so save yourself.[18]

Henry Miller first learned of Krishnamurti from friends in Paris in the early 30s. By this time Krishnamurti had left his leadership position of *The Order of the Star of the East*, an organization founded in 1911 by Theosophists. He left the Order precisely because 1) he was seen as its leader, and 2) it was an organization at all. "When you look for an authority to lead you to spirituality," he said in his renowned parting speech, "you are bound automatically to build an organization around that authority. By the very creation of that organization, which, you think, will help this authority to lead you to spirituality, you are held in a cage."[19] Already deeply suspicious of group-think, Miller found such teaching against institutionalization especially inspiring. Miller mentions Krishnamurti but once in "*Colossus*" and only in passing. He does, however, write an essay devoted to Krishnamurti in *The Books in My Life* (1969).[20] In the essay Miller finds most compelling Krishnamurti's ability to think freely, without "opinion and prejudice." According to Miller, what distinguishes Krishnamurti from other great world teachers is his nakedness, that he is dressed "only in the frailty of the flesh [and] relies entirely upon the spirit, which is one with the flesh." Spirit one with the flesh. For Miller, not only is there is no other path to the river, there is no other river.

One need not look very deeply into Krishnamurti before discovering at the heart of his teaching is the idea of letting go of individual prejudice. What Miller sees as flow Krishnamurti calls the "creative release of the individual," which necessarily leads to "abundant energy rightly directed so that . . . life will have expansive and profound significance." Krishnamurti sees such a release as "integrated revolution . . . starting not from the outside but from within." The revolution he speaks of doesn't take place by departmental thinking, specialization, or categorizing. That is, it makes no sense to exclude, to mold, to defend. The key, for Krishnamurti, is to integrate. To integrate is to become fully alive. The

18 See *Total Freedom: The Essential Krishnamurti*, Harper/Collins, 1996.

19 Ibid, p. 4.

20 Essay was probably written in the 1950s.

practice of integration begins with the ability to listen directly. What keeps us from doing so, however, is that everything we hear is filtered through judgments and beliefs. How can we really listen, Krishnamurti asks, if we're already convinced of conclusions, if our opinions are already solidified, if definitions are already clear? If we are conditioned as capitalists, catholics, or carpenters, if we are so persuaded by education, religion, or art, how can we approach the world with a fresh mind? We can't. Krishnamurti and Miller both caution against becoming repositories of fear, understanding that all conflict arises from this fear, all war begins in the conditioning of our minds. All war, all battle, all conflict. This being the case, the only way to end war is to free ourselves from the conditioning, to drop the borders, to flow. Not easy, for sure, this river. It will never be simple to cough blood into a handkerchief, to lose a child, to die. Still, to recognize that even our perception of death and disease is a form of conditioning gives us hope of becoming free of the same.[21]

Like Miller, Krishnamurti did not embrace the patriotism preceding WWII. Living in the United States at the time, he insisted that, as malevolent as Germany's militaristic designs might be, American foreign policy was amply imperialistic and not to be excluded as part of the problem. Beyond the political implications, Krishnamurti believed that nationalism and war were merely symptoms manifesting from the crisis that resided at the heart of individuals, that the conflict was directly related to our narrow-mindedness, to our inability to free ourselves from entrenched thinking. "You are the world," he said to his followers in 1939. Heal yourself and you heal the world. It should be no surprise that Krishnamurti was harshly criticized for his views, accused of failing to engage the terror of war directly. In 1940—the same year Miller was forced to leave Greece because of the war—after coming under the scrutiny of the FBI and being suspected of partaking in a plan to assassinate Roosevelt, Krishnamurti went into a self-imposed exile from public speaking and didn't return until the mid-40s.[22]

It can be fairly argued that both Miller and Krishnamurti were mistaken in their opposition to the war, a mistake that, in turn, weakens their more general claims against the controlling orthodoxy. It's true, most today believe that if the U.S. had not entered the conflict, German atrocities would have continued, that the war would've dragged on for years. In fact, it is hard to argue *against* such justification. But there is a fundamental flaw in this reasoning, and it is this: to this day, the so-called "war" has not ended. Hitler was stopped, yes, but *directly from that conflict* grew the split of Europe and the Cold War, which gave rise to the Korean struggle, the overthrow of Cuba, the bloodstained fields of Vietnam and Cambodia, hundreds upon hundreds of thousands killed or disappeared in South and Central American, the genocide in East Timor and the Philippines, and any number of savage conflicts in Africa and Eastern Europe. Likewise, it is commonly stated that the Cold War ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the demise of the Soviet Union. Tell that to the Serbs and Croatians. Tell that to the Columbians, the Koreans, the Nepalese. Tell that to those who helped drive the Soviet Union from Afghanistan in the 1980s and are now fighting the Americans in those very same mountains. Tell that to the capitalists who have profited mightily and continue to profit from the mass proliferation of weapons so very

21 *Total Freedom,* "Can We Create a New Culture?" pp. 178-87.

22 Vernon, Roland. *Star in the East*, Sentient, 2000., pp. 208-9.

"necessary to defend freedom and democracy everywhere."[23]

End of war? Is there any chance that political maneuvering will ever put an end to institutionalized violence? Is there any chance the orthodox thinking that so passionately defends war as a just means of resolution will ever lead to peace?

Henry Miller said no. And in saying no, he did what he knew to do. Focusing on the self, he recognized his own limitations, his own borders of prejudice and fear, and by breathing through his conditioning and opening to the eternal current, he watched those borders shift and spread and dissipate, if only in the moment, one epiphany leading to another and yet one more. The process that started in Paris and took form in Greece stayed with Miller the rest of his life. After completing *Colossus* in New York in 1941 he made his way to California and settled on a Big Sur cliff not far from where great rivers widen and disappear. While Miller grew to love the coastal ridges, Greece never left him, in fact became a place he returned to in his imagination again and again, a spot of time that nourished his spirit like no other, one that contributed mightily to the abiding creativity he experienced till the end of his life, an experience he called God. And in God, at the edge of the sea where the sky does not end, he held his hands up in benediction, offered blessings to all beings of the earth, to the critters and the trees, to men and women everywhere. "We are all one substance," he said, "one problem, one solution."[24]

The light dawns upon us still, even now in the midst of war.

23 This phrase, of course, is the rallying-cry of the most militaritistic among us today, the neo-conservatives. The neo-cons, influenced by Leo Strauss's platonic philosophy and political science of the 50s, and led by Norman Podhoretz, writer and editor of *Commentary* magazine from 1960-95, gained their current political might by steadfastly churning out reactionary propaganda in support of what is best described as "American Exceptionalism," where imperialist tendencies are apparently viewed as a good thing. (Why not if the imperial power is exceptional?) The voice of the neo-cons is best represented today in *The Weekly Standard*, a magazine funded by Rupert Murdock of Fox News fame. See Andrew Bacevich's *The New American Militarism*, Oxford, 2005, for a detailed examination.

24 See the lovely ending of Miller's *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch*, New Directions, 1957.