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THE BOOSTER/DELTA NEXUS

HENRY MILLER AND HIS FRIENDS
IN THE LITERARY WORLD OF PARIS AND LONDON
ON THE EVE OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

by

Patrick Mansur Freiherr Praetorius von Richthofen

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submitted for the degree of Ph.D. in the University of Durham

1987

Volume Two : pp. 1-388
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FabBMV.  The Faber Book of Modern Verse. (ed. by Michael Roberts).


FJR.  Fritz Raddatz.  Eros und Tod.

FMHR.  Hans Reichel.  (ed. by Francois Mathey).

Ford  Hugh Ford.  Published in Paris.

FrF.  Freud und die Folgen.  (ed. by Dieter Eicke).

FrLD.  G.S. Fraser.  Lawrence Durrell.

FrLDWW.  G.S. Fraser.  Lawrence Durrell (Writers and their Work).

FSAA.  Francis Scarfe.  Auden and After.


Glicksberg  Charles Glicksberg.  The Sexual Revolution in Modern America.

GOLW.  George Orwell.  The Lost Writings.

Gülich  Elisabeth Gülich.  "Raymond Queneau".

GWMM.  George Wickes.  Henry Miller.

Hamlet  Michael Fraenkel and Henry Miller.  The Michael Fraenkel - Henry Miller Correspondence called Hamlet.

Harrison  John Harrison.  The Reactionaries.

HISA.  Henry Treece.  How I See Apocalypse.

HM.  Hugo Manning.  The It and the Odyssey of Henry Miller.


Hoops  Wyclef Hoops.  "Lawrence Durrell".


HR.  The Happy Rock (ed. by Bern Porter).

HRCat.  Hans Reichel.  Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris (catalogue).

HRSW.  Herbert Read.  Selected Writings.

HRTM.  Herbert Read.  The Tenth Muse.

HTDT.  Henry Treece.  Dylan Thomas.

HT.  Hugh Thomas.  The Spanish Civil War.


Hynes  Samuel Hynes.  The Auden Generation.

IE.  Egon Friedell.  Ist die Erde bewohnt?

IH.  Ihab Hassan.  The Literature of Silence.

InHML.  The International Henry Miller Letter.


JS30s.  Julian Symons.  The Thirties.


KC.  Kingdom Come.

Kermode  Frank Kermode.  Puzzles and Epiphanies.


Kirk  Russell Kirk.  Eliot and his Age.


KRDAS.  Kathleen Raine.  Defending Ancient Springs.

LB.  London Bulletin.
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RACP. The Collected Poems of Ronald Bottrall.
RBTP. Ronald Bottrall. The Turning Path.
Remember Henry Miller. Remember to Remember.
RHP. Rayner Heppenstall. The Intellectual Part.
RIB. Henry Miller. Reunion in Barcelona.
RIBS. Alfred Perls. Reunion in Big Sur.
RR. The Right Review.
RSS. Robert Short. "Surrealism".
RT. Alfred Perls. Round Trip.
RWCS. Raymond Williams. Culture and Society.
SatW. Henry Miller. Sunday After the War.
SB. Noel Fitch. Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation.
Scheugl Hans Scheugl and Ernst Schmidt. Eine Subgeschichte des Films.
Schmidt Michael Schmidt. An Introduction to Fifty Modern British Poets.
Sontag Susan Sontag. A Susan Sontag Reader
Spirit Lawrence Durrell. Spirit Of Place.
SS30s. Stephen Spender. The Thirties and After.
Steiner George Steiner. Language and Silence.
STR. George Steiner. A Reader.
Synth. Synthèses.
TC. Two Cities.
TCA. Twentieth Century Authors. First Supplement. (ed. by Stanley Kurtz and Howard Haycraft).
TCFL. Harry Moore. Twentieth Century French Literature.
TCL. Twentieth Century Literature.
TCV. Twentieth Century Verse.
ThiH. Henry Miller. This is Henry, Henry Miller from Brooklyn.
Thurley Geoffrey Thurley. The Ironic Harvest.
T'ien Hsia. The T'ien Hsia Monthly.
Tindall William Tindall. Forces in Modern British Literature.
TG. This Quarter.
TTC. The Twentieth Century (ed. by Bernard Bergonzi).
TWM. Wyndham Lewis. Time and Western Man.
Unterecker John Unterecker. Lawrence Durrell.
WF Surr. Wallace Fowlie. Age of Surrealism.
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I. The Transition to Delta.

Late autumn and early winter 1937 saw Henry Miller growing tired of the Booster. Anais Nin cited Miller as saying: "I want to live a deeper life, I know my defect, I expand too much, I should not, for instance, have done the magazine". And she commented: "The Booster has dispersed his energies" (AN.ii.273). A deeper life and work on the second Tropic, these were Miller's aims - from which he was being distracted by a host of other activities and concerns. He had become one of the editors of Volontés, which not only meant work but also an added financial burden (LtAN.179). He was the European editor of J.P.Cooney's Phoenix. He worked for the Villa Seurat Series, took the burden of publishing The Black Book on his shoulders, dealt with the Obelisk Press, negotiated with Denoel and Steele over a French edition of Black Spring, still scouted around for subscribers for Anais Nin's diaries, sent out to little avail numerous begging letters (including one for his old father) to celebrities such as Somerset Maugham, T.S.Eliot, Rebecca West and others, carried on his Gargantuan correspondence and worked on shorter essays and stories. It is not difficult to see why, after four numbers of the Booster, his interest was flagging (Corr.121). Among the reasons Frederick Hoffman gave for the short life-span of a little magazine were two which now directly threatened the Booster's existence: lack of interest on the part of the editor and lack of funds (Hoffman 5f). With the magazine running into serious financial difficulties, with the lack of positive critical response, with Durrell writing from England that the Booster was anything but a success, and that few people understood what it was all about, Miller felt that there was no real point in going on....
As we have seen, even admirers of Miller and Anais Nin and Durrell failed to appreciate the Booster; the Villa Seurat work must have seemed to many as curious and isolated a rivulet as Potocki’s zany Right Review, leagues away from the literary mainstream. The impression created in the foregoing chapter, however, is only one side of a more complex situation. For if the Boosters were outsiders, they were still a part of a romantic stream of art, and, importantly, this stream was growing more powerful as the artistic impulse animating the Auden generation was beginning to ebb away...

Durrell was in London, busy collecting material for another issue of the magazine, again advertising Villa Seurat work as he went along. His letters never failed to mention how he “suffered” in literary London. Many years later even he kept up this habit:

the thought of dear old Potocki or dear old Prince Monolulu strolling up the drive would make my heart sink purely by association. The grubby little English world; the Fitzroy Tavern; Nina Hamnett; Aleister Crowley…” (Mosaic.xi.H.2.48)

Still, in the boon days of 1937, riding on a crest of growing recognition, Durrell was glad to be in London, reading in the British Museum, going for a drink at the Café Royal, for a meal at the then exotic Greek restaurant in Denman Street, browsing in Zwemmer’s bookshop, or in David Archer’s shop in Parton Street, “the haunt of Dylanites and Bakerites” as Grigson has said (GGRRec.43). He was happy to be there and he was establishing important literary contacts all the while.

One of these was Dylan Thomas. Their encounter was no chance meeting and it had to do with the Booster, for Miller and the Villa Seurat, who were most alive to Thomas’ work, had sent him, it seems, the Booster circular. Their subsequent association was not only one of writers who admired each others work; it was, as we shall see, both a symptom, and, in a way, an active force in the formation of that new romantic upsurge that was to characterise English literature as Europe drifted into war...
Dylan Thomas and Caitlin
In a letter to A. Desmond Hawkins dated the 30th October 1937, Dylan Thomas reported that he had been receiving some "strange requests from magazines". Apart from letters from New Verse and Twentieth Century Verse and Transition, Thomas wrote of a request "for a contribution to a special number of Henry Miller's 'The Booster', 'completely devoted to 'The Womb'". And he added: "The only contribution to give Mr. Miller, anyway, is a typewritten reply to the effect that I too am, passionately, devoted to the womb" (DTCL.262f).

In actual fact, Thomas did send material to Paris. Though he did not appear in the "Air-Conditioned Womb Number", the three Delta issues which followed all contained a contribution of his. As he told Durrell in a letter around Christmas 1937, he had sent "two prose pieces" to Miller, who replied that "owing to some unexplained difficulties" he could not say when they would appear. Thomas found all this "rather silly,..., sending you stuff to keep and not to print" (TC.i.4.3). In "The Shades of Dylan Thomas", Durrell recalled:

on a flying visit to England I had been commissioned by Henry Miller to investigate the story that Anna Wickham, the poetess, had a large private diary, for publication, parts of which were regarded as actionable if produced in England itself. (Encounter.ix.51.56)

Durrell found that the diary did not exist, but he did meet Dylan Thomas at Anna Wickham's house. Thomas was apparently very interested in Miller and his circle, in "the Paris Group, as he called it" (ibid.). He was also interested in the Booster. Their meeting was very short, for Durrell had to leave for Innsbruck. Like so many writers and artists he met, Durrell invited Thomas to Paris and to Corfu, but the Welshman declined, saying: "I think England is the very place for a fluent and fiery writer. The highest hymns of the sun are written in the dark" (TC.i.4.2). On the envelope of his letter, Durrell asked Thomas for a poem "for a special number" (ibid.3). And although Thomas did not want to send more material if it was not going to be used, he did say that he had a poem. "I'd love to send you the poem of course", but he wanted clarity (TC.i.4.3). Why Durrell - "poised here on a fucking Alp" - wrote to Miller at Christmas that "Dylan Thomas has no poems, he says" (Corr.119), is hard to say, for the "Poem (For Caitlin)", an intricate nine stanza love poem, was to be one of the
jewels of the first Delta, a poetry number(1).

In his first long letter to Durrell, Thomas also referred to a book with the proposed title The Burning Babe: 16 Stories. This collection was as yet unpublished. Thomas and Durrell discussed the possibility of having it issued by Jack Kahane's Obelisk Press, possibly as another flower of the Villa Seurat Series. The reason was that Thomas was growing more and more impatient with his own publisher, the poet and translator George Reavey, whose Europa Press was also based in Paris. It is important to see that for one of the major poets of the period Miller and the Obelisk Press presented a genuine alternative for publishing items which could not be issued in England. Thomas wrote to Reavey in July 1938: "Henry Miller says the Obelisk Press is keen to get the stories. He'd like to know if, when, + how" (DTCL.313). Reavey apparently thwarted these plans. He had other things in mind:

A small, expensive edition will be done in Paris first, then a purged one here. I hate the Paris idea, but Reavey bought out my copyright. (DTCP.314f)

The Burning Babe was, in fact, announced in quite a number of magazines as appearing presently. The April Delta contained such an announcement for Spring 1938; another "magazine actually announced a review of the book appearing in their next issue" (Rolph 39). However, the collection had been ill-fated from the start: a number of publishers had turned it down and it continued to run into difficulties, as English printers feared prosecution for obscenity. Even in late summer of 1938 Thomas was lamenting the many cuts the English version of his book would have to suffer. Eventually, however, after a long and frustrating correspondence, Reavey pulled out and Thomas was able to rearrange it completely. He pruned the book, threw out all but "the best" stories, and added poems - including the "Poem (for Caitlin)". The result was The Map of Love which came out in 1939 (DTS1.224). One of the stories he took out of the original version was "Prologue to an Adventure". In the correspondence with Reavey Thomas had written:
The only story I can think of which might cause a few people a small and really unnecessary alarm is 'The Prologue to an Adventure'. This I could cut out from the book, and substitute a story about my grandfather who was a very clean old man. (CFDT.237)

Censorship regulations were confusing and confused, it seems, for this "Prologue to an Adventure" had in fact already been issued in a little magazine called Wales in the summer of 1937. Re-printed in the winter of 1938 in the second issue of Delta, it was, as we shall see, a poetic introduction to what was to become a travesty of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. This novel was never finished. Had it been written, however, and had the war not interfered, it might possibly have appeared under the same label as the work of Miller and Anais Nin and Lawrence Durrell: "And my next book will be that reversed version of Pilgrim's Progress, + will appear with the Obelisk Press, Paris" (DTSL.185)...  

On this trip to England Durrell did not meet another new contributor to the poetry Delta. Of Nicholas Moore, the editors knew nothing, as they said, "except that we like him" (D.i.25). Nicholas Moore has said: "I was introduced to the Villa Seurat people more or less by accident"(Letter 28th March 1982). Still at school in Leighton Park in Reading, Moore had become fleetingly acquainted with Christopher Kininmouth who in turn appears to have been a friend of Patrick Evans and Durrell. "What happened, I believe - my memory is a little uncertain - was that Kininmouth gave me The Booster's address to send poems to"(ibid.). A long and fruitful association began. Moore, by now an undergraduate at Cambridge, was precisely the kind of collaborator Durrell was looking for. He was preparing to launch his own little magazine, Seven, which he edited with G.S.Fraser. It was financed by a wealthy friend called John Goodland. Goodland, in fact, later came to pay for the Delta of Easter 1939 as well...  

When Durrell returned to France in January 1938, Parisian life and the Villa Seurat quickly took hold of him again. What is noticeable, however, is that the previous autumn's warm optimism and the great sense of community had changed. A more sober note entered the letters and journal entries of the day. Perhaps David Gascoyne's return to a state of anxiety and depression after months of relative happiness was most
revealing. He spoke of a resurgence of "le monde désert, a terrible fundamental boredom, a terrible sense of being alone among people who are all alone with themselves and inarticulate" (DG.ii.33). Was it a mere coincidence that from January to October 1938 "Larry" was not mentioned once in Anais Nin's journals? The reasons for this change of atmosphere were not merely local.

Slowly, very slowly, the sombre outside world was forcing its way into the universe of the Villa Seurat, too, the fear and anxiety born of the disintegration of political Europe taking its toll even here. David Gascoyne said: "The atmosphere of this putrid continent becomes every day more horrifying and more impossible to breathe"(DG.ii.37).

In March, Hitler's armies marched into Austria. Events beyond the frontiers took on a new, vicious purport for the people living in France, in Paris, even for Miller's friends and acquaintances. One day, Anais Nin's friend, Gonzalo More picked up a newspaper and saw on the front page a photograph of his best friend "murdered the night before by the fascists" (AN.ii.284). Fear was growing in the hearts of many. Fear, however, was not growing in the heart of Henry Miller. Although Michael Fraenkel, writing from afar, was deeply sceptical about his friend's Eastern tranquility, Anais Nin noted: "Henry is the only joyous one among us, the 'Happy Rock' he calls himself. He does not care what happens to the rest of the world" (AN.ii.295). David Gascoyne has suggested that one of the reasons for Miller's and Durrell's "apparently willful irresponsibility" was that both of them encouraged by Anais Nin's appreciative adulation, felt themselves at that time to be at the outset of a new phase of creativity, and did not want to face the prospect of having this stemmed by the outbreak of a war in which they might find themselves involved. (Letter 26th Feb.1983)

One need not reiterate the many stations of their growing successes to see how hateful it must have been for them (in spite of their Neronic gesturings) to see the world spiralling down into a deep abyss while they themselves were in such a promising phase. The lights were going out in Europe - just as they were stepping into the limelight...
The Villa Seurat was published in more and more literary reviews. Sometimes the same article appeared in different magazines, almost as if they did not have enough to go around. The first half of the year 1938, the period of the first Delta, was particularly rich, their work appearing in Transition, in Mesures, in the T’ien Hsia Monthly, in the London Bulletin, in the Phoenix, in Seven, and others. In France, even that blast furnace of Parisian intellectual life, the Nouvelle Revue Française was mentioning with reserved approval Miller's contributions to other French periodicals. The January Cahiers du Sud issued "L'Univers de la Mort". And the NRF said: "faible dans son jugement, mais d'une exceptionelle richesse" (NRF.ccxcv.528). Jean Wahl, also writing in the NRF, spoke of Miller's contribution to Volontés as: "la lettre pleine de sens de Miller aux surréalistes" (NRF.ccxcv.687f). Volontés, financed in part by Miller himself, printed altogether five items of his from January to June, and the first of these was his "Paix! Quelle Merveille!"...

In April the Durrells left for Corfu. The Booster days were now definitely over, and, as if to mark this ending, the fifth number of the Villa Seurat review appeared that very same month; but its name was changed to Delta. Miller's biographer Jay Martin, concluded his three page account of the Booster with the lines: "Its title was changed to Delta and its contents were thenceforth largely selected by Durrell, who assumed financial responsibility" (Martin 329). There is a tendency in the critical literature about the Villa Seurat to mention and to discuss the Booster while ignoring almost entirely Delta. But the relation between the two was in fact an intricate pattern of continuity and change. On the inside cover of the first Delta one read the following programmatic statement:

Beginning with this issue the Booster becomes Delta. It should be remembered that circumstances imposed upon us a title which we did our best to live down to. The change merely marks a voluntary break with an ambiance which was never ours. It neither means a change of heart nor even one of attitude. (D.i.inside front cover)
To say that nothing had changed was a bridge to ease the transition from the Booster to the new Delta. But it was more as well. Booster positions continued to be asserted long after the first issue of the rebaptised review had appeared. Thus a Delta ad on the back cover of the summer Seven was clearly reminiscent of the earlier Booster placard:

DELTA. A review in French and English which is gay, serious and alive. Edited by Alfred Perlès, Lawrence Durrell, Henry Miller and William Saroyan, from 18 Villa Seurat, Paris. Non-Political, Non-Educational, Non-Co-operative, Non-Ethical, Non-Literary, Non-Consistent, Non-Contemporary. (Seven.i.back cover)

Delta presented itself as unchanged, as identical, or almost identical, with the original Booster. The outward emphasis was on continuity. Behind the closed doors of Miller's studio, of Durrell's flat on the Parc de Montsouris and Perlès' dog-leg room at the Impasse de Rouet, things were different, if the epistolary debate of how and whether the Booster should be continued is anything to go by. This exchange of letters between Miller and Durrell had begun around Christmas following Durrell's report that the magazine had not gone down well in London. In his missive there were hints that Durrell was in the process of disengaging himself from the buffonery of the Villa Seurat. It was also a first sign of the new tone the magazine was to adopt. "I made myself the sheathed sword of the outfit", he wrote to Miller: "and pictured you and Alf as a couple of insane and incorrigible cherubims running everthing into the ground as hard and fast as possible" (Corr.119). Durrell was a different man in London, not the puckish clown but the litterateur, not the prankster but the poet. When in London, Durrell, a corrigeble cherubim, it appears, did not feel entirely a part of the Villa Seurat. He saw himself rather as a translator and a bridge:

You know, it's good to be able to get twenty paces away from you people and take a good look at you all in perspective. I see that from now on you will have to rely on me a great deal as PUBLIC OPINION. (ibid.)
What he reported of the Booster's reception has already been quoted. In the opinion of literary London it had fallen between two stools. Apparently, this had also become the opinion of Lawrence Durrell. He suggested certain changes. More important than the idea of installing "a column dealing with books we like in thumbnail reviews, a few lines about them regardless of when they were published or what not" (Corr.120), was the plan to open the magazine to all and sundry so long as there was a chance that they would be printed in return: "We must widen out and print everybody, good or bad. Then, in exchange, they will print us for better or for worse" (ibid.). Hitherto, despite the joking announcement that editorial chairs were for sale, the Villa Seurat editors had printed what they liked and nothing else. Now Durrell was planning to run the magazine in a utilitarian way, according to sober do ut des principles. Henry Miller did not go along. In his response to Durrell's proposals, he said the following:

I really disagree strongly with you about accepting poor things because the chap is good for us or likeable, or this or that. I think it's a mistake, and gets one deeper and deeper into the mire. (Corr.121)

The mire Miller meant was compromise. He said: "I feel that trying to get ads, distribution, etc. brings about the compromise which is hurting us"(ibid.). The Booster, that much was certain, was in difficulties, all the efforts to make it self-supporting had been in vain, the "Air-Conditioned Womb Number" not even paid for yet, and indeed something radical had to happen if the review was to be saved - if it was to be continued at all. Miller's proposition, a "little Chinese policy", as he put it, was diametrically opposed to Durrell's. Instead of widening out, Miller argued, the Booster should make itself scarce, become an exclusively "private affair for subscribers only", something rare and thus all the more attractive, costing 100 francs for a "guaranteed" dozen instead of the former 50 francs. It was to be aimed at that small readership "of whom we are absolutely sure" (Corr.121). One could let the public and the troublesome American Country Club believe that the review had folded. The less people involved the better, was Miller's view, and so instead of printing more, Miller wanted to publish less, "much less", on cheaper paper, and to make the magazine "an affair of contents"(ibid.).
In one point Miller agreed with his young friend: "I feel we have fallen between two stools, as you hint" (ibid.), the magazine's punch, they felt, had been dissipated in two contrary directions. It is, however, not clear whether this realisation implied for Miller — as it did for Durrell — that there would be no more clowning and buffoonery in future issues.

What is certain is that though Durrell's concept was not accepted, Miller's suggestions were not put into practice either, at least not until the Dismemberment Delta of the following autumn. When he sent his letter to Durrell in January, Miller was tired, and the ideas he expressed were introduced on an abdicatory and very sombre note: "I feel weighed down with all the responsibilities that I seem somehow to have assumed. Beginning to overwhelm me" (ibid.). Soon he was to present himself as the 'Happy Rock' again, but in these winter months of 1937 he had enough. In fact, as he confessed to Durrell, he was feeling quite suicidal at times. Understandably, the old Booster would hardly be continued in this spirit, and he prophesied that the next issue of the review would be "the last, probably" (ibid.). Though the smug notice in Delta saying that the new name did not imply a change of attitude stood in a bleak contrast to the fact that the main agent of the original Booster was pulling out, none of this ever surfaced in editorial notices. Though Durrell, who had now taken charge and financial responsibility, was planning to turn off precisely those tones of the old review which had made it something truly out of the ordinary in the little magazine world of the late 1930s, none of the doubts and hesitancies ever came up in Delta...

Notes

1. One might also mention that the impoverished Thomas was usually paid for his contributions, as Nicholas Moore has said, sometimes even twice, "forgetting" that he had already been paid (Letter 13th Sept. 1982). Although the price may have varied 7/6 was the sum he suggested for "January 1939" and for another poem, as well (TC.i.4.5).
II. The First Poetry Delta, April 1938

At first sight, there was much that reminded the Delta reader of the old Booster. Though this issue was only 25 pages long, the financial situation had not deteriorated completely (there were photographic reproductions of two paintings). The editorial board had been extended again to include Reichel and Fraenkel (who had been deleted in November), Abraham Rattner and Roger Burford, an English poet and scenario-writer. Perlès was still Rédacteur en Chef, the executive offices still at the Villa Seurat 18, the review still on sale in various Paris bookshops. And what is more, a handful of commercial advertisers still kept faith. Stressing continuity with the Villa Seurat Booster (and not the Country Club Booster) the editors numbered this first Delta "2me ANNEE. No.2". The review's lay-out resembled that of the Booster as well. The price was the same, and to crown all, that forgotten Booster idiosyncrasy, the "back cover we used as a vehicle for texts no one could decipher" (Moore 97), was resurrected with a poem in Greek by the renowned Kostes Palamas. It was issued in English in the same number, translated by Durrell's friend from Corfu, Theodore Stephanides, who along with George Katsimbalis, the Colossus of Maroussi, also produced a translation of Palamas' Poems (Martin 360). Indeed, the contributors to this poetry volume were as international as any in any issue of the Booster. All in all, one may well ask how a poetry Booster would have differed from this April 1938 Delta. Probably, in no way whatsoever, except that there are good reasons to assume that in the Booster's halcyon days there would never have been a number dedicated exclusively to poetry...

The October Booster had announced a series of special numbers (B.ii.30). A poetry number was not included in the list. It is true that there had been some talk of a poetry Booster in September (Corr.facs.le tt.). Nevertheless, it seems no coincidence that a poetry number was only issued after Miller had more or less lost interest and pulled out. He did not contribute to the first Delta nor to the second poetry number which followed in Spring of 1939. He did not particular-
ly like poetry. Would a poetry Booster have been issued at a time when Miller was still enthusiastic about his own little magazine? The Booster was indeed too much his work for him not to have contributed.

All issues of the Booster except the final one had included poems, but these were related to the editorials' disrespectful gaiety and iconoclasm only tenuously. A delicate lyric like the first Booster's "Distance is Dearer" by Emma Swan had little in common with Miller's swaggering boosts and blesses. This is not to say that verse is categorically excluded from the field of burlesque: Wambly Bald's "Conquest" from the second Delta is an example of ribald bar-room poetry, "Milleresque" in its comedy. And Durrell, whose editorial in the November Booster had included a stanza from his comical "Ballad of Kretshmer's Types", composed in those days a cycle of poems which might have easily been printed in the Booster; "The Death of General Uncebunke", was not satire, as he said, "but an exercise in ironic compassion"(LDCP.43). It was indeed possible to express that mixture of backstreet humour, of disoriented irony and laughing irresponsibility in verse form, conveying successfully what we have called the Booster spirit. But even if some of the contributors had a certain talent for this mode of poetry, very little of it was to be found in the pages of the Villa Seurat magazine. In the Booster the lack of comical verse had not mattered, had not encumbered the underlying flow of gaiety. There was enough in the prose pieces to go around. In the poetry Delta, however, this lack meant that the original liveliness was lost. Durrell, who had decided to sit on one stool, succeeded in keeping the number he edited clean of the "clowning" which literary London had found so distasteful. Thus in this first Delta there was some good poetry, but none of its predecessor's irreverences, eccentricities and play, no irresponsible childishness and surprises, no outrageous editorial pronunciamenti and vivacious diatribes, in short, very little of what had distinguished the Booster from other contemporary reviews.

Among the contributors were many newcomers; about two thirds of them had not appeared in the Villa Seurat review before. Perles noted in his memoirs that "Durrell collected most of the material"(MFHM.173). But though it is true that quite a number of the poets published here
were presumably first contacted by the young Englishman, surprisingly, Miller had "contributed" at least as many contributors as Durrell. His literary connections had been put to use, and so for months contributions had been arriving at the Villa Seurat, with Miller passing them on to his young friend with the note: "Keep for the Poetry number if it's any good" (Corr. facs. lett.).

As a glance at the poems of Delta will show, the Booster's editorial flexibility was preserved. "Unlike most magazines the Booster has no fixed policy", they had written in September 1937: "It will be eclectic, flexible, alive - serious but gay withal" (B.iii.5). Delta, too, would eclectic and flexible, though, as we shall see, its openness had altogether different implications from that of its predecessor...

The poems of Delta were international; there was German poetry by the Czech painter Fedor Loevenstein, a translation of a poem by Fondane (collected under the heading "Poèmes Epars" in Le Mal des fantômes), Greek metaphysical verse, Fraenkel's "death" poetry, work by the Swede Artur Lundkvist, and more. Still, the review, it seems, was orientated more towards England than its Booster antecedent. If most of the contributors were not from England, well over half the poems were by writers for whom London was the world's literary hub. Kay Boyle and Fraenkel were the only American writers represented! The Booster had been an expatriate sheet, a little magazine published from Paris. When Durrell took over, things changed. In spite of his Corfu residence and in spite of The Black Book's publication in France, in the pre-war years he looked toward England. A self-exiled absentee, an outsider, he still felt a part, had very firm opinions about English poetry, about its hopes and short-comings. Significantly, views which resembled his own were fast gaining ground among the members of a younger generation of poets...

In what way was this first Delta more than a rather motley collection of very different poems, more than the chance product, assembled by an isolated 'island' poet, who printed the best from the rather limited selection he could lay his hands on? The key is to be found in the attitude and the ideas which guided Durrell's editorial work. From the point of view of editorial policy it would seem that Delta was a
conscious literary operation with the ambitious aim of influencing English poetry in a particular direction. The Booster had "no fixed policy", but this in itself had been a policy. Delta, too, had "no fixed policy", but this in itself was also a very definite programme, especially in the world of English poetry on the eve of World War Two. Two guiding ideas must be stressed when discussing Durrell's editorial outlook; the first is his belief that the horizon of English poetry needed to be widened, and the second is the romantic notion that genuine poetry partook of a mystical and prophetic quality. For the editor-poet both aspects stood in stark opposition to the ideals and practice of that literary generation which was felt to be dominating English verse, the Auden group.

In fact, Delta and Durrell's editorial programme can only be understood on the background of the situation of poetry and verse magazines in England. We have earlier mentioned the atmosphere of constriction and conformism which many outsiders thought determined English literary opinion. Many shared the view subsequently offered by Orwell in "Inside the Whale":

As early as 1934 or 1935 it was considered eccentric in literary circles not to be more or less 'left', and in another year or two there had grown up a left-wing orthodoxy that made a certain set of opinions absolute de rigueur in certain subjects. The idea had begun to gain ground ... that a writer must be either actively 'left' or write badly. (CE.i.561f)

Though from an angle even further away from the centre than Orwell, Durrell's views were similar. The Booster days had already seen some blasts against propagandist art. Still, what the Booster said was kept rather general, applicable, as it were, to the artistic Zeitgeist of the Western hemisphere as such. While editing Delta, however, Durrell's mind was focused on a concrete situation, his own. He was an English poet whose poetry was hardly acknowledged in England. The reason for this, he felt, was that the mainstream of English verse was limited and excluded much good work. He believed that poetry suffered by what he considered the decade's exclusive focus on the verse of social criticism and political warning with its rationalistic and topical penchants, its colloquial diction and urban emphasis. This
narrowing down had been engineered, thus the complaint which has been mentioned before, by a 'gang' of left-wing poets and publishers and magazine editors. Durrell's opinions as expressed in a letter to Tambimuttu in early 1939 were combative and simplistic, and though he was probably aware himself that he was not doing justice to the situation's complexity, what he wrote represented the essence of his views. These views were not much different from those which he held while he was putting together his first poetry Delta. He spoke of a paralysing narrowness of horizon, and though he did not actually name Auden, Spender, Day Lewis, MacNeice, and the others, the references to the schoolboyish conspirational atmosphere were all a contemporary need. Durrell bundled the entire thirties generation together under the heading "poetical axe-grinders, theorists and critical fish-slices who have imagined that poetry is really a manner, and no one without that manner can possibly be a poet", going on to say:

This charming and puerile snobism, imported straight from the prep-school dressing-rooms, has exercised a really hallucinating effect upon the poetry of the last few years. It has done even more than get a few good poets neglected; it has weakened the poetic output of the very cliques whose article of faith it was. How many of us turning from the pages of New Verse in the last year or so have sighed for a bucket of liquid manure to dash over these elegant and epicine narcissi, in the vain hope of making them sit up and looke fruitful? (PL.i.2.np.)

Again, Durrell's perception, however self-righteous, was probably not entirely mistaken. In the preceding chapter we noted that New Verse was the most influential poetry review of the Auden generation. It was one of the best gauges to the literary 1930s. But if this was so, then a dropping off of the review might indeed be regarded as signaling a decline in the energy and the reservoirs of the literary generation itself. As a matter of fact, Grigson himself has recalled a "weakening impulse" of New Verse toward the end of the decade (GGRec.35). He had felt increasingly dissatisfied with his own review: "New Verse dragged on, larger, rather less bitter, but so far as I was involved, it had only a similacrum of life. I dreaded its arrival from the printer" (GGCS.182). Durrell's hope for a new fruitfulness was perhaps not as absurd as all that...
W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Christopher Isherwood.
Durrell firmly believed that this stagnation had to do with a politico-aesthetic parochialism. In view of New Verse's crusade against Robert Graves and Laura Riding and Edith Sitwell and other poets he admired, this is understandable. He himself was implicated in all that Grigson said about proponents of 'poetic isolation', about the detached writer who lived in Italian towns or on islands, had "no right to exist and no claim to be tolerated and need expect no good man to listen to him" (NV.xxxi/xxxii.2). But Durrell, the expatriate poet, was not alone. Francis Scarfe, who was not implicated in Grigson's censures (contributing, incidentally, to New Verse a translation of Queneau's "Oak and Dog" in the summer of 1938) also felt that by about 1936/7 Grigson's review had lost much of the catholicity of the earlier numbers and had become "increasingly doctrinal" (1). The 'weakening impulse' of New Verse which observers like Durrell seem to have perceived before it folded in Spring of 1939, was a symptom of an atmospheric change, a slow shift away from the polemical and political. This change, which may be said to have become generally apparent only when Auden and Isherwood left for New York in early 1939 had begun in 1937 and 1938 only very uncertainly. Later, with the growing disillusion of the New Signatures generation, with the disappointments of the Spanish Civil War, the horrors of the purges in the Soviet Union and the general decline of hopes for peace, it was speeded up. With the end of the decade came the end of the poets of New Verse and Twentieth Century Verse and the Left Review, and as they abdicated, some quietly, some, like Grigson, still full of anger, lashing out at the triumphant successors, "the clique of vegetable Blakes" as he called them in Kingdom Come in the winter of 1940/41 (KC.ii.2.62), another generation took their place, and these regarded themselves as part of "a broadly romantic reaction" (TTC.287). Its main poets were Dylan Thomas, George Barker and David Gascoyne. According to Derek Stanford, Lawrence Durrell, too, was regarded by some of the young as "an alternative to the Pylon Verse Establishment" (Labrys.v.105). Most critics, however, single out Thomas, Gascoyne and Barker and this seems to have been contemporary opinion in the late 1930s as well. Michael Roberts, for instance, closed his important Faber Book of Modern Verse of 1936 with poems by these three poets, while Stephen Spender once said to Gascoyne: "I do hope you'll go on writing poetry, though: Of your generation there's only you and Dylan
Thomas and George Barker". He was repeating the views of John Lehman, another influential magazine editor of the day (DG.ii.113). In the last years of the decade these poets formed the vanguard of a 'romantic revival', which other poets like J.F.Hendry, Nicholas Moore, Henry Treece, Dorian Cooke and G.S.Fraser tried to organise in a poetry movement called the New Apocalypse (MWW.323f). The important thing is that in the late 1930s all these poets tended to appear in the same magazines, and these verse magazines all pursued eclectic rather than partisan editorial policies. Between them Moore's Seven, Tabimuttu's Poetry London and Durrell's Delta printed all of them. Plainly, there was a link between editorial flexibility which these three editors practised and the new 'romantic' impulse in poetry. We will discuss this in greater detail in "January-March 1939 : A Time of Endings" and in the chapter on the second poetry Delta. The point is that while Durrell was clearly one of the new romantic stars, the first Delta of spring 1938 still belonged to the period of quiet omens....

The Thirties movement died silently, without bang or whimper. The last issue of New Verse was that of May 1939, in which Grigson praised Auden as 'something good and creative in European life in a time of greatest evil', at a time when Auden was ceasing to be part of European life anyway. The final issue of my own magazine, Twentieth Century Verse, appeared at about the same time. Both magazines ceased rather than ended, and the Group Theatre also ceased its activities when war came, the artistic impulse behind it extinguished now that Auden and Isherwood had gone. All was changed: no more poems about Spain, no more verse plays about the decay within a class of society or the problems of high-minded judges, no more anti-Fascist fairy tales in the form of novels, no more agonizing about Munich. By the end of 1939 the great tide of Left wing feeling had receded beyond the bounds of vision, and the land it had covered was as smooth, almost, as though the tide had never been. (JS30s.147)

This was the vanishing point of an epoch (as described by Julian Symons). In the winter months of 1937/8, however, a cry like Eugen Jolas' would still have seemed to many quite absurd. "The bankruptcy of sociological literature and art should now be fairly obvious even to the most zealous activists of art" (Transition.xxvii.9). However, for the observant eye there were signs well before Auden's departure, even before the ending of the Spanish Republic and the traumatic Hitler-Stalin pact, isolated signposts planted in the
literary lands. While noting, for instance, that in American periodicals "Trotsky has displaced Traherne", D.G.Bridson said in the Criterion of October 1937:

Luckily, proletarian literature seems to be dying down somewhat these days, it being an undoubted and again lucky fact that most of the proletariat still exhibit an understandable predilection for Eddie Guest, Peter B.Kyne, Fannie Hurst and Edna Ferber, as Mr.Louis Adamic points out. (Criterion.xvii.66.201)

But did this mean that the sociological stress was generally called into question? Hardly, for in the very same issue of Eliot's quarterly, one found Porteus observing that the "atmosphere to-day is more highly charged with politics than it has been in this country for many a moon"(ibid.193). And nine months later in a review of American periodicals, A.Desmond Hawkins would still deplore that "everyone who is not pro-Stalinist is at present apt to be labelled 'fascist'" (Criterion.xvii.69.798f). Indeed, the most doctrinal of Grigson's editorial statements came after the Munich crisis in the late summer and early autumn of 1938. A double number of New Verse was characteristically entitled "COMMITMENTS" (NV.xxxi/xxxii).

Then again, contemporary observers of the little magazine scene would not have missed a striking development in one of the most influential revolutionary periodicals of the day, the American Partisan Review. This magazine, edited by Philp Rahv and William Phillips, had thrown off its affiliation with the Communist Party, the John Reed Club and the orthodox New Masses in late 1937 to pursue an independent policy. The editors were intent, as William Philips recalls, "on printing the best and most advanced writing and on maintaining a radical, anti-Stalinist intellectual and political position"(LMA.134). Though the pursuit of "the most advanced form of modernism" was still regarded as linked to a "social and historical bias"(ibid.), the signal was clearly visible. It was not for its Marxist bias, but for the fact that it printed Trotsky and Eliot, Edmund Wilson and the New Critics, that in July 1938 the Criterion's critic could argue that the Partisan Review was "by far the liveliest monthly that current English literature can show" (Criterion.xvii.69.798). The editors said in the first editorial of the new series:
Conformity to a given social ideology, or to a prescribed attitude or technique, will not be asked of our writers. On the contrary, our pages will be open to any tendency which is relevant to literature in our time. (LMA.135)

This was the direction: scope for more experiment, more art, different subject matter, re-admittance of modernist impulses. In 1939 Durrell praised Tambimuttu in terms he himself would probably have liked to have heard for his work on Delta: "The real excellence of Poetry lies in the fact that you have created a forum capable of accommodating every kind of poet writing today" (PL.i.2.np).

The kind of eclecticism Durrell had in mind involved certain difficulties, and he was aware of them: "poets are queer fish and Poetry will have to be as flexible as rubber and as large as a fishing net to hold them all" (ibid.). The image of the net is felicitous, large enough but also devised to allow small fish to slip through. Dylan Thomas wrote to the editor of Poetry London:

Poetry editors are mostly vicious climbers, with their fingers in many pies, their ears at many keyholes, and their tongues at many bottoms. You've shown, in your introduction, how much you believe in the good of poetry and in the mischief of cliques, rackets, scandal schools, menagerie menages, amateur classes of novitiate plagiarists etc. More subscribers and power to you. But one trouble I see is that, in an attempt to include many sorts of poetry, you're liable in the end to sacrifice poetry for variety. (DTSL.188)

Durrell shared this view. He too spoke out against "over-eclecticism" (PL.i.2.np). While leaving the precise boundary between flexibility and over-eclecticism a matter of conjecture, while he suggested that ideally the editorial passage lay somewhere between the Scylla of a paralysing cliquishness and the Charybdis of uncritical laxity, it was the former which, at that point in time, still seemed to represent the greater threat.

If we consider again the question whether Durrell's general assessment of the state of English poetry was adequate or not, whether his rough and ready division into the reigning 'cliques' with their stranglehold on important sheets on the one hand, and on the other a diverse and
scattered group of neglected poets, was really justified, then we must say that in part it was and in part it was not. "The reputation of a decade is often an agreed fiction", G.S. Fraser once wrote: "It is part of literary tactics of every generation of young men to run down their immediate predecessors" (MWW.323). The tendency to disparage the established writers is as understandable as it is distortive of the situation's true complexity, and Durrell's attitude as expressed in his letter to Poetry London shows that he was no exception. A detached glance at a six-month crop of English literary journals and little magazines is enough to cure one for good of all categorical statements about the "state of English poetry". To a large extent then Durrell's letter was literary warfare.

Indeed, who would know from his epistle that Durrell actually admired Auden, calling him (and Eliot) "the masters of us all" (Encounter.xiii.6.66)? And who would know from this letter and the editorial comments about literary tyrannies that a good number of other poets worked and published in the 1930s, poets who did not belong to the 'left-wing orthodoxy'? Where did Eliot fit in, and Yeats and Robert Graves and Herbert Read, the Sitwells and Laura Riding, William Empson, Ronald Bottrall, William Plomer and the many others? Who would have known from Durrell's comments that his own little clique, the Parisian Villa Seurat group, ostensibly so distant from the mainstream, had published, as we have said, by 1939 in over forty different literary journals? But attacking Twentieth Century Verse and New Verse was the order of the day, and Tambimuttu's "Second Letter" in the April 1939 number of Poetry London reiterated the fiction Durrell and others seem to have agreed on:

This paper exists as a platform for poets who require more freedom than that afforded them in the papers of little hen-coops and cliques, in order to work well. It is a protest against the modern suppression of free speech in verse. (PL.i.2.np)

Again, this view was not entirely unfounded. Fraser said: "behind an agreed fiction there are always at least some facts"(MWW.323) and he was right. As we have shown above, there existed genuine grievances, and the idea that there were many who had been unfairly excluded for political reasons could not be explained away simply by saying, as
Grigson did:

There is not a New Verse clique (unless - reductio ad absurdum - it is cliquish to prefer to print poems by the poets who seem to write better than others). (PC.liv.1.53)

Still, there was much to be said against the clique accusation as well. In his retort to attacks by D.S. Savage, Grigson criticised in particular the tendency to lump together without distinction literary phenomena which were quite different from one another, Mass Observation and Auden, for example. To illustrate his point he listed some of the points where he and "the Auden school" had parted ways:

Mr. Savage knows very well that New Verse is ready to criticize its own contributors and those who are 'for' good poetry but objectionable in other ways. We could have had - we did have five years ago - the support of Day Lewis, but we went for him when his real nature began to show through the revolutionary surface of his poems. We have criticized Spender and Auden whenever it seemed that we ought to. We have attacked on many occasions the ineffectuality of the Group Theatre, which performs the Spender, Auden, Isherwood plays. We have always - it has been a primary aim since the first number of New Verse - attacked cliques in the making and tried to prevent the exaltation of those mediocrities who cluster around the good writer, and the establishment of a Popular Front in poetry, painting, etc. Our object has been to keep things in England alive and fluid. (PC.liv.1.53)

And in a reply to Tambimuttu's attacks, Julian Symons rightly pointed out that "a third of Tuttifruti's contributors have already contributed to Twentieth Century Verse" (TCV.xvii.19).

But it is not likely that either Tambimuttu or Savage were impressed by Grigson's arguments. The view that Auden and New Verse along with "its appendix" Twentieth Century Verse were responsible for "apparently methodical and consistent attempts to ignore or sabotage poetry in favor of unemotional and manufactured verse" (PC.liii.4.204), was deeply rooted. Savage's argument seems an extended version of Durrell's own letter to Poetry London. "There is a conspiracy to keep the individual out of poetry, to tone down the word 'I', to emasculate the emotional content of a poem" (ibid.207), and the aim was to "make poetry palatable to the masses":

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It is a very good thing to debunk the pretentious notion that poetry is a rarified activity having no relation to every-day living, no doubt, but it is every bit as dangerous to fly to the opposite extreme and insist that it is an occupation parallel with advertisement writing. (ibid.204)

Savage contrasted Auden and the New Signatures set with a number of younger poets who included Thomas, Barker, Keidrych Rhys, H.B. Mallalieu and R.B. Fuller. The contrast is revealing for, as Savage and with him quite a number of other critics (Fraser, Treece, Hendry) felt at the time, the future belonged to this more romantic generation of poets. "New Signatures and New Verse are no longer touchstones of contemporary taste, as they were four or five years ago. Something has happened since then..."(ibid.208).

But while it is true that Auden and New Verse deeply influenced the ideals of the mid-thirties generation, and while it is undeniable that these ideals had all but vanished by the time the war began, giving way to a more personalist aesthetic, the transition from the one to the other was not as clearcut as all that. In fact, the two streams were manifest not consecutively - as the term "romantic reaction" wrongly suggests - but rather, they ran for a number of years at least more or less side by side, mixing and mingling so as at times to be virtually indistinguishable....

Everything that blossomed out fully after the symbolic ending of the decade when Auden wrote "On the Death of W.B.Yeats", already existed in England before. To talk of verse censorship seems at least a mild distortion if one considers that the chief proponents of what Scarfe has called "a great emotional revival" (FSAA.xiv), Thomas, Barker and Gascoyne as well as Herbert Read (as the theoretician), had already made names for themselves as early as 1934 and before. And contrary to what D.S. Savage suggested, they were certainly not among the poets who in the mind of Durrell had suffered exclusion at the hands of cliquish poetry editors (PC.liii.4.208). Neither were the other poets who Savage mentioned as pointing to new dawn of English poetry, Fuller, Rhys and Mallalieu. According to Savage these younger poets were in dire need of "a new paper", but Julian Symons retorted angrily that all three of those mentioned were "staple contributors" to Twentieth Century Verse
and he was right. Mallalieu **himself** rejected the idea that London actually needed a new poetry journal: "New Verse and Twentieth Century Verse amply fill the need which Mr. Savage erroneously believes to exist" (PC.IV.I.54f). Indeed, Tambimuttu's words about Twentieth Century Verse's and New Verse's exclusiveness (and thus about his own review's raison d'être) cannot remain unquestioned. These two journals not only issued work by "reactionaries" like Wyndham Lewis, by later contributors to the notorious Right Review (A.J.M. Smith), by the Criterion's H.G. Porteus, but also numerous contributions by some of the neo-romantic poets of the Apocalypse (2). Of course, Barker, Gascoyne and Thomas frequently appeared here as well. Deploring the degree to which little magazines overlapped, Porteus said in 1939, that it was Savage himself who had "played a not negligible part in building up the reputations of those 'Woolworth poetry-shops' castigated by Count P." (Seven.v.24f). The 'Woolworth poetry-shops' were New Verse and Twentieth Century Verse....

Another instance might be mentioned. Kathleen Raine, a friend of David Gascoyne, later described her response to Auden and the prevalent social realist aesthetic of the time in highly critical terms. She had felt, so she said, that it stressed unduly the outer world while it did nothing to help "to create for us images of an inner order we all share" (WLHL.88). Nevertheless, in the thirties she was no outsider as her strictures on Auden might have suggested. She was a regular contributor to New Verse. And Henry Treece, one of the self-elected leaders of the neo-romantic revival listed her poem "Outlaw" as exemplifying the despised Grigson-Eliot notion of the hard "objective image" (HISA.59f). Francis Scarfe, who himself took part in this rigamarole once said:

a battle was waged among these young poets round two opposing conceptions of poetry; those sometimes called classical and romantic, or cultural and emotional, or cerebral and sensual (FSAA.xii)

It is undeniable that the concepts were opposed and even mutually exclusive, but where in reality was the front line dividing the two inimical camps? At least as far as the world of the little magazine was concerned it is almost impossible to make out. Again and again,
the house of cards so carefully erected by the literary historian is blown down by some unexpected gust of information. The past reality was more complex than later categories can suggest.

Surrealism, for example, was described by Francis Scarfe as a part of "battle for the liberation of emotion, and against purely intellectual and cerebral standards, which Lawrence himself had so valiantly preached" (3). Surrealism was part of the sensualist revival. But Auden himself toyed with surrealism for a time. And Scarfe did not omit to mention that it was "one more tribute to the breadth of 'New Verse' that many of the younger poets who now indulged in surrealism were also connected with that periodical" (FSAA.151). Where was the dividing line between the opposing, the emotional and the cerebral conceptions of poetry?

In The Modern Writer and His World, G.S. Fraser has said: "Literary history, particularly recent literary history is always oversimplified", indicating that such oversimplifications or "fictions" were operative means by which one generation fought down its predecessors (4). But he also noted that there was always some truth behind an "agreed fiction". Indeed, as we have said, for all the mixings and minglings and overlappings, there did exist differences between the poetry of Auden and his group and that of the generation which followed.

Many years before, G.S. Fraser noted in The White Horseman, an Apocalyptic anthology of 1941, that unlike the Auden generation which stood in "a classical tradition", the younger poems were "romantics". In contrast to his fellow Apocalyptic, Henry Treece, who tended to stress that a whole range of writers (including the Boosters, whom he called 'the Paris Movement') reacted against an artistic period "of Socialism, realism, even, at times, of mechanical Classicism" (HISA.174), Fraser offered a more conciliatory and precise interpretation:
the younger generation of poets, to-day, tend to derive from Pound and Eliot, through Freud and the Surrealists, though especially, in the very recent past, Dylan Thomas, more or less side-tracking the influence of their immediate forerunners (Auden, Spender, MacNeice); with their interest on the whole concentrated on the formal and imaginative rather than the external social side of poetry. Compared to the Auden generation, they are much more definitely interested in being poets than in being persons. (WH.29)

While Treece's notions of a 'reaction' may be said to reflect the way many of these poets saw themselves, Fraser's view that the new generation had side-tracked their immediate antecedents is more accurate. It is true that this by-pass metaphor seems a simplification as well. The crucial influence of Auden on the younger poets was hardly taken into account. Indeed, Durrell and his age-group shared that opposition to the dryness of Eliot and his imitators, which Julian Symons mentioned as typical of the Auden generation (JS30s.27). Durrell said: "Auden's influence freed us from the feeling of chilly formalism and logic-chopping which we felt so strongly in the criticism of Eliot and the polemics of Lewis" (Key 183). The pattern of attraction and rejection was far more complicated than images like "reaction" or "side-tracking" are able to suggest. Nevertheless, in parts at least, the view was not unfounded that Durrell and Gascoyne and the others took up again the modernist experimental tradition which Auden and his friends had set aside due to the urgency of their social engagement and that eclectic reviews like Seven, Delta and Poetry London were more conducive to this conception of art than dynamic, partisan magazines like New Verse or New Writing.

In The Ironic Harvest, the critic Geoffrey Thurley described eloquently what he considered to be the sad effects on English poetry of the ironic and rationalistic traditions epitomised in the verse of Auden and Empson. It is important to see that in his analysis a handful of poets like Dylan Thomas and David Gascoyne had managed to avoid being infected by "irony" and thus able to become part of broader and more pertinent artistic tradition. Thurley's view may be said to be a variant of Fraser's "side-track" metaphor, younger poets taking up the modernist "momentum of T.S.Eliot's breakthrough" (Thurley 98). Indeed, where Auden, Spender, MacNeice and Day Lewis had followed rational and humanist directions with a characteristically English slant, the neo-
romantics looked either to Continental modes or to regionalist modes which disposed them (just as it had the expatriates Eliot and Pound, and the regionalist Yeats) to a more passionate absolutism of the kind usually associated with romantic art.

But this is a very sweeping statement, and the closer one looks the more one is forced to differentiate. In the 1950s G.S. Fraser said of Auden, Spender, MacNeice and Day Lewis, that it was "hard to find between the styles and temperaments and attitudes of those four poets the obvious affinities that reviewers found so easily in the 1930s" (MWW.301). The same was true of the affinities in style, temperament and attitude between the poets of the romantic revival. If, for instance, it is true that, as Fraser points out, the new generation was "less political than the Auden group" (TTC.285), then one must not fail to indicate that their politics stretched from the mildly socialist dreamings of Dylan Thomas and David Gascoyne's post-surrealist, post-communist invocation of a "Christ of Revolution and Poetry", across the Apocalyptic's celebration of Herbert Read's anarchical teachings to Durrell's crypto-reactionary declamations - "To be a poet is to be religious: and to be religious is to be, in some way, a royalist. Is it not so?" (RR.viii.np).

Was it symptomatical that Dylan Thomas thought very little of the verse of his fellow 'romantic reactionaries'? He did not like Durrell's poems, and the latter remembers disagreeing with him on points of aesthetic theory: "I maintained that poetry should try and say something" (Encounter.xiii.6.67). Although Thomas attended with great interest the Surrealist Exhibition in London in 1936 and read some poetry in honour of Eluard, discussed surrealist techniques with Gascoyne, he also "disliked Gascoyne's poems very much indeed" (CFDT.199). Perhaps, by the end of the decade Thomas changed his views about Gascoyne, whose metaphysical poems were no longer self-conscious exercises in automatism; but Gascoyne's new and painfilled "spiritual" explorations were still distances away from his own sensual and incantatory celebrations. Thomas did not think much of the Apocalyptic movement either, and asking his friend Vernon Watkins to contribute to Tabimuttu's first number, he revealed what he thought of his closest rival's work:
It may be honest, if so, it shouldn't want to pack its pages with the known stuff of the known boys; a new paper should give—(say)—Barker a rest: he must be very tired. (DTVW.51)

The romantic upsurgence in the late 1930s was anything but a heterogenous affair, and it was no coincidence that some of the chief poets of this various, irregular and more specifically artistic movement should publish in an eclectic, irregular and (in comparison with the usual purposive political little magazine of the day) more purely aesthetic verse magazine like Durrell's poetry Delta.

Durrell had tried to make his slender review a platform from which different types of poetry might speak. His flexibility was no fiction: we have mentioned their international flavour, there were even 'mystical' poems in French by Fred Perlès. Verse by the neo-Georgian lyricist, John Gawsworth, "an anachronism poetically", as Durrell later admitted (Spirit 21) stood side by side work by the Swedish surrealist and socialist Artur Lundkvist. Roger Burford's "When the Anger was Over" was nothing if not a political poem, pointing out in a manner reminiscent of the ending of Hemingway's To Have and Have Not ("One man alone ain't got...no chance"), the limitations of individual action ("Not further than an inch can one man fly"), while praising the virtues of solidarity and collective action: "But two added together came out and stood talking/ there were three and they wakened each other"(D.ii.16). In a somewhat less spectacular way, Durrell anticipated the open editorial policies of his friend Tabimuttu, whose first Poetry London included work by Spender and parts of MacNeice's Autumn Journal...

Despite some Audenesque echoes in Stephen Bylansen's "Variation", the poems in Delta were concerned not so much with topical subject matter like the fight against fascism, but with what Derek Stanford has called the 'universals', "love, sex, landscape, the nature of the universe and of art" (Labrys.v.106). There was Emma Swan's sad love poem "A Meteor" and Patrick Evans' landscape evocation "Downland Sunrise" and the densely packed "Angels for Djuna Barnes" by Kay Boyle, and Fraenkel's "Death in a Room" and Antonia White's "Epi-
Durrell's own "Poem to Gerald" on the death of their father is another example of the number's orientation on personalist subject-matter. The same applies to Dylan Thomas's long love poem, which, apropos "verse censorship", was first printed in Julian Symons' Twentieth Century Verse.

Thomas, who worked for over a years on the this closely textured "Poem (To Caitlin)", gave the reader none of the ease and calm his love seems to have achieved at the poem's end, at the end of a series of intricate images, of what he tended to call his "stripping the individual darkness"(NV.xi.9). Durrell later said: "Thomas is often genuinely obscure - even to himself"(Key 198). But in this case, he knew what he was saying, for in February 1938 he sent to a correspondent of his an extensive 'plot' outline, adding, however, that "the plot is told in'images', and the images are what they say, not what the stand for"(DTSL.186). As we will not discuss this particular contribution by Thomas to the Villa Seurat review in any detail we will quote only the introductory passages of Thomas' own interpretation:

The poem is, in the first place, supposed to be a document or narrative, of all the emotional events between the coming and going, the creation and dissipation, of jealousy, jealousy born from pride and killed by pride, between the absence and the return of the crucial character (or heroine) of the narrative, between the war of her absence and the armistice of her presence. (DTSL.186)

David Gascoyne, another key-figure in the search for a "new direction", contributed six poems to the poetry Delta. This was more than Durrell or Thomas or any other poet. We have earlier noted that from the summer of 1936 until the composition of Höllderlin's Madness in September 1937 Gascoyne had written next to no poetry at all. He was looking for a new way. As an adolescent he had gone to Paris and found in the surrealist world the inspiration he was looking for. His renewed search had led him once again to Europe. "More and more, I feel the existence of a great gap between their generation's conception of poetry and mine", he said after reading new poetry volumes by Spender, Auden and MacNeice in 1938. Indeed, G.S.Fraser's idea that the younger poets of the early 1940s had evaded to a good extent the
influence of Auden and his group applied especially to David Gascoyne. It was more than a private joke that George Barker said he could never "remember whether David Gascoyne really spoke only in French at the time, or whether he merely happened to give this impression" (CFDT.156). Gascoyne looked to Europe, and Europe, which meant for him "the tradition of Hölderlin, Rimbaud, Rilke, Lorca, Jouve" (DG.ii.55), had little in common with the England of Auden and MacNeice. European (modernist) poetry, he felt, was the very antithesis to the poetry England was producing at the time. In July 1938 he formulated the difference categorically:

Poetry is not verse, it is not rhetoric, it is not an epigrammatic way of saying something that can be stated in prose, nor is it argument or reportage. In England the whole question needs to be cleared up and restated. (DG.ii.55)

Criticism of this kind might have been formulated by a literary surrealist as well, someone who deplored, as Gascoyne said, "the surrender of English poetry to rationalism, of English poets to rationalist critics" (DG.ii.79). Indeed, one can argue, as Geoffrey Thurley has done, that by taking up the Continental surrealist mode at such an early age, Gascoyne managed to avoid "the insularity of the English cultural tradition" and to plug "in to a broader tradition". Here the world of Lorca and Eluard stood against "the conservatism of Auden, and the reticent cleverness of Empson" (Thurley 98), and here, according to Thurley, the difficult art of direct statement was opposed to the ironic and essentially evasive mode of the Auden school. Thurley chose a comparison from a different sphere:

The basis of Stravinsky's harmony is the concord spiced with the wrong-note, just as the basis of the Auden school is the 'normal' attitude spiced with self-irony, self-mockery. Gascoyne, like Webern and Schönberg, saw the necessity of a fundamental break with the conventional. (Thurley 115)

After emerging from the sheltered inwardness of his surrealist verse, Gascoyne began to strive, as Thurley said, "to bring his emotional experience and obsessions into contact with the objective world" (Thurley 105). The young poet expressed this aim as early as September 1937: "no more themeless improvisation, no more autonomous lyricism
... Emotion, a raised voice, but clear coherent speech" (DG.ii.22). Curiously, this will to clarity and coherence was the obverse side to a new and essentially inexpressible spirituality in his poetry. The poems he contributed to Delta show that the new direction he had chosen in 1937 meant not only a more conscious way of writing, an emphasis on craftsmanship, but also a new metaphysical orientation. It was the dawn of his religious poetry. Of the six poems printed in the April Delta four were later included in his Poems 1937-1942 under the appropriate heading "Metaphysical Poems". Thurley felt that few of these poems actually "break out of their elaborately metaphoric inwardness" (Thurley 104). The Delta poems, however, were less successful than many of Gascoyne's later ones not because they were elaborately inward, but because Gascoyne was obviously still in the process of experiment and learning how to express the new metaphysical dimension. This was difficult. "Signs", for instance, reveals no elaborately metaphoric inwardness; rather its two stanzas exhibit a somewhat facile religious pathos:

There presently began to rise  
A dream-transfigured face  
With lips exhaling prayer  
And upturned eyes. (D.i.22)

Not all of the Delta poems failed in this way. Gascoyne's attempts to express in religious terms certain Freudian concepts were influenced by Jouve, and the Eros-Thanatos dualism in particular appeared here as a dialectical movement toward the unio mystica, love being the inexplicable, "perpetual nostalgia" (like the death wish) for the presence of God (DG.ii.83). In "The Fault", an incantation, the poet voiced this overwhelming desire to reach upward "through the mortal part / And gain still higher". The fault is blandly named: "to be alive" (D.i.22). It was the age-old soma sema metaphor, a notion which Gascoyne reiterated in the strange "Venus Androgyne": "With gaze impaired by heavy haze of sense..." (D.i.14). After reading Phaedrus, Gascoyne noted in April 1937: "Must have been a Platonist all along and never known it before"(DG.i.95). Indeed, he was convinced that somewhere there existed another, more essential world: "I shall always believe that there is another plane"(DG.ii.43). And this idea of a transcendent realm permeated the six Delta poems, four of which
actually end with its apprehension. In fact, except for "The Hero" and "Venus Androgyne", these poems were constructed along a similar pattern: in the beginning the monde désert of Pierre Jean Jouve is graphically evoked, a state of chaos, confusion and despair, while towards the end there is the hint that through the darkness a light may be seen. Despite the gloom, the poet can pray for illumination: "Among the lowlands of despair / Build us a savage and enduring monument" (D.i.18).

The axis of "Cavatina", one of the better poems, was formed by the powerful image of "the shattered Cross / High on the storm-lit hill" from which (Audenesque) "searchlight eyes" beam into the dark of night. The poem's first part speaks eloquently of the doom of the world, first in psychological terms, then in rich Biblical metaphors: "Gold, excrement and flesh, the spirit's malady / A secret animal's hot breath". Darkness and confusion are everywhere, and yet somehow, the poet, a poet of musical spheres almost, can hear an insistent "transcendent melody", and the more he suffers, the better he can hear. His spirit is purified by fire (D.i.8). We have previously discussed the Fondanian idea that despair can lead to existential awareness, a belief which seems to echo in the two final stanza of "Cavatina", which also signals the upward motion and spiritual elevation that contrasts with the initial catastrophe:

 Yet through disaster some transcendent melody
 Insists; and the interior suffering like a silver wire
 Enduring and resplendent, strongly plied
 By conscious hands into the searching fire
 Emerges, and is swiftly purified:

 Some force like violins a pure lament
 Persists, sending ascending stairs
 Across the far wastes of the firmament
 to carry upwards all our weight of tears. (D.i.8)

Gascoyne's attempt to describe (rather than evoke, it seems) a transcendent vision already bore the Christian God's imprint. Unlike other visionaries of doom, he also strove to reassert his old belief that man had the power to alter the terrible human condition. His God, in other words, was neither the placid God of the European bourgeois nor the detached divinity of the mystics. His hopes were focussed on
that "strangely violent but exalted world of poetry and revolution" which was usually hidden behind "the screen of surface appearances" (DG.ii.40f). Gascoyne's slow conversion was no retreat. As Robin Skelton has said about "Ecce Homo", another of the poems of the 1937-1942 volume: "The appeal is not to a God outside politics but to a 'Christ of Revolution and Poetry' "(DGCP.xiv). In this poem Gascoyne overcame both the obscurity and the privacy which still flawed some of the "Metaphysical Poems". One of the reasons for this development was that the "objective world" had entered his poetry in the form of very concrete and powerful images. His catastrophic vision no longer depended on generalities like "lowlands of despair" or "the condemned condition of our blood", but was peopled with murdered workers, with "a lynched Jew" and centurions wearing "riding-boots, /Black Shirts and badges and peaked caps"(DGCP.45). The dreamer had awoken from the artificial surrealist nightmare - surprised to find that the real horror was only about to begin....

Notes

1. FSAA.131, x.
2. FSAA.ix, xiv.
3. FSAA.xiv, 155.
4. MWW.321, 323.
III. Before the Special Peace and Dismemberment Delta: The Villa Seurat Group and the Munich Crisis.

The poetry Delta appeared in April 1938. Shortly after, Durrell returned to Corfu. That summer, a book of poetry entitled Proems was published by the Fortune Press, presenting verse by Edgar Foxall, Rayner Heppenstall, Ruthven Todd, Patrick Evans, Oswell Blakeston and Lawrence Durrell. Edited 'eclectically' by Blakeston, Proems can be regarded as a sequel to Durrell's poetry Delta, as all the poets (except Ruthven Todd) appeared, or were to appear, in the Villa Seurat review. Four of the six contributions by Patrick Evans, for instance, were printed in the Miller-Durrell magazine, in part under different titles and with new dedications. "The Anonymous Poem (For Lawrence Durrell)" had been a plain "Fragment" in the April Delta. Durrell's poems were introduced with a note saying that they had not been issued before, which was true of the Unckebunk sequence and most of the "Themes Heraldic" (Proems 23). The third and the tenth of the latter, however, had previously appeared as "A Lyric for Nikh" and "Poem for Gerald" in the first Booster and the first Delta respectively. Reactions to this poetry volume varied, reflecting, it would seem, the kind of ambiguous response which probably greeted the poetry Delta. Proems did not create a stir. Dylan Thomas' friend, the poet Glyn Jones, noted in Life and Letters Today:

There is a fair amount of indifferent poetry in Proems and more half-formed poetry, but the book is well worth reading for the little red horses of Patrick Evans, the yellow fly of Oswell Blakeston, and the farmyard of Rayner Heppenstall. (LLT.xix.13.125)

Durrell was not mentioned here. In a later advertisement of the volume, the Fortune Press reprinted part of a Books of Today review which read: "Without Durrell, the book would have been worth its six shillings; with Durrell, it is worth committing robbery with violence for"(LLT.xx.17.125). Reuel Denney of Poetry Chicago, however, thought differently. He deplored the book's "uncertainty" in feeling and in meaning, finding in particular Durrell's contributions "dry" and "abstract" and "bony" and of "an arid negative quality". He said:
Saints and the bones of saints are mentioned here almost as frequently as revolts and workers in Marxian poems, but the effect is no more convincing. (PC.liii.3.156)

Denney's review, written after the Munich agreement, closed with a left-handed comparison between the British Empire and Proems:

One does not generalize about an empire or its culture on the basis of a small book like this. But this book seems, solemn as it is, to play out a dissolving movement; it suggests a bank clerk watching the fall of his own currency. (ibid.159)

Funnily enough, what the American had meant as a criticism was more in the nature of a compliment, for it actually confirmed a poignant coincidence between the catastrophic atmosphere expressed in many of the Delta/Booster contributions and the mood of gloom and despair now common to wide parts of a literary audience: in the late summer of 1938 there were few West Europeans who did not feel like bank clerks watching the fall of their own currency....

"The Munich Crisis in September 1938 was a symbolic event", Samuel Hynes has said, "equal in its effect on literary consciousness to Hitler's rise to power in 1933, or the beginning of the Spanish Civil War in 1936" (Hynes 334). Across the Channel in France, and especially in Paris, literary consciousness was virtually extinguished in the latter part of September. Here, to a greater extent than in London, the Crisis was not only a symbolical event but first and foremost a real event: all of a sudden the air of Paris was filled with fear and panic, a great wave of anxiety swept into every recess of the metropolis, perculating at first and then crashing even into the almost watertight compartments at the Villa Seurat. Anais Nin lamented: "The little world I created, out of protectiveness, love, humanity, work, may be destroyed by war, by Hitler" (AN.ii.303). The Encyclopaedia Britannica Book of the Year noted that the European Crisis "made itself felt also in Paris", adding, however, that the "city maintained its habitual calm" (BY 39.496). Anais Nin had a different story to tell. Fear was in the air, collective apprehension and hysteria, she noted. She stayed in Paris while many of those who could afford to
left the city: "People packing and running away. People faced with the threat of concentration camps, imprisonment, or bombing" (AN.ii.303). Women were weeping in the streets, people thronging before banks to withdraw the little money they possessed. War was in the air.

From May on, tensions over the Sudeten question had grown steadily. By mid-September the danger of a German invasion of Czechoslovakia had increased dramatically. The British and the French governments had sought to avoid a war. Chamberlain met Hitler in Berchtesgaden, returned to London, but, having pressurised the Czechoslovak government into accepting the German terms, he found, in the course of another meeting with Hitler at Bad Godesberg, that the dictator had changed his mind and now peremptorily insisted that Sudeten areas be ceded by October first. The Czechs now refused to comply and mobilised. War seemed finally inevitable. Anais Nin: "Black days for the world" (AN.ii.303).

The Czech Crisis was a symbolic event with profound consequences for the artistic and intellectual climate in France and England. It was a hiatus in the world of Henry Miller and the Villa Seura group as well. In the following chapter we shall discuss the great changes which the group underwent before the second Delta, the "Special Peace and Dismemberment Number with Jitterbug-Shag Requiem" appeared in the late autumn of that year.

The war menace of September 1938 touched everyone in Paris. It affected some more profoundly than others, some later than others. For some it came as a complete surprise and, oddly, as a revelation. The important thing is that many illusions about the future, many hopes and ideals, many faiths folded before a terrible reality. Very many people felt as Anais Nin did:

That the war in reality did not take place does not matter. A great many people died psychically, a great many faiths died. The veil of illusion which makes human life bearable was violently torn. (AN.ii.309)
In the group of Booster/Delta artists and writers Henry Miller was among those who were most radically unsettled. He was shocked to the core. Although September 1938 transformed the apocalyptic visions which he had been evoking for so many years into a very real possibility, he was anything but pleased about having a front row seat:

I saw Henry trembling and groaning, although he was the only one who left Paris and had no one to worry about except himself. Henry in an agony of egoistic concern, raging because peace had been torn from him by greater, exterior forces. Henry without strength. Cabling right and left for money to sail back to America. Henry a primitive. (AN.ii.309)

Up to now, the impersonal tides and currents of politics had moved well above his head (or below his feet). Up to now, the political world had meant little to him, Hitler's ascent to power and the Spanish Civil War had not disturbed him, less, at any rate, than an empty stomach. Miller considered himself outside, a chronicler of the Zeitgeist rather than a participant. Early 1938 had still seen him publically joking about high-grade bombers with ice-boxes and about guns booming in Abyssinia and Spain. War was still far, far away, a dramatic hypothesis which might discussed with the same ardour or indifference as any other non-immediate problems, Hamlet, for instance, or "How to Lead a Podiatric Life" or Zen Buddhism. The Munich Crisis changed all this.

Hitler had marched into Austria in March 1938 and almost immediately started the campaign of intimidation and terrorism of the Czechoslovak Republic. By treaty France and England were deeply implicated, but although some of the more sensitive observers were disturbed about these developments, life continued more or less as before - especially for Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell. Political upheavals and terror, war and soldiers on parade was confined to newsreels and newspapers. And so, despite lengthening shadows the Villa Seurat remained more interested in Nijinsky than in the Japanese bombardment of Chinese cities or the fact that Viennese Jews were being rounded up, beaten and forced to scrub the streets on their knees. At the same time, however, David Gascoyne was recording in his diary how the atmosphere in France and in Paris was changing slowly,

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becoming increasingly oppressive, and people, only a few at first, were beginning to fear the "insanity of another war" (DG.ii.37)....

Lawrence Durrell, nevertheless, had travelled back to his Grecian island, and although one General John Metaxas had established in Greece a virtual dictatorship in January 1938, abolishing all political parties and banishing opposition leaders, the young Englishman was unperturbed. He produced some sun-drenched poetry and water-colours, swam in the sea and lazed in the sun, pondered on the aesthetic quality of British battleships and wrestled with The Aquarians, a kind of epistolary dialogue between God and Lawrence Durrell. War was even less a threat on Corfu than it was in pre-Munich Paris; it was impossible to imagine it here and despite utterances like: "The screw tightens a bit, the stresses increase" (Corr.130), Durrell's letters were eloquent of a naive optimism which could only spring from very peaceful surroundings:

Ach, what if the doom does seem to close in a bit and the portents loom thick?...Let us eat our way through this dying section of European time and wonders will begin again. ... Can Spring, I ask you, can Spring be far behind? (Corr.130f)

If one exaggerates a bit, one might say that in these letters "war" reads like a minor hangover, and "doom" like a week of depression. Durrell did not feel implicated - yet. Neither did Henry Miller. His reaction to the brutal bombings of Shanghai and Guernica and Madrid was a comical satire entitled "The All-Intelligent Explosive Rocket", but he did not pursue this project since "no one else seemed to be able to take war as offering any possibilities for comedy"(Martin 325). Miller was in good spirits, the Happy Rock, cheerful - until his own life was endangered by a possible air attack on Paris. When this happened his tone changed to hysteria, his mood to the darkest black.

Still, as we have seen, a certain myopic indifference to outside political events had its undeniable advantages, and Miller had been able to complete Tropic of Capricorn by the end of August. He had begun revising this, his last major Parisian work. Anain Nin, who like most other writers of the time found it increasingly difficult to concentrate or to write anything, confessed how she admired Miller.
"My only pleasure this month was Henry's writing in Capricorn" (AN.ii.307). It had been Miller's very conscious aspiration to achieve this attitude of creative detachment. In his down and out period, his strength had come from the certainty that things could not really get any worse; now he had come to hold up an awesome shield of quietism to the historical and hysterical world, a mystical armour against the age's destructive spirit, and these were some of the tokens embossed upon his shield:

Nijinsky, American apocalyptic utopianism, Brunhuber's 'Le message de Pluto', Hebrew mysticism, Jungian analysis, Faure's conception of China, Berdyaev's theology, Zen, the Egyptian Book of the Dead, The World's Desire, the I'Ching, Christian Science, Theosophy, Romain Rolland's book on Ramakrishna, Krishnamurti, Dane Rudhyar's 'The Artist as Avatar', John Cowper Powys, Maeterlinck's Wisdom and Destiny, the life of Milarepa, Paul Claudel's Connaissance de l'Est. (Martin 335)

For some time now, Miller had been retreating into this world of unreality, encouraged by David Edgar and Conrad Moricand. It was a retreat almost in direct proportion to the outer rise of tension, unrest and danger. The vagrant-turned-artist-turned-mystic, who had lost interest in most other forms of literature, had little inclination to face the fact that the satanic Hitler was of a higher and more immediate reality than any of the fiends his occultist friends could conjure up and so eloquently discuss (AN.ii.306). Perhaps it was inevitable that the unsparing Zeitgeist finally asserted its right. In mid-September, Miller's head was rudely pulled out of the mystical sands. Hitler's ultimatum and the hourly expected arrival of the Luftwaffe bombers (with ice-boxes) over his beloved Paris dragged Miller back into a very sinister real world by the scruff of the neck. Miller who had joked about poison gas and high-grade bombers and said that they "belonged" like everything else now awoke in what Samuel Hynes called the "continuous nightmare of the 'thirties", the fear of a "combination of aerial bombardment and poison gas"(Hynes 293).

Later, when he looked back and analysed his own reactions, he acknowledged that he had panicked. He was confused and anguished to see his existence crumble, so confused, in fact, that he had twice been on the way to join the Foreign Legion only in order to protect his world. He
was infected by the Parisian hysteria and there was even rumour that he contemplated suicide (NMHM.10). "People will tell you that I lost my head during the crisis", he wrote to Fraenkel: "I don't deny it" (Hamlet 373). Anais noted in her diary exactly how Miller lost his head, how he trembled and how his "Chinese talk of wisdom had not stood the test of reality" (AN.ii.309). Miller, it appears, was in a terrible state, he packed his suitcases, stored his manuscripts away, and fled southwards. Worn and haunted, all he wanted was to escape, sending out pitiful letters to those friends who might help him: "I'm already on a war basis, ferreting about like an animal, not a thought in my head except to keep alive by hook or crook" (Corr.133).

Full of loathing, disilluisionment and hatred Miller ended up in Bordeaux. One thing was certain: Europe, his Europe had thoroughly disappointed him. Indeed, in the second half of September Miller's myth of Europe died an ignoble death. Though, in the course of the war, this myth was to be resurrected again, Miller never actually lived in it again. His letters from Bordeaux were so sombre and pessimistic that Lawrence Durrell felt impelled to send not only money but also words of encouragement — words referring Miller right back to 'those wonderful Booster days'. He said: "We are no good if, after all we have professed in talk and writing, we cannot laugh NOW, AT THIS MOMENT" (Corr.138). Suntanned and out of harm's way, Durrell did of course have a point...

Exactly when Miller began to laugh again is not quite clear; as he described it to Fraenkel, his sang-froid returned on the day Hitler's ultimatum was set to expire, in other words before the all-clear was sounded. This, as we shall see, was important. The first of October was a bright and sunny day in Bordeaux, and Miller elaborately described to Fraenkel his re-achieved peace of mind. There he was sitting in a late-summery park near the Allées de Tourny in the afternoon, expecting the first wave of bombers to come sweeping down out of the blue. But he was no longer afraid. "No anxiety, no reproaches, no hatred, a sort of everlasting calm and bliss" (Hamlet 372). A deep serenity took hold of him, one reminiscent of the Tropic of Cancer's tranquile ending. The bombers never appeared, Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain and Daladier concluded the Munich Agreement,
and Miller returned to Paris.

What were the effects of the Munich Crisis on literary Paris and London, and what were the effects on Miller and his circle? Paris was jubilant, Parisians thronging the streets in celebration of the peace of Munich. Edouard Daladier who stepping out of the plane thought that the crowd had come to lynch him was cheered enthusiastically. David Gascoyne recorded with disgust how cinema audiences applauded even Hitler and Mussolini (DG.ii.73). The sense of relief knew no bounds. Former prime minister Pierre Flandin telegraphed to Berlin his sincere congratulations, the French national assembly voted with 535 to 75 in favour of the Agreement. War had been averted.

But in fact, the respite was only temporary. The moral and political crisis of French society continued. National unity was non-existent, slogans like "Plutôt Hitler que Blum" bespeaking the rift. 1938 saw a profound political shift to the Right, from a quasi-Popular Front cabinet (Blum/Chautemps) to a Centre-Right government by the Radical Daladier in the summer. In the wake of Munich there was an upsurge of anti-communism, of anti-semitism, and, important for Miller and his friends, there were hysterical outbreaks of xenophobia. An aggressive polemic was mounted in the press against Soviet Russia, the Left and those exiled Germans, Austrians and Czechs, whose unwelcome warnings were angrily denounced as "war-mongering". The manner in which the authorities treated anti-fascist refugees as well as other resident foreigners (like Hans Reichel) constitutes one of the sadder chapters in modern French history. It was in these months that Anais Nin noted: "Persecution of the left-wingers in France. Gonzalo wondering where he will go" (AN.ii.318).

Many intellectuals and writers on the Left, it seems, were undecided and confused. What was the proper course of action? One was almost unanimous in lamenting the treason of Munich, which offered on a silver platter to the Nazis the only true democracy in Eastern Europe. But there were deep hesitations about actually advocating a war against Hitler. Many shared the feelings of Gide and Simone de Beauvoir who thought that "anything even the most cruel injustice was better than war"(WiP.122). David Gascoyne, who was conversant with
French political life, noted with painful eloquence during the Munich Crisis:

In spite of everything, I still cannot believe that, of the two evils between which Europe has to choose, the disappearance of Czechoslovakia is the worst. (DG.ii.70).

Sometime later, however, he wrote that he was becoming "more and more convinced of something sinister and shameful having taken place at Munich" (DG.ii.73). But this did not mean that he now considered a war to be preferable.

Peace had been bought at Munich for a terrible price. Antoine de Saint Exupéry wrote in Paris Soir on the first of October: "When peace seemed threatened, we discovered the shame of war. When war was no longer a threat, we felt the shame of peace" (WiP.122f). It is significant that in Herbert Lottman's account of literary politics in Paris the Munich Agreement and its consequences leading right up to the Nazi-Soviet pact almost a year later were treated on no more than one and a half pages. The enthusiasm of a political generation of writers and artists on the Right and on the Left gave way to an unutterable sense of helplessness and despair. David Gascoyne commented about a meeting with Tristan Tzara in October:

We talked of war, of the political débâcle. Between people today who feel the social problem at all profoundly, there inevitably arises the impossibility of expressing oneself with the conventional vocabulary at one's command. In every sentence one repeats words such as 'inimaginable', 'affreux', dégoûtant., in every other sentence, impotently. (DG.ii.82)

Silence and the shame of peace reigned and immense relief. For Christopher Isherwood "this post-Munich autumn of 1938 was a period of relief disguised as high-minded disgust" (CICK.241). Many on the Left in France and in England must have felt as he did, though very few had the courage to admit it openly. Isherwood confessed some forty years later:
Like all his friends and thousands of other people, Christopher declared that England had helped betray the Czechs. He meant this. It seemed to him absolutely self-evident. Yet his dead secret, basic reaction was: What do I care for the Czechs? What does it matter if we are traitors? A war has been postponed - and a war postponed is a war which may never happen. (ibid.)

Ironically, the much criticised Neville Chamberlain had argued publically much along the same lines, asking why Englishmen should go to war "because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing" (AJPT.528). Many Englishmen still agreed, but public opinion here was soon to undergo a profound change. In France, however, the tide of history was against the 'anti-Munichois' and it was flooding in the direction of Vichy.

In early November, a new anti-Jewish outrage was organised by the Nazis in Germany, the horrific night of broken crystal, the Reichskristallnacht. Synagogues were burnt to the ground, Jewish shops looted, Jewish men and women and children beaten, some killed, many sent to concentration camps. With brutal cynicism, a collective fine of 1,000,000,000 marks was imposed by the Nazis on the Jewish community. The people of the United States and Britain were outraged and shocked. The U.S. ambassador was called back from Berlin and relations between the two countries cooled markedly. In England these outrages had lasting consequences:

Nazi treatment of the Jews did more than anything else to turn English moral feeling against Germany, and this moral feeling in turn made English people less reluctant to go to war. (AJPT.515)

In France, however, there was no popular outcry of comparable dimensions. On the contrary, anti-semitic agitation continued to increase. Not only papers like Brasillach's Je Suis Partout and Charles Maurras' L'Action Française, but large sections of the boulevard press contributed to poisoning the atmosphere. "Plutôt Hitler que Blum!". Strangely, however, neither David Gascoyne's journal nor that of Anais Nin refer explicitly to the overt anti-semitism of the press nor to the latest demonstration of Nazi barbarity. Gascoyne, proud of his compassion and ability to feel the distress of humanity, noted for the days in question various visits to cafés, a weekend holiday, trans-
lation work and two desinterested discussions about politics: "Familiar argument between an aristocratic and reactionary mother and an emancipated disillusioned son, into which I dropped only a non-committed word here and ther" (DG.ii.93). Anais Nin was conscious of the "threat of concentration camps" (AN.ii.342) and as early as 1934 she had heard of "the persecution of the Jews in Berlin" (AN.i.349). But she, too, was silent about the recent outrage. Interestingly, it was none other than Henry Miller, who spoke out against what he called a "spectacle which for consummate horror and brutality can be paralleled only by the Belgian Congo atrocities under Leopold" (Hamlet 394). Was it possible that the Czech Crisis and the immediate threat of war and the disillusionement with Europe had changed the heart of 'Happy Rock' Henry Miller?

"People ought to be changed after an experience like this", Miller had written to Anais Nin as the Crisis was reaching its peak. Indeed, Miller himself felt changed – but he also reaffirmed with vigour his old ideas of acceptance and detachment. He explained to Fraenkel that by growing attached to the Villa Seurat and to France he had become unfaithful to himself. Now, however, he was again living as one ought to live, with packed suitcases, a vagrant. He had regained his inner peace even before the danger had passed. He said that he felt strengthened by his passage though "a second hell" and in more than one way, this last Hamlet letter to Fraenkel was a valediction. "To-day the Villa Seurat no longer exists", said Miller: "For me the war which was so narrowly averted really took place. I have relinquished my place and my possessions once again" (Hamlet 367).

It was in mid-October that Miller began to compose his final contribution to the Hamlet exchange. It was December before he finished it. This long epistle attempted to redefine his outlook in view of the Crisis and its aftermath. The great question asked was: how could people not change after having been eye to eye with the horror of war? And yet, the letter, so long and so well composed, was itself an indication that Miller, like so many others, had once again settled down, somewhat uneasily, to his old ways.
Perhaps Miller had changed after all, not, as one might have supposed, in the fundamental belief in "detachment", but in the scope of his concern. The Crisis had seized him, had indelicately forced him to consider political events - and left him confirmed in his old views. Miller could no longer close his eyes - and became more detached, more "oriental" than ever before. Miller spoke with assurance about war and Hitler and Chamberlain and Germany and the persecution of the Jews, but his Whitmanesque acceptance emerged unscathed, even strengthened. The political world, hitherto almost averted, now served increasingly as a reservoir to nourish his old ideas and ideals. The Munich Crisis should have crushed his quietism, as it had destroyed the illusions of so many others, but it did not. Anais Nin wrote that "a great many faiths died" in those weeks (AN.ii.309), but although Miller's was roughed up, it survived. In some cases, as with David Gascoyne, the prospect of war caused not a panic but a sudden joy, an upsurge of sympathy with a suffering humanity whose anxiety and despair now coincided with his own: "Crise de la politique, crise del'homme, crise de l'esprit" (DG.ii.59). Miller, however, felt no sympathy with the masses, felt confirmed in the thought that "the poet remains locked outside the historical pattern; he is the eye of God which illuminates the drama but is powerless to alter it"(Hamlet 386).

Stephen Spender has written that in the 1930s "public events had swamped our personal lives and usurped our personal experience" (SSWWW.91). Something of the kind now, belatedly, happened to Henry Miller. Miller, however, profoundly disliked the condition and soon withdraw again into a new mystic calm, then a Graecian peace and finally the safety of the 'Air-Conditioned Nightmare'. Anais Nin wrote: "It isn't good to stay too long in the polluted air of history"(AN.iii.27) - and Miller agreed with all his heart.

In the months of the last Hamlet epistle, however, memories of the Munich trauma were still so alive in his mind that daily political occurences came to his attention, forced their way into his life and compelled him to adapt them, somehow, into his writing. He condemned the "baiting of the Jews" in Germany, but when he did this it was not the expression of a new moral awareness, one different from the "everything is excellent" stance of the Booster. It served rather to il-
lustrate Miller's general point that humanity as such lacked all compassion and was made up of cannibals and sadists. This essentially misanthropist view was in fact lost somewhere on a hundred page epistolary ocean, lost among references to Erich Gutkind, Indian metaphysics, Keyserling and Jacob Boehme, Hermes Trismegistus and the I'Ching, Lawrence's Apocalypse and other strange flotsam. As so often, Miller's anti-humanism was not without a core of truth. He had a point when he said that he persecution of the Jews, like other barbarities - "Who gives a f..k about the Chinese"-, was "not only ignored but hushed up as much as possible" (Hamlet 394). But he was not arguing from a moral position; he was no different from those he chided for their unfeelingness. It was only a few pages later that he noted: "No situation can be ignominious if one is detached" (Hamlet 397).

Miller had not renounced his former views. He may have been entering tentatively the world Isherwood and others were just preparing to leave, but it was entirely on his own terms. There was a curiously pristine air and one of naive wonder about those parts of the letter in which Miller discussed these "greater, exterior forces" which had destroyed his private peace at the Villa Seurat, Hitler and Mussolini and the Western powers. "I am informed that I am an ignoramus in these matters, as undoubtedly I am" (Hamlet 395). Nevertheless, he asked disturbing questions such as the following:

I am not able to understand, for instance, why the thousands of men and women in Germany who were doomed never thought to offer their lives in an attempt to assassinate Hitler and his satellites. I am not able to understand why the statesmen who pride themselves on their sense of reality, who know that they are dealing with unconscionable thugs, never thought to pay a few American gangsters what it would require to get Hitler and his gang. I am surprised that no rich Jew ever thought of this. (Hamlet 395)

Miller's letter comprised some 100 pages. This was a good tenth of the 1000 pages Miller and Fraenkel and Perlès had set as the goal of the Hamlet correspondence. As usual in his contributions to this long and uneven exchange, this last letter of Miller's contained some good comic passages - "To send an Englishman with a cod-fish smile and an umbrella to deal with the passionate Adolf is suicidal" (Hamlet 396). Nevertheless, its tone was anything but bright and sprightly. Miller
was in fact deeply pessimistic about the future of Europe. He was writing, he said, "these closing pages with a most solemn realization of the debacle which is impending" (Hamlet 409). For mankind in general, and mankind in Europe in particular, there was not much hope: "The human race is not the sort that brings itself to the point of destruction in order to experience a change of heart" (ibid.). Miller himself saw that he would have to "carry on somewhere else". He was ready to go: "I believe in aiding Fate, not tempting it. I believe that when one has life he will know how to guard it" (Hamlet 410). Miller knew how to guard it. These were the last words of the Hamlet correspondence.

A page or so before, there was a reference to the visit paid by the German Foreign minister to Paris. Speaking of the Maginot and Siegfried lines, Miller said: "While their respective emissaries of peace and good-will fly over these impassable barriers to sign their names to new pacts of non-aggression..." (Hamlet 408f). This reference is interesting not only as an illustration of Miller's new attention to what was happening immediately "outside the whale". It also calls into question the editorial arrangement of the Hamlet correspondence, which, as it stands, actually ends with a letter from Fraenkel. Even if Fraenkel's letter was really "lost" somewhere in Knightsbridge, in other words, even if it really existed, there is no reason for the correspondence to close with his accusing Miller of treachery: "You have broken all the rules of the game" (Hamlet 41). For this letter which was dated November 29th 1938, well over a week before Ribbentrop came to Paris, the event referred to in Miller's last contribution.

Hitler's foreign minister flew in to visit the Seine metropolis. On the sixth of December he signed a pact of friendship and non-aggression with the French Republic. Here was another joke in the spirit of Chamberlain's "I've got it!". But this time there were no cheering, crowds on the streets when Herr von Ribbentrop was chauffeured to the Hotel Crillon; the atmosphere in Paris was "frosty" (according to William Shirer) (WS.533) as quite a number of eminent Frenchmen refused to attend the receptions in honour of the Reich's high emissary. The post-Munich heave of relief had been shortlived. Now began the drôle de paix, the period of waiting for war, which lasted for
almost an entire year.

It is difficult to describe the peculiar atmosphere which coloured the Parisian autumn and early winter of 1938, a curious mixture of disturbed normality and habitual anxiety. "There has been a lot of snow, but now it has all melted away", David Gascoyne was to write on New Year's Eve: "Have written a new poem called: Snow in Europe'" (DG.ii.108). This poem ended with a stanza that is eloquent of the eerie calm of the time:

The warring flags hang colourless a while;  
Now midnight's icy zero feigns a truce  
Between the signs and seasons, and fades out  
All shots and cries. But when the great thaw comes,  
How red shall be the melting snow, how loud the drums! (DGCP.80)

Referring to this poem Derek Stanford once spoke of "the politics of intuition" and of "the poet as prophet"(DSFoP.68). But, of course, here, David Gascoyne was anything but a prophet. He was merely putting into words what many people in France and Britain were feeling and fearing. The false euphoria following the Munich Agreement had vanished into thin air and all that remained was a bitter taste. "At midnight on New Year's Eve the most terrific sadness at the state of the world" (AN.ii.316) Anais Nin was to note, and one no longer needed to be a visionary to foresee that the post-Versailles world was about to disappear in an orgy of violence and fire...

The distance between the Booster months of 1937 and the autumn and winter of 1938 then was more than one of time. Inbetween lay the ending of Miller's Villa Seurat. It was a slow ending. Miller had returned to his studio but its spell was somehow broken. Anais Nin conveyed something of this sense of fracture and disenchantment: "Suddenly the Villa Seurat looked dilapidated. One noticed the stains on the walls, the fissures, the peeling paint"(AN.ii.309). It was a lost paradise, upon which its master did not (yet) look back with nostalgic regret. He was set on a new course, "a new modus vivendi" (Hamlet 367), slowly growing ready to leave France. Comparing the 1930s with a tragic play, Samuel Hynes said:
Act Five is the year that began in September 1938 with the Munich agreement, and ended a year later - as tragedies must end - with the expected necessary dying. That last year seems a strange period, as one looks back on it, a sort of war-year before the war, when the life of Europe had already become a war-time life, a period of waiting for the end, and of preliminary endings. (Hynes 340)

Nevertheless, it is just as strange to see the habitual motions of the old life beginning again. "How could people not be changed", one asked oneself in amazement as a tenuous and much desired normality settled uneasily on the dazed metropolis. Anticipating the title of Sartre's novel of 1945, Le Sursis, Anais Nin called this: "À reprieve" (AN.ii.310). She said: "We had escaped a nightmare, a monstrous holocaust, a gigantic tragedy for a few days" (AN.ii.310). Here was a stage and a troupe of actors and accustomed roles in the final act, playing on as the curtain slowly began to fall. "There was no reason to hope that war was not inevitable", Perles later wrote (MFHM.163). Still, in the proscenium, time-honoured activities reappeared, hesitatingly at first, but stronger as time slowly pressed the disagreeable Munich interlude into a deceptive past. A war postponed was a war that might never happen. The cafés filled again, jousting grounds for interminable discussions and there were museums to visit and concerts and galeries. The famous St. Thomas Choir from Leipzig delighted an autumnal audience (which included Tzara and Gascoyne) with Bach's St. Matthew Passion (DG.ii.79). There were parties and meetings and week-end trips, visits to the cinema, the theatre and restaurants. The storm clouds were drawing together at no great distance, but meanwhile, Anais Nin was completing Winter of Artifice and Miller, whose "Tribute to Blaise Cendrars" was just appearing in the T'ien Hsia Monthly, was busy revising Capricorn. The lull was ominous, but David Gascoyne was full of energy, tackling several projects at once, two novels entitled The Anointed and Son of the Evening, a documentary book about modern France, several poems and "a sudden crop of translations" (DG.ii.91). There was no reason to assume that war was not inevitable, but nevertheless, Lawrence Durrell turned up again in Paris on his way to England "to take a hand for a week or two in literary Life/Death" (Corr.138). Literature and art, mere spectres in the weeks of the panic, were resurrected and gave a
parting performance. Literary society came together again and Auden visited and lectured, and there was also the Cahiers du Sud dinner, which Gascoyne attended and described with Fondane, Jules Supervielle, Leon Paul Fargue, Roger Callois and Paul Valéry, "looking rather like an old white horse" (DG.ii.90). Business as usual, one might say, and Henry Miller was immersed in Erich Gutkind's The Absolute Collective and negotiating with the Obelisk Press and reading Balzac's Séraphita. And yet - it was a very odd "normality", somewhat reminiscent of the astrologer Moricand researching only some weeks before into mythology in the Bibliotheque Nationale when the Luftwaffe bombers were due to arrive hourly.

In spite of the facade, not many people thought that this "peace" was anything but transient. Soon, everything would change, and symptomatically, Anais Nin did not protest when Gonzalo More began to burn her precious collection of books, a nasty signal for the ending of one era, and the beginning of another, one of fire and action (AN.iii.311). Miller was making plans to leave, dreaming of Tibet, and, even more surprisingly for him, of returning to America. Gascoyne too was thinking of going to America to get a job with the theatre (DG.ii.102). Even Alfred Perlès, a son of Paris for well over a dozen years, was not too sad when Durrell bundled him off to London in mid-December. It was not only anxiety about future political developments which left the Villa Seurat group on its toes. There was also a feeling of disappointment. The sense of unnerved disillusionment became a part of their final months in Paris. Life continued as normal, but for Henry Miller the dream of France had ended in the summer's mad rush of "stupidity, bigotry, patriotism, injustice, selfishness, callousness" (Hamlet 374). In September 1938 Miller wrote to Anais Nin that he was "cured of Europe" (LtAN.176), a Europe which had disturbed his serene existence. And, with the Red Skin surfacing with vigour, he concluded: "If they don't settle things magnanimously it's no use living in this part of the world any longer" (ibid.177). The Crisis had passed, the hysterics abated, but thoughts of travelling, of returning "home", of moving on, never again left his mind. It was a period of disappointment, of transition and leave-taking. Into this time, curiously, fell the penultimate Villa Seurat publication, the "Special Peace and Dismemberment Number with Jitterbug-Shag Requiem", a ninety
page issue of *Delta*, which Alfred Perlès later described, with some justification, as "the best number we ever produced" (MFHM.173).
Special
Peace and Dismemberment
Number
with
Jitterbug-Shag Requiem

XMAS 1938
Under this extravagant title the second Delta appeared in December 1938, a ninety page "requiem", the front cover bordered in black like a death notice and reminiscent of the Black Book excerpt in the Booster of October 1937. The title suggests that this number had to do directly with the Czechoslovak Crisis of September, and in certain ways, it was a topical number.

"I am singing now while Rome burns", Miller had said some years before, adding that "Rome has to burn in order for a guy like me to sing" (Hamlet 56). As we have seen, Miller plainly enjoyed emphasising his neronic streaks, believing that this would shock his interlocutors, and as far as they belonged to the literary classes he was probably not wrong in his expectations. At the same time, the impulse to dance on the edge of the volcano was in many ways not that unusual a phenomenon at all, and can indeed be seen as yet another indication of the powerful link existing between Miller and l'homme moyen sensuel. A chronicler of the year 1938 noted: "There would seem to be some connexion between a period of tension and a sudden popularity in extravagant dances" (BY39.197). Among these dances, the jitterbug was the rage among enthusiasts of swing music. Indeed, in the months of the Czech Crisis and beyond, the wide-spread passion for dancing was so great that one contemporary came to be reminded of "the dance craze which flourished before and immediately after the outbreak of the World War" (BY40.197). Of course, this popular 'craze' contrasted markedly with the feeling of depression and paralysis that had set in in the literary sphere during the late summer and autumn. "Preoccupation with political events amounted to anguish and created an atmosphere unfavourable to literature" (BY39.277). The ex-Boosters, however, and Henry Miller in particular, had not allowed themselves to be touched by that anguish (at least this is the impression they conveyed to their audience) and so their penultimate house publication was as appropriately called the "Jitterbug Shag" as it was a "Requiem", a dance while Europe was burning.
The first part of the title is perhaps even more interesting than the Jitterbug Requiem allusion. Dedicated as it was to Milada Souckova and Zdenek Rykr of Prague, the ex-Boosters seemed to express with this issue a feeling of disgust with the dismemberment of the Czechoslovak federation and compassion with the plight of their Czech acquaintances and friends. I have referred to their Czechoslovak connections before, we have noted that it was into Czech that Tropic of Cancer was first translated in 1938, and that Czechs formed the largest contingent of East Europeans in their review. In their own indirect way, the "non-political" editors of "Special Peace and Dismemberment Number" now showed that they were not wholly indifferent and revealed where their sympathy lay. As Orwell pointed out in "The End of Henry Miller" in 1942, the review's "nearest approach to a political statement" that its editors exhorted their readers to drink pils-nér - "IT'S STILL CZECH" (Tribune.cccc. 18). Was it no more than a coincidence that the only commercial advertisement to be printed in this number was one for the Orion Chocolate Works Ltd., a company based in Paris and in Prague?

Nevertheless, the Villa Seurat's expression of sympathy for the Czechs did not mean a radical change of heart. Miller's dramatic itinerary through the summer had not changed his views, and similarly, Delta's seeming concern about the "dismemberment" of Czechoslovakia was a highly ambiguous affair. For example, the editors devoted the back cover to a Czech text entitled "Henkst", but this sign of sympathy was immediately qualified by the two exclamations, "Peace! It's Wonderful!", which framed it. Was it cynicism or pure naiveté which led the Villa Seurat to forget that pacifism, the exaltation of peace, peace at all costs, must have seemed to many Czechs directly responsible for the policies of appeasement which resulted in the destruction of their federation? Indeed, the fact that the ex-boosters chose as their motto "Peace! It's Wonderful!" is eloquent of an essentially parochial grasp of the great shifts of world politics which were occurring at the time: this phrase was the favorite greeting of one "Father Divine" from Harlem, the black leader of a revivalist sect. "Peace! It's Wonderful!" was also, as we have seen, the title of a prose piece which appeared about this time in Seven in which an incorrigible Miller proclaimed himself a "God" and said what the world really needed
were "traitors to the human race" (Seven.iii.21). By that time the Czechs had probably had their fill of traitors. The Villa Seurat position, in short, had hardly changed at all.

Still, unquestionably, a whole page notice dedicated the second Delta to two Czechs. Moreover, the fact that the editors issued work by the champion of the First Republic, the combative humanist Karel Čapek, seemed to indicate their sympathy and solidarity. Still, what they selected and printed again posed some difficult questions, for it ignored entirely the important change of attitude Čapek had undergone from the mid-decade on, a change the Villa Seurat editors must have known about. "Le Pèlerin boiteux" evinced such an a-social and a-political bias that it may not even have belonged to the pacifistic phase of his writing that had crumbled in disappointment in the mid 1930s. Čapek's pacifism had given way to a strong anti-fascist engagement, manifest in the patriotic and militarist play, Matka, which Milada Součková has called "a literary Guernica" (MSLS.51) or the well-known Válka s mloky of 1938. "Le Pèlerin boiteux" reveals no traces of his political and social engagement, let alone of his anti-fascist involvement. It would thus seem to point the reader to his œuvre from the period 1917-1921. "Je ne veux corriger personne, ni rien bouleverser", says the Pilgrim, who is a listener to inner music, a sceptic, an artist and a lonely traveller: "je ne suis ni un réformateur, ni un anarchiste, bien qu'en beaucoup de points le monde ne me satisfasse pas. Je ne défends que moi-meme..." (D.ii.31). The early Čapek's scepticism about a rationally explicable world is echoed in the Pilgrim's question: "Le bonheur, les certitudes, le monde - et moi - et en face de cela des facultés de connaissance et de jugement si limitées et si peu sûres - où puis-je m'aventurer avec des instruments aussi imparfaits?" (D.ii.31f). Čapek did not hold in the 1930s the quietistic, metaphysically oriented, anti-social attitude which his Pilgrim professes, and his intensified political involvement even resulted in his being praised at the 1938 International Congress of Writers in Madrid by the Soviet delegate Alexei Tolstoy (MSLS.52). One wonders which action was more inappropriate, to print Čapek in an irresponsible sheet like Delta with its painfully injurious title, or to select a contribution that implied the very opposite of what the author had fought for in recent years. Čapek may have never realised
where his work appeared. He died on Christmas Day, 1938.

Like Capek and many other Czech authors, Milada Součkova too experienced "a volte-face from 'art for art's sake' toward a fiction inspired either by ideology or 'reality'" (MSLC.137). Like Capek's contribution, her own "Amor and Psyche", as we shall see below, was also no longer a true representation of what she thought and felt at the time....

The second Delta paid homage to their Czech friends in the new and terrible post-Munich world, but did so in most questionable ways. By re-emphasising individualistic views, by going on as if nothing had changed, the Villa Seurat was unable to establish more than a very superficial sense of sympathy for those for whom everything had changed. In fact, the continuity of attitude was so unquestioned that Miller and his friends did not even think it necessary to put together a new magazine for the post-Munich period. They simply garnished and ornamented with a number of post-Munich notices a magazine whose concept and content had been largely fixed before the Czech Crisis...

Lawrence Durrell arrived in Paris in November. He travelled on to London in December, taking with him Alfred Perlès. The final shape of the "Special Peace and Dismemberment Number" was determined in the time inbetween. The editorial direction and the contents, however, had evidently been fixed before Durrell came to Paris. How can we know this? The "Autumn" issue of Nicholas Moore's Seven had on its back cover a long and detailed advertisement for the Villa Seurat announcing this second Delta. Aside from the Villa Seurat authors, the contributors listed were Dylan Thomas, Moricand, Antonia White, Nicholas Moore and - Milada Součkova. In this notice there was no talk of "dismemberment" nor of "requiems" nor of drinking pilsener that was still Czech, nor could there be. The reason was that this issue of Seven appeared in July 1938 (1). Delta was in fact not a Czechoslovak number after all, the serious Czechoslovak element was only draped around a magazine whose character was of a different nature altogether. Here is the Seven advertisement:
DELTA. The only magazine in the world which dares to print anything and everything. Originally called "The Booster", under which name it created attention in Europe and America, this review is now for sale through subscription only at the prohibitive price of 250 francs, or its equivalent in any currency, per year.

DELTA will appear irregularly, spasmodically, according to the whims and caprices of its editorial board. The current issue contains fragments from four distinguished and audacious books just published from Paris. Never since the glorious Middle Ages has a review dared to publish such material as we are now offering to the public. It is absolutely necessary to subscribe, if you wish copies of this number, as there will be no copies on sale anywhere. (Seven.ii.back cover)

If the issue's contents and its editorial direction had been agreed upon in the summer, then Durrell's part in the organisation of the magazine will have been relatively small, for he was not in Paris at the time. There is no reference to this Delta in the published correspondence between Paris and Corfu. There are several reasons for assuming that Miller had once again taken charge of the review. The plans for subscription and distribution closely approximated to that "Chinese policy"(Corr.121) which he had outlined in a letter to Durrell in January 1938. As he suggested it should then, the magazine had now become a "private affair for subscribers only"(ibid). Furthermore, as the advertisement in Seven indicated, there was now a strong odour of sexuality and obscenity about the magazine. This was reminiscent of the Clichy Miller and very unlike the poetry Delta which Durrell had edited in the early months of the year. Also, hardly one of the English poets associated predominantly with Durrell appeared here. On the contrary, the contributors were almost exclusively friends or acquaintances of Miller. They even included his old Cancerian cronies Richard Osborn and Wambly Bald (the notorious Van Norden). Add to this that the Christmas Delta featured only a handful of poems, with an overwhelming proportion of prose, and the impression becomes unavoidable that here was another product of Henry Miller, a distinctly expatriate and Parisian little magazine....

Perlès, of course, was still the review's nominal editor-in-chief, and the editorial board still included Hans Reichel, Hilaire Hiler, Roger Burford, Abe Rattner and Michael Fraenkel. Without further explanation, however, William Saroyan, previously hailed as "of divine thunder, light-bringer, dart-clinger"(B.ii.6), had disappeared from
the scene.

The last air-conditioned Booster had embraced like a climbing plant the Villa Seurat's passion for "the womb". Although its long title suggested a theme somehow connected with the outrage of Munich, there was no central topic in this penultimate Delta. Still, the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia did have consequences, for even if the magazine's contents had been selected in the summer of 1938, they took on a different meaning after the Crisis. A strong valedictory note coloured its pages. It had become a "Requiem", as the title says, a jitterbug requiem, to be sure, but a requiem nonetheless, a composition of Villa Seurat leitmotifs, a sparkling and explosive collection of all their obsessions and preoccupations. It is true, there were no boosts, no "Sportlights" nor editorial hammers, but the Delta editors reintroduced some of the salt and pepper of the first two Boosters, and they added the mustard ingredient of sex. Thus the ninety page booklet, twice as long as the longest of the Boosters, dealt with familiar themes such as art and the artist, the expatriate and his praise of France, astrology and madness, and so on. But for once, the whole magazine was permeated with sex - very much in the way the Villa Seurat's other published work was. In this sense, at least, one can say that the penultimate Delta reflected more truly than any of the other numbers the particular quality and bias of their writing. The sexual component was here not only mixed and fused with other expressions of their world view, with the hatred for America civilisation, for instance, but was also treated in very many different ways, reaching from the burlesque to the lyrical, from the grossly explicit to the aesthetically shrouded. This Delta was indeed the paradigm of Villa Seurat literature.

The Special Peace and Dismemberment Number was different from all the Boosters and from the foregoing poetry number not only because it had acquired a valedictory character. The idea as to what a magazine ought to publish had changed: "The only magazine in the world which dares to print anything and everything". When the editors described the new Delta in the advertisement in the July Seven they did not mean what Durrell had meant with his poetry number, that they were aesthetically flexible or free of politico-literary dogma. In contrast to the
numbers they had issued before, the Delta editors had now decided to do two things: first, they would print representative pieces of their work and no longer censor themselves as they had done before. And second, they were finally going to take advantage of the fact that they were in the unique position of publishing from Paris, of the fact that the French authorities were more lenient in matters of censorship. We have referred to Miller's idea that the Booster had failed because they had compromised. Miller no longer wanted to compromise, but was intent on offering his work straight from the shoulder— and on cashing in on the commercial bonus which dealing in forbidden fruit naturally brought with it...

Jack Kahane's Obelisk Press profited well from the comparatively open laws in France. It exploited the market for tourists looking for "unprintable" books. It printed and distributed work by Miller, D.H. Lawrence, Joyce and Cyril Connolly, as well as a host of other books which for reasons of "obscenity" were prohibited in England and the United States. The idea of publishing themselves what could not be printed in London was probably not very strange to the minds of the Boosters...

In the Booster and the poetry Delta there had been no obscenities, no four letter words that might have caused offense in England. With the Dismemberment Delta this was no longer so. The editors were cooking according to the Obelisk recipe. Vociferously, Kahane had announced in 1929 that he would print any book of literary worth that had fallen victim to British censorship. Now the Villa Seurat was advertising itself in similar terms: "Never since the Middle Ages has a review dared to publish such material..." (Seven.ii.back cover). This Delta was now a truly 'Parisian' journal, with all the erotic reverberations that epithet had for the contemporary, with excerpts from books "just published from Paris", as they emphasised in their ad, "published from Paris" like Frank Harris and Radclyffe Hall...

To recapitulate: Durrell's poetry Delta was a moderately avant-garde verse magazine with ambitions in the world of English poetry. Despite its role in the "Romantic Revival" there was little that was spectacular about it. The Booster, on the other hand, was dadaistically unique.
among the little magazines of the time, but constrained by affiliations to the Country Club, which the Boosters respected at least to a certain extent. It was also constrained by the fact that Miller and friends wanted to sell openly on the American and British market, and were thus obliged to acknowledge censorship regulations. "We wish to make it clear", the editors had written in the summer of 1937: "that the Booster will not print anything obscene" (IntHML.iv.22). But what seemed an ironic wink was in fact a serious editorial position. Orwell later said that he could hardly quote Miller for there were unprintable words "almost everywhere" (CE.i.545). But he might have quoted from any of Miller's contributions to the Booster. We have noted that Durrell was not above transforming a forthright "cunt" into a white-tiled "vulva" in his excerpt from The Black Book, taking out altogether a passage like "Connie swallowing the penis in a series of thirsty gulps" (2). It was almost as if the editors had actively stuck to George Bernard Shaw, who had told Miller (via Durrell) to bowdlerize himself: "He will have quite enough to fight without adding the police and making himself impossible on decent bookshelves" (Entretiens.xxxii.48f). It was precisely those decent bookshelves where Durrell's poetry volumes belonged and the four Boosters as well. In short, hitherto the editors had taken great care not to print anything truly "unprintable", taken care not to encourage the opinion that they specialised in obscene literature. Up to now the reader had been confronted with artists, madmen, practical jokers, iconoclasts, bohemians and other strange fowl, but never with anything overtly erotic or titillating by authors whose work had on other occasion been stamped as "pornographic". And so they issued scenarios of death and destruction, printed poetry about nightmares and madness, occasionally paraded horrific images of a diseased world "running with pus" (B.ii.29) - but shunned overt sexuality. They published harmless fantasies about the "womb condition", some lustreless pages about night walks around the Châtelet area, as well as the Eskimo legend entitled "Nukarpiaartekak", which was innocuous enough for Roger Roughton's Contemporary Poetry and Prose to have printed it without difficulties in stuffy London. One can well understand the Boosters' surprise when the American Country Club found this story "repugnant, filthy and pornographic": they had done everything to avoid a conflict with the English and American censors. But sometime in the middle of
1938 this cautious policy was unceremoniously discarded by Henry Miller...

If hitherto, Paris had hardly crossed the threshold of the magazine, Paris as a physical environment but especially Paris as a condition of artistic freedom, in which it was possible to write books like Tropic of Cancer without fear, the Villa Seurat now demonstrated to the Anglo-American reader what colourful and obscene flowers could spring from the soil they had practically left uncropped up to now. But provocative demonstrations of this kind were risky, apt to be nipped in the bud, before anyone, let alone that wider audience in England and America, would actually take notice. For to the usual difficulties of publishing a normal (non-sexual) literary review were added new ones, in particular, as Shaw had suggested, the police and the hydra of obscenity laws and regulations...

While French legal practice in questions of obscenity was generally liberal, especially where foreign language publications were concerned, the offence of outrage aux bonnes moeurs, article 28 of an 1881 codification of censorship laws, still existed (DTQC.230). The Villa Seurat were very conscious of these laws, conscious also of the "few American Country Club members who might get us into trouble" (Corr.121), individuals who might seize the opportunity to get even with the clowns who had dirtened their club sheet. Should the attention of the authorities be drawn to obscene publications, should the Club institute legal proceedings against Alfred Perles, should some zealous British or American embassy man bring pressure to bear on the French officials, as in the case of Frank Harris' My Life and Loves (3), then who could say what the outcome would be. Especially as in the year before the war, traditional French hospitality, as we have seen, had all but vanished; xenophobia was spreading like a cancer; and though Americans and Englishmen were largely spared depressing experiences, the owner of the Villa Seurat review, Perles, was still a Czech citizen, and the bothersome Czechs, constant reminders of the Munich debacle and (like the German emigrés) the threat of the Third Reich, were not held in high regard by many Frenchman. Indeed, it was not long before French legislation became very strict. This was the direction: in July 1939, a décret-loi was issued, whose articles
119-128 made it illegal "to produce, possess, transport, distribute, sell, import, export or advertise any writing or pictures contraires aux bonnes moeurs" (DTQC.231). But even before, one had to be careful. The Villa Seurat's publisher, Jack Kahane, for instance, over wary perhaps, had taken precautions not to attract too much attention when Miller's Cancer was first issued. Its sleeve carried a warning: "Ce volume ne doit pas être exposé en vitrine" (Ford 367). One bookshop, Tschann, ignored this warning, but nothing happened. Kahane does not seem to have ever run into serious difficulties with the authorities. But the Villa Seurat did not feel completely at ease. In "The Shades of Dylan Thomas" Lawrence Durrell has said that the Country Club was about to take them to court, and that "the editorial staff of The Booster took incontinently to its heels and fled from the threat of prosecution by the French to the more liberal atmosphere of London" (Encounter.ix.51.57). Durrell's recollections were not very precise, but whether factually correct or not, they do reveal that all was not well in France, the traditional refuge for artists and political exiles. Miller was not the only one whose dream of France was beginning to turn sour. Nevertheless, it is not easy to understand how Durrell could write of London's "more liberal atmosphere", for in England, the editors of a publication like the second Delta were unequivocally liable to prosecution.

The Villa Seurat was aiming for a readership in England and America. It was this readership, and not a French or expatriate audience, they were actually writing for, and despite all denigration of literary London and literary New York, the response of this readership was considered essential. We have seen in the chapter on the Booster editorials that even "Happy Rock" Miller acknowledged the importance of an audience when he said that the artist "must finally confirm this creation by reading it in the eyes of others" (IntHML.v.16). To reach the eyes of others, to get through to a readership, then, to overcome the censorship obstacles, was an integral part of the operation of art. Unlike the work of many of their compatriots, their art required more than just writing and finding a publisher. It needed the skill and cunning of the smuggler combined with the smooth manner of the professional public relations man. Kahane's autobiography was called Memoirs of a Booklegger; the Villa Seurat were bookleggers too. Miller
and friends had two strategies, if that is the right word, for reaching a readership in England and America. The first was their long-term efforts to lift the censorship bans on their books. In the early days especially Durrell and Miller corresponded at length about this. But for all their lobbying and public relations work, for all the innocuous articles and stories published in little magazines, in the 1930s there were few signs that their chief works would ever be permitted a legal existence in Britain or the United States. Durrell wrote to Miller: "Ellis and Eliot said they thought it a little premature to fight a test-case for another 5 years over Tropic" (Corr.118).

The other "strategy" was short term, promised immediate successes, both financial and otherwise, but entailed risks as well. This operation was largely illegal and began with selling copies of their work to Anglo-American tourists in Paris, copies that crossed into England and the United States buried in the deepest corner of a suitcase. Alan Thomas remembered:

The repressive activities of Sir Walter Joynson-Hicks, Home Secretary, James Douglas, Editor of the Sunday Express, and Sir Archibald Bodkin, Director of Public Prosecutions, brought plenty of grist to Kahane's mill. (FrLD.171)

But Villa Seurat contraband was smuggled into England and the United States by Miller and his associates directly as well. Anais Nin apparently held the record when she brought fifty copies to New York on one trip. Single author copies were sent to friends in America and sold at a profit. Miller was also in touch with various publishers of questionable repute whom he tried to persuade to pirate his own books and to send him royalties nevertheless (Martin 330). We shall not describe in any detail. The point is that unlike the Booster and unlike the poetry Delta, which were part of legal publicity, the "Special Peace and Dismemberment Number" belonged to the illegal, subterraneous strategy. The question, then, which preoccupied the Villa Seurat once again in the autumn of 1938 was, how to dodge the various censorship authorities in England and in America.
In Britain, public morals were strictly shielded from anything that smacked even faintly of "obscenity". In *Keeping it Dark* (1930) by Bernard Causton and G. Gordon Young, the reader is offered a view of an entire society helplessly entangled in a net of punitive legislation, of dark and haphazard traditionalism, of ignorance and incompetence on the part of the authorities, and hysterically Puritan zealotry. This calm study of what Lawrence Durrell might have called the institutional frame-work of "the English Death" ended with a plea for more light (KiD.78). But the darkness of censorship prevailed throughout the 1930s, its agents eagerly confiscating, prohibiting, burning and fining. Almost ten years after *Keeping it Dark* was published, Elizabeth Bowen reviewed *The Black Book* and noted:

Prose in this country suffers from the narrowness of the channel permitted it - the writer is inhibited from the start. No new mode is possible in the grip of a whole set of adverse decencies ... Bourgeois literature (or call it conforming literature) is going septic under tight bands. (Purpose xi.2.117)

We cannot discuss here all those laws which inhibited a young writer like Durrell, censorship laws, laws sharply limiting the freedom of the press, laws concerning blasphemy, sedition and contempt of court (KiD.23f), laws giving the Lord Chamberlain the right to assess theatre performances, laws permitting the British Board of Film Censors to cut or forbid films. There were, however, some which are worth mentioning.

Lord Campbell's act of 1857 was aimed at preventing "the sale of obscene books, pictures, prints and other articles"(KiD.73), and consequently, at the order of the Public Prosecutor, bookshops could be raided, books such as *The Well of Loneliness* seized and burnt. As D.H. Lawrence discovered in 1919, the same applied to art exhibitions and paintings. The law which prohibited "traffic in obscene publications" included lending or exchanging them, and, as Causton and Young pointed out, this meant that "everyone who lends a friend a private copy of Joyce's *Ulysses* or shows him *The Well of Loneliness* is liable to imprisonment since both books have been officially declared 'obscene!'"(KiD.56). Publishing "obscene" works could lead to a heavy fine or even imprisonment.
But the Delta editors were faced with another barrier as well. Under Section 42 of the Customs Consolidation Act of 1876 it was illegal to import obscene publications or articles. Customs officials not only searched suitcases but were also allowed to open letters and parcels from abroad. The manuscript of Lawrence's *Pansies*, for instance, sent in a sealed envelope, was confiscated. There were similar laws in America. Section 480 of the Postal Laws prohibited "the mailing of contraceptives and other obscene matter" and, according to Malcolm Cowley, had been used to suppress various little magazine publications (ER.195).

Worst of all, it would seem, was that the authorities' censorship activity was arbitrary, irresponsible and secretive. There was no binding definition, it seems, as to what was 'obscene' and what was not. Durrell's acquaintance, Potocki of Montalk, noted in his Right Review: "Even the 'authorities' seem disposed to admit that the law of obscenity is, in the nature of things, unsatisfactory and vague" (RR.v.17). There was no accepted standard, no generally applicable regulation. Sometimes the authorities acted, and sometimes they did not. And sometimes, as in the case of *Guido and the Girls* by Waldo Sabine, a book of erotic poems, they acted only when the third edition included a satire on the President of the Board of Education (DTQC.75f).

Just as disquieting and unnerving was the precautionary censorship practised by the publishers and the printing firms, who, under the libel laws were liable for prosecution as well. They kept a strict check on what they issued. An illuminating example of this self-censorship was offered to the readers of the December 1936 number of Contemporary Poetry and Prose. Two blank pages followed the bold title *WITH OUR FATHER MAKHNO* by Isaac Babel! An incensed Roger Roughton explained in the editorial of the next number: "...perhaps many people do not know that most of the censorship in this country is carried out by the solicitors whom all large printers must keep" (CPP.ix.2). After calling the laws "violent, ignorant, unjust and immoral", Roughton pointed out how dark the proceedings were:
Censorship is not a matter of commonsense; no layman can decide what is likely to meet with disfavour. In this case, after having previously 'passed' the story, the lawyer decided, when the whole edition was on the press and nearly due out, that WITH OUR FATHER MAKHNO was 'doubtful' and must be removed. (ibid.)

In the review's short history this was apparently not even the first time that offense had been taken. Contributions by E.E. Cummings and Benjamin Peret were taken out - not, however, the Eskimo legend which caused the scandal at the American Country Club of France....

Another item which was printed in Contemporary Poetry and Prose in May 1936 was Dylan Thomas' "The Burning Baby". This was not only the title story for the collection which Thomas had planned to issue in 1938, it was also one of those items the printers of The Burning Baby feared would lead to a charge of obscenity. Dylan Thomas about his publisher: "Publication, he has condescended to tell me on a postcard, of the stories as they stand would lead to imprisonment"(DTCL.319). Not even the fact that most of the sixteen stories which Thomas proposed had already appeared elsewhere could dispel the anxiety of the publishers and printers, who sent "a lawyer's list of the objectionable words, phrases, passages + whole chunks in my stories"(4). As Roger Roughton said of literary censorship:

although aimed against pornography, it seems to have little success there, and otherwise the application of the law has been memorable chiefly for its abuse. (CPP.ix.3)

And, as if to remind little magazine readers and editors that Roughton's descriptions of the obscenity laws as unjust and violent were no youthful exaggerations, Potocki's Right Review had begun to serialise from October 1936 the Whited Sepulchres, an account of his trial and conviction for obscene libel in 1932. In spite of help from many prominent literati like Aldous Huxley, Yeats, Eliot, Ellis, Russell, H.G.Wells, Priestley, Housman, de la Mare, Forster and Rebecca West, Potocki was convicted at the Old Bailey and sent to Wormwood Scrubs for six months. The corpus delicti was a poetry collection entitled Here Lies John Penis, which included translations of Rabelais and Verlaine. Full of biting wit and indignant vehemence, Potocki uncovered the brutality of legal proceedings of this kind (5).
Although by 1937 Joyce's *Ulysses* had finally appeared in England, the constriction which Elizabeth Bowen deplored was still there. Books like James Hanley's "Boy" were still being banned, work by Miller and Durrell suppressed, harmless works like Anais Nin's diaries considered not publishable in England (AN.ii.206), writers like Cyril Connolly and Dylan Thomas forced to look abroad to have some of their work issued. But just as Thomas disliked intensely "the Paris idea" and really wanted to publish in England (DTCL.314f), so the Villa Seurat's second *Delta* aimed for a readership in England and America in the winter of 1938.

Perlès later recalled that the review's subscribers who had thought that *Delta* was finished were surprised when another number actually appeared. They must have been all the more surprised when they read that the yearly subscription rate had been raised from 50 francs to 250 francs. "Supposing we refused to distribute it openly, even in Montparnasse", Miller had written in January 1938: "but made it absolutely a private affair for subscribers only, raising the price of subscription to 100 francs here and five dollars for America" (Corr.121). Even the price of 250 francs, he must have now felt, would not scare a subscriber away, on the contrary. *Delta* was going to be an alluring rarity. It was now available, as the *Seven* ad had said, *only* through subscription. "Mailing them out in sealed envelopes without return address, and only, to begin with, to those on our list of whom we are absolutely sure"(Corr.121). A certain undercover attractiveness combined with an admittedly rather expensive protective measure: normally little magazines were sent out in open envelopes or by bookpost, but Miller knew that this cheaper way of posting meant that their publication was also more liable to be examined by the postal censors. *Delta*, it would seem, was therefore sent out in sealed envelopes, and this without return address, for, as Miller may have known, letters were sometimes opened, especially, if, as in the case of D.H.Lawrence, officials had been told whose letters to intercept.
It is not clear how many sealed envelopes were sent out, how many people actually subscribed to Delta, whether Perlès' later recollection was correct that the old subscribers of the Booster and Delta actually received a copy, nor what the circulation of the Dismemberment Delta was. Possibly, quite a number of copies remained in the Villa Seurat among the other published "practical jokes", which Anais Nin thought Miller had wasted his time on: "All of these are now piled in his closet, wasted" (AN.ii.325). What is certain, however, is that the penultimate Delta did not lead to legal action against its editors. In this respect, at any rate, Miller's clandestine operation was successful. Alfred Perlès, who came to England in December, was issued with a British National Identity Card in April of the following year. Had the Home Office glanced at his contribution to the Dismemberment Delta the naturalisation of Alfred Perlès may not have run as smoothly as it did...

In later years, Perlès was to consider this Delta "the best number we ever produced" (MFHM.173). It was the "best" not only because it opened its doors to Paris and let in a multifarious sexus, not only because it allowed its contributors more space than any of the preceding numbers, but also because it provided as an aesthetico-philosophical superstructure an extensive statement of Villa Seurat positions in the form of Lawrence Durrell's letter to Henry Miller entitled "Hamlet, Prince of China".

Had Michael Fraenkel and Henry Miller never embarked on that 1000 page epistolary voyage called Hamlet, Shakespeare's ambivalent brooder might not have played such a striking role in Villa Seurat discussions, might not have prompted Durrell's letters to Miller and his essay "The Prince and Hamlet". Nevertheless, Hamlet the character and Hamlet the play would still have occupied central positions in Durrell's credo. In a 1939 review of The Family Reunion Durrell said:

The greatest question in literary history is here repeated: was Hamlet really mad or only pretending to be mad? The correct answer, of course, is that he was simply an artist, in possession of a territory so remote from the mind and the heart of the ordinary man that it would appear very near madness. (PL.i.2.np)
More than two years before, his reply to the same question was longer and more complicated, more worthy, in fact, of the "greatest question in literary history", one which had occupied the minds of Yeats and Freud, Nietzsche and Joyce, Goethe, Laforgue and Eliot....

There were several Hamlet letters by Lawrence Durrell. Only one of them, though significantly extended, was reprinted in Delta. These letters had been stimulated by Miller's request for some "penetrative interpretations" of the play (Corr.21). Miller, who said he could not bring himself to reread "the damned thing" (ibid.) needed material for his correspondence with Fraenkel. Durrell gladly complied and he sent off in November 1936 the first letter. He called this a "note for an essay". Very pleased, Miller sent that letter on to Fraenkel and to Philip Mairet of the New English Weekly. An exchange of letters between the NEW and Durrell resulted in the publication of a long article, "The Prince and Hamlet", on January 11th 1937. It was subtitled "A Diagnosis". Miller suggested to Durrell that the essay be included in his Hamlet correspondence with Fraenkel, but although Fraenkel called it "a little masterpiece of the deepest insight" (Hamlet 260), nothing ever came of that. Still, Durrell was spurred on, and in January 1937 two further letters arrived in Paris. These provided the torso of the Delta contribution called "Hamlet, Prince of China".

It is not clear whether Miller ever followed Durrell's fiery exhortations to read more of the Elizabethans (Corr.39). It is not clear whether Miller did indeed ever reread Hamlet or not. What does transpire from the voluminous correspondence with Fraenkel, is that he adapted to his own purposes parts of Durrell's interpretation of Hamlet (Hamlet 385ff). But unlike Miller, for whom Hamlet was one example of many, for whom Shakespeare's importance was exaggerated - "A Colossus can be impressive and meaningless" (Hamlet 390) -, the Prince of Denmark's tragedy was central to Durrell's understanding of himself and his creative work on the eve of a new world war. It was also crucial to understanding the effect Tropic of Cancer had on his imagination.
Durrell's work abounded with references and allusions to Hamlet. In "Zero" and "Asylum in the Snow", those quasi-surrealistic blueprints for The Black Book, the protagonist who identified himself as Hamlet says he is none other than the author himself: "I am Lawrence Durrell, the writer" (Spirit 263). At the beginning of their friendship, Durrell, to the wonderment of Anais Nin, emphasised that "one cannot write well without having written Hamlet once" (AN.ii.230). What precisely he meant became clear to her only in time: for Durrell Hamlet exemplified something like an archetypal conflict between the 'real self' and the many adverse forces which surround it, forces associated with the terms morality, religion, society, history and heredity. There were, thus the argument of Durrell's first longer letter to Henry Miller and "The Prince and Hamlet", two Hamlets, two "co-existing Hamlets"(NEW.x.14.271). There was the outer Prince determined by his social position, surroundings, values, and moral demands - "The Prince was society"(ibid.). And there was the inner Hamlet, Hamlet proper, as it were, the true man, "the personal, the gentle, the malleable Hamlet"(ibid.). The real Hamlet, said Durrell, was struggling to assert himself, and "Hamlet is the psyche for ever trying to fight its way out of the armour of the Prince"(ibid.).

The dramatic development is dualistic; it is, in the main, "the inner struggle, done in terms of the outer one"(Corr.26). The inner Hamlet, according to Durrell, moved on a plane and in a chronology which was quite mysterious and not dependent on, or even connected with, the movements of the Prince. The inner Hamlet existed in the world of the artist:

It is from the battle-front of the self that the artist sends us back his messages, gnomic scribbles, fragments, which we can never understand, but which thrill us for centuries as a sort of tribal experience. (NEW.x.14.271)

Only very occasionally does the spectator catch sight of the soft Hamlet's struggles, as there were two very distinct worlds:
Two chronologies: two loves: two separate sanities: two planes of action moving disjointedly along together: and two protagonists who are one. Hamlet and the Prince. (ibid.)

It was the inner man, however, who really mattered, and, as the play progresses, he becomes painfully aware that he was alone. He was surrounded by conventions in the shape of people, and even Ophelia, whom he had taken "as an ally" (ibid. 272) was blind to his inner struggle. "Even the ghost, that ancestral voice", Durrell observed, did no more than call Hamlet to a conventional revenge, was, in other words, "just another social mouthpiece" (ibid.). This realisation cut him "off from supernatural aid" (ibid.). It was the death of God and "the final horror" (ibid.).

It is interesting to see that in the earlier letter to Miller, Durrell suggested that before the pressure of society finally crushed him, Hamlet still had the chance to "turn away from these fakes to his real self" (Corr. 26). In the modified New English Weekly article, the private Hamlet was doomed from the start, "so caught up in the machinery that there is no hope of escape" (NEW. x. 14. 272). Hamlet, said Durrell, "is crushed inwards onto himself" (ibid.), forced to be the Prince "however much his private Hamlet suffers" (Corr. 26). He was destroyed by the moloch of society, those voices which urged him "to relinquish his inner psyche in favour of his material rôle on the social stage" (NEW. x. 14. 272). Here was Durrell's epitaph:

Hamlet, the creature of the void, poisoned in the bud and dying the Bastard Death, with a loneliness and irony never before seen in literature. (ibid.)

Lawrence Durrell did not leave his interpretation at that. Despite an alleged distaste for -isms, systems of thought, he proceeded to sketch out a sweeping historico-cultural scenario, something that might be called the ideology of the English Death. "The tragedy of Hamlet was the tragedy of the Elizabethan Age....It is the tragedy of England now, but more advanced, more grey and carious than ever" (Corr. 27).

The Elizabethans and the Jacobeans, said Durrell, were poisoned by a host of ideals (humanism, chivalry, etc). Despite their exuberance and courage they were unable to realise themselves, to accept what Durrell
called 'the real'. "The Age of the Prince was the Elizabethan Age. An Age that poisoned its young men with the humanities and then showed them none" (NEW.x.14.271).

Shakespeare himself was no exception: caught in a net of social and aesthetic norms, said Durrell, his inspiration and creative impulse were eventually silenced in the roaring of those "damning literary formulae of his age" (Corr.50). In the letter to Miller, the idea that Shakespeare surrendered to conventional aesthetics was put forward in stronger terms than in "The Prince and Hamlet", and yet, the essay actually illustrated the point more clearly. Comparing what he calls the original Folio version with the later Quarto text, Durrell came to the conclusion that the latter version was more comprehensible, clearer, a play, in short, "in which any signs of the inner feud are cleverly related to external things, to love, to revenge, to madness" (NEW.x.14.272). But, said Durrell: "It is a play without Hamlet" (ibid.). The contrast with the earlier Folio version could not be more striking. "Unerringly the whole of the inner struggle, which clogs the action of the Folio, has been cut away" (ibid.). And Durrell went on to point out the differences: on the one side a mathematical equation, lucid, "a slick piece of work that even the critics would enjoy", and on the other, an incomprehensible work, dark, the interior battle quietly raging away. "Everthing is explainable without any reference to the phenomenon of genius", Durrell said of the Quarto version, while into the other "the real grin of genius is carved" (ibid.). One might add, that Durrell was not certain whether it was Shakespeare who was responsible for altering the original. But Shakespeare's retreat to Stratford, his silence there, Durrell seems to have regarded as a direct consequence of having done in one way or another injury to his own genius. "Shakespeare went home and buried the guts under his cherry tree" (Corr.27).

Some "authentic barbarians" (Chaucer and Skelton) apart, English literature, said Durrell, was populated by failures in the existential quest, some more squalid, some more magnificent than others, men who did not 'realise' themselves, writers who were victims of the "English disease", countless Hamlets crushed in upon themselves. It was so in the twentieth century as well, and in the third Booster editorial one
finds the line: "and on the title-page of the 20th century Hamlet still walks with his palms turned outward smiling the insane smile of the schizophrene" (B.iii.5).

Henry Miller was not undisposed to paraphrase Durrell's view in his correspondence with Fraenkel, calling Hamlet the "surpreme coward who walks out on LIFE" and adding: "In the Hamlet type, which is the modern man par excellence, we see ... a surrender to the forces which bind and imprison him" (Hamlet 390). Durrell presented Miller with another paradigm, another example of the struggle for the self. For the young Englishman, however, this essay was "my private piece of fame" (Corr.38). It defined his own path. "You must rewrite Hamlet", he said to Anais Nin: "You must leap outside the womb, destroy your connections" (AN.ii.233).

Durrell deplored Hamlet's "stagnant end, the conventional Elizabethan pogrom, and a brief but witty epitaph" (Corr.27). He wanted something else. The Black Book, full of vehemence and obscenity, was a first effort to 'rewrite Hamlet'. The Black Book, with its hero finally leaving the "English Death" behind and fleeing to a Greek island, was, in his own words, "the birth of Mr Lawrence Durrell" (ALyn 46). An act of self-liberation, it was inspired and made possible by Tropic of Cancer, a book, which, as Durrell wrote to Miller, freed him immediately: "I had such a marvellous sense of absolution, freedom from guilt" (Corr.60).

Miller, the young Englishman believed, was the very first writer to have freed himself entirely. Tropic of Cancer was the "PUREST" and "most religious" book of the time (Spirit 49ff).

Through Durrell's Hamlet letters there shines something like the outlines of an existential pyramid. Right above the unenlightened masses there were those who were propelled, somehow, toward self-realisation, those who occasionally caught a glimpse of the beauty and the horror beyond, but who shied back and surrendered in the end. This is where Hamlet sat brooding out his Bastard Death, where 'Death' Gregory from The Black Book vegetated away, where Shakespeare remained despite his genius - "only sometimes the malaise
shook him, tied him up, and presto, out of the folds fell a genuine bit of heraldry"(D.ii.39).

From that level the ascent was directly to paradisal heights, to the "Heraldic Reality", the realm of self-fulfilment, where Hamlet's grand question could finally be answered in the affirmative. "Have you the faith to deliver yourself to the inner world of Gauguin, or haven't you?"(D.ii.40). Miller had the faith, said Durrell, and he could speak those crucial words "I AM A MAN". It was here that Durrell felt he himself had just arrived, chanting humbly "the magic incantation: I AM A MAN. THAT IS ENOUGH"(D.ii.45). Miller, however, according to Durrell's Delta contribution, was a mountaineer, bound for new heights in the Heraldic Himalayas: "There is only going up, not down" (D.ii.38). The direction was Parnassus and from there on directly to Olympus, the stages I AM A MAN leading to I AM AN ARTIST and then on to the ominous I AM GOD...

While "The Prince and Hamlet" dealt with the Dane dying the Bastard Death, "Hamlet, Prince of China" was about Miller's position in the existential pyramid. The reason why Durrell felt that Miller occupied a position higher than anyone else was two-fold. First, he had realised himself "as a man more fully" than others. Second, he had put himself on paper directly and honestly, had expressed himself without hiding behind masks or mannerisms.

As the first Booster editorial had proclaimed: there were no canons to follow or defend, no literary or moral conventions. A writer could and should explore "his inner heraldic territory". Durrell said:

In our age we have reached a point in writing when it is possible for the writer TO BE HIMSELF on paper. It's more than possible. It's inevitable and necessary. (D.ii. 39)

This was in a marked contrast to the time of Shakespeare and Jonson, as Durrell emphasised, a point, which somehow contradicts his usual anti-progressive, anti-historical outlook. The plight of man is the same throughout history, he suggested on the one hand, but the 20th century is better for the artist than that of Shakespeare on the
other: "If he had faced the world as it is now, in which canon is no longer based on anything, he would have written things greater than you can imagine" (D.ii.39). Then again, the English Death was more advanced and grey and carious than ever before. We have remarked before that checking Durrell's or Miller's logical consistency is no rewarding activity...

Returning to the question of self-realisation in art, it is worth noting that the author of The Alexandria Quartet, a tour de force in multi-perspective, observed more than two decades earlier that, in his opinion, autobiographical narrative in the first person singular was not the ultimate answer. Durrell had roughly exercised in stereoscopic vision in The Black Book and told Miller in this Delta essay: "The next few years will show me whether you can support the theory of the ego-protagonist indefinitely. I rather think you can't" (D.ii.40). Putting oneself on paper without feelings of guilt was centrally important, but only a first step....

In "Hamlet, Prince of China", Durrell actually suggested that Miller's emphasis on being a 'man' concealed a certain hesitation about accepting his destiny as an artist and as 'God'. But it was, according to Durrell, exactly "in this area of the soul that the germ of the final thunderclap is breeding" (D.ii.44). Practice and the "theory of the ego-protagonist", in other words, were something like the literary corollaries to the I AM A MAN condition, but this was not the final objective. Durrell wrote to Miller:

you have been beating into this territory alone, quite alone. In order not to go mad, you had to keep yourself with you as company. That self, the basis of your ego-protagonist work, you raised to the square root. (D.ii.41)

This was a fair description of Miller's highly self-referential approach, but in Durrell's lines there was also a critical undertone. There was more, he said, much more to come. And so, the young 'Corfiote' proceeded to paint in vigorous brushstrokes the prospective scenario in which a Henry Miller who has finally accepted himself as an artist would dispense with the exaggerated emphasis on the ego, "the self, which you used as a defence against the novel terrors of
this heraldic universe, (as one might use smoked glass to look at the sun)" (D.ii.41). And then, said Durrell, one might witness the birth of a new mythology, watch the colossus Miller forging and sculpting "those immense mythical figures which fertilize all our books for centuries ... and our minds" (ibid.).

But what had Durrell's appraisal of Hamlet and Henry Miller to do with the Villa Seurat magazine in general and with the sexual emphasis of the Dismemberment Delta in particular? The vaguely Jungian view of man's individuation in The Black Book and in the Hamlet letters varied themes, attitudes and ideas that were put forward more roughly both in the Booster's editorials and in central Booster contributions such as "The Enormous Womb" by Henry Miller. Indeed, Durrell's paradigm for self-liberation was closely related to the energy which was behind the Booster and behind the Dismemberment Delta as well: it was the view that self-fulfillment could only be achieved by ridding oneself of social and moral norms, the attitude that was reflected in the review's notice that it was free of all principles: "Non-Political, Non-Educational, Non-Progressive, Non-Co-operative, Non-Ethical, Non-Literary, Non-Consistent, Non-Contemporary" (Seven.i.back cover). And this self-description was, of course, no more than a politer way of expressing the antinomian anarchism which had inspired Miller's Cancer, that "gob of spit in the face of Art, a kick in the pants to God, Man, Destiny, Time, Love, Beauty..." (Cancer 10). In the terms of Durrell's Hamlet letters, the Villa Seurat review can be called a platform for the twentieth century Hamlet, conceived as a shelter from the crippling "English disease", a place where one was free from the bogey steel cage of convention, morality and obligation. "The only magazine which dares to print anything and everything" (Seven.ii.back cover)....

"Hamlet, Prince of China", "The Prince and Hamlet", as well as a number of other letters of Durrell's were blueprints for individuation. They were oriented on Henry Miller, the 'man' and artist. The reader of the Tropics and of The Black Book may, however, have paused occasionally and wondered why, in this long harangue, Miller's admirer, Lawrence Durrell, hardly referred to the paramount importance of sex in the writing of the American. After all, in Henry Miller's
work, as Ludwig Marcuse has observed, sexuality was not only moved to the very centre of the human world, it was also as various as the same, as questionable, as edifying and diabolical: Miller's world was one huge canvas populated with myriads of breasts and navels and vaginas and penises, a veritable Milky Way of Copulation (LMObs.315), and so the question is: how could one write about Henry Miller and by-pass this multi-facetted and most central of themes? There exist quite a number of possible answers, not in the least the fact that by the late 1930s Miller himself was no longer stressing this aspect of his work as he had done before. He was tired, as we have noted, of being called a pornographer, and was following paths less physical. Dylan Thomas once wrote to a friend:

good fucking books are few and far, and if you look at Tropic of Cancer as the best modern fucking book, and not - perhaps my sincere enthusiasm misled you - as a universal life-and-death book then I know you must enjoy and admire it enormously. (DTSL.236)

Though Miller might have found this description quite amusing, by the end of the decade he was moving in other, more metaphysical spheres, had left far behind the 'good fucking book' phase. In a way, Durrell appeared precisely at the right moment: for him Tropic of Cancer was much more than a good book about sex; it was "at once the greatest piece of writing in our time, and also the most religious book"(Spirit 50).

It is revealing to see what, in the process of Durrell's interpretations, was done to the phenomena of sex. Carefully, it was cushioned and tucked away among the extensive explanations of the 'Heraldic Universe', of self-liberation, hidden away in the exuberant density of the Black Book's poetic contortions. As Durrell revealed to the reader of his letters and his early prose, self-liberation was what preoccupied him at the time, and a central part of this self-liberation was a catharsis, a purging of prejudice, a cleansing of what Jung called the collective norms. In his letters about Cancer, Durrell repeatedly referred to the book's 'purity', and in the Delta essay he noted that Miller had "the purest mind we have yet had" (D.ii.42). These statements would have appeared as pure nonsense to a vast array of contemporary and later readers, commentators who like
F.R. Leavis felt that both Miller and Durrell were dirtying life. But Durrell's notions of 'purity' were not as absurd as all that. There was something which numerous commentators on Miller had noticed with bewilderment: "His work is utterly free of sin or guilt" (Glicksberg 135). Thirty five years before, Durrell had noted exactly the same thing about Cancer:

by reducing everything to the common denominator of phenomenon, it achieves a Purity of soul and cleanliness of spirit, against which people like Joyce and Lawrence in their most abandoned moments seem a little grubby: a little hand-soiled by the great northern mantrap (our disease, our death) THE GUILTY CONSCIENCE. (Spirit 49f)

Having quoted this, it is important to add that Durrell was not referring exclusively to the sexual extravaganzas in Cancer, and while it is likely that he had this particular aspect in mind, the notion of a 'phenomenal purity' covered almost everything in that book, including such immoral acts as "pinching things from whores-ah" (Corr. 12).

Standing in the anti-genteel, anti-'puritan' tradition of modernism with its pretensions to confronting reality, the phenomenal, directly, Miller had made it clear (even before he received Durrell's praise) that he wanted "a classic purity" (BS. 46). And in his usual extreme way he wrote:

I want a world where the vagina is represented by a crude, honest slit, a world that has feeling for the bone and contour, for raw primary clours, a world that has fear and respect for its animal origins. I'm sick of looking at cunts all tickled up, disguised, deformed, idealized. (BS45)

This was from Black Spring, and Durrell took up the cue. In January 1937 he read "The Eye of Paris" which was later translated into French and published in the Booster (Corr. 57). In that essay Miller described a photograph by Brassai, the "Chair Prime":

THIS IS A CHAIR. Nothing more. No sentimentalism about the lovely backsides which once graced it, no romanticism about the lunatics who fabricated it, no statistics. (WoH. 185)
It was the pure phenomenon, said Miller: "It is a chair of the lowest denomination" (ibid.). And a concomitant purity of vision characterised (according to Durrell) the writing in Cancer. Durrell wrote enthusiastically in November 1936: "The wheel turned right back to the preglacial days when dung was dung and angels were angels" (6).

In Durrell's words, what Miller had written was clean and pure, so free of norms and standards, so ahead or beyond everything else, that it was not subject to moral or even aesthetic criticism. "The critics will get there on about five p.m. next Thursday" (D.ii.40). If a critic reacted adversely to Miller's frank exhibitionism, this was not the fault of Miller or his books but the reader's very own. Durrell wrote about his own response to Cancer:

When I read it first, my repulsion from it was the reflection, NOT OF ANYTHING INHERENTLY REPULSIVE IN ITS CONTENTS, but of my own habit-pattern, my own upbringing. I was reading into it an unpleasantness which was my own mind. (Spirit 49)

Durrell's public comments on Miller were usually motivated by a missionary spirit, or one of (self-) defence. What is important is that for him freedom from collective norms, a clear vision of reality was the objective. This was the goal, an ideally pristine consciousness. Miller, in his view, was the first to have demonstrated something of a 'pure awareness' by writing without guilt about sex and other taboo areas. His guileless exposures signified for his young admirer an almost saintly simpleness. Many years later Durrell still stressed that it was not so much the subject matter itself which distinguished Miller's writing but the 'pure' mind behind it:

in him we find none of the puritan sensitiveness, the recoil, which we find in the uneven author of Lady Chatterley's Lover - surely a most disgusting book because it is so painfully romantic. (HR.3)

Of course, there are arguments which run against the notion of Miller as a modern day noble savage. Charles Glicksberg said of Miller that his "persistent reliance on the shock value of obscenity" would argue that he was "still affected by the very convention he would destroy" (Glicksberg 136). More important, however, at this stage, is the fact
that Lawrence Durrell, who called himself "a pre-atonement, pre-redemp-
tion, and pre-original sin man" (Encounter.xiii.6.62), whose Black
Book was obscene enough to leave Dylan Thomas "sickened and excited"
(TC.i.4.4) and to be allowed to appear in England only in 1973, had in
the Booster years a peculiarly ambivalent and uneasy attitude to sex
in literature himself, an unease which expressed itself in the
eloquent manner in which he reduced the sexual factor to a mere
stepping stone on the path to artistic self-fulfillment...

Asked in the late 1950s how close he was to Lawrence's belief that it
was only through sex that one reached a clear vision of reality,
Durrell replied that he was influenced by Lawrence "as a writer but
not as a person of ideas"(Encounter.xiii.6.62). Nevertheless, in The
Black Book and in much of his later work, Laurentian concepts were
ever-present, the sexual act played such an important role in the path
that Durrell sketched out for his self-searching protagonists, that
one could say: without sex, no enlightenment. And yet, for him sex was
always a catalyst, essential, to be sure, as an explosive stimulus for
departure, but no more: "The act of sex itself I take to be a vibra-
tion intended, by its orgiastic amnesias, to wake some other engines
of understanding in him"(Moore 162). An experience which Durrell
described a number of times in The Black Book was one in which the sex
act cleansed away the poisons, "the dirt and the scurf of things, the
thawed pus and venom". It was a freeing from the English Death
(BB.63). The hero experienced again and again a kind of psychical
ablution and entered the 'Heraldic Universe', that mythical sphere,
which was described as timeless, identical with the womb condition...

The vision of a spiritual cleansing, a moral tabula rasa, a pristine
and a-historic consciousness, permeated Durrell's work at the time to
the point of obsession, for he himself was in the process of breaking
"the mummy wrappings - the cultural swaddling clothes"(BB.9), and in
his real life this 'heraldic' condition demanded and eventually found
its correlative in that of his exile from England. On Corfu, he was
"inside the whale", possessed a 'clear' vision of his limited island
surroundings, was rid of the overburdening responsibilities and guilt
feelings of the old life in England. In the 'Heraldic Universe', as in
exile, there was no alienation, the outside world was far away and
robbed of its aggressive complexity; everything was clear and simple, nothing to separate the subject from his surroundings: "The sky is familiar again" (BB.101). It was the phenomenological state, and the sexual act was considered a vehicle to achieve it - temporarily.

For just as the symbolical regression into the 'womb', a recurring motif in The Black Book, always ended in a painful rebirth, so the sex act's healing effect was described as limited, certain to recede like a wave on the sea shore. It never left more than a taste of the enlightened 'pure' awareness. Sex could even be a delusory detraction if it did not precipitate genuine action, and this, according to the Hamlet letters and The Black Book, could only mean: self-liberation in the form of exile and art. The heroes of The Black Book and The Alexandria Quartet retreated to Greek islands and began to write. Durrell's lovers always "discovered the fulcrum in themselves to lie outside the possession of each other, ...in the domain of self-possession (art)" (Moore 167). And in this domain of self-possession (art) an uninhibited, honest and 'frank' depiction of the existential struggle and of the sexual experiences which initiated the desire for liberation was considered centrally important...

But the clarity with which Durrell ascribed to the sexual element its place in the struggle for individuation was no more than an index to the difficulties he had in achieving the frank immediacy in writing about it that characterised some of Miller's best works. Durrell never was the author of 'good fucking books'. In the Hamlet letters, as we have noted, the sexual topic was hardly touched upon, and if it was, then Durrell never failed to introduce alongside it some other more respectable theme, a habit which did not change in his long career as an 'expert in modern love'. In his works and words, sex and writing about sex were mostly connected with some philosophical scheme or idea, with notions of self-liberation or spiritual purity, with occultism or 'France', with the great struggle against 'Puritanism' and so on and so forth. Sex was an instrument, a bridge, a catalyst, but never simple, never accepted as a pure phenomenon in itself. Durrell never said, for instance, that describing sexual encounters can be a pleasure in itself, even sexually exciting - or that, for a time, this was a gap in the Anglo-American literary market, or even simply, as
Glicksberg observed: "Sex is as much a part of life as the aspirations of the spirit, and the language of sex is as legitimate a part of literature as the vocabulary of idealism" (Glicksberg 139). It is true, on rare occasions he did succeed in producing a line or two of devastatingly brilliant obscenity, such as the one which according to Miller told "the whole story of England", namely Tarquin's remark to the Black Book hero: "Look, do you think it would damage our relationship if I sucked you off?" (Corr.98). But usually, to use Glickberg's terminology, the language of sex and the language of idealism were so close together as to be virtually indistinguishable - and this despite his clamouring for a phenomenal immediacy. Sex never appeared on its own, for its own sake, as it does in some of Miller's more powerful passages. Even in The Black Book it was always chaperoned by some idealistic maiden aunt who had her sights set on higher purposes. This had important consequences: sex was acknowledged and talked about but heightened to quasi-metaphysical spheres - where it lingered on, impotently...

In one of his early phatasmagorias Durrell had written: "When you are afraid of something, or you want to hate it, you give it a name" (Spirit 261). In later years he might well have added: you mix it with a generous quantity of obscure imagery, mysticism, non-rational psychology and religion. Durrell would describe Miller's highly obscene Sexus as a part of his enormous "spiritual autobiography" which only "holy men would be able to read" without prejudice, a work comparable to "those great Indian rock-cathedrals with their obscene-religious sculpture"(A0.24). Privately, very spontaneously and with great honesty, he cabled Miller that he found Sexus: "DISGRACEFULLY BAD", that it would ruin his reputation, being, as he said in a letter, no more than a "shower of lavatory filth which no longer seems tonic and bracing, but just excrementious and sad" (Corr.265f).

In retrospect, the fact that in later years Durrell dissociated himself from manifestations of his early outspokenness seems to have been almost programmed from the start. He admitted in the early 1960s, for instance, that there were some parts in The Black Book which "probably are a little bit too obscene", which he would not "have written that way now"(PR.269). Characteristically, it was these very passages which
Miller admired most. "I thought they were marvellous when I first read them and I still think so today" (PR.185). Upon hearing of the volte face of his friend, Miller observed: "Maybe he was only spoofing, Durrell" (PR.185). Durrell was not spoofing. But, in any case, as far as his contributions to the Booster and Delta were concerned, there was no cause for later regret: as we have seen, the Booster excerpt from The Black Book had already been appropriately bowdlerised, while his contribution to that number of Delta in which Miller and Perlès pulled out all the stops, was no more than an innocuous and fairly abstract appraisal of Miller's work.

Even in his most explicit work, The Black Book, sex was a part of his epistemological machinery, functional, instrumental - and thus finally respectable. Judged against his expressed aims of freeing himself from convention and the old moralities, one cannot but feel that Durrell failed. One could argue that the ideal of a phenomenal purity, so closely linked to that priapic cathartic vision, only makes sense if one sees it as a young man's exaggeration, a maximalist weapon to be used at random against the crusted moral inhibitions of his England, a cleancut cornerstone for a theoretical justification of his art. But this does not alter the fantastic discrepancy existing between his claims and the reality both of his life and his art.

Durrell's Delta letter set impossible standards not only for himself. His eulogy naturally appealed to Henry Miller, the 'Brooklyn Boy', who had already begun thinking of himself as a prophet of "a new and dazzling mythology", an artist-hero, that Zarathustrian superman that the Booster editorials had posited, a mystic, a philosophical explorer of unknown realms that Keyserling had seen in him. Such laurels Miller accepted without reserve, applauded in a letter Durrell's interpretation as the "very core of the matter" (Corr.56), and agreed that a great work lay ahead. This ouevre was going to be greater even than Tropic of Capricorn "which will be tremendous enough, I can assure you" (Corr.57). And so, the man who always proclaimed that the "best world is that which is now this very moment" (B.iv.23) set his sights – on the future. He wrote to Durrell in January 1937 that he too felt "that the great opus lies ahead" (Corr.57). Indeed, this notion had been introduced into his mind by admirers ever since the first pages.
of Cancer emerged from his Underwood. Anais Nin, for instance, had said to him in 1934:

In the books, you are creating yourself. In Tropic of Cancer you were only a sex and a stomach. In the second book, Black Spring, you begin to have eyes, a heart, ears, hands. By and by with each book, you will create a complete man. (AN.i.366)

Now, several years later, just as Anais Nin and others like Fraenkel were moving away from Miller, a new admirer, a young writer, hailed him as being in the process of apotheosis, on the verge of composing an ultimate work of art: "Hamlet squared, Hamlet cubed, Hamlet in an atmosphere which gives trigonometry cold fingers and logic blunt thumbs" (D.ii.41). The sights were set on the future, the objective in Miller's own words: "Something to put beside Quixote, Gargantua, Satyricon, etc. A classic for the 21st or 22nd century" (Corr.57). And from the summer of 1938 on Miller repeatedly referred to a book that was going to crown his other books, a novel to be entitled Draco and the Ecliptic, to be published in 1942. It was going to be "the joyous book of the mystic, Herr Gottlieb Leberecht Müller, alias Henry Valentin Miller" (IntHML.v.20), as he wrote to Keyserling in Darmstadt. Although he was never quite sure exactly what the book was going to be about, it was clear to him "that it will be vastly significant, not just for me but for the world to come" (Corr.148).

Draco and the Ecliptic never materialised. The opus magnum never came about. The ultimate Hamlet was never written. The goal which anti-idealist Henry Miller had set himself was never achieved. He had come, it would seem, to overrate his imaginative powers, his synthesising energies. Anais Nin occasionally called him "slightly megalomaniacal" (AN.ii.273). He announced the great oeuvre, but before, as he told Durrell, "all the Brobdingnagian experience must be vomited forth" (Corr.57) - a task which kept him occupied, rosily crucified, as it were, for much the rest of his life. He felt certain that there was only going up (as Durrell had suggested) - and never again wrote a book of the same vitality and force as the first Tropic. Norman Mailer has put the blame on Anais Nin for civilising this wild man from the Manhattan jungle, but he might as well have blamed most of Miller's acquaintances - and the Villa Seurat 'sage' himself (Mailer 371).
Enthusiastic letters such as Durrell's "Hamlet, Prince of Denmark", reprinted unabashedly in his own periodical, placed an overwhelming weight of expectation on Miller's shoulders, exaggeratedly encouraging where no encouragement was necessary, and, instead of casting a cold but helpful eye, inflating perhaps his self-importance inordinately. Perhaps the warm atmosphere of mutual encouragement and praise associated with the Booster days had its darker aspects as well...

But to return to the Peace and Dismemberment Delta. In his long epistle to Henry Miller, entitled "Aller Sans Retour London", that unlikely and yet ardent Franco-turned-Anglophile Alfred Perlès, described his first steps in England, his first months in that new world, the sprawling metropolis, his first acquaintances, his English girls, his renewed and deepened friendship with David Edgar, his experiences in anthroposophical and theosophist circles, as well as the visit of one Mr. Richards: "Mr. Richards glanced over my books and my writings in Delta (not the jitterbug shag number!), in Purpose and the T'ien Hisia Monthly" (RT.56). Mr. Richards was a police officer whom the CID had sent to investigate Perlès' application for a British citizenship. NOT THE JITTERBUG SHAG NUMBER! There were no complications - but, as in the case of many East European and German emigrés, there might easily have been. Perlès was living off royalties and fees for articles and literary essays, he told the Under-Secretary of State of the Home Office, Aliens Department (RT.43), but he was anything but well off, and had Mr. Richards decided to look a little closer he would have found that of the sexually tinged contributions to the Special Peace and Dismemberment Number, "Josette" by Perlès was the most explicit and the most obscene, a chapter from Le Quatuor en Ré Majeur well worthy of the Carl of bygone Clichy days. The point is, however, that even in the minds of the protagonists this issue of Delta was exceptional, unlike the other numbers of the Villa Seurat sheet - and quite in accord with their other literary productions. NOT THE JITTERBUG SHAG NUMBER!

Aspects of the sexual theme have cropped up now and again in the pages of this thesis, facets which might be subsumed under headings such as "Sex and Exile" or "Sex and Death" or "Sex and the A-historical Attitude". Indisputably there existed between the members of the Villa
Seurat coterie certain similarities of outlook in this matter, correspondences which become more visible the further one moved away from Miller's studio; and to the critic across the Channel the Villa Seurat must have seemed a rather homogenous group of politically and socially irresponsible post-Laurentians. And, from a bird's eye view and in the larger context of European literature on the eve of the Second World War this assessment was perhaps not wholly inaccurate. If, however, one redescends to the cobble-stone cul de sac in the 14th arrondisement, one is forced to concede that things were more complicated. Even the inner circle was vehemently divided on crucial issues - including the role of sex in art. Here, for instance, is Anais Nin's critique of Miller's libidinous world: "Instead of investing each woman with a different face, he takes pleasure in reducing all women to a biological aperture" (AN.ii.260). The Villa Seurat circle was, apropos of sex, many little circles. And when, as in the Dismemberment Delta, the many-faced sexus of Henry Miller and his friends danced and capered with this elusive nymph from distant Czechoslovakia or that faun from England or America, the resulting whirls and reels were such as to make it very difficult to find some kind of unifying pattern.

Love, sexual love in particular, was what they wrote about, and yet, Wambly Bald's Waldo, "handsearching" his nose-picking barroom booty, had little in common with the hesitant young woman's love described in Milada Součkova's "Amor and Psyche". The contributors were often worlds apart and so it seems to require acrobatic elasticity and a measure of brute violence to write with assurance about "Sex and the Villa Seurat".

Still, it is also difficult to avoid bringing into relationship with each other certain characteristics which were common to some of the contributors. There was that barely veiled Freudian substratum, for example, in the writings of Nicholas Moore and Dylan Thomas, poets of a very different temperament and style, who were, nevertheless, both associated with the New Apocalypse, both part of the aforementioned 'romantic revival'. It is not enough to state generally that no generalisation can be made about this thematic complex. Indeed, the most appropriate way of dealing with the sexual phenomenon in this
issue of Delta, more various here than Miller's fanfaras and Durrell's 'heraldic' speculations might suggest, seems to be to look at the most important contributions more or less individually, pointing out similarities and differences of treatment and attitude as the occasion demands...

In the conclusion of a later book on Czechoslovak literature in the modern age, Milada Součkova stressed the deep impression which the events of the pre-war years had made upon the consciousness of the European writer: "With the position of the individual in society undermined, literature could not abstain from facing the collective issues of its time" (MSLC.137). Her own work was no exception. In the woeful weeks before the Munich Agreement she published, for instance, a pamphlet entitled Kaladý or The Refuge of Speech. "Words of my mother tongue, hide in the name of a village" she wrote, invoking an age-old national literary tradition which had sprung from the need of the Czech tongue to retreat into the names of towns and villages, rivers or forests in order to evade the continuous encroachment of foreign cultures, especially of German culture. It was a literary warning, and Milada Součkova's lyric passages have been called "the succinct culmination of this centuries-old tradition of 'apologies' for Czech speech" (MSLC.viii). Some months after Kaladý the German Army occupied Prague, Hitler spent a night in the old palace of the Bohemian kings and Milada Souckova joined the underground resistance (MSLC.xiv).

In November 1937, a first fragment of her Amor and Psyche had appeared in the Booster. At this point the novel was still "unpublished" (B.iii.37). In the course of 1938, however, Amor a Psyche (its Czech title), begun in the mid-thirties, appeared in Prague. The publication of another excerpt in Delta, however, was probably not part of a coordinated effort at advertisement. On the contrary, contact between Milada Součkova and the Villa Seurat seems to have been minimal after their meeting at the Salon des Surindépendents in 1937. The apology for an 'inadequate' translation in Delta seems to suggest that the editors had not consulted her before publishing. The impression is that Miller and his friends did not know the young woman very well, knew nothing of her deep concern about her country's future. How else
can one explain Alfred Perls's callous remarks when he wrote from his snug London harbour in March 1939:

Herr Hitler has just marched into Prague, the swastika is flying from the Hradcin; Dr. Hacha is suffering from a slight cold, Milada Souckova is singing the Horst Wessel Lied, Amor and Psyche are definitely divorced, Pilsener beer is no longer Czech and the ostmark is reestablished. (RT.15)

Milada Součkova was not singing the Horst Wessel Lied, and, an active member of the Czech resistance, she lived in grave danger of her life throughout the German occupation: "Only by luck did I escape from the Gestapo, which tortured to death the writers Vancura and Kratochvil, with whom I had been working in the underground resistance" (MSLC.xv). Apart from underlining the assumption that Miller's circle had not been in touch with her for some time (despite the Delta dedication), apart from reconfirming the notion that the editors often acted without direct authorisation, the editorial note to the excerpt and Perls's remarks in Round Trip also indicate the following: there was little or no evidence in Amor a Psyche that Milada Součkova would subsequently become actively involved in the 'collective issues' of her time, actually fight for her country and, later, even go into exile when the Communist putsch ended the post-liberation flowering in 1948. Amor a Psyche belonged to an earlier creative period "in which the individual author could talk intimately and persuasively to the individual reader" (MSLC.137), and the title, Amor and Psyche is eloquent of this non-collective introvert bias...

If the whole of the novel was in any way like the Delta and the Booster passages, its main formal characteristics were a delicate artfulness, a complexity of structure and narrative technique with shifting viewpoints and levels of time. Milada Souckova, for example, presents the narrator, a young woman, as someone in the process of writing a novel and very much aware of this, aware of the formal and aesthetic difficulties and apt to discuss her techniques:
The room in which E. is sitting with her fiancé has artificial literary dimension, which makes it possible to place in one spot the future position of the fiancé and at the same time the details of his emotional relations with E., several references to past events being made. This is also called the construction of a novel and its psychology. (D.ii.62)

But aside from questions of novelistic technique, Milada Souckova was concerned, as the title suggested, with that 'eternal' paradigm "Love". Despite some risqué sentences in the first half of her Delta contribution — "she began to thaw towards me only when conversation turned to the condition of the sexual organs of women who procure abortions" (D.ii.63) — the second part is the more interesting, as it not only touched that eminently taboo subject of Lesbian love, but discussed the question of sexual morality in literature. When in 1959 Lawrence Durrell defended Miller against charges of pornography, he invoked the Marquis de Sade, noting that the "cry of anguish behind his work is always: 'Look there is no morality in nature. I can prove it to you'" (A0.16). More than twenty years before, Milada Součková had argued in similar terms, citing de Sade's books as "the best proof" that literature "cannot be bound by the claims of a morality which protects the interests of the civil code" (D.ii.64). Literature, she wrote, recognised no sovereign outside itself, outside its laws, outside its own inherent "inexorable moral code" (D.ii.63). Society, the "social code", man as a collective unit, also appeared in these pages — but only as the familiar bête noir of the artist/writer in the romantic tradition. What disrupts society, asked Milada Součková, what explodes the framework of society, what is its mortal enemy? And her answer was: Love and Art.

Society only accepts poets' passions into its midst after the expiration of a certain period of time, when they are safety (sic) separated from it by a firm pedestal and metal trousers. (D.ii.65)

The artist did not belong, he remained a "permanent enemy of the people" — Miller's words for Wyndham Lewis (Corr.30) — and it was to this tribe that the narrator/author Milada Součková felt she belonged — in Amor a Psyché. "Society fears words that brush the pollen from the stamens, and complicated sentences that swing up, shake up and fertilise twenty-year-old minds" (D.ii.65). This was, of course, Henry
Miller's song, and that of Lawrence Durrell, and all the other conventionally 'anti-puritanical' crusaders of the time. It was the familiar Love and Art versus Society theme, and Milada Souckyova was all for the former - and not only because she was a poet. Her own love, or rather, that of the young woman narrator, was for a girl called Elizabeth, and this was a love which society prohibited, which her parents found "excessive" and she was forced to conceal. Thus, both as a writer and as a lover (physically innocent, as she assures the reader) the author/narrator stood outside the "social code". Furthermore, since the author/narrator felt obliged by that "inexorable moral code" of art to inquire into and to reveal the nature of her love, the result, her confession, her book, in turn reaffirms her position beyond the norms of society.

In November 1937 Anais Nin noted in her diary that she was going to edit a number of the Booster containing only woman's writing (AN.ii.267). It is more than likely that, had this issue ever materialised, it would have included work by Milada Součkova, perhaps even the Delta excerpt from Amor and Psyche. "I am confused", wrote the author/narrator, "by the fact that I am not a man, confused about the fact that men write about women, and that I am a woman, who wants to write as they do, and longs to be their equal"(D.ii.64). It was this kind of complexity of self-perception which beguiled Anais Nin all her life, urged her on to attempt to determine a 'new' awareness of woman in creation. There were many discussions in the Villa Seurat circle about the differences between men and women as artists, particularly in the Booster summer of 1937. At one point, she noted bitterly that a woman "never created directly except through man, was never able to create as woman"(AN.ii.233). Milada Součkova saw the question, in these excerpts, at any rate, somewhat less doggedly, with a self-irony and humour foreign to Anais Nin: the "categorical imperative of literature" for a woman writing was to write like a man, and not to "degenerate into an authoress"(D.ii.64f). Blithely, she also pointed out that there was something wrong about male authors writing about women, not, as Anais Nin might have thought, because of a man's innate inability to feel or think like a woman, but because the "accepted moral code" was contravened:
Describing women's love for men they cease to some extent to be men and experience the petty pedantries, tenderness and sentiments which are the attribute of the female sex. If these processes are natural from the point of view of nature and art, they are not always so from the angle of the social code. (D.ii.65)

In these fragments from Amor a Psyche there is a concern with the questions of Art and Love - but also with their relation to society, "the social code". Still outside and antagonistic, Milada Součková at least accepted the fact that society must be reckoned with, and this acceptance became a bridge that could be crossed once feelings of patriotism and love of freedom and justice became stronger than the distaste for a smug bourgeois morality. Although his polemics were always based on the assumption that a social code existed, Miller categorically refused to become interested in society in any positive way. There was no bridge for him: "Society is made up of individuals. It is the individual who interests me - not the society" (CosE.159).

Wedged between Durrell's "Hamlet, Prince of China" and Miller's furioso extract from Tropic of Capricorn there stand somewhat uneasily three short love-poems by Nicholas Moore. According to Derek Stanford, the chief preoccupation in Moore's poetry of the time was "with the problems of individual love and social well-being"(FoP.144). For many young poets of the 1930s the latter concern, as has been pointed out, was an almost obligatory exercise. Little trace, however, was left of it in the seven poems which Moore contributed to the three numbers of Delta. Little was left of it in the 1939 New Apocalypse anthology, which his friend G.S. Fraser reviewed in Seven: "Nicholas Moore, too, avoids the obvious temptation to interject into his light, shapely love-poems, the bit that says, 'Meanwhile, the bombs are falling on Madrid!'"(Seven.viii.28).

As William Tindall once noted, Dylan Thomas' generation, "inclining toward Freud, accepted Marx less and less"(Tindall 236). Nicholas Moore in Seven and in Delta was seemingly no exception. Love was his central theme, inclusive of the sexual variety. The seven poems in Delta were all love-poems. The motive force behind a number of them was the sexual drive in a frankly Freudian guise. Indeed, some of Moore's early poems bore the stamp to such a degree that Derek
Stanford called them no more than "a diagram in the margin of the master's text" (FoP.145). The imagery in "Poem to Miss Hartree" in the Dismemberment Delta does strike one as facile, and yet, from the other poems a certain, more personal eroticism does detach itself, giving not the "loud meaty pleasure" of Miller's work (DTSL.236), but evoking a light and easy atmosphere of naive love and innocence...

In his 1943 pamphlet on Miller, Moore defended the American as an noble innocent, explaining that "through all the joy, the degradation, the filth, the misery, the poverty, the obscenity, there runs a certain faith: faith in the ultimate peace in the human heart" (NMHM.12). Miller was presented as the "good man", and Cancer regarded as "a loving understanding of human weakness, and at the same time a fierce attack on the inhuman society that makes conditions of vice possible" (ibid.). This reading of Miller's work was one-sided to say the least: "He does not like the crowd of the mean individual that makes it up, the crowd that is swayed by fascist demagogy" (NMHM.9). Nicholas Moore's portrait of Miller said much about Moore himself. And for all the emphasis on words like "love" and "heart" in that treatment, there can be little doubt that Charles Glicksberg's assessment was more accurate, that Miller was in fact far "too egocentric a novelist to do justice to the phenomenology of love or passion" (Glicksberg 133). It was Moore who was concerned with 'love' and the 'heart', and, unlike Miller, he did not restrict his attention to "the physiology of sex" (Glicksberg 133). The love Moore called upon in his poems in Delta encompassed other forms as well, as for instance, marital love. Moore's love poetry was light and shapely. It is true, someone influenced by Freud cannot but point out the dark abyss which "love" spanned, and Moore gave an example of this in "The Antic Beings", where he spoke of "Sexual grace turned monster" and of terror and shame. Love, he suggested here, was full of depths and darknesses, and not only a "sing sing pretty maid all in a fairy boat" (D.iii.8). Significantly, "The Antic Beings" was composed of five questions with no answers provided. And yet, Moore's poetic bias was altogether in a different direction. Stephen Spender noted in 1946:
Nicholas Moore is a poet with a fund of gaiety and bright colour in his writing. He rarely writes with any close concentration and his work produces an impression of a light clear atmosphere in which he can develop ideas freely, rather than with any intensity. (SSPoetry.58)

The comparison with some of Durrell's Mediterranean poems suggested itself to Tambimuttu, who once said both poets pleaded "that life and living are really simple, and not so complex as many different theories about them would make us believe" (PL.i.1.np). G.S.Fraser, too, praised Moore for having realised "that there are moments when the evil is irrelevant, when remorse is irrelevant" (Seven viii.28). In the end, however, there were not many who would agree about the virtue of keeping deeper issues outside. Too happy, perhaps, and lacking in some 'redeeming' dimension such as a consciousness of doom, Moore's love-poetry was always in danger of being considered entertaining but a little banal and perhaps even escapist (WH.23). Still, he did play an important role in the broadly neo-romantic revival of English poetry in the late 1930s and early 1940s as an editor and as a poet. The praise of Tambimuttu and Fraser suggests that in those days his carefree and airy love-lyrics were considered part of this reaction against the "Audenic group" (Seven.viii.28), even though they had little in common with the penchant of other Apocalyptic poets toward "the involuntary, the mysterious, the word-intoxicated, the romantic and the Celtic" (SSPoetry.44). Indeed, after the White Horseman anthology of 1942, Moore parted ways with the Apocalytics, for he found that "his literary ideals were incompatible with those writers whose work was printed alongside his own" (FoP.137). His poetry remained clear and "chiefly in common speech", which was rather uncommon in the war decade, when death and violence tended to cast shadows on the poetic imagination.

Moore, in short, was not one of those hungry and desperate spirits whom Miller described in Cancer, not a man who "makes the guinea pigs squeal ... because he knows where to put the live wire of sex" (Cancer 251). Moore's poems were not those of the defiant visionary, sword in hand and ready to have his Rainbow burned, his Cancer banned. His poems were not of violence and ecstasy, and yet, curiously, provoke and irritate they did, and complaining that there was too much sex in
the poetry of the time, occupying a place which "might more properly filled by the more universal love of society"(FoP.148), Kathleen Raine singled out as a particular example of this negative tendency Nicholas Moore. Perhaps "The Three Kings", "The Antic Beings" and "Poem to Miss Hartree" did not stand too uneasily between the unspeakable Miller and the banned Lawrence Durrell after all.

As R.B.Kershner has pointed out, Dylan Thomas "is probably the most thoroughly and frequently explicated modern poet"(RKDT.ix). In view of this fact it is astonishing that his early prose work was only collected in 1971. It is all the more surprising since in the 1930s Thomas' prose was "more organically related to the poetry than at any subsequent period" (DTEPW.vii). With a maximum of interest in the poetry, why was there so little interest in the early prose pieces? It is not easy to say. Whatever the reasons - Davies mentions as one the stories' darkness and "savage intensity" (DTEPW.x) - the effect was that the early Dylan Thomas tends to be remembered largely as a poet. In the 1930s, however, Thomas saw himself as a poet and as a writer of prose, something which is evinced in his yearlong efforts to publish the stories from his 'Red Notebook'. Frequently his letters mentioned the plan to write a novel, indeed it was one of his chief ambitions: "Thomas for several years contemplated many of his stories as sections of a novel"(DTEPW.xi). There existed, in other words, an intimate link between the idea of a novel and the composition of his shorter prose.

But, as with David Gascoyne, the projected novel was never written. And, as we have seen, even the collection of stories called The Burning Baby and later retitled In the Direction of the Beginning never came about either. It is easier to explain the failure of the story collection than that of the novel. The reasons were largely external, as it were. They had to do with censorship. We have remarked that Thomas often bemoaned the printers' fear of prosecution for obscenity. As far as the novel was concerned, circumstances were more complex. Henry Treece, one of Thomas' first and none too sympathetic commentators, reflected that he "lacked the one essential quality of the novelist - the ability (is it patience, persistence, just sheer donkey-work?) to organize experience over a long distance"(HTDT.11). Davies has suggested that Thomas' career showed "a classic record of a
young man eschewing, because of some curious urgency, formal
disciplines like plot in prose and developing structures in poetry"  
(DTEPW.xi). Lack of ability or reluctance caused by some 'curious
urgency'; the actual reason was more complex and contradictory than a
short paragraph can hope to suggest: Henry Treece might have had
difficulties explaining the painstaking care Thomas took when working
on a poem, writing and rewriting for months on end, while Walford
Davies would have to explain the repeated avowals and attempts to
write a novel.

In one letter, evoking the image of a butcher slicing a "juicy ham,
Thomas spoke of a "large chunk of prose"(DTSL.222), which was still
for sale. This may remind one of Stephen Spender's impression that
Dylan Thomas' poems could be turned off and on like a water tap
(DTSL.196). Thomas' stories were self-sustaining - fragments. Nicholas
Moore published in Seven in Spring 1939 "An Adventure from A Work in
Progress" by Dylan Thomas. This was later included in Adventures in
the Skin Trade and other Stories of 1955 - but the rest of the "Work
in Progress" was impossible to make out, was probably never written.
From another "book in progress", as an annotation said, came Dylan
Thomas's contribution to the Jitterbug Shag Delta (8). It was called
"Prologue to an Adventure".

This fragment was first published in a little magazine called Wales in
the summer of 1937. It was probably one of the two prose pieces Thomas
had sent to Miller in the Booster days (TC.i.4.3). We have mentioned
this before. In April 1938 Thomas noted in a letter to James Laughlin
that Miller was getting some of his "new prose printed in France"
(DTCL.291). Two months earlier Thomas had reported to Charles Fisher
about the Paris plans for The Burning Baby, and he had added: "And my
next book will be that reversed version of Pilgrim's Progress, + will
appear with the Obelisk Press, Paris"(DTSL.185). "Prologue to an
Adventure", which evinces both the self-sufficiency and the frag-
mentary character of many of Thomas's early stories, was one of the
sixteen stories for The Burning Baby. It was also intended to become
the prologue to "that reversed version of Pilgrim's Progress"!
"As I walked through the wilderness of this world, as I walked through the wilderness" (D.ii.7), began the incantation in the familiarly heavy and rhythmic voice of the Welsh bard, who quickly propelled the narrative into the 20th century: "as I walked through the city with the loud electric faces and the crowded petrols of the wind..." (ibid.). The "Prologue" mesmerisingly ushered in what was intended to unfold into "the adventures of anti-Christian in his travels from the City of Zion to the City of Destruction" (9). The idea behind the "Adventure", then, was to stand Bunyan's allegory on its head. Still, the "Prologue" opened not, as one might have expected, in the Celestial City, but with a celebration of some hallucinatory hours in the City of Destruction, the Moloch City that haunts the work of modernism to such an extraordinary degree...

"Hallucination", Paul Ray has said, "is the key word for those of Thomas's stories that bear the surrealist stamp" (Ray 283), and to this category belongs the "Prologue". But perhaps more than to the surrealists, this account of a nightmarish walk in a sexually hazed metropolis, on the "night before the West died" (D.ii.7), pointed to the "Circe" episode in Ulysses, as Bloom's erotically perverse fantasies and Stephen Daedalus' grotesque visions rise in one's mind, and the Walpurgisnacht in Bella Cohen's bordello is invoked. Indeed, just as the travels of Odysseus sounded through the Dublin day of Leopold Bloom, so for the drugged perambulation through the "abnormal world" which Derek Stanford found so characteristic of Thomas' early stories, the great classic of English Puritanism served as a bass resonance chamber. The City of Destruction was graphically evoked in the Welshman's anti-hymnal, a Sodom that "will be burned with fire from heaven" as Bunyan had prophesied. It was a Vanity Fair in its repulsive twentieth century guise, ugly and strangely alluring; again it was Joyce's Dublin, it was the London of "The Waste Land", the modern metropolis par excellence.

It was also The Black Book's London, city of the English Death. This is a significant intersection, for like Ulysses and like "The Waste Land", Durrell's book referred back in time, specifically to a 1604 pamphlet by Thomas Middleton, also entitled The Black Book. From this satire, Durrell had taken not only the title, but, quoting whole
passages without altering them, he also used "Lawrence Lucifer" as one of the names for his 'ego-protagonist'. Lucifer was the anti-hero of Middleton's account, which describes his satanic visit to London's sinks of corruption, its brothels, gaming dens, houses of usury and drink. But whereas the literary tradition which Durrell played on, those ambiguous pamphlets that leeringly held up to blame the habits of the Elizabethan and Jacobean underworld, has receded into specialists' libraries and vestigial appearances in dramatic performances, Dylan Thomas in the "Prologue to an Adventure" tapped one of the great streams of popular English culture. Durrell's correlation, influenced certainly by Eliot's famous juxtapositions in "The Waste Land", was essentially a private affair (since he could not expect anyone to know, or even to know of, Middleton's booklet). But Dylan Thomas's plan revealed greater ambition, comparable indeed with the Ulysses undertaking. It was an alluring challenge, and yet it was also a burden which Dylan Thomas was unable or unwilling to carry beyond an initial burst of interest....

Whence, however, the desire to invert Bunyan's myth, to turn it inside out, as it were? As far as the composition of a novel was concerned, there were technical and stylistic reasons, of course, additional depth of meaning which a widely accepted paradigm could provide. But the idea behind was anything but original, and Thomas, of course, knew that Joyce and Eliot had exhausted all the technically innovative impulses such a juxtaposition might offer. But Thomas' plan to tell the tale of anti-Christian in the City of Destruction, to compose an anti-Puritan Baedeker were for other reasons as well. Davies has suggested the following: there was in Dylan Thomas (as there was in the Boosters) the "sub-literary impulse of the avant-garde, daring and perverse in proportion to the complacency it seeks to erode" (DTEPW.ix). And there was more:

The dark frustration of a mind unsure of a rational, ordained universe, the strong awareness of emblematic death and decay, causes Thomas to body forth and celebrate a strong anti-life imagination. Exaggerated emphasis is placed on the physicality of existence in a sexually-driven world. The writer celebrates that side of life which the conscious mind is most afraid of - the irrational and elemental, the negative forces. Thus there where there is a received symbol of life and generation, it is modulated into perverse and negative
forms. (ibid.xiv)

Davies' comments referred to the story "Caspar, Melchior, Balthasar" but they applied equally to the "Prologue". For that matter, these remarks pertain to many works of the modernist tradition ("April is the cruellest month"), including those of the Miller clique. Here was one of the real origins of the "obsession with the imagery of sex and death" which Spender found so typical of many of Thomas' poems (SSPoetry.45).

Eros and Thanatos, sex and death, are commonly regarded as those factors in human experience which are mysterious and elemental and fear-inspiring. A romantic imagination, it seems, invariably converges on the age-old pairing, and we need not reiterate how it came about that by the 1930s the odour of death had become an almost inevitable presence in the scenario of modernist love, hanging heavily not only in the curtains of the cheap hotels where the Villa Seurat authors let their protagonists enact their furtive encounters. Carnal knowledge and the awareness of death walking hand in hand, these were a powerfully awesome pair. It was, as Durrell had noted: "Womb, then, the tomb in one!" (BB.173). Love and Death evoked a grand literary ancestry, pointed to what not only Freud considered an archetypal psychical connection, and threw up questions about the literary worth of such a coupling that are not easy to answer. We may call to mind how we criticised that Lawrence Durrell tended to tone down the sexual factor in literature by attaching it to some 'respectable', metaphysical subject matter. It has been said of Henry Miller that he links the unappeasable hunger of the flesh to the overwhelming consciousness of doom and death, and it is this shifting perspective that makes his best work a contribution to literature rather than pornography. (Glicksberg 133)

The Grim Reaper, it would seem, has the power to render respectable even the grossest of sexual depictions. Without the ingredients of doom and death, these lines seem to suggest, Miller's work would be pornography. The question about the "Prologue" is, whether the pairing of death and love really increased the story's literary effectiveness, or whether it bespoke an evasion, whether it was enlightening or the
expression of hesitancy and inhibition.

Denuded by a cynical appraisal of its poetry, obscurity, literary and religious allusion and all the images of death and doom, "Prologue to an Adventure" tells the story of a night on the town, of carousal and debauch. By the operation of poetry the narrative skeleton of the "Prologue" is padded until it seems "a contribution to literature" rather than a straightforwardly realistic account of a visit to the bars and brothels of Soho. Again, the question is whether this padding added to the piece's effectiveness or not. The function of poetry was in the view of Dylan Thomas the following:

Poetry, recording the stripping of the individual darkness, must, inevitably, cast light upon what has been hidden for too long, and, by doing so, make clean the naked exposure. (NV.xi.9)

Was the narrative core of the fragment, the fable of the "Prologue", actually metamorphosised and transmuted to an extent that it opened for the reader new vistas of meaning and light - or was it fogged and poetically 'heightened' for other reasons. Through the haze of doom and decay, through the universal life and death affectations, Dylan Thomas saw in Tropic of Cancer essentially "the best modern fucking book"(DTSL.236). Could he have refused this way of reading, this method of approaching, his own work? Especially if it tells of brothels and drink and sex and negrowomen offering their breasts and whores whispering: "We shall be naked but for garters and black stockings, loving you long on a bed of strawberries and cream, and nakeder for the shawl that hides the nipples"(D.ii.8)?

In The Romantic Survival, John Bayley has shown that to paraphrase Thomas' verse and to condemn it on that basis, as Julian Symons had done, was "clearly no sort of critical lever at all"(JBR5.216). To reduce to paraphrase is violence, to say that the "Prologue" is no more than a veiled carousal is not adequate, and yet, this does not preclude the existence of a narrative essence, the treatment of which, its transformation and presentation are here under scrutiny. Did the manner in which the "Prologue" offered its narrative essence suggest a succesful poetic synthesis, did it really lead the reader to more
"light" and "clarity", as the programmatic statement in New Verse demanded of poetry? The aim was certainly for "light", the result, however, was not always up to it - and it did not help that Thomas was aware of the shortcomings of his work: "Immature violence, rhythmic monotony, frequent muddle-headedness, and a very much over-weighted imagery that leads too often to incoherence" (DTSL.161). The "Prologue" evinced many of these defects...

Dylan Thomas announced that he was striving to cast off an overclothed blindness and achieved - an overclothed vision; and the reason behind this failure seems to have been, in part at least, evasion and self-protection. When we say self-protection and evasion, this is meant both in a legal and in a personal sense.

Thomas, as we have seen, was painfully aware of the obscenity charges threatening him and he was willing to comply with censorship regulations, to change and alter and bowdlerise. He even agreed to take out "Prologue to an Adventure" from The Burning Baby and "substitute a story about my grandfather who was a very clean old man" (CFDT.237). Is it so unlikely that the censor worked in his head even before he had finished a story?

There was a personal aspect too. For Geoffrey Thurley, Thomas provided a paradigm for the self-protective function of obscurity in art: "a country-boy scared of the metropolis, he threw up the Surrealist word-wall to shield a basically shy and simple personality from hard-boiled scepticism" (Thurley 127f). The later Thomas, as is generally known, advanced to a greater lucidity in his prose. Davies noted: "From the imaginative nightmare, the prose gradually emerged to the light of common day in the Portrait and went on to the optimism of the Play for Voices" (DTEPW.xvi). This new clarity came about, as Thurley argued, only "when he had won the respect and reputation (largely by dazzling the London critics with an incoherence they mistook for Sybilline - 'blinding them with science')" (Thurley 128).
A tropical jungle of metrical, semantic and rhythmic effects, was this the "naked vision" Thomas had ordained poetry for? Maybe Thomas really thought so, since, as he said, the kind of blunt confessional realism practiced by Miller was no more than an "old literary way", "anti-literature" at best (DTSL.236). But what about the impression (vide Thurley) that the chaotic onrush of images in his poems and stories seems often a shield, a muffling up, a cowering, as it were, under a warm aesthetic fur? Thomas' prose poems, it would seem, were in fact both manifestations of a strong creative impulse, striving to speak to the world in a new way, to reach through "individual darkness" to some new form of clarity, and artificial smoke screens under whose cover he might advance into the antagonistic territory that was London and himself.

This dual impulse to reveal and to cover up was an apparent contradiction: to reach for light while leading into obscurities, to write savagely and in a way full of anguish about sex while at the same time, as an expression of a puritanical disgust, covering it up in the densest of rhetoric. For this dual drive there are various explanations, Thomas' own dialectical predelictions quite apart (DTSL.191). One might simply suggest that while naturally feeling a great urge to speak and sing about himself and the "rich frustrations of adolescent sexuality"(TTC.285), the young and bursting poet was also naturally frightened to do so (not only for fear of imprisonment). Two decades before, a young T.S.Eliot had called for the "continual extinction of personality" in literature; then Auden and his friends, as the generation of Thomas widely believed, drowned the personal in a cool intellectual pool, in a pond of collective concerns and social obligations. Thomas, however, spoke in the unmistakably personal voice, passionately romantic, Celtic and introverted - and he could not do otherwise than sing about himself (HTDT.10). Self-exploration, expression of self, fathoming his very own and very inner world and "for his own benefit"(ibid.125), that was Thomas' programme in the years before the war. By 1938 he had more or less retracted his quasi-Marxist affiliation expressed in the New Verse questionnaire (HTDT.31), and when he did so, he was only adjusting his politics to "the essentially extra-social nature" of his early work (DTEPW.xiif). Thomas was also an admirer of another extra-social singer of himself,
one who had gone further, Henry Miller.

Widely regarded as a spearhead of the new inwardness, a neo-romantic upsurge, Thomas was not in that decade "temperamentally capable of moving outwards to a more objective varied world for his material" (DTEPW.ix). It was only after the war that he emerged to the"light of common day". The admired Henry Miller, on the other hand, was temperamentally capable of moving outwards to the objective world, and back again, moving as if amphibiously from one realm of reality to the next, weaving various levels of consciousness together with the greatest of ease. Dylan Thomas occasionally belittled Miller's self-assurance, calling him "a dear, mad, mild man, bald and fifty, with great enthusiasms for commonplaces"(DTVW.54). But his influence on the avantguard of British poets in the 1940s, on youthful searchers like Thomas, Nicholas Moore, Durrell and David Gascoyne was immense. In later years Thomas and Durrell too achieved an equilibrium in which the lyrical impulse was controlled (more or less) by an alert artistic sense, and at that point, Thomas was finally able to "express more naturally the exalted and truly naive vision he had of the countryside of his childhood home, South Wales"(Thurley 128). The "Prologue to an Adventure", however, just like The Black Book or Gascoyne's "Metaphysical Poems" still belonged to the dark and obscure and insecure period of creation, when the versatility of one like Henry Miller was still held high and much admired.

The "Prologue" was like a fantastically elastic looking glass, framed intricately and gilded, a mirror in which one could see the outer world reflected but in a distorted way. If, regarding Thomas' work, one comes to the conclusion that he "used his fire, his passionate dense imagery in the celebration of all human and material experience" (MW.335), then one must say that the "Prologue" celebrated only through the night-mind some of the the darker and more perverse aspects of the world and the narrator himself...

In 1939 Dylan Thomas said that he found Miller's "city night-life ... new and tremendous" (DTSL.230). Apart from Joyce, the "real literature of American Paris", especially Djuna Barnes' Nightwood and Miller's Cancer and Black Spring (NEW.xiv.1.11f) may be said to have influenced
most intensely prose pieces like "Prologue to an Adventure". Thomas felt particularly close to Henry Miller, and, had the war not intervened, he might have even written the article about him, which he referred to on several occasions (DTCL.373).

There are numerous parallels between the American's 'city night life' and "Prologue to an Adventure". Like Henry Miller and many of the surrealists, Thomas inspected with close attention the ugly and the scabrous aspects of experience, and like Miller, Thomas employed the phenomenon of sex as one of the last effective explosives against what was (conventionally) believed to be an unfeeling and apathetic readership. Walter Lowenfels once wrote to Miller: "You have to scream at the audience because we have gone dead to the reality around us. Obscenity is a form of violence" (MR.485). The same applied to Thomas: the narrator's companion cries, "syringe in hand, Open your coke-white legs, you ladies of needles, Dom thunder Daniel is the lightning drug and the doctor" (D.ii.11). For him too, obscenity and blasphemy were forms of tonic violence...

Nevertheless, the "Prologue" shifts about somewhat uneasily in its own daring. It is in this unlike Cancer. Sex was more consciously or evidently a means, an axe, at times, somewhat too heavy for neophyte Dylan Thomas. He chanted about the city night life, about the society of outcasts, about the journey through the city of doom - and yet his narrator remained strangely apart, at times even squalidly so. The London described was the City of Destruction, but was the narrator really the daring anti-Christian Thomas had announced to Charles Fisher? It does not seem so. A peculiar atmosphere of fascination and disgust hovers over this "Prologue", an atmosphere of reticence unknown to the Tropic of Cancer. What distinguished Miller from so many of his admirers and emulators, according to Kenneth Rexroth, was his "absolute freedom from the Christian or Jewish anguish of conscience, the sense of guilt, implication, and compromise" (KRBiB.162). It also distinguished him from Dylan Thomas. "There was one part in him that nobody could get at", Caitlin Thomas recalled: "that was impregnable, untouchable, not of his own making, but handed down from generations of close-tied, puritanical, family traditions" (Moynihan 28). Coupled with this deep core of nonconformist unease, or, as
Durrell would have put it, the guilty conscience, which played a central role in the concept of the "English Death", was the above-mentioned country boy's antipathy for and fear of the City. London, Thomas said more than once in his letters, "really is an insane city, + filled me with terror"(DTVW.49). Again, in this fascination and disgust, he was not unlike the islander Lawrence Durrell. London, said Thomas, the modernist poet living in the country, was a horrible place where "there's no difference between good and bad"(ibid). But though Miller sometimes cursed Paris too, the narrator of Cancer was undeniably a part of Paris, a point which was clear even before the final pages when in a mystical peace, he feels the Seine and the landscape run through him. Funnily enough, this rang utterly true. Thomas' protagonist, on the other hand, is tangibly outside. In the treatment of the prostitutes, for instance, it is significant that Thomas does not let the narrator describe them, but makes them describe themselves: "We are not the ladies that eat into the brain behind the ear, or feed on the fat of the heart"(D.ii.8). Unlike Miller and his cronies, the narrator remains aloof and wary, the anti-Christian, incongruously fleeing the girls' embraces! In the "Prologue" these elements of reticence conflict with the aim of standing a puritanical Pilgrim's Progress on its head, and with the young man's desire to shatter violently bourgeois complacency. Reticences and evasions mix uneasily with almost immaturesly obscene outbursts:

there out of Pessary Court comes the Bishop of Bumdom, dressed like a rat catcher, a holy sister in Gamarouche Mews sharpens her index tooth on a bloodstone, two weasels couple on All Pauls altar. (D.ii.9)

One can sense, among the many unresolved contradictions at work in this fragment, the desire to practice iconoclasm in all spheres, to destroy traditions as a way to freedom. More and more, however, it would seem that this iconoclasm was directed mainly against vestiges of Pilgrim's Progress Christian in himself. "The thing to be revealed", Davies has written about Thomas' early prose: "was something concerned more with inner than with outer weather" (DTEPW.xiii)....
"Miller's city night life is new and tremendous" cheered Dylan Thomas in the spring of 1939 (DTSL.230), and several months later (just as the Germans were invading Poland), he noted how much he admired that best of modern fucking books, *Tropic of Cancer*. "Yes, it is, to date, his best book", he said, and yet he added: "but passages from *Tropic of Capricorn* which I've read in magazines are really much better and wider, less repetitive, & contain the best description of America I've ever read" (DTSL.236). Thomas probably had the "I am a Wild-Park" piece in the October *Booster* in mind. Another Capricornian probe of "the obsessive myth of Henry Miller", as Ihab Hassan has called it, one which "celebrates the periodic deaths and rebirths of his ego and the emergence of his consciousness as an artist" (IH.72), was offered in the *Jitterbug Shag Delta*. It was Miller's last and longest contribution to the Villa Seurat magazine.

The excerpt was well-chosen because it was not only an outstanding example of Miller's talents as an autobiographical romancier, but also because it distilled many of the better elements he was going to fall back upon again and again in the years to come. "Always the flesh and the vision together", Anais Nin had boosted in *Tri-lingual Womb Booster* (B.iii.27). In this Capricornian excerpt, Miller did keep the flesh and the vision together, juggled his themes and preoccupations with such vital spontaneity, that Thomas' admiration is understandable. What makes the piece so particularly strong, in contrast to *Capricorn* as a rather discontinuous whole, was that Miller's ideas and visions gyrate not only around the consciousness of the protagonist, but around a definite narrative train as well. There was little of that verbose expostulation which made items like "The Enormous Womb" or large parts of the Hamlet correspondence with Fraenkel laborious and unrewarding reading. An anonymous reviewer of that exchange of letters noted of Miller in 1939: "Far be it from us to discourage him from regarding himself as a thinker, but it is the case that he only thinks well when he starts off by telling a plain story" (NEW.xvi.8.118). And returns to it periodically, the sympathetic critic might have added. In the *Capricorn* excerpt Miller started off by telling a plain story (or episode in his life) and he returned to it periodically. The narrative progress is plain enough. While the fable of Thomas' "Prologue" had to be espied through a dazzle of images, Miller left the
reader in no doubt as to what his protagonist 'Henry' was doing, where he was, what he was thinking. This did not prevent the occasional and unexpected upsurge of all kinds of phantasmagoric extravaganzas. But the foundation in the 'ordinary' world was solid enough to sustain them. "It reads very much like a comic picaresque, moving freely between the mud and the stars" (IH.59), Ihab Hassan has said, but in this case 'the word 'mud' is inappropriate. The fable moved on solid, real ground: a desperate 'Henry' walks the streets of New York, walks up that "cunty cleft of a street called Broadway" (D.ii.53). It is evening, he stops for a plate of spaghetti and rancid meatballs, drifts on, follows a blind accordion player, sits on a stoop, ponders on his situation and that of the world, gives a beggar a quarter, moves on to the Roseland, a dance-hall, dime-a-dance, fantasises about money and sex, watches the crowded dance-floor and lets his imagination run riot. There was nothing dark or mysterious or extraordinary about this narrative progression. Nevertheless, it provided an effective frame-work to contain Miller's centrifugal material and control his sweeping imagination. Anchored firmly into the ground of Miller's comical and carnal realism were several fantastic chunks of hallucinatory prose, fanfarades in which he spun out his favorite themes in dazzling and occasionally nauseating imagery.

Prominent as in most of his depictions of a post-1910 America were the denunciations of New York, that "piece of highest insanity" (D.ii.54), and its gutless inhabitants; those "men of the future world saturated with shit" (ibid.52). In his magnificent peroration, Miller described America as an insane pandemonium, a mechanically twitching hollowness, desolate and hateful. His pervasive belief that humanity was made up of cutthroats and cannibals is reiterated, men were animals no matter that they were "dressed up, shaved, perfumed" (D.ii.55). From this species there was nothing to be expected, and any hope for the future is quashed with a horrific image of a masturbating nun: Sister Antolina "waiting for the Resurrection, waiting for life without hernia, without intercourse, without sin, without evil" (11). There will be no change, Miller said here, as he had in the Booster editorial: "Christ will never come down to earth, nor will there be any law-giver, nor will murder cease, nor theft, nor rape" (D.ii.50).
But through the darkness some faint shimmerings were to be seen as well, the strongest of which was when 'Henry', the "still unhatched", realised: "I am different" (D.ii.52). Belonging to the tribe of "those with the fever", the alienated protagonist is too weak, yet, to act; nevertheless, he feels a great affinity with the outcast, the madman and the monk, with Blaise Cendrars, that "splendiferous hulk of a poem" (D.ii.51). 'Henry' is clearly very much outside ordinary society when he says: "fundamentally, I have no desire to work and no desire to become a useful member of society" (ibid.54). However, he is still too weak, does not know what to do, and comes to the conclusion: "For a man of my temperament, the world being what it is, there is absolutely no hope, no solution" (ibid.54).

This observation illustrates Miller's narrative technique when dealing with his American past: he spoke through the mouths of two ego-protagonists. There was Miller, the narrator/author who had found a solution in Europe and was reminiscing in Paris about his life in America. And there was 'Henry' of Brooklyn, "an amorphous and omniverous ego, a kind of pre-artistic consciousness that reminds us of the diffused sensibility of the child" (IH.82). Miller put to use, played on and shifted between the different angles of vision, the limited perspective of the desperate 'Henry' and the wider, more aloof view of the Parisian's retrospective. A concrete example: 'Henry' wastes his time loafing and writes books - in his head: "Once I spent a whole evening sitting in a chair and saw nothing, heard nothing. I must have written a good-sized book before I woke up" (D.ii.56). Writing books in his imagination he finds depressing, sterile, "sperm free and skating ad astra" (ibid.52). He frequently interrupts his skating, saying to himself that he ought to "forget about the destiny of man because you might still find yourself a nice lay" (ibid.53). Such contradictory impulsions in the mind of the struggling 'Henry' served Miller well as a way of ordering his material, of justifying the abrupt shifts between fantasy and muddy realism and vice versa. "The way I no longer think about the condition of the world is marvellous", 'Henry' noted after finding distraction from his depressing musings in the Roseland: "I mention it because for a moment, just as I was studying a juicy ass I had a relapse" (ibid.52). By the hair he drags his imagination back to the dancers, to calculating his
chances, to "sizing up the taxi-girls all diaphanously gowned" (ibid.56). He sees the notices saying "No Improper Dancing Allowed", imagines Pompeii's phallic sign posts and plunges, forced by some irresistible associative process, into a stream of brightly violent images, improvised on the idea that New York was caught suddenly and transfixed in the way that Pompeii was. Later his attention is again on the Roseland, and he watches his friend, the rutting Bill Dyker dancing with a nymphomaniac called Paula - only to lose himself again in a last phantasmagoria...

How to organise a wealth of heterogenous material, that was the question which always forced itself on Miller in the 1930s (AN.i.288). At times and despite all kinds of complicated charts and diagrams and notes and years of work, he found no satisfactory answer. The book on Lawrence, for instance, remained a torso. In the fragment from Capricorn, Miller seems to succeed formally - by stressing the digressive mind of poor 'Henry' and by weaving between the two above-mentioned perspectives.

However, Miller's transitions from extravagant denunciations to, say, 'Henry' entering the Roseland, checking his hat "and urinating a little as a matter of course" (D.ii.56), were not always convincing (IH.76). For not only is it sometimes hard to distinguish the various facets which made up the narrator called Henry Miller, the difficulty in determining who was speaking was augmented by the sudden shifts of perspective and transitions which tended to interrupt tonal continuities.

We have earlier quoted George Wickes on Black Spring: "Miller lists plenty of horrors, only to forget them immediately, so that the theme of impending doom in the title is never taken quite seriously" (AiP.270). This is only partly correct, since for the reader the smell of sulphur lingers on, even though Miller might have hurried on. He might forget the horror, but the reader finds this more difficult. Lashed with images of unusual violence and obscenity, of abortionists "pulling out arms and legs, turning the sausage machine, clogging up the drains" (D.ii.57), the reader is left to grapple with the fact that for all the horror of the scenario, its creator has suddenly
slipped into the guise of the lecherous and indifferent 'Henry'.

Was there a higher purpose behind such unsuspected shiftings, such sudden changings of tone? Was it, one wonders, that Miller wanted to demonstrate by means of the unfeeling 'Henry' how pernicious was the effect of the New York deus loci on man's readiness to feel compassion? He did say somewhere in Capricorn: "I was the evil product of an evil soil" (Capricorn 12). But Miller was not really denouncing the lack of compassion at all in the sense that he was advocating the compassion of the humanist. Rather, he demanded as the only valid attitude precisely the emotional indifference which his shifts and transitions of tone themselves are so eloquent of. The advice young 'Henry' gives himself, that he should get rid of those "false notions about humanity"(D.ii.55) was the advice Miller habitually gave his readers as well. The indifference of the ego-protagonist, his demonstrative unwillingness to care, these were no warning, but rather the recipe for surviving in a world of madness. The only possible way to live was not to care; and the only possible way to write was not to care either - hence the carefree shifts from horror to bawdiness, from doom to the Roseland and back again...

With a writer like Miller, the biographical aspect invariably forces itself upon the reader. "The tale of the Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company in Tropic of Capricorn is a perfect portrait of our insane and evil society", commented Kenneth Rexroth (KRBiB.167). In order to stay afloat in such a society, in order to be able to write, Miller had hardened himself. He had seen the horror, he knew, for instance, that abortions were performed by the "Jew-boys on the East Side, in Harlem, the Bronx, Carnasie, Brownsville", knew the story inside out. And he wanted to be, had to be "the one person in the world to risk everything, tell everything"(LTAN.68). He saw, recorded, spoke out imaginatively — and calloused. Anais Nin once wrote: "He has many areas of insensitiveness, even of hardness. Henry is often not human" (AN.ii.250).
As far as the Capricorn fragment was concerned this 'hardness' was evinced not only in the discontinuous shifts, but in the way in which Miller employed his images. More than once wild clusters of shock images are thrown at the reader - which the author himself does not seem to feel shocked about himself. It is almost as if he had grown insensitive to his own scenes of horror, while being quite conscious of their shock value to the ordinary reader. How else could one explain a crude and pointless assembly such as the following: "The drooling notes are the foam and dribble of the epileptic, the night sweat of the fornicating nigger frigged by the Jew" (D.ii.59)?

It is difficult to escape the impression, sometimes, that the deplored impersonality of New York City, its unfeeling gigantism left a lasting impression on the imagination of Henry Miller. Anais Nin said that "what makes his world so vast also destroys his personal relationships. He is acquisitive" (AN.ii.260). Stomach-turning scenes were heaped up like trophies, contrasted and heightened by comically realistic scenes where the shadow of doom is wholly absent, descriptions of 'Henry' throwing "imaginary fucks" into taxi-girls. Anais Nin often deplored the lack of feeling and compassion in Miller's writings: "He cuts human beings open and exposes their vitals, but he does not feel for them. He can do this because he does not care" (AN.ii.231). In October of 1937 she noted: "Henry is not reaching for depth but for quantity. This dehumanizes experience. It is an enlarged world, but empty of feeling, humanity, drama. It leads nowhere" (AN.ii.258).

Perhaps she was right. Perhaps it did in the end lead nowhere. Miller's work of the pre-war period is commonly considered the better part of his oeuvre. There is much to be said for the view that the emotional detachment which Miller practised in life and in his work impaired the contact with his 'material', made for a fading of energy. It seems at first a paradox that his creative powers diminished even though those formative experiences in pre-Paris America moved increasingly into the centre of his attention. But it is not really a paradox, for not only did writing about the life in America set him apart from that pre-artistic existence for good, the temporal distance from the period he was describing naturally increased as well and made
itself inexorably felt.

Tropic of Cancer bore the stamp of immediacy: it was of Paris, and often lifted directly from Miller's letters to his friends, to Schnellock and Anais Nin. Cancer was "written on the wing, as it were, between my 25 addresses. It gives that sensation of constant change of address, environment, etc. like a bad dream" (LtAN.158). Though revised and worked over many times it still seemed an impromptu account, spontaneous and fresh. Capricorn, in contrast, was more self-assertive, confident - but focused more or less entirely on the past. "I believe in nothing except what is active, immediate and personal" Miller wrote in 1935 - and began to concentrate very much on the crucial years with the Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company and the life with June in the mid- and late-1920s. And this was in fact the only story he really wanted to tell, one he had planned so many years before:"on that fateful day, in the Parks Department of Queen's County, N.Y. I mapped out the whole autobiographical romance - in one sitting" (A0.29). This part of his past was his real and his lasting concern.

"For years I have been trying to tell this story" (Capricorn 303), Miller said in the Coda to Capricorn - but Tropic of Cancer had to be written first. It "was not in the scheme - but of the moment" (A0.21), a book which had to do with the birth of the writer, "a blood-soaked testament revealing the ravages of my struggle in the womb of death" (WoS.95). He also said, almost apologetically: "The strong odor of sex which it purveys is really the aroma of birth" (ibid.). Following this 'birth', in Black Spring Miller probed into the possibilities of writing about New York, about his boyhood in Brooklyn. Significantly, George Wickes has said that "this book is quite different from Tropic of Cancer, less violent and obscene, more euphoric" (AiP 269).

This tendency continued in Capricorn, though it did not always meet with approval. Blaise Cendrars for one remarked that he found only a third of Capricorn any good, "magnifique et sain, the sex and adventure, documentaire stuff". Miller noted: "The rest bores the shit out of him. Ho ho!" (Corr.158). Although there was violence and obscenity in Capricorn, it was of a different quality, a different, more detached tone. Cancer had been "a book of cannibalism and sadism", 120
Miller told Anais Nin in 1935 (AN.ii.51). In Capricorn, he later noted somewhat pompously, "the use of obscenity is more studied and deliberate, perhaps because of a heightened awareness of the exacting demands of the medium" (WoS.94). No longer concerned with self-liberation, the second Tropic was for Miller "the transition to a more knowing phase: from consciousness of self to consciousness of purpose" (WoS.95). And the purpose was to write the story of his life with June. "From this point on", Miller said cryptically in The World of Sex: "the problem is to write retrospectively and act forwardly" (WoS.95). Two works of great immediacy still followed Capricorn, the Colossus of Maroussi and the Air-Conditioned Nightmare, and yet, a lasting shift of emphasis onto a more distant past had undeniably occurred.

"We are not ashamed to contradict ourselves or to make mistakes", the first Booster editorial had taunted. Though often it is hardly profitable, it does seem necessary to mention at times certain incongruencies in the work and attitudes of Henry Miller - if only to counteract the impression of monolithic single-mindedness which his self-portraiture sometimes conveys. The point here is that despite his great freedom from guilt feelings, his attitude towards sex and obscenity in literature was not always as clear as eulogies such as "Hamlet, Prince of China" would have it. It was especially in the years after the war, when his books began to emerge from the suitcases of returning GIs right into the firing line of public outrage, that Miller dodged this way and that, not so much in his books, it seems - here he rarely compromised - as in the way he explained, justified and, at times, almost excused the use of obscenity.

In the Big Sur potpourri, for instance, Miller described at length and with humour how, while working on Capricorn, the "Voice" had taken hold of him, dictating what he wrote, so that he was not responsible. It was the "Voice" which was to blame, especially for the interlude called "The Land of Fuck", responsible even for every comma and semicolon. For all the irony and comedy in this passage, in the years before the war Miller was often possessed by an extraordinary creative urge that carried him away impetuously. The question thus, who was 'responsible' for the obscenities is an interesting one, though hardly
for the public prosecutor, who might have pointed out to Miller what
he had written years before about precisely the same parts in The
World of Sex, that in Capricorn "the use of obscenity is more studied
and deliberate"(Wos.94). Here "The Land of Fuck" was no longer the
object of comedy but "a high-water mark in the fusion of symbol, myth
and metaphor"(ibid.).

Deliberate or automatic, studied or spontaneous - while it is dif-
ficult to untangle such contradictory explanations, they do seem to
indicate something about Miller's variable attitude to sex in liter-
ature, how difficult it was even for him to grasp that human phenome-
non, the frank treatment of which had brought him such notoriety. On
the one side, Miller, according to Herbert Read "the most obscene
writer in the history of literature" (HRTM.253), was never without awe
for that realm of which he said "the greater part, for me at least,
remains mysterious and unknown, possibly forever unknowable" (WoS.97).
Sex was a mystery, and yet, no one described it as scathingly as Henry
Miller, presented its ungarmented, embarrassed and most repugnant
aspects in the way he has done. Miller was the sexual romantic - and
the man who "lops away the whole superstructure supporting the great
Romantic lie of the West" (HR.4).

The reasons why he was so attracted to this subject matter in his
writing were manifold, almost untraceable. They reached possibly from
the desire to communicate starry mystical experiences to the
calculations of the literary entrepreneur, from the self-righteous
anti-Puritan's crusade against Anglo-American brittleness to a bevy of
psychological and even pathological motives (exhibitionism, con-
fessionalism, pseudolism, solipsism) (AN.ii.260). Some have seen
religious intent at work (he himself did too) (A0.15), others
adolescent iconoclasm, some the wish to re-establish the language of
sex, others the desire to dirty life, coprophilic and misogynist
obsessions. Many motives can be made out, all of which somehow touch
and somehow miss the phenomena of sex in Miller's work, the writer who
proclaimed that he must be the one man in the world to tell everything
(LtAN.68). His was, after all, the all-inclusive programme of Whitman,
which insisted on the acceptance of diametrical opposites, and this
also in the motives for writing. It destroyed (in theory) critical and
selective criteria in order, presumably, to fix the anxious reader's eye on the one and only constant, the Happy Rock himself. Here is what Joseph Delteil noted: "Il a délibérément minimisé et méprisé systèmes, politiques, religions, pour s'installer à cheval" (Synth.31). But Miller was not as firmly in the saddle as all that.

"I am a part of the world, of life as they say, and I belong and I don't belong" (D.ii.54). 'Henry' of the Capricorn fragment expressed those paradoxical feelings which seem to have moved the mind of the early Miller, the inner exile, as well. Expatriation to France alleviated but did not wholly resolve an inner dilemma, which Annette Baxter has described as "a persistent psychological expatriation" (ABHM.13). To this psychological condition, the sense of not belonging and of belonging, the waxing literary preoccupation with his American past bears witness.

"I am different", concluded 'Henry' emphatically - and demonstrated the I am not different with a vengeance. In many ways 'Henry' is an Everyman. Here was Orwell's "ordinary" or "average sensual man", Kenneth Rexroth's "Surplus Man", speaking and thinking and acting like a face in the crowd. Miller's 'Henry' was still the Brooklyn Boy, the dispossessed of the Clerky Class, his activities, his 'non-political' stance and his sexual doings not at all out of the ordinary. George Orwell said: "For the truth is that many ordinary people, perhaps an actual majority, do speak and behave in just the way that is recorded here" (CE.i.544f). Miller knew this, and it was not only for sentimental reasons that in 1934/5 he travelled to the United States. His expressed aim was to re-immersse himself in language and life (HMGN.222f). In time, other, more esoteric impulsions were to gain ascendancy in his artistic universe, until in the end he apparently felt that it was necessary to stress his 'normality'. In The World of Sex he said: "My own adventures are as nothing compared to the ordinary Don Juan. For a man of the big cities I think my exploits are modest and altogether normal" (WoS.97). Dispute this though one may, and it was not only his comrade Hilaire Hiler who felt that Miller's sex-obsession "occasionally touches the realm of perversion and pathology" (IntHML.v.9), Miller was probably right: the sexual experiences of 'Henry' in Capricorn were essentially not much
different from that of his haunted acquaintances, that ordinary man in the street: "altogether normal"!

Miller, however, was also convinced that he was different, deviant and apart. "I saw what few men have seen without losing their faith or their balance", he assured Lawrence Durrell in 1937 (Corr.55), and even 'Henry' of the desperate New York epoch senses in the Capricorn excerpt: I am different. For Miller himself this sentiment was not only a means of guarding his 'individuality', but proved powerful enough to propel him out of the Moloch City's reach to France. It also became a habit of thought. Overwhelming the 'I belong', it grew into something like an article of faith, a part of his work even in little details such as the recurrent scenes of 'Henry' stealing money from the blind newspaperman on the corner, his giving a quarter to a beggar instead of a dime, his relishing the taste of his aunt's freshly baked bread after just having killed another little boy with a stonethrow. The 'I am different' was also, of course, manifest in the Booster editorials. But unlike the Booster with its reservations, the Dismemberment Delta actually took the concept to a radical conclusion. In the fragment from Capricorn one finds not only 'unprintable' words like cunt or fuck used freely, but also the protagonist's good friend Bill Dyker, the MacGregor of the published Tropic of Capricorn "standing at the sink scrubbing his cock" (D.ii.57). This was unprintable in England, unprintable in America - and thus fit to be written and printed in a magazine which was different from the rest, in the Dismemberment Delta.

Miller might have occasionally bewailed legal adversities - but he needed them as well. Here was his startling conclusion about the causes of Nietzsche's insanity:

That he, Nietzsche, was all right as long as he took a fighting stance, so long as he was fighting the world. What took the pins from under him was Brandes' wholehearted acceptance and admiration. Against that he was powerless. He fell over backwards. (Corr.55)
This interpretation said less about the pitiable Friedrich Nietzsche than about Miller himself. Obscenity was a guarantee of non-conformity and notoriety in the world of literature, and thus it seemed to ensure that he himself would keep up the fighting stance. As long as he was treated with hostility for reasons of his obscenity, he would not topple over backwards. Later he did topple, and this was precisely when he saw himself accepted, winning a great following and turning into the literary saint. In the early 1930s he was still wary of success. Lowenfels seems to have sensed this: "You manage, very adroitly, not to get published", he wrote to Miller, who much enjoyed that line (MR.v.485). While naturally wishing to be published, he was also somewhat afraid of it. Miller desired recognition - and rightly feared it.

In 1937 Miller, in a mellow and harmonious mood, did proclaim to Durrell that the fight was over: "I accept the world in the ultimate sense. Yes, I fight and I bellyache now, but it's rather old habit-patterns than anything real in me" (Corr.56). As so often, this was more in the nature of a wish, an ambition, an ideal, than anything else. For all their self-conscious instrumentalisation, the obscenity, the pyrotechnic and caustic intensity of the Capricorn fragment (as later in the Air-Conditioned Nightmare) were not the products of "old habit-patterns", and contradicted the mystic quietism which Miller cultivated at the same time. But such contradictions naturally did not worry Miller, the man whom Joseph Delteil called "a paradox, sitting astride all the categories, shaking all the labels like a toro its banderillos, essentially and above all a free man" (IntHML.ii.7f).

Let us return to the Capricorn excerpt. Hardly concluded, the revision still in progress, Tropic of Capricorn had become for Miller by the end of the decade an opening move, a gambit in the great game of recapturing the past. The fragment selected for the penultimate Delta was correspondingly a foretaste of his future mode - of retrospection. In 1935, Miller said he believed only in what was active, immediate and personal (Alf Letter 8), in the Booster editorial he insisted that the only world worth bothering about was the present world - but in 1947 he issued a book entitled Remember to Remember. Somewhere in between lay Capricorn, and the fragment in Delta. Miller had said in the
Hamlet correspondence that the artist "is always a-historical" (Hamlet 82). The subject matter of the a-historical artist was also a-historical, meaning, in Miller's case, not only that the dominant focus on the crucial years of his life with June did not change with time, but that his leitmotifs did not change either. America, the Un-beautiful, for instance, was for him a stable entity, outside the passing of time, vacuum-packed. It was for the iconoclast Henry Miller a sacred cow, untouchable. His unreconcilable stance varied slightly but never altered in essence. Perhaps in part the product of 'old habit patterns', it remained however a powerful source of inspiration, firing him on for a very long time indeed. "She's America on foot, winged and sexed", Miller said of June, his terrible muse, in the conclusion of Capricorn, merging, as Michael Fraenkel in "The Day Face and the Night Face", two ruling and inspirational passions into one resounding image: America was June and June America (Capricorn 311).

In the worrisome winter of 1938/39 there was added to the extravagant vituperation in Miller's Delta contribution a very historical dimension of meaning. As we have seen, what had been a somewhat theatrical spectre, the impending dissolution of Western civilisation, had suddenly become a potentially lethal reality for Miller. It was at the time when the second Delta appeared that Miller reviewed Erich Gutkind's The Absolute Collective: "Never was a whole world so devoted to the cause of death and destruction" (WoH.82). An era was speeding towards a violent ending, was the essay's tenor, and the Capricorn excerpt must be read as illustrating this imaginatively.

Miller said in the Gutkind article that the end of the civilised world was rapidly approaching and that the executors of "this program of annihilation" (WoH.79) were Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. The important thing is that Miller insisted that America, megalomaniacal, progress-obsessed, materialistic America was just as responsible for this development:

We know now how the Renaissance faded out - in an orgy of megalomania. The 'modern' nations today - Japan, Germany, America - are going mad in a similar way. No more wonderful examples of schizophrenia are to be found than in these 'progressive' countries: The fury and the enormity of their activity is the symbol of their impotence, their
inability to bridge the split. This stupendous activity, disguised as progress and enlightenment, is only a means of spreading the death which they carry within them. (WoH.83)

In the final section of the Capricorn fragment, Miller twined and braided and fused the Saturday night dance in the Roseland with his vision of America spinning like a mad dynamo towards destruction. America, said Miller, in a tumble of images, was "the black frenzied nothingness of the hollow of absence"(D.ii.60). Images of machinery and coldness, electricity and the reptilian world abound (somewhat conventionally), frenetic sexual acts are described as thoroughly sterile and mechanical. The human being was part of the machine, was the machine, and Laura the nymphomaniac became another symbol of America, "brandishing her cunt, her sweet rose-petal lips toothed with ball-bearing clutches, her ass balled and socketed"(D.ii.60). There was no hope to be found here, said a Laurentian Miller, where even the well-spring of sexuality is poisoned.

In the Capricorn fragment little was said about the sexual constitution of the 'new world' and this was good, for the pompous solemnity with which he described in "The Absolute Collective" a new age of freedom was almost meaningless:

The disturbances which characterize this age of transition indicate clearly the beginnings of a new climate, a spiritual climate in which the body will no longer be denied, in which, on the contrary, the body of man will find its proper place in the body of the world. (WoH.85)

In "The Absolute Collective" and the fragment from Capricorn two other positive myths were markedly absent: the myth of France and the myth of China. In the essay Miller spoke of a new world, a new life and a new man, but all this was more utopian than ever before, the expression of an abstract idealism of the kind he so deplored in Marxist or Christian or psychoanalytical systems of thought. These absences were understandable. It was winter of 1938, a time of gloom. The Capricorn excerpt painted the empty dance of a world gone mad, described how warmth was missing, freedom and vital and fruitful activity. It was only right that Miller selected this fragment for his parting contribution, for in the months after the Munich debacle there
was hardly a place in the world onto which he could focus whole-
heartedly the old Booster optimism; at best he could reiterate with
vehemence his scorn for the ideas and attitudes, for the destructive
principles which, in his view, lay behind the more immediate political
disasters. Paris, at any rate his Paris, had disappeared, the Paris of
Germaine and Nys and Elsa and Tania and Claude and Anais. Everything
had changed: "The Villa Seurat became identified with all France, with
her destiny" - and now it suddenly looked dilapidated, shabby, empty
(Hamlet 367). The darkest days of his disillusionment in the September
scare were over, but Paris was no more.

And yet, France was too much part of his framework of values and
experience for a short and sharp eclipse to shut off its warmth for
good. France the Good and the Beautiful was to be resurrected, and
with a vengeance after he returned to the air-conditioned nightmare of
America. And so, he began the reminiscent Quiet Days in Clichy in 1940
and Remember to Remember some years later and other praises of France,
his France; which had disappeared forever into the past. But even
before leaving Paris, even while he was shouting out his disappoint-
ment in France, the Special Peace and Dismemberment Number printed,
not his, but his lieutenant's "Josette", an excerpt from Perlès' second Paris novel Le Quatuor en Ré Majeur, which was nothing if
not a nostalgic recapitulation of their myth of marginal Paris, of
their happy days of shame in the metropolis of Cancer.

But before turning to "Josette", attention must be drawn to the con-
tribution of another of Miller's Cancerian sidekicks, to "The Day Face
and the Night Face" by Michael Fraenkel. This valedictory epistle to a
woman the author loved has already been mentioned in the introductory
chapter on Miller and Fraenkel. It was a letter intended to illustrate
what Fraenkel had diagnosed as an absolute split in the psyche of
modern man into "two separate streams of day and night consciousness"
(DFNF.46f). As has been shown in that chapter, the author took the
woman's ambivalent attitude - "The day face is hard, unresponsive,
static: the night face is warm, volatile, responsive" (D.ii.22) - and
identified a similar opposition in himself, while attributing to
America (which she chose) the qualities of inhumanity and death, and
to France (which he opted for) warmth, unconsciousness and life. Of
course, the manner in which Fraenkel attacked America and set against it "the Holy Cross of human livingness" of France (D.ii.25) was itself somewhat mechanical and not very original (Hamlet 34). Nevertheless, "The Day Face and the Night Face" did state clearly a good number of the reasons why the Villa Seurat expatriates had lived in France for so long. It was in fact the purest expression of the expatriate myth of France to be found in either the Booster or in Delta; now a part of their valediction to a bygone life, it was a most appropriate link between the American Capricorn fragment and the Parisian "Josette" by Perlès...

Sorrowful and "panic-laden" (RT.37) Alfred Perlès boarded with the Durrells the boat train one day in December 1938. There had been no time for goodbyes, Perlès later recalled, otherwise he might not have left at all. Before him lay an uncertain future and England: the much insulted England of Sentiments Limitrophes and Le Quatuor en Ré Majeur, the dull and vicious England of Miller's "Via Dieppe Newhaven", and Durrell's The Black Book. And so as the train pulled out of the Gare du Nord the Austrian "felt like Robinson Crusoe leaving his beloved desert island" (RT.39), felt that he was abandoning his beloved France, his "spiritual home" for almost two decades. With the sombre perspectives of those months it is more than understandable that Perlès "had the strangely melancholy feeling of leaving behind something vital and beautiful to which I can never return" (RT.39). Full of sadness a happy epoch had come to a close.

Three or four months later his mood had changed. Fear and anxiety had been shaken off and given way to a new self-assurance and firmness. "The new age is definitely ushered in" (RT.9), he wrote to Henry Miller in a long letter. England had received him well, much better than he had ever expected and for this he was thankful. He had even grown to love it. The letter describing this transition ended with: "But I wouldn't be any good at all if I weren't good enough to die for England. Any day!" (RT.37). Miller will have rubbed his eyes at this, but Perlès spoke in all seriousness. France, he said, he had loved and still loved, but he was beyond that now, had crossed a borderline, was at "the threshold of a new world" (RT.35). He was happy, he felt spiritually reborn. He was not afraid, he wrote, not of war, not of
Hitler nor of concentration camps, nor of the Nazis finding that he had "a considerable array of Jewish grandmothers" (RT.15). He went as far as to say: "For no concentration camp can be more horrible than the one I have just escaped after a sojourn of some forty years or so. Whatever comes now can only be to the good" (RT.15). Rebirth, conversion, initiation, getting closer to the angel, whatever one may call it, an inner process of self-realisation, it seems, had finally unmasked that elusive master of masks and disguises, Alfred Perlès. This development had been set in motion, as we have earlier noted, by the novelist Antonia White in the winter of 1937/38. Antonia White was his "spiritual midwife" (RT.10). It had brought to light what he felt to be his true self and, as so often with converts, this new self was deeply critical of its many fleeting forbears, affectionately tired of their Parisian surroundings, and at times even severely critical of that former spiritual haven, France. His bitter observation that in France one remained a "sale étranger, no matter who you are" (RT.12) would be a case in point. One remained a despised foreigner, he said, even if one paid a small fortune for a carte d'identité, even if they made one "a grand ami de la France" (only to draft one into the army at the next best occasion). Perlès loved Paris, the Paris of his arduous youth - but now in the spring of 1939 he said that he had had enough of it, was "sick of the same places: poor imitation wombs, threadbare Villa Seurats or mangy Delta covers" (RT.52). Goodbye to all that was the tenor, and with a minimum of nostalgia Perlès typed out his long "Aller Sans Retour London" letter, remarking again and again that he was "definitely abandoning old cycles" (RT.35), with new vistas unfolding before him.

Goodbye to France, goodbye to Paris was also a valediction to Henry Miller. It was something of a declaration of independence, of the will to break out of his friend's orbit. We have remarked on this before. "I have said the vilest things about the English in Sentiments Limitrophes and also in Le Quatuor. But what of it? I take it all back, I retract" (RT.20). He expressed his Whitmanesque volte face and then added significantly: "I denounce my past allegiances" (RT.20). For the past decade the chief allegiance had, however, been with the Anglophobe Henry Miller! We have described in detail the relationship between Perlès and Miller in the chapter called "Protean Exile and
Patriot of the 14th Ward", followed, as best we could, the Austrian's process of dissociation, which reached a high point in the Horizon "Letter to Henry Miller" where Perlès wrote:

Being an American citizen has made it unnecessary for you to take a stand. You have the terrible privilege to remain neutral and 'detached'. Detachment, I found out, is the one thing that cripples the soul irremediably. (Horizon.ii.12.296)

That was in December 1940. In the spring of the preceding year, in those months of change and transition, things were not quite as clear yet. Perlès found himself in an ambivalent position. He was on the threshold of a new world, but also still attached to the old. He called himself the God-appointed renegade and yet he was willing to die for England (12). He affirmed vigorously his independence, turning his back on a shoddy Villa Seurat, on "the good old shadowy days with rainy seasons and pick-pocketing, pleasant inertia and premeditated spontaneity"(RT.9) - but he did so in the language, using the idiom, tone and style of the man who had been the "hero" of that era. It was not easy to escape the influence of Miller. Indeed, it had been difficult enough for Perlès when in the earlier part of the decade he was still writing in "that exacerbatingly spotless French of his that won't leave the tiniest crumb around anywhere" (Hamlet 36).

In November 1932 Anais Nin put down in her diary that Perlès was still most suspicious of Miller's work and that he told his friend that "his books would mean nothing but for the obscenities" (AN.i.152). Perlès said that Miller's work was smut, not really literature at all. Perlès seems to have found an absolute dependence on obscenity questionable. Notwithstanding, some six years later he selected from all the possible vignettes which made up Le Quatuor for contribution to the Dismemberment Delta an excerpt which described with obvious enjoyment and in explicit detail an amorous afternoon with the putain Josette...

"Josette" was a most apt contribution to this longest and most comprehensive issue of the Villa Seurat magazine. It was well chosen for it brightened up with memories of a bygone epoch the winter gloom of 1938. It was a happy but not a self-evident choice. Perlès might after all have followed Miller's example and selected another reminiscence.
of his Austrian youth from Sentiments Limitrophes, perhaps the long
description of his soldiering days on the Romanian battlefields, or
that passage about Mozart and Schubert entitled "The Gay Source",
which was published in Seven in spring 1939. He might also have fol-
lowed Durrell's example and contributed one of his interesting cri-
tical essays on Goethe or Hölderlin, for example, or another eulogy on
Henry Miller. But Perlès picked Paris. Antonia White wrote about her
friend's Le Quatuor:

He can put the whole smell and taste of Paris into a page so that one
is not reading about a city but experiencing it as if his sensual
perceptions were so vivid that he communicated them through some more
direct medium than words. (Seven.iv.51f)

Completed in 1936 and published two years later Le Quatuor dealt to a
large extent with Perlès' marginal life in the Seine metropolis. We
shall not discuss the book in any detail, but we might point out
that, as far as themes Parisian were concerned, Le Quatuor offered a
broad palette from which the managing editor of Delta might have
picked his contribution, small mosaic stones, "brilliant little
portraits of days, people, rooms and streets"(ibid.), pages about
empty cafés, about English girls at the Casino de Paris, about his
arrival in Paris and about, as Miller put it, "how for twelve years he
lived the life of a cockroach" (Alf Letter 15ff), pages upon pages
about a certain wall-paper(LtAN.102) and so on. But 1938 marked the
end of a way of life for Perlès and while he could also have decided
upon a portrait of one of his friends from Sentiments Limitrophes -
Anais Nin admired herself in the woman called Pieta (AN.i.87) -, his
choice was "Josette". Into "Josette" he had been able to put not only
quite a bit of the "smell and the taste of Paris", but also much of
the "happy life of shame", which he and his friend Henry had led in
the early part of the decade before mystical conversions and esoteric
concerns turned their attention to spheres less physical...

A description of several hours in the company of a fille de joie,
"Josette" revealed more clearly perhaps than the other Delta con-
tributions the pleasurable and positive sides of the low-life expatri-
ate's existence, the components which made up the desperado and Epi-
curean attitudes which Miller had learnt from Perlès and practiced him-
self for a while. In many respects, not only thematically, "Josette" was reminiscent of Miller's "Mademoiselle Claude", with its first person monologue, the straightforward chronology, the violent imagery, the extra-social morality. However, "Josette" was also different, for it was in fact the portrayal of a day, of some hours of sheer happiness. "Josette" was the record of a perfect experience. Almost all the darker layers which loomed under Miller's Claude story were absent, an account that was rightly regarded as a direct forerunner of Tropic of Cancer. "Josette" exhibited that more mellow and nostalgic disposition which was to become so characteristic of the later retrospections on their Parisian low-life, exemplified in Quiet Days in Clichy and Perlès' My Friend memoirs.

Apart from its nod towards that literary tradition prevalent especially in France of the nineteenth century (Balzac, Maupassant), that of what one might call the theme of the erotic meal, a depiction in other words where sexual desire is transposed and flows through the very core of an exquisite repast, descriptions in which the food itself acquires an erotic quality, the main literary topos of "Josette" was that of the good-hearted prostitute.

From the very beginning the narrator stresses his distance from conventional bourgeois morality, and he does so by emphasising how close he felt to that outside group of the filles de joie: "Ah! je les aime, les putains, toutes!". This he sighs by way of an introduction, explaining explicitly and at length, where, in his view, the source of goodness and happiness lies, and how little he thinks of conventional modes of love. He then proceeds implicitly to substantiate his claims by minutely rendering how he meets Josette, how they have lunch together, how they make love in a hotel room and then part company. With this clear argumentative structure (first the hypothesis and then the 'proof') and in elegant, if at times jargonish French, Perlès underlined that for his narrator the ordinary, bourgeois standards governing the relationship between the sexes did not apply, that having to pay for love was no barrier to affection. Perlès' narrator insists that instead of being cold and selfish, prostitutes were on the contrary particularly warm-hearted, intelligent and even wise...
Reading through "Josette", the declaration of love to Mademoiselle Claude by Miller rings persistently in one's ears: "vous êtes presque un ange" (WoH.143). In point of fact, both Miller and Perlès were swimming in an age-old literary tradition that explored the motif of the good-hearted courtesan. Of the earlier examples of this tradition, not many were free of moral didacticism and questions of guilt and redemption, and it was only around the turn to the twentieth century that poets and novelists began to pay homage to the prostitute not because she served as an elevating paradigm of repentance and renunciation. Perlès and Miller were part of this development, one which had already found extensive expression in the French symbolists, in the English decadents, in German expressionist poets and dramatists, in writers like Hesse, Carco, O'Neill and others.

Another, closer example would be Céline. During the wanderings through an exaggeratedly realistic world of dirt, disgust, brutal cynicism, bitterness and absurdity, Bardamu, the 'hero' of Voyage au bout de la nuit, encounters only one human being who offers him warmth, love and beauty. Like Mademoiselle Claude, Molly, the girl from the bordello near the Ford plant, has a heart of gold, supports her desperate lover with gifts of money. But Bardamu leaves her, casts a regretful glance in her direction as the only person in the book not scorched by the author's pitiless vision. In Céline's account little fuss is made about the fact that Molly is a prostitute - certainly much less than in "Mademoiselle Claude". In that story, Claude's character traits often served Miller as springboards for the wildest generalisations: "Oh Christ! Give me a whore always, all the time!" (WoH.146). Certainly much less than in "Josette" where something of an obtrusive typology was thrust upon the reader: "Ah! je les aime, les putains, toutes! Elles sont sages, intelligentes, hygiéniques" (D.ii.72).

In some respects Molly, Josette and Claude were described in similar terms, shared the features characteristic of the magnanimous whore: each of them was generous at heart, unprejudiced against poor men or foreigners, each of them was compared to an angel or a saint, each of them has a sense of responsibility directed not only at her lover but also at children or relatives, each of them seems capable of love. And yet, despite these correspondences, it is Céline's strangely subdued
portrait that is most memorable. In all three narratives, for instance, a situation recurs in slightly varied forms, namely: the prostitute refuses to be paid and then the protagonist in turn refuses her charity. While Miller and Perlès were occupied with genre painting, with blustering and blatantly capitalising on their connoisseurship of the demi-monde, Céline quietly placed his enervating hero in a truly tragic situation. In the terrible awareness that it was too late for love, that he was incapable of happiness, that he was irremediably disillusioned and condemned to wander, Bardamu, the haunted picaro, refuses further gifts of money from Molly. In a book so devoid of warmth, so full of fantastic vulgarity, both Molly's natural generosity and Bardamu's refusal to continue to exploit someone too good for him stand out and accentuate the pungent hopelessness around. How different was this from the *Le Quatuor* fragment.

Antonia White commented on the author/protagonist of *Le Quatuor*: "like the clown, one feels he would rather hurt himself severely than be ignored". And she added: "To be hurt is, after all, a proof that one exists, and Perlès seems to be continually asking himself whether he does exist as a concrete and identifiable person" (Seven.iv.5f). *Le Quatuor en Ré Majeur* evinces a wide range of moods and atmospheres. Of the anguish, existential uncertainty and self-deprecation Antonia White believed characteristic, there is no trace in the Delta fragment. Here, the narrator is happy with his Josette, "cette putain, cette femme, cette sainte" (D.ii.75) - until she refuses to accept his "petit cadeau". But his reaction differs profoundly from that of Bardamu, for her gesture of affection rouses his suspicion. Payment is part of the convention, he tells her, part of "la morale" (D.ii.75). Almost priggishly aware of his reverse moral standards, he actually forces the money upon her, insisting: "une femme qui se respecte ne fait pas ces choses-là pour rien" (D.ii.76).

Josette sometimes strikes one as little more than a means with which the narrator can illustrate his (none too original) anti-morality and his familiarity with the half-world. A basic assumption of this anti-morality was that idealistic, romantic love is nonsense. Firstly, one does not see the real woman through the mists of devotion and,
secondly, if one does miraculously succeed in touching her, the consequence is a dose of "la chaudepisse"(D.ii.72). Real love, the argument went, is only possible without illusion, without fear of being infected, and with this definition only "les professionnelles de l'amour" are capable of making one happy. Josette was one of these, "celles qu'il faut payer d'avance pour qu'elles s'asseyent à cheval sur le bidet"(D.ii.73). It was plain that the narrator knew what he was talking about - and that this knowledge was a matter of pride for him. He knew where to go, what to expect, what to avoid. He was an expert, an authority, a master of the game - and he did not allow the reader to forget it. "Quand on rencontre une putain le matin, c'est toujours de chez le coiffeur qu'elle sort, c'est couru" (D.ii.73). He was familiar with the workings and the work-ethos of the milieu, a most welcome client (he suggests). But while he is flaunting his connoisseurship and sophistication, while he is busy showing what a gourmand he is, and what a wonderful lover, whatever individuality Josette might have possessed recedes into the background.

The literary programme of Miller and Perlès was: "creating a literature about ourselves, about our happy life of shame"(Alf Letter 10). In this excerpt the emphasis was clearly on self-presentation. Josette was there as a prompter, a substantiation of the general remarks about "les putains" which Perlès introduced his contribution with. Josette, for instance, declines the narrator's invitation to accompany him to the Molitor swimming pool. She has business to do. Upon the savant's reply that at the Porte d'Auteuil one could work as well as at the Place Clichy, she counters that the Place Clichy is her home territory, that men were counting on her to be there, and that she did not care to be taken for a non-professional, for "une boniche" (D.ii.76). In his introductory words the narrator had expressed the same disdain for these women "mal déguisées en putains"(ibid.73), forced onto the streets by the hardness of the times and notoriously infectious. Josette serves to illustrate a point...

There is no reason why Josette should be portrayed according to standards, say, of nineteenth century realism. On the contrary, it seems almost a prerequisite for erotic or pornographic literature with its absolute concentration on the sexual that characterisation con-
forms to well-established and limited patterns, so that there is room enough for the reader's sexual reaction and imagination (13). And quite apart from that, it is not at all unusual for works of an extremely subjective bias, in the modernist tradition of Joyce, Lawrence and Céline, to focus interest onto questions of borderline consciousness rather than on the problems of turning a flat character into a round one. The freedom of working with types rather than with individuals is, however, a dangerous freedom, the space it opens up demands to be filled and brought to life with something like originality of thought, authenticity or forcefulness, with imaginative qualities....

On the question of 'authenticity' in the excerpt from Perlès' novel, one might perhaps mention a conversation which took place between Miller and Anais Nin in 1934. The topic was Parisian prostitutes. From this conversation one can see that Miller enjoyed talking, hobnobbing with them, even with the diseased ones. Perlès, however, apparently thought that this was a waste of time. "Fred is a snob sometimes. But I like whores", said Miller and added that his friend was "always a bit contemptuous with the whores. They feel it" (AN.i.157). While not wanting to give too much weight to such biographical material, it does seem to coincide with the atmosphere of fantasy, idealisation, bloodlessness, that pervades Perlès' contribution to Delta. Josette was not important, the Ideal Prostitute was. Characterisation was neglected, not because there was some unbearably intense emotion that usurped its position - but rather because to bring a character to life is far more difficult than to improvise on clichés. Perlès, as we have seen in the introductory chapter, tended to take the easy way, and he admitted in 1940:

Writing had always come easy to me; there was nothing much to; it, I thought. It was enough to be born in the first decade of the sign of Virgo with a certain sense for sound and balance, to be able to play about with a typewriter indefinitely. It came off easily, effortlessly. (Horizon ii.12.294)

At the excerpt's middle there is placed a description of a sexual act. Perlès painted an amorous encounter in euphemistic colours, but did not allow it to vanish in a metaphorical haze as the "Prologue" of Dylan Thomas did. It was explicit enough, including, for instance, a
poetic depiction of what is usually subsumed under the clinical term oral-genital stimulation:

Sa bouche, l'autre, celle qui sera toujours sincère, s'ouvre à mes baisers comme une fleur reconnaisante de mon ardeur, s'ouvre comme une huître, palpitant sans bruit, implorant la grâce d'être avalée d'un seul trait. (D.ii.75)

The two pages of erotic narrative of this kind were unique in the pages of the Villa Seurat magazine. But for all the comparative explicitness and unadulterated passion and sexual desire, Josette sweating love, liquified voluptuousness dripping down the side of her nose, there is something disturbing about the proceedings. It is this: they are too perfect. Perlès' excerpt was a flower from the ideal and orderly field of pornography. It is a world of priapic fantasy: of course, one begins to feel, of course, her breasts are hard, pointed, large, "se gonflent de passion incandescente, se radissent encore", and, of course, her eyes beg for "une merci inexistante, ils luisent seulement d'un éclat conquis, subjugé, noyé, apprivoisé" (D.ii.75). In fact, almost everything described pertains to the ideal of a perfect action, a sexual encounter markedly lacking the trip wires, deflations, absurdities, smells and anxieties which usually do enter into love's four-postered ring - and, as Ian McNiven has pointed out, into Miller's low comedy:

The artistic triumph of Cancer resides, indeed, precisely in its characterization of males, in its vivid and varied anecdotage of men stumbling through the mazes of their conceptions of women. (Mosaic.xi.H.2.24)

In "Josette", by contrast, the narrator stands free of doubt and self-irony: he is the resplendent conqueror, the swaggering pornographic hero - a character not easily found in the pre-war books of Henry Miller. But, precisely because of this, because of its flaw- and frictionless character (reminiscent of Anais Nin's later erotica, incidentally), Perlès' two-page love act is less alive than "Made-moisselle Claude", where the narrator describes how on the first night he behaved as if he "had never slept with a woman before" (WoH.141). It is less memorable also than a desperate 'Henry' throwing "an imaginary fuck" into each of the Roseland girls (D.ii.56). Like a day
dream Perlès' excerpt hovers above the reader's head - and his sympathies. It follows a path beaten by the journeymen of pornographic manufacture, a thoroughfare, one should say, where the 'dramatic' pattern of tension, expectation and fulfilment is routine and transparent, the assignment of rôles a mechanical rite: man is in control, calmly observant, watching as he fills his woman with a frenzied sexual happiness. This literary formula is as familiar as the experience it professes to describe is not familiar. Perlès did try to ward off criticism by saying that there were not many days like this in a man's life and the rest of Le Quatuor confirms this. In the excerpt itself however the blague narrator struts about unchallenged. Psychologically, the depiction of the sex-act conforms almost completely to a pattern of wish-fulfillment fantasy, and it also conforms to what the narrator so vociferously denounces - to the norms of a bourgeois, male-dominated society. Man remains the master - and the fact that Josette, well-satisfied and thankful Josette, is a whore (by definition and prejudice, emotionally and sexually hardened), only adds to the triumph the narrator and (as Anais Nin might have said) male society carry away.

In short, the dish Alfred Perlès set before the reader had been cooked, re-cooked, warmed up many times before. That the chef waved his arms about with the air of having discovered something new is only embarrassing and does not alter the fact that the recipe (and especially the sexual ingredient) is a tired cliché. The inverse morality of the piece is un-original and self-contradictory, the imagery threadbare (sexual fulfillment = death), characterisation and topos are in the usual pornographic line, the action's rise and fall predictable, and the underlying bias in effect socially conservative. Perlès may have sensed that something was needed to salvage this passage from lack-lustre sentimentality. He may have perceived that more was needed than an elegant French prose style, some nostalgia for the good old bad days in Paris, more than a splendid meal, a cultured putain and an immoderately virile protagonist... Such doubts may have been one of the reasons why halfway through the love-scene, Perlès suddenly thrust at the reader an extreme blasphemy, a piece of imaginatively brutal obscenity and anti-religion, which could hold its own beside most of Miller's doom images. Of course, 'pornography' and
'blasphemy' and 'obscenity' are very slippery terms, difficult to define, and what is to one person sacrilege might have no emotional import for another. Nevertheless, Perlès applied a lever at that point where a culture stamped by two thousand years of Christianity may be said to be most sensitive: during his carnal tour de force the narrator glances up to the crucifix on the wall, has, what he calls, "une hallucination brutale", for there, above the bed, "ce pauvre hère, nu crucifié, nous regarde avec envie, son pagne transformé en tente par l'érection d'un désir posthume" (D.ii.74). Perlès went on to describe in painful detail the crucified figure's vain attempts "à détacher de la croix sa main ensanglantée pour se la passer sous la tente". And he added: "Rien que pour pouvoir faire l'amour maintenant, une seule fois, il sacrifierait volontiers deux mille ans de christianisme. Rien qu'une fois!..."(ibid.). Full of scorn for this spectacle the narrator then turns back to his living Josette.

Was this Perlès' contribution to the Villa Seurat celebration of sexuality? Was it a variation of what Miller, referring to Lawrence's "The Man Who Died" once called the "Resurrection in the flesh" (LtAN.158)? Was it an extreme protest, the manifestation of a struggle with the oppressive Christian sexual ethics as tradited over the centuries and still effective today? Was it an attempt at enlightening the reader who is asked to enquire into the reason of his being shocked, his own anti-sexual taboos also against masturbation and voyeurism?

"Josette" evinces manifold ambiguities. Perlès did repeat the Villa Seurat habit of hitching an a-moral, a-historical and a-social Sexus to the religious dynamo. We have pointed to this conventional modernist nexus in our discussion of Durrell's "Hamlet, Prince of China", to the blasphemous variants in Miller's and Thomas' pictures of masturbating nuns and lustful bishops. But it is not that the outburst in "Josette" is cynically blasphemous, full of gloating joy and hubris and violently suggestive of sexual envy, that arouses the reader's suspicions. It is rather that this blasphemy was an alien element, that it was entirely out of tune with the almost turgid conventionality of the rest of the excerpt.
The Black Book's hero, Lawrence Lucifer, lying in the arms of the prostitute Hilda, meditated rawly and obscenely on the humanity of Christ, coming to the conclusion that man had made of Christ an ineffectual "pale intellectual parasite". And then came the lines: "Jesus, a damp scrotum which has lain for two thousand years on the butcher's slab, under the knife" (BB.99). But these thoughts, however calculated to shock the reader, seem, in part at least, integral elements in his self-searchings, seem, as with Dylan Thomas, a storming of barricades in his own mind and in those of the reader as well. Perlès' blasphemy, on the other hand, seems contrived, grafted on inadequately, remaining curiously without emotional repercussions for the rest of the passage or the book as a whole. It is like the explosion of a blank cartridge. Nothing in the passage is hit, as the ease and fluency with which he ordered up and then dismissed this image suggests. For Perlès, as perhaps for the ordinary free-thinker of the time the "hallucination brutale" was apparently not that shocking after all. The blasphemy was uttered, or so it would seem, for the sake of effect; it was not intended to be developed, not a part of self-scrutiny, of an inner exploration or struggle (as in the biography of Dali, for instance) with an oppressive religious tradition. Whatever the emotional effect on the reader, the author was not implicated. Of course there is no absolute reason why an author should participate in the emotional experience he seems to expect of the ordinary reader, i.e. to be shocked. But the manner in which Perlès presented his scene, clearly reminiscent of the above-mentioned tendency of Henry Miller to conjure up images of doom, conscious of their effect on the reader but without actually feeling them himself, serves only to alienate the reader from the author. Because he does not appear emotionally involved, because the common ground which he implied when he led the reader into the scene by calling it "une hallucination brutale", is actually denied by the carefree way in which the image is sprung upon the reader, a chasm of incredibility opens between the reader and the author. The shift of norm and pace is wholly unprepared for, and, unlike Miller in the Capricorn fragment, Perlès does not offer anything to alleviate this rupture. While the reader winces in horror or embarrassment, the author, gleefully rubbing his hands and satisfied with his shocking invention, returns easily to the shallow status quo ante and expects the reader to
The desire to shock is at cross purposes with the attempt to portray a perfectly harmonious afternoon with Josette. The two impulses, shock and Epicurean contentment, splay apart, and the author is manifestly incapable of clamping them together. Durrell later said: "It's only with great vulgarity that you can achieve real refinement, only out of bawdry that you can get tenderness" (PR. 281). But vulgarity and bawdry do not necessarily lead to refinement and tenderness, and Perlès' blasphemous vulgarity seems inadequately integrated. If Perlès was really the careful littérature he is always described as, why did he not avoid this dissonance? Actually, in context with the rest of Le Quatuor, with his strangely dislocated experience in the snows of the Schmelz or with the passage reprinted in the first Booster with its atmosphere of alienation and inexplicable sadness, "Josette" might be said to take on a slightly different meaning. Can one ask: was the brutal vision of Christ on the Cross intended to be in the nature of those existential experiences Perlès invoked on numerous occasions? Miller would certainly have said so. In Quiet Days in Clichy he noted about his Fred/Carl:

He was always endeavoring to hold back instead of giving forth. Thus, when he did break out, whether in life or with the pen, his adventures took on a hallucinating quality: The very things he feared to experience, or to express, were the things which, at the wrong moment, that is to say when least prepared, he was forced to deal with. His audacity, consequently was bred of desperation. He behaved sometimes like a cornered rat, even in his work. People would wonder whence he derived the courage, or the inventiveness, to do or to say certain things. They forget that he was at a point beyond which the ordinary man commits suicide. (Clichy 23)

Miller's dramatic characterisation may pertain to the Delta blasphemy, and it may not. Perlès later said of Miller that he "always had a tendency of attributing to me qualities or virtues which I either never possessed or which I was blithely unaware of possessing" (Alf Letter n.p.). What seems likely, however, is that had Perlès really attached any great importance to this "hallucination brutale", he would have expatiated on it in the same detailed manner in which he squeezed out, for instance, the existential relevance of the other two excerpts from Le Quatuor in the Booster. But, as we have said, the
'hallucination' of Christ on the Cross came as unexpectedly as it passed away...

We have spent a longer time on "Josette" for two reasons. First, Paris, the topography and atmosphere, the smell and taste of Montparnasse, entered the pages of the Villa Seurat review on too few occasions, Paris, the reality of their happy life of shame, the sensual and gastronomic pleasures, the sensual material which their joie de vivre and their myth of France was built on. It is almost entirely the credit of Perlès that this world appeared in the Booster and Delta.

Second, "Josette" was the longest contribution by the managing director of the Booster/Delta. Despite our criticism of certain aspects of "Josette", we still agree with Hugo Manning who, after praising the "buoyancy, eloquence, and life-loving zest" of the Villa Seurat trio took up the cudgels for the Austrian:

Perlès, an underestimated writer in my opinion, is an extraordinary admixture of clown, philosopher, reporter and mystic and has the Millerian kind of woleness which, I think, is the touchstone of genuine human success. (HM.16)

We cannot leave "Josette" behind without mentioning the following point of interest. Years later, Miller once more wrote on that well-worn topic, the humanity of Christ, asking why the disciples never commented about Jesus "farting or even picking his nose"(A0 42). He added that he thought that the words "O Lord, why hast thou forsaken me!" were really "the most human thing about Jesus, that keeps him linked to us human-all-too-human trash"(A0.42). In this context Perlès wrote a letter to Durrell, praising Miller's child-like innocence, and in a fine piece of unintentional self-irony, the former author of "Josette" noted:

The 'farting Christ' in his letter to me is characteristic in this respect but no one but Henry could think or say such a thing without seeming incongruous or blasphemous. (A0.47)
Another important Villa Seurat frequenter contributed to Delta. Conrad Moricand's influence on the imagination of Henry Miller was impressive, "far greater than most of Miller's friends recognized" (Martin 318). Anais Nin's portrait of Moricand entitled "The Mohican" bears out his somewhat sinister attractiveness. Though Miller later claimed that the astrologer had no real part in the quickening of his spiritual pace towards the end of the decade, that Moricand was "merely a part of the décor" (DIP.24), this was written after the war, after Moricand, "the Devil", had destroyed Miller's Big Sur paradise. In fact, just as the deposed Fraenkel contributed to the formation of Miller's imagination, so Moricand's esotericism and astrology influenced his outlook in the years before the war. Anais Nin noted that through Moricand "Henry has found a new way of looking at experience" (AN.ii.292). In the final letter of the Hamlet correspondence there was a passage which characterised this new way of looking at things:

The synthetic view of the universe, which the scientists have discarded through their desire to penetrate the mystery, this cosmic view of the ancients, capable of infinite expansion and interpretation has its roots not only in the idea of correspondence (such as Hermes and Boehme enunciated so eloquently) but also in the idea of eternity, of root and flowering, of beginnings and ends, of flux and reflux, of freedom and destiny. (Hamlet 400)

The astrologer's Delta horoscope of Nijinsky was pertinent, offering Moricand's own voice and method rather than the opinions of Anais Nin or Miller himself. In the first paragraph of the horoscope, which may have been commissioned by Miller as part of his efforts to keep Moricand fed, the author of Le Miroir de l'Astrologie and Portraits Astrologiques discussed the phenomena of schizophrenia in fairly transparent terms. Who would, for instance, disagree with his suggestion that a schizophrenic "est un malade qui a perdu tout contact normal avec la réalité"(D.ii.13), or that, before the final disjunction from reality, there is a time of alternation, life having become "un courant alternatif"? Proceeding from here, Moricand moved into a more poetical idiom and correlated Nijinsky's astounding abilities as a dancer, his seeming defiance of the law of gravity, to a psychic predisposition to relinquish contact with normal reality, a striving which, however, only resulted in the earth asserting its
harsh dominion: "Nous sommes rives, hélas! à la terre comme à ses lois et chaque fois que nous tentons de nous en affranchir, elle se venge"(D.ii.14). Following this, as it were, generally intelligible introduction, which actually makes up half of the essay, there is the more specifically astrological interpretation, obscure to the layman, but patently bearing out what the author has previously said about the dancer "qui a perdu et devait perdre un jour complètement tout contact avec la réalité"(D.ii.13). And finally, there was the hesitant question whether a certain miraculous constellation of Jupiter, Neptune and Mercury might not be a sign that Nijinsky would soon be released from psychiatric detention. In the final paragraph, Moricand admitted that his horoscope could not predict the future of Nijinsky, only to add that astrology sometimes is "une petite lampe qui éclaire les voies ténébreuses de l'âme et du caractère"(D.ii.15).

The latter suggestion would have appealed to Miller and friends, precisely because it lacked dogmatic assertiveness. It also seems somewhat odd coming from a man who was, by most accounts, imprisoned in a fatalistic cage, by the astrological chart hanging on the wall of his tiny attic room. Moricand was a poet, an astrologer, but also, as Miller said, "a victim doomed to live a dolorous, circumscribed life"(DIP 17).

"Nijinsky devant L'Astrologie" was important not only for illustrating Moricand's astrological method but also for its subject matter. For the Villa Seurat, Nijinsky exemplified the artist turned madman. Nijinsky was insane, there was no doubt about this, said Miller in the Hamlet correspondence, but he also asked: what of it? "That Nijinsky was stark mad when he wrote the diary makes no difference whatever to me", Miller told Fraenkel: "He was just mad enough to write the most poignantly truthful, naked words that we have had in a long time" (Hamlet 373). Nijinsky's was the old romantic plight we have described repeatedly, and so Miller and friends naturally found in the 'truthful, naked words' of his diary the confirmation of old beliefs. "Cultivate the madness", Miller had written in the early days of his acquaintance with Anais Nin: "Do not run from it. In madness there is wisdom for the artist"(LtAN.42). And the Villa Seurat cultivated "the madness", described it and feared it. Art, as Nijinsky's example
dramatically showed, was always a risk, but a risk that had to be taken. At least this is what David Gascoyne felt: "the poet's destiny is to risk madness, despair and death for the sake of a possibility of redeeming existence by means of the secret power of the Word" (DG.ii.79). And so the Villa Seurat celebrated the "unconscious", were attracted to it like moths to the flame, but they were aware of the possible penalties, of which the horrors of psychiatric treatment, padded cells and brutal psychologists, were probably not the harshest. Nijinsky was not the only example before their eyes.

Shortly after the Germans invaded France, Leonora Carrington, one of the few important representatives of literary surrealism in England, lost her mind. This acquaintance of David Gascoyne and former companion of the surrealist painter Max Ernst, later described her dire experiences in an asylum in Spain. The short novelette En Bas is an account so grim as to force a reconsideration of Miller's dictum about cultivating the madness and of surrealist tamperings with insanity. Leonora Carrington was not the only person in the wider circle of the Villa Seurat acquaintances to lose herself; aside from Reichel, Artaud and Richard Osborn, Gascoyne's friends Audrey Beecham and Emily Coleman (who wrote a book about her stay in an asylum entitled The Shutters of Snow) (DG.i.24). Miller, whose "ideas about psychoanalysis", as Hiler remarked, "seemed to have very little connection with the depressing and unpleasant aspects of a personal clinical analysis" (IntHML.v.6), was not to be perturbed, that is, if one takes as a measure his reactions to the news that his friend Osborne was mad:

Richard has gone mad? Hurrah. Let's go and see him. Let's have a drink first, and put ourselves in the right mood. This is rare, superb, it doesn't happen every day. I hope he is really insane and not faking. (AN.i.116)

The Delta editors, at any rate, were thrilled by Antonia White's "The House of Clouds". David Gascoyne had persuaded Miller and Durrell to read "The House of Clouds", and they "became so enthusiastic about it as a 'human document' that they decided to reprint it, with her slightly bemused permission" (Letter 26the Feb.1983). Her story had first appeared in Life and Letters Today in 1930. Like much of her
work "The House of Clouds" was based on personal experiences. In 1922 she had suffered a mental collapse and was admitted to an asylum. The experience which "The House of Clouds" records was so intense that half a century later an interviewer noted that she still "remembers every moment of the ten months she spent in Bethlem Asylum (now the Imperial War Museum) in 1922-23" (AWFM.12).

The events leading up to this harrowing internment formed the basis of a quartet of novels: Frost in May was completed in 1933, The Lost Traveller, The Sugar House and Beyond the Glass followed in the early 1950s. Parts of "The House of Clouds" were incorporated into the final volume of the tetralogy. In contrast to "The House of Clouds", the causes of and the course of the young woman's insanity were described in greater psychological depth and detail in the novel. But there were also differences in treatment that were the result of other factors than that the one was a novel, the other something like a short story. In "The House of Clouds" Antonia White did not include in the narrative passages describing events that were occurring outside the asylum at the same time (discussions between the girl's parents, for instance), passages which not only distract from the horror but also, at times, attempt to explain 'objectively' what was happening to her. "The House of Clouds", itself some fifteen pages in length, offered no such relief and described in exact and perspicuous prose the young woman's mind and experience, even those moments when she believes herself to be a magic horse, the Lord of the World, a flower or a salmon. Depictions such as these must have especially appealed to the Villa Seurat's love for the magical, the wondrous and dislocated, these as well as those picturing her askew sense of time, her nightmares and dreams and repeated 'deaths'. "She lapsed at last. She was dead, but unable to leave the flesh. She waited, light, happy, disembodied" (D.ii.80). In her description Antonia White never once abandoned an unaffected, non-sentimental way of narrating - in itself almost a statement against romanticising the condition of the mentally ill. Full of compassion and yet unrelentingly lucid (reminiscent at times of Kafka's pristine nightmares) "The House of Clouds", which was in fact the longest contribution ever to appear in the Villa Seurat review, denied the reader the opportunity to come up for air. Aware of the pain, dreariness and brutality, the reader remains fascinated by
the journey through a strange land, partakes in the disorientation and the occasional beauty of the girl's fantasies. He also experiences the end in which all hope is snuffed out. Still interned, the young woman's searching has stopped, she "had become an Inmate"(D.ii.91)

"The House of Clouds" ends on a pessimistic note. In Beyond the Glass on the other hand, the narrative moves towards sanity and freedom. Happily the novel closes with her discharge. In this sense the novel seems closer to Antonia White's biography than "The House of Clouds". In a long conversation with Carmen Callil in 1979 Antonia White said that although her life provided the raw material for her novels, "writing an autobiography and writing fiction are very different things"(AWFM.9). But while "The House of Clouds" and the asylum chapters in the novel were based on the same experience and were both biography transformed into fiction, they pointed in two different directions. The one ended in hopelessness, the other in the assurance of a new life. More than a quarter of a century lay between the publication of the two accounts, and this period saw some deep changes in Antonia White. There were not only renewed attacks of the mental ailment she suffered from in 1922, and a long and intensive Freudian analysis that helped to cure her in the end. Of crucial importance was her return to Roman Catholicism in 1940. She had left the Church in 1926. "The House of Clouds" bears witness to the formative influence of her Catholic upbringing, but also that at the time when the story was written she was convinced that her faith, Helen's faith to be precise, had not prevented her suffering, had not kept her from insanity. In the novel, written after her hesitant re-conversion, Catholicism is much more prominent, almost all-pervasive. Antonia White now shows how her devout parents do not give up hope in a hopeless situation on account of their faith. More important, perhaps, she describes how, on the day she was decertified and heard that her paramour had married another, Clara feels a quiet impulse to drown herself. It was a rosary in her hands which held her back.

Though entirely lacking in the sexual bias which characterised a good part of this issue of Delta and although Antonia White (like Milada Souckova, Karel Capek and others) was no member of the Miller set, by reflecting so perfectly the Villa Seurat's obsession with insanity as
a borderline experience, "The House of Clouds" was part of the pattern of cross referencing and confirmation which the editors had obviously aimed for in their montage of contributions. We have quoted Miller on the "synthetic view of the universe" with its origins "in the idea of correspondences" (Hamlet 400). Nothing vital is ever isolated, was the import of this attitude - and their editorial work helped to impress this idea onto the reader as well. We have shown that the Villa Seurat tended to connect an ambivalent sexus with those manifold areas of non-rational imagination described above, with the apocalyptic ending of the West as described in Thomas' "Prologue", with the horrors of American civilisation in the Capricorn excerpt, with the "Holy Cross of human livingness" and the warm expatriate experience as evinced in the contributions of Perlès and Fraenkel, with the 'heraldic universe' and the idea of self-fulfillment as depicted in Durrell's Hamlet letters. There was nothing incongruous about the fact that Moricand's contribution and that of Antonia White had no sexual implications whatsoever. To the universe of the Villa Seurat the world of astrology and the world of the madman belonged emphatically. The Villa Seurat concerns that were presented in this issue (even in contributions such as "Le Pélérin boîteux") not only touched each other but often overlapped and fused to achieve a cumulative effect, confirming in this way the impression that the Dismemberment Delta was altogether the most comprehensive collection of Villa Seurat art which the editors of the magazine had produced up to then. We have already quoted Perlès as saying that it was "the best number we ever produced" (MFHM.173).

Still, importantly, this issue of Delta did not manifest the collaborative spirit of the Villa Seurat. In this respect it was wholly unlike the Booster. It was a perfect sampler of their art but it was patently not a publication on which was concentrated as much common effort as on the Booster. The important thing about this Delta was the individual contribution. What one remembers about the Booster, on the other hand, was the Booster. The Delta pieces were memorable, captivating, disturbing, their cumulative effect impressive, and they were certainly better advertisements for Villa Seurat major work than the idiosyncratic Booster. The communal Booster spirit, however, a reflection of an animated group life, had all but disappeared. "Today the
Villa Seurat no longer exists" Miller had written after the magazine had been put together (Hamlet 367). This new Delta confirmed his words by evincing something entirely different from the Booster's demonstrative insistence on the feasibility of the Villa Seurat "way of life". It was a stock-taking, a retrospective, a grand finale, it seems, before the final curtain fell. It was a glowing epitaph in darkening days, a requiem for a way of life that had already ended, a requiem for the Villa Seurat...

Notes

1. The spring Seven was no.4 and appeared in February 1939 (D.iii.np).
2. BB.243, B.ii.19ff.
3. Ford 360,352.
4. DTCL.322; CFDT.237.
5. Perhaps one might mention that Durrell singled out Whited Sepulchres for praise at a time when he no longer wanted to be associated with Potocki (RALD.54).
7. In that final number of Seven, Moore issued a first editorial and political statement, which quoted with approval Dylan Thomas' plea in New Verse in 1934 for "the right of all men to share, equally and impartially, every production of man from man and from the sources of production at man's disposal" (Seven.viii.32). In 1940, when the Marxist bias had all but vanished from the literary scenery, this utterance tasted oddly out of time. Indeed, as early as 1938, Thomas himself already felt that he ought to withdraw his statement for he felt that "it no longer applied"(HTDT.31)... 
8. D.ii.7; DTEPW.xv.
9. Thomas, quoted from DTEPW.xv.
10. Otto Rank might have felt that the young poet was attempting to create a substitute for "the lost primal reality", while at the same time trying to be reminded "as little as possible of the primal trauma connected with it"(ORTB.100).
11. D.ii.57; see Thomas' "Prologue" for a similar, though less explicit image (D.ii.9).
12. RT.21,57.
In the dog-days of 1933 Antonin Artaud had given a lecture at the Sorbonne. His performance of "Le Théâtre et la Peste" was attended among others by his patron and psychologist René Allendy, by Henry Miller, Brassai and Anais Nin. Anais Nin described Artaud's tortured plea for a more intense experience of life, and she noted the following question: "Is he trying to remind us that it was during the Plague that so many marvellous works of art and theatre came to be, because whipped by the fear of death, man seeks immortality, or to escape, or to surpass himself?" (AN.i.200). Artaud's contortions were misunderstood by many in the audience, people laughed and hissed and protested and finally left.

But the halcyon years passed, and suddenly onto the startled Parisians was thrust another kind of Black Death shadow, a menace which had brought panic in the summer of 1938 and overshadowed life for the drôle de paix year which followed. Antonin Artaud did not have the pleasure of witnessing the Parisian hysteria: he was interned in St. Anne. However, not only for Miller and his comrades did the possibility of war, death and destruction raining down the air, assume a role not altogether different from that of the Plague in the late Middle Ages. The prospect of massive air-raids terrified French and Englishmen alike, especially as the Czech Crisis had caught many of them unawares (1). It was widely believed - by Henry Miller too - that concentrated bombing from the air in unholy union with poison gas attacks would in a matter of weeks cause millions of casualties, destroy all major cities and mean in very real terms the end of Western civilisation. The Apocalypse seemed imminent. Stephen Spender described in retrospect an anxiety which must have plagued thousands: "My own private fantasy was of emerging out of a cellar after the first air raid on London on to a scene which consisted entirely of ruins" (2). Following the Munich Agreement tension eased for a while, and air raid precaution programmes (ARP) did much to calm the public - at least in England. The apprehension at the thought of bombs showering down literally out of the blue sky was nevertheless neither expunged nor really eased in the minds of Miller and his continental
companions. It remained with them like a shadow, fusing easily with apocalyptic images of the "dissolution which we have talked and written about for so long"(Hamlet 364). Armageddon rumbling in the distance actually quickened their energy of life, caused that "fear of death" which whipped them on - to finish their work, to pack up and then to escape.

The whip-metaphor may be exaggerated. There was apocalyptic apprehension, an end-of-an-era feeling - and a return to 'normality'. Once the September hysteria had died down, the need for immediate departure lost its urgency. On the contrary: one took one's time. Anais Nin, for example, left for the United States only in September 1939; the outbreak of the war was to surprise her while she was vacationing in St.Tropez, living, as she put it, the "Tahitian life" (AN.ii.335). Even so, after the Czechoslovak scare something had changed. We have cited Anais Nin saying that in those days of panic a "great many people died psychically, a great many faiths died"(3). A change was visible in Miller's letters and essays as well, manifest in some basic assumptions which were shared - to a degree - by his Paris friends: There was definitely going to be a war, more destructive than anything the world had hitherto seen, a kind of enormous Guernica. One did not know when it was going to begin, but presumably not in the winter of 1938/39. One did not want to become involved. The idea was to get out in time, for France was no longer the ideal place for an artist, its myth quite threadbare. One would have to "carry on the experiment elsewhere"(Hamlet 309). England, even England, was a possible alternative, a preference. Work in progress was going to be finished, published and departure carefully prepared for - this time. Until then and in spite of the sinister backdrop, life would go on much as usual, or as Miller later put it: "Meanwhile make the most of it"(DiP.19).

This was not a unanimous code of conduct nor a wholly common sentiment. Among Miller's acquaintances there were some who did not want to escape, who were "still dreaming of carrying on from behind the lines". These he felt were "not intelligent enough, I confess, to rearrange their lives in view of the reality which stares us in the face"(Hamlet 309). Others plainly lacked the prerequisites for flight, especially money and the proper papers. Hans Reichel was a case in
point. Conrad Moricand was even forced to join the Foreign Legion when
the war began because he was on the verge of starving. Lawrence
Durrell did not at all share Miller's absolute pacifism; in early 1937
he had written: "If there's a war now, I suppose I'll be among the
killers"(4).

And yet Miller's underlying propositions remained valid, at least as
far as he and his closer friends was concerned. These self-elected
children of France had no desire to take up arms in her defence, nor
even - if they could help it - to stay in Paris in the event of a
conflict. For a variety of reasons which reached from deep disillus-
sionment and disgust with France's weakness, division and defeatism to
Miller's dictum: "When people resort to guns etc. I duck", departure
was unalterably on the agenda (LtAN.177). Few still believed in
France, and indeed when the war began, Foreign Legion officials combed
through the internment camps to goad and pressurise young foreigners
to enlist. France had abdicated as the chief focus of expatriate
devotion. Alfred Perlès was quite willing "to die for England. Any
day!"(5) - but not for France. A curious phenomenon was this yielding
of the French myth before an unrelenting reality, and "mourir pour la
France" was an alternative considered only by those unfortunates who
were unable to leave in time.

In the grip of a paralysis such as the world has never known before,
filled with a premonitory dread such as perhaps only the Atlanteans
experienced, we live from day to day, from hour to hour, awaiting the
debacle. (WoH.79)

Miller's words came from the platform of the last Criterion. As one
can see from his reference to Atlantis, the feeling of impending
disaster was also something of a literary pose, a theme which lent,
and had for a good part of the decade lent, itself to the kind of
dramatisation that Marc Alyn once called "the aesthetics of enlarge-
ment" (Alyn 46). It was a theme which in its clear-cut silhouette -
there was no ambivalence, no nagging doubt or complexity about "the
end of the West" - had appealed naturally to the mythopoetic
imagination of those concerned with the search for higher or absolute
(i.e. simple) truths. The Apocalypse had been a part of their literary
formula throughout the decade.
The extravagant visions of an impeding world-catastrophe in their creative work at this time should therefore not be taken wholly at face value. Characteristically, there is not too much in the private letters and diaries of these winter months which refers directly to that Spenglerian mood so often invoked in poems and essays, in public writings in other words. Only Anais Nin, with an unfailing instinct for self-dramatisation and for the symbolic gesture, set a beacon to signal the end of the "individually created world" (AN.ii.312) by allowing Gonzalo More to set fire to her books. But even here the gesture is exaggerated and flawed; an impatient Gonzalo leaves the slow-burning tomes which she then rescues from the flames.

Speaking of those post-Munich months Julian Symons once remarked on a feeling widespread in those days, namely "that a whole way of life was over, that some terrible worm had been eating away individual generosity and idealism, and secreting in their place brutal cynicism and self-satisfaction" (JS30s.144). This awareness of a change, however, which was ostensibly shared by anyone "with the faintest trace of sensibility" and was so similar to Anais Nin's idea of the individual's world ending, was in effect something in the nature of a superstructure raised above day-to-day living, and brought into full light only, it would seem, occasionally, by the sight, perhaps, of an ARP trench, a visit to the news-cinema, by events like the dissolution of the International Brigades, or in an art work. There was, at least as far as Gascoyne's detailed journals and the Durrell-Miller correspondence were concerned, no great urgency, and life went on much as usual. Habit and routine were tranquilising arguments of great persuasive force.

Late December 1938: what had become of the "Paris Group", as Dylan Thomas called Miller's little clique? Where were the actors whose stage had been that cobblestone cul-de-sac off the rue de la Tombe Issoire? Of the original Booster set only a few, Anais Nin, Moricand and Hans Reichel, were still in Paris. Others had departed long before. Tcheou Nien Sien, admirer of Li Po and of Betty Ryan, had gone to fight the Japanese aggressors. Others were away on vacation. David Gascoyne, for instance, was in Switzerland with friends, visiting the
Laurence Vails (Kay Boyle). With some others it was difficult to say. Betty Ryan was still secretary of Delta, Cecily Mackworth had not left either. Alfred Perlès, as we have seen, had departed for London with the Durrells, and was soon joined by David Edgar. Anais Nin, too, was busy planning a visit to England in early 1939. Apparently, she did not make it. Henry Miller on the other hand managed to scrape together enough money to join his London friends for two weeks around Christmas. It is little wonder that Durrell later (incorrectly, it seems) remembered "piloting Miller (trembling and swearing) past the Customs at Dover", and that it had become "an act of wisdom to transfer The Booster to London" (6). As a gravitational centre Miller's studio had to all intents and purposes ceased to exist.

"Snow in Europe" was the title of a poem which David Gascoyne wrote at the time. In December Paris was ice-bound and shivering in sub-zero weather, the nightfrost so grim that it forced Miller to sleep under six blankets with his sweater and bathrobe on. "Doing some jolly fierce watercolors now to keep warm", he wrote to Durrell shortly before Christmas (Corr.145f). He was also working on a little book, hand-written in a printer's dummy, about watercolouring, for his friend Emil Schnellock (7). He visited galleries and exhibitions (on Georges Rouault: "He's a feeling butcher"), and he was quite alone in the Villa Seurat: "Enjoying a life of complete solitude" (Corr.146).

Even so, he was not entirely happy, for at this point it was still uncertain whether he could go to England. "Still no dough in sight". Six years before, fleeing from his wife, with an empty wallet, he had been turned back at Newhaven. Perhaps this tragi-comical experience was on his mind when he complained to Durrell: "Every Christmas has found me broke, balked and frustrated. And usually alone. This one promises to be the same" (Corr.146). It was all a matter of some 1000 francs, (only four yearly subscriptions to Delta), and although he was expecting a cheque from America - perhaps from Cooney, who was busy hand-setting "Via Dieppe-Newhaven" for the Spring Phoenix - the Belgian printers of the Dismemberment Delta were still waiting to be paid. "Tell Fred if I don't come I hope anyway to have enough to pay Delta money end of December", he wrote and added: "That'd be something anyway" (Corr.145). But somehow money was procured; the Durrells helped
and Anais Nin too. And so very shortly before Christmas, Miller crossed the Channel, overcoming his phobia about the English Customs and his disgust with things English in general. "How it feels to ride into London Lawrence has described once and for all in Women in Love", he had scoffed some years before (8), but now he was eager to see "the roller skating rink and the casinos and Covent Garden and the Café Royal"(9). He was quite happy to re-visit the country he had once called: "The oyster that tried to swallow the world!"(ARNY.129).

Once in London, Miller enjoyed the comfortable luxury of Ian Hugo's flat. Anais Nin asked Miller: "How do you like the aquarium-up in the ceiling?"(Mosaic.xi.H.2.45). Durrell later remembered six cases of excellent Bordeaux which were put at the disposal of the displaced Villa Seurat musketeers. Ian Hugo, Anais Nin's husband, was a good host and his wine was put to good use. A Dickensian Christmas in London had been a dream of Miller's (Martin 274). His dream was realised. The fortnight in England was active, full of fun and almost reminiscent of the early Booster days.

Durrell was the master of ceremonies. As usual when staying in London he was very busy, with writing a play, for instance (10), so busy in fact, that he had little time for correspondence. A letter from Anais Nin begins: "Dear Larry Who doesn't write me"(Mosaic.xi.H.2.45). But he did organise several dinner parties for Miller, who wanted to make the acquaintance of a number of writers and artists. He had compiled a list, at the top of which was the name of Dylan Thomas(11).

The meeting between the "crazy Welsh poet" (Miller on Thomas) and the "dear, mad, mild man, bald and fifty, with great enthusiasms for commonplaces"(Thomas on Miller) is on record in detail (12). After Miller had arrived, Durrell wrote immediately to Thomas, even enclosing a pound to pay for his journey from Hampshire to London. Thomas would have preferred his correspondents to come down - "I've got the willies of London and it makes me ill as hell"(see "The Prologue to an Adventure") - but, as he added: "I mustn't miss this chance of seeing you both and God knows when, if ever, I'll come to Paris" (TC.i.4.4). He got a lift up to London(13). In two short memoirs Durrell has described Thomas' encounter with Miller. Constantine
Fitzgibbon said of this meeting that it was a "good example of Dylan's timidity and shyness with those whom he regarded as great artists" (CFDT.256). Indeed, Thomas had to be coaxed into coming into the flat. There, however, in the company of Miller and Durrell, he quickly felt at home, joked, drank and even read from his latest work. It turned out a "splendid evening" (Encounter.ix.6.58). Although Thomas and Durrell continued to meet in the following months, it was Miller the Welshman was most impressed with. After thanking Durrell and his wife for the good time in London, Thomas wrote: "I liked Miller enormously, as I'd always expected I couldn't do anything but, and you must please keep him to his promise of coming to stay in the spring, in Wales, in the live quiet" (TC.i.4.5). Nothing became of that promise, and the two met again only ten years later and on another continent (14).

Aside from Dylan Thomas, Miller came together with a number of other writers as well. Many years later Durrell remarked that "hardly anyone had heard of Miller then. ... Miller was a Paris bum, a beatnik. Mr Miller, who's he?" (Alyn 48). In point of fact Miller's name was not as unknown as all that, and it was not for nothing that Anais Nin spoke of "Henry's growing celebrity", or Miller of his own "fame and recognition" (AN.ii.243). As Durrell put it in those days, Miller's reputation was "already strong among those for whom most of today's writing resembles the lifeless pokerwork of a village barber" (NEW.xiv.16.241). When his name was mentioned in this article or that the reviewer often felt it unnecessary to specify who 'Mr Miller' was (15) - on the contrary, as the anonymous critic of Money And How It Gets That Way noted in the NEW: "The most eminent of the Boosters needs no boosting" (45). If Miller was not popularly known, and Dylan Thomas wrote that many of the enthusiastic commentators on The Black Book "hadn't, remember, read a line of Miller before" (DTSL.230), there were nevertheless many literati who were most eager to meet him.

As Miller later recalled, he saw in London T.S.Eliot, W.T.Symons and E.Graham Howe. Rayner Heppenstall noted in one of his memoirs: "I briefly met both Miller and Lawrence Durrell that year in London" (RHIP.38). There was also a meeting with the poet Norman Cameron, who, in the words of Geoffrey Grigson, belonged to "the Inner Command
of the Thirties"(16). That much is on record, but there will have been others as well, old acquaintances perhaps, such as Herbert Read and George Orwell, maybe Rebecca West, who admired the works of Anais Nin and whom Miller had wanted to visit in 1933(Martin 274). Perhaps he also saw Humphrey Jennings and E.L.T.Mesens, the editors of the surrealist London Bulletin, which had just issued his "Chez Benno". Durrell may have introduced him to his own friends, to some of the other Booster/Delta contributors like Gawsworth, Tambimuttu, Stephen Bylansen, Oswell Blakeston or Roger Burford. But this is not certain, as for instance, Nicholas Moore never made the acquaintance of Miller. Many of those whose critical curiosity was also aroused by Durrell's Black Book had expressed a strong interest in Miller: the famous sexologist Havelock Ellis, for instance, Faber director and author Frank Morley, as well as Hugh Gordon Porteus (AN.ii.247). In this network of literary acquaintances Miller and his young friend may have also met Desmond Hawkins, influential critic and literary editor of Purpose. The aforementioned W.T.Symons was that periodical's General Editor, and perhaps one should mention that in these months especially Purpose printed much work by the Villa Seurat renegades and this in spite of its 'responsible' editorial stance.

T.S.Eliot was the most influential man of letters Miller met on his visit. London's highly intricate literary life often defies the attempts of later chroniclers to retrace its weaving strands and motions. And yet it is strange that most biographers of the famous T.S.Eliot leave unmentioned his meeting with Miller in late December 1938. Many make no reference to the author of Tropic of Cancer at all. Perhaps they did not believe the encounter worthy even of a footnote in the life-story of one who had moulded the poetic sensibility of generations. Stephen Spender wrote: "Already, in 1928, T.S.Eliot was a legend to the young poets" (SS30s.238). Eliot was a giant, a legend, and the powerful director of Faber and Faber... Perhaps the Eliot commentators were right. In comparison Miller was a nobody, at the time, and perhaps nothing noteworthy occurred when they met. Still, a few lines might have been illuminating, not only as far as Eliot the private man and editor of the Criterion was concerned, but also as a way of throwing into relief certain features of 20th century Anglo-American literary experience.
At first it is difficult to imagine two men more dissimilar than the cultured Anglo-Catholic convert and the gutter novelist from Paris. Nevertheless, there existed some striking parallels. Eliot and Miller were exiles from America, sharing the experience of conscious and voluntary expatriation. Though Eliot's 'palefaced' return to English roots differed from Miller's flight, they had both rejected America and come in search of a more meaningful culture in Europe. They had stayed when most Americans had returned home. Furthermore, like many of their contemporaries they held a very bleak view of the state of Western civilisation, were convinced of its decay and eventual disintegration. While loathing the modern industrial world, its political institutions and philosophies of progress, materialism and liberalism, they also shuddered at the prevalent ideals of a social upheaval of the masses, a reorganisation of society along Marxist lines. There are quite a number of intersections of this kind between Miller and Eliot including an anti-semitic prejudice. In Eliot's earlier work one found also evidence "for the existence of a street-haunting dandified night-bird" (SS3Os.248), not quite a Millerian bohemian but a noctambulist nevertheless. This was the Eliot who had written the introduction for Djuna Barnes's Nightwood and for Charles Louis Phillippe's Bubu of Montparnasse....

Still, in spite of such overlappinngs, the man from Brooklyn was by temperament, background and conviction fundamentally different from the white-flannelled aesthete from St. Louis. Miller, that self-styled and self-centred prophet and notorious "cunt-painter" was vociferously anti-traditional, anti-moral, anti-social, an anarchist with a taste for the Oriental, for chaotic spontaneity, an unorthodox surrealist, belonging, as Fraenkel put it, to that "species of artist whose effectiveness as artist is in direct proportion to his irresponsibility" (Hamlet 303). Eliot belonged to a different tribe altogether, a Harvard graduate, scrupulous workman of art, self-declared classicist in literature, conservative in religion and reactionary in politics, deeply concerned with saving Art and Culture, Tradition and Society. Whence, one might ask, his interest in Henry Miller?
In spite of his advocacy of discipline and hierarchy, be it in literature or in society, Eliot was remarkably open and unprejudiced as far as dissenting writers of talent were concerned. For this he was indeed attacked viciously by another monarchist, anti-semitic, anti-democrat, another admirer of Charles Maurras. Potocki wrote in his own Right Review: "Left Wing literary slime is encouraged by a firm of which one of our official Royalists (T.S.Eliot) is a director.... how much further can decadence go?" (RR.vi.np.). Eliot, however, did not allow his aesthetic discrimination to be poisoned by his political views (nor by Potocki's diatribes), and he helped the poets of the Auden generation and younger ones as well. Charles Madge, Kenneth Allot, Dylan Thomas, David Gascoyne, even Roger Roughton benefited from the Criterion's generous policies. Herbert Howarth, who incidentally also contributed to the last Delta, noted about the Criterion:

The magazine which nursed the creativity of its editor nursed the creativity of younger writers; it nursed them, however different from him in outlook, hopes, style, and manners, both by what it published of other men and what it published by their own. (Howarth 297)

But Eliot's generosity was not limited to younger poets. Referring to an article by Ezra Pound, Hugh Gordon Porteus once remarked about the Criterion:

In passing, non-Christian readers may well be grateful to the editor of THE CRITERION for not interfering with the statement that 'it is mere shouting for the home team to pretend that the so-called Christian virtues were invented A.D.1 to A.D.32 in Judaea.' (Purpose.x.4.239)

Miller, too, was surprised to find his own work warmly welcomed by Eliot. Eliot wrote to Miller about Cancer in June 1935: "There is writing in it as good as any I have seen for a long time. Several friends to whom I have shown it, including Mr. Herbert Read, share my admiration." His letter went on: "Without drawing any general comparisons, your own book is a great deal better both in depth of insight and of course in the actual writing than Lady Chatterley's Lover" (17). Still, when Miller asked whether these words might be used as a dust-jacket blurb, Eliot retracted, and a modified, very much pruned version was printed. Nevertheless, their correspondence continued, with Miller
occasionally trying to place a review, acting on behalf of friends, sending to London begging letters and other material — such as the first 100 pages of the *Hamlet* exchange. Much of this Eliot turned down (as expected) but he was always friendly. He was helpful although *Tropic of Cancer* had used the phrase "Like T.S.Eliot's verse" to describe a. bleak and barren square. "He seems to treat me very gingerly and cavalierly. He means to be warm-hearted, I suppose, but has grown such a crust that it is almost impossible"(Corr.30). Miller wrote to Eliot on behalf of Lawrence Durrell, who subsequently began a long and fruitful personal affiliation with the greatest of Faber poets.

Eliot's standards were very high. Anais Nin's study of Otto Rank was rejected in 1937. Faber had also turned down *Max and the White Phagocytes*. Still, in October 1937 Miller's "Un Etre Etoilique" was printed in the *Criterion* and in January 1939 his review of Erich Gutkind's *The Absolute Collective*. In his 1965 study of Eliot, Howarth noted: "The influence of the editor on his contributors is obvious. Less obvious is the influence of the contributors on their editor"(Howarth 264). Eliot was a careful editor, reading and contemplating everything that was sent to him, and especially those pieces which he finally included in his review. Why, one might ask, did he decide to print Henry Miller in that very last issue of the *Criterion*, why did his important valediction have to follow directly upon Miller's essay?

Ostensibly on a book by Erich Gutkind, Miller's essay brought together, as we have indicated in our discussion of Miller's contribution to the *Dismemberment Delta*, many of those favorite topoi which he had collected and developed over the years. Here one found once again the obsession with the artist-hero who habitually fuses with the "I" of the narrator, the pervasive song about modern man's death in life, the apocalyptic vision, etc. These familiar ingredients were now mixed, however, with a new sense of urgency, seasoned with references to the disintegrating world situation. The end was near, but, as before, Miller's catastrophic vision was infused with a curious optimism and the essay's main tenor was that "the complete destruction of our cultural world, which seems more than ever assured by the impending
smashup, is really a blessing in disguise"(WoH.85). Happily, the dirt of civilisation would be cleansed away, a new man would appear, one whose keynote would be "totality, integration, oneness"(WoH.62).

Miller's was an optimistic apocalypticism.

Perhaps it was this wholly irrational hopefulness which caught the mind of Eliot, whose gloom had spoken ever more clearly from the Criterion's editorials of the decade. Perhaps it was this unrealistic belief that somewhere beyond the "apocalyptic Era"(WoH.91) there existed for man the possibility of a "new way of life"(WoH.85), devoid of the hollowness, schizophrenia and impotence of modern existence which somehow thrilled the Eliot of The Waste Land. Maybe Eliot was also fascinated by the man Miller, who seemed so free of doubts, who appeared to believe in himself so completely that he had no fear of the future. Back in 1936 Eliot still wrote "mildly sarcastic" letters to Miller(Corr.46), kindly belittling those inconsistent and egocentric Hamlet epistles. Now, in clear view of another world war, Miller's pronouncements, orotund and unfounded as ever, were inexplicably - reassuring. Miller said of himself, the artist: "His voice is heard above the wrack of doom - joyous and prophetic"(Hamlet 90). It was almost as if at the end of a decade of the artist's involvement in politics, at the end of roads both 'revolutionary' (Auden and Isherwood leaving for America) and 'reactionary' (Eliot's exhaustion), the strangely self-assured and enthusiastic voice of Miller gained a hearing. "We stand at the threshold of a new way of life", cried Miller: "one in which MAN is about to be realized" (WoH.85), and although Eliot must have known that this was an improbable definition of man's estate in the winter of 1938/39 - he printed it.

Eliot was tired, depressed by the tide of events. The Criterion had taken too much of his time and energy, and for over two years he had been thinking about resigning as editor. Seventeen years were enough, and in any case there was pessimism and staleness all around. The "European mind", such a genuine possibility in the previous decade, was dispersed and nowhere to be found, and so in his "Last Words" in the January 1939 number he confessed to his readers:
In the present state of public affairs— which has induced in myself a depression of spirits so different from any other experience of fifty years as to be a new emotion—I no longer feel the enthusiasm necessary to make a literary review what it should be. (Criterion.xviii.71.275)

The end of the Criterion had come, but not before its editor had taken stock and cast a dejected glance into the future, expressing his hope that others, and especially small and independent literary reviews, might continue the struggle against the deterioration of cultural standards that seemed inevitable. What he meant with the 'continuity of culture' is not immediately clear, at least as far as the selection of contributions for that final issue was concerned: for apart from more traditional disquisitions like Ronald Bottrall's "Byron and the Colloquial Tradition in English Poetry", one found not only Miller's enthusiastic exercise in utopianism— but also a very positive two page review of The Black Book. To entrust the continuity of culture to two such iconoclasts seemed paradoxical to say the least, but A.Desmond Hawkins argued that Durrell's book "is liable to be as important for fiction as Auden's first poems were for verse" (Criterion.xvii.71.318). The Villa Seurat group was being acknowledged by the folding Criterion.

Hawkins spoke of The Black Book's "revolutionary impact", spoke of it in terms similar to those he had used to praise Black Spring, more powerful than "any novel written in England during the last five years", and its author with his "freshness, vigour, panache, and an intimacy that our native gentility has lost" (Criterion.xvi.64.503). These praises call to mind how Eliot found in the chaotic pages of The Black Book hope for the future of English prose fiction. "What we are against is despondency and paralysis" Miller had once proclaimed (Alf Letter 19), and despondency and paralysis were the real threat to art and literature in the post-Munich period. The vivaciousness of the ex-Boosters was suddenly at a premium....

Referring to Hawkins' review of The Black Book Miller wrote to Durrell in January 1939, that he thought it "the best so far", and he added: "I was amazed, considering the source"(18). Perhaps it was not such a surprise after all. We have noted above that the Villa Seurat's
particular romantic penchant was no altogether unique phenomenon in the literary 1930s. Neither was its catastrophic vision. Stephen Spender later noted that the intellectuals of the decade, including the readers of the Criterion, of course, recognised in Hitler's terrible activism "some of their own most hidden fantasies" (SSWWW.190), nihilistic and destructive imaginings which had been nurtured by a wide reading of Dostoievski, Nietzsche and Wagner. Miller's work, even the review of The Absolute Collective, had roots reaching into this darker side of nineteenth-century romanticism, and arguably, it was to these hidden fantasies that Miller spoke as well. Now, as the continent was sliding inexorably toward the abyss, these (self-fulfilling) prophecies of Spenglerian cast seemed to be corroborated by events, these visions and Miller's own vivid scenarios of doom. To his fellow expositor Michael Fraenkel, Miller wrote with barely concealed pride that the destruction they had foreseen was imminent. In a time when humanistic and progressive ideals seemed discredited and bankrupt, Miller felt that his own diagnosis conferred authority on his work, and who, at this point in time, could have said that he or Fraenkel or Durrell were really mistaken?

Nevertheless, this was not the reason why he and his friends were suddenly appreciated. They were not the only prophets of doom around. In fact, the attitude critical of an empty society with false values was common to most poets between the wars. Everyone was agreed on the symptoms, The Waste Land outlook was all pervasive, even among Communists, and it had allowed a young Marxist David Gascoyne to praise Miller for giving "us his unique record of the Last Days of World Capitalism" (19). The point is that the Villa Seurat were nihilists with a difference. Miller seemed to see the limitations of the purely catastrophic vision: "You and I have gloated over this bankruptcy", he wrote to Fraenkel, "we have searched for signs of it everywhere, congratulating ourselves on our most excellent vision, on our capable diagnoses". And then he added:

I say, we should liquidate the gloating too! That too is a stand which is untenable, indefensible. We have been too eager, in a negative way, to see the true values posited; we have been like prosperous undertakers, revelling in the profits of spiritual death. (Hamlet 403)
And so in this letter, Miller grandiloquently rejected "the pleasure of saying:"I was right!" (ibid.). But the feeling of being right was all-important for his creative activity. Unlike so many others whose analysis of the spiritual death of the time had been just as accurate as the Villa Seurat's but who were paralysed by their own vision, Miller derived not only pleasure out of this sense of having been right, but also a permanent creative energy. There was consequently in his writing a happiness and vivaciousness which counteracted the catastrophic vision therein expressed. Arguably it was not his rather unoriginal system of ideas which captivated the reader of the time but this unbounded and generous vitality, the lust for life and (irrational) personal optimism. For Miller, as we have seen, believed himself exempt:

When I read Spengler and Lawrence I was intoxicated with this shadow of doom which threatened us. I think the diagnosis was excellent. I think the facts are being corroborated every day. But I know damned well now that I am not doomed. (Hamlet 274)

A prophet of doom and destruction, but incurably optimistic and writing with an almost embarrassing liveliness in a time when others were silent, depressed or off to America. "I feel very happy about the bad times we are living through and always have lived through. I am glad to be a maggot in the corpse which is the world. I feast on death" (20). Miller admitted that he needed the disruption of the times in order to write: "In other words, Rome has to burn in order for a guy like me to sing" (Hamlet 56). This, at any rate, was the picture he liked to present to his readers, and so in that year of détente, that year of a phoney peace, many - and not only looney little magazines like Cooney's Phoenix - were willing to lend an ear, to print his work.

Miller was regarded as one of the few who wrote "from the very bottom of their epoch" (Comment. ii.39.87). His disciple Durrell was also welcomed, the protagonist of his black comedy being - it was felt - "not the narrator or any other character, but the zeitgeist itself" (Criterion. xviii.71.317). And all the while they were laughing, Boosters first and foremost, fiddling vigorously and enjoying themselves, or so it seemed to outsiders, in "this merry, devil-may-
"care atmosphere" in the months before the war (DiP.20). Just as in the Depression years the self-assured voice of the propagandist poet offering solutions instead of questions and doubts was widely welcomed, so in the twilight before the catastrophe of another world war, when nightmares and phantoms and uncertainty determined the atmosphere, the self-assured books of Miller and Durrell were received with enthusiasm, more - it sometimes seems - than at any later point, precisely because their (unoriginal) catastrophic vision corresponded closely to the spirit of the times, was in other words felt to be true, while being successfully infused with an unusual gaiety, music, and exceptional creative energy and optimism.

One's average prophet of doom, however, is destined to enjoy at best a very short flowering of recognition. This usually occurs just prior to the expected event, when a wider and popular consciousness reaches that level of alarm that is his normality and business. Should the predicted Armageddon fail to materialise in time and should the world continue pottering on in its old familiar way, unbelief and ridicule will push him ruthlessly into oblivion. If it does come about and if it does happen to be the "universal destruction" to which the absolutist visionary will naturally tend, then the question of his recognition will be settled once and for all. Then again, the day of doom might well turn out very different from what he promised it would be, and his credibility might just undergo its own private Judgement Day. More important, once the conflagration has begun, no matter what the outcome, the general preconditions which made possible a work of foresight will suddenly be wholly altered, relegating it mercilessly to the past. The prophecy will become at best an exciting and sensitive account of the fears and hopes of a bygone epoch, with only this or that tentacle of meaning reaching into the new present, many others paddling wildly in the realm of fantasy. War, to be more specific, is the great divider of times, inevitably divorces the past from the present, its prophet from its reality. Henry Miller saw this clearly. To Michael Fraenkel he wrote in late 1938: "I smiled to myself thinking how ironical it was that events had not only caught up with our book but would perhaps nullify the book"(Hamlet 366). It was his last Hamlet letter. The increasing focus of his major creative efforts on his New York past, his talk of returning to America in order to
settle accounts, may not be a direct consequence of, but does coincide with, this realisation of how easily relevance can be stripped from a work by the fickle Zeitgeist.

In the end Miller was plainly more than a scavenger, feeding on a mouldering present. In this he was quite unlike Michael Fraenkel, whose death philosophy is now forgotten. The Tropics are still readable today. Shortly before the war, however, they possessed a unique poignancy which was later lost (CCEC.336ff). That remarkable congruence between the twilight ambience before the war and his books, the way the apocalyptic optimism in Cancer and Capricorn responded to the needs of a disillusioned readership facing a war that was believed by many to be a universal catastrophe, this was allimportant in preparing not only the positive critical reception Miller received in London in December 1938, but accelerated his rise in literary reputation as well. Miller was in complete harmony with the unharmonious times, and even Time magazine devoted a whole page to his and Durrell's works. Understandably, when he returned to Paris he was content. Meeting Miller in a Montmartre bar, David Gascoyne observed: "He had just been to England, and, rather surprisingly, had much enjoyed the trip" (DG.ii.116). But there was more than that. London had opened new vistas for him. "You don't know how grateful I am for that trip", he wrote to Durrell: "It was a real experience - and starts a new and more auspicious cycle of travels, I feel sure" (Corr.141).

Notes

1. AJPT.528, SS30s.23.
2. AJPT.532, SS30s.23.
3. AN.ii.309; Hamlet 367. Heppenstall said: "Afterwards, I felt that the war had really taken place and that some of my friends were among the casualties" (RHIP.35).
5. RT.40,57.
6. Encounter.ix.6.57,56; AN.ii.316.
7. He also completed one for Durrell in October (Corr.135). See also HMGN.254.
8. SatW.199; for financial assistance see: AN.ii.316; Corr.141.
9. Curiously, Jay Martin does not mention this trip at all.
10. Durrell was writing a play. Miller: "Next I expect you tell me you
will play in your own play. You are becoming a Shakespur!" (Corr.146).

11. He had previously included a similar list in a letter to Frank Dobo in 1932 (HMGN.92ff).

12. Encounter.ix.6.57; DTVW.54.

13. "Luckily I managed to get driven to see him" (DTSL.220).


15. See for instance: NEW.xi.26.437f

16. TC.i.4.5; GGRec.83.

17. Martin 317; see also Corr.30,118; Cancer 45.


19. Comment.ii.39.88; Spender has written: "Perhaps one reason for the attraction of communism was that the communists also had their vision of final crisis, though they regarded it as one involving the destruction of capitalism rather than of civilization. Considered as an apocalyptic vision, the communist view coincides with that of T.S.Eliot in The Waste Land or Yeats in 'The Second Coming'. To see this is to see how, looked at from a certain angle, or in a given situation, works which seem quite alien to all idea of politics can suddenly seem to be politically symptomatic and to offer a choice between complete despair and revolution"(SS30s.24).

20. Hamlet 339. This was written before Munich.
VI. January – March 1939: A Time of Endings

1939. This was the year of disillusionment, of tragedy, of leave-takings. "As always before the war, there was fever in the air", Miller later remembered: "With the end approaching, everything became distorted, magnified, speeded up" (DiP.19) and the feverish road to the end was paved with many endings.

This was Auden's "dead of winter", this was when the fall of Barcelona signalled to the world the final agony of the Spanish Republic and with it the fading away of a cause which had been the decade's greatest for many poets (Hynes 382). "We are all in deep despair over the tragic fate of Spain", Anais Nin had written shortly before: "Barcelona about to fall into the hands of the fascists" (AN.ii.318). Then, on January 26th Franco's troops entered the city. And the hope proved futile that Spain might still offer "some sort of compensation for Munich" (JS30s.138). Now, endless columns of refugees, the defeated, wound their tortured way towards the French border, and in Paris David Gascoyne attended a huge Front Populaire meeting at the Vel d'Hiver, where a crowd of 14,000 cheered, sang the Internationale, raised clenched fists, shouted "Ouvrez les Frontières". But he felt "at the same time almost certain that nothing will be done" (DG.ii.116). The days of the Popular Front's power were over, and soon the French government formally recognised Franco's Burgos regime. The pull to the Right in French politics was plainly perceptible, as Daladier's anti-labour and anti-communist policies were deepening the country's paralysing division. Then, in March, the Spanish loyalists were finally defeated. Madrid surrendered, and the illusions "nursed throughout the decade that history was on the side of democratic movements" (JS30s.148) crumbled. Stephen Spender has written: "With the ending of the Spanish Civil War it became clear that the thirties was being wound up like a company going into bankruptcy" (SS30s.85).

On Europe's other perimeter another tragic dénouement was being acted out. On March 15th German armies marched into the sad and disintegrating remains of Masaryk's once flowering democracy. Eyes were abruptly opened as Nazi protectorates were proclaimed and Hitler entered Prague.
in triumph. Two weeks later Chamberlain pledged British and French assistance to Poland, should its independence be threatened. The great edifice of appeasement, erected on the fear of war and on guilt feelings about the Versailles treaty and on the belief that German self-determination ought not be denied, collapsed overnight.

Further East, in Moscow, the policies of collective security, another idea that had stamped the political world of the thirties, were falling apart. Litvinow's pet hope that German expansion might be checked by the joint action of Russia and the West, had proved another delusion, soon to be replaced by another system of allegiances...

The ranks of Art and Literature, too, were being thinned out by the disintegration of hope and worsening perspectives for the future, especially in France. David Gascoyne expressed his admiration and surprise when in January he received a copy of Jouve's Kyrie: "There is something miraculous in his being able to continue to create poetry so intense and pure at a time like this" (DG.ii.115). The Zeitgeist sat like a numbing gargoyle on the shoulder of every artist and writer and editor, and although the fat volumes of the Nouvelle Revue Française were still brim-full with the foremost produce from the world of letters, the number of fiercely experimental little magazines - which naturally also fed into that quasi-national institution - was rapidly dwindling. Jean Wahl wrote in a 1938 number of the NRF: "Parmi tous les signes attristants, il y a un petit signe qui l'est moins: ce sont ces revues, ces journaux qui viennent chaque mois, ou chaque semaine, apporter les échos de quelques pensées libres" (NRF.ccxcv.26.687). But hard times and persistent worry were conducive neither to experimental art, to free thinking nor to the production of small reviews, and so in the first half of 1939 at least fifteen French little magazines closed down, in July and August another seven - including Henry Miller's Volontés.

Over in England the situation was much the same - so it seemed. The Criterion's end has been mentioned. The proscenium of the literary stage was hurriedly being cleared, the props rearranged. The final issue of The London Mercury appeared in April (before disappearing into Life and Letters Today). Almost symptomatically, it published the
full version of Auden's great valediction "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" (Hynes 349ff). Yeats, "the old silver haired giant" (Corr.149f), as Durrell called him, had died on January 28th. It was a time of departures. Two days before, the chief poet of the thirties generation arrived in New York, and his poem was more than a moving obituary to the Irish master. Like his essay "The Public vs. the Late Mr. William Butler Yeats" it bade farewell conclusively to the old belief that poetry might in any significant way influence the course of history. Auden's change of heart was one of many indications that a literary era was finally drawing to a close. In the second number of Horizon Cyril Connolly not only called the move of Auden and Isherwood to America "the most important literary event since the outbreak of the Spanish War", but also said that it was "a symptom of the failure of social realism as an aesthetic doctrine" (Horizon.i.2.68ff). Referring to this passage Stephen Spender said in his memoirs, that the departure of Auden and Isherwood "helped discredit the movement of the 1930's", but he also said that "this movement had already been made bankrupt by events"(1)

Several influential literary reviews came to an end. In May appeared the final issue of Grigson's New Verse, in June Julian Symons' Twentieth Century Verse, as well as Fact, a documentary journal which had begun only in 1937. In his last number Grigson reviewed the work of his greatest contributor, W.H. Auden, in an article that was also a goodbye to his own magazine. To him, "it seemed that good and creative things were departing from European life, and leaving behind only the time's great evil"(NV.i.2.ns.49). The thirties had been his decade, too, and New Verse - even in Durrell's (later) opinion - with the Criterion "perhaps the most important periodical of the day"(Key 195). Now it was over. These are the words of Samuel Hynes: "It was a time of endings, but of no beginnings, a time in which the great issues of the 'thirties, and the journals in which writers had argued those issues, were disappearing into the wings and the stage emptied for the final scene"(Hynes 340).
But Hynes' assessment was exceedingly sombre and narrow, for what is perhaps more remarkable than these endings, is the number of little magazines and journals that continued to provide publication outlets for poets and writers right up to the war, into it and at times even throughout the war. The impression is often that with Auden's departure and the end of New Verse there opened a yawning void - at least until Connolly's Horizon began in January 1940. Grigson spoke with characteristic sharpness of "the new crop of loony and eccentric small magazines in England and America" (NV.i.2.ns.49) and there were some to whom this disparagement well applied. Still, aside from many reputable periodicals that carried on, journals such as Purpose, Life and Letters Today, New Writing, Wales, Scrutiny, and the New English Weekly, it was to these 'eccentric' little magazines that many young poets began to turn.

It was a period of transition - not of standstill. If Auden and New Verse abdicated, other poets and other reviews pressed forward with a sense of urgency and novelty. Poetry London, for instance, had a strong beginning in January. Spender later said about Horizon: "To start a literary magazine in September 1939 at first seemed an act of mad defiance of historic circumstances" (SS30.s.87). The same applied to Tambimuttu's move in the winter of 1938/9, but time in both cases proved the sceptics wrong. Nicholas Moore's Seven which printed not only old Boosters and young Apocalyptics but also writers as diverse as Wallace Stevens, Potocki of Montalk, George Barker, Anne Ridler, Parker Tyler and Julian Symons, helped to bridge any gaps which may have emerged. It continued until Spring 1940. In spite of Grigson's gloomy goodbyes and Eliot's sombre prophecies, more editors and more writers were going to continue into the darkening days than one might have expected.

There were different motives and different ways of arriving at similar conclusions. For some, for the political veterans, it was a matter of retrenching from forward lines to a defensive ring around some sort of core: "Our standards are aesthetic, and our politics in abeyance", Cyril Connolly noted in the first "Comment" in Horizon. Some of the younger poets did not need to move back, did not feel defeated the way Auden and Grigson and the thirties movement felt at an end. They were
anxious about the future, but the causes and aspirations of the political artist had not been theirs and they were spared his stunning disappointment. Their enthusiasm had not gone under. It was this which was now sorely needed...

To that latter group of innocents belonged Lawrence Durrell, prospective editor of a second poetry Delta. The decade's great question about the relationship between art and political action had been answered from his smug island retreat in a sweepingly absolutist manner: politics and art should never be mixed or confused. This idea, or rather this compartmental habit of mind lingered on, even when he was taught by the storm of political events that no artist is an island, that he too was implicated. But it was an ill-taught lesson, and nobody likes changing his way of thinking, especially not when, all of a sudden, the literary climate changes and appears to justify one's attitude: "poetry makes nothing happen; it survives / In the valley of its saying". These words must have seemed honey on Durrell's lips. Durrell did feel threatened by the growing political storms - "It's a sad feeling but makes you give the final ounce to what you do" - but the ostensible segregation of art and politics was rigidly upheld (Corr.150). If links connecting the two worlds were not entirely absent, they were of the 'romantic' variety that has been described above. Most often, however, one finds, such as in a January 1939 letter, some form of the Millerian coupling of the great and universal catastrophe and the happy private and creative life. Just before expressing his deep anxiety about the war, Durrell announced: "I am collecting a slow but strong poetry number" (Corr.149). The world was going to pieces - and another Delta forthcoming. The worrisome l'art au service de la révolution aesthetic was at an end, and now Durrell breathed easier in London's literary climate. It is small wonder that the tone of his letters to Miller changed, matured and he felt he had "grown in humanity half a cubit"(Corr.150). For him January to March 1939 was not a time of endings.

Notes

1. Hynes 359; SSWWW.257.
Alfred Perlès' long valedictory letter to Henry Miller was finally completed in mid-April 1939. Perhaps its ending on a note of frothy Anglophilia was due to the fact that some days before, an official from the UnderSecretary of State of the Home Office, Aliens Department, had handed him an identity card and a new nationality: on the glum day the Wehrmacht marched into Prague, the old Czechoslovak passport that had accompanied him on his European peregrinations lost its validity. "Aller Sans Retour London" was the epistle's speaking title, and its emphatic message was that there would be no more returns, no more aller retours for the spiritually reborn Alfred Perlès. And yet, consistency had never been a forte of the rue de la Tombe Issoire irrationalists, and so April found the Austrian-turned-Englishman back in Paris, back in Miller's studio, back to jesting and bantering and clowning about just like in the old days. "The retour always lands you in the same place", Perlès had written in the winter months: "And I'm sick of same places"(RT.52). But he was happy to be back just the same. Miller wrote to Anais Nin about a meeting with Perlès and Moricand, that "we had a wonderful time of it. I haven't laughed so much in ages. To see Fred dancing around Moricand and interrupting him is quite a sight"(LtAN.185). Still, Perlès was only there on a short visit, and it was not long before he returned to London, to a new circle of friends, and perhaps once again to the "threshold of a new world"(RT.35) he had previously proclaimed with vigour in the goodbye to Henry Miller and Paris.

In that letter he had said that he was "sick of same places". And yet among the "same places" which a chameleonic Perlès had grown weary of but then revisited just the same, a threadbare Villa Seurat was not the only one: he had also said that he would not return to what he called "mangy Delta covers"(RT.52). When, however, the final issue of the Villa Seurat review came off the Belgian printing press sometime in March 1939, he was still Directeur et Rédacteur en chef. And what is more, he had also contributed more poems than anyone else. Even so, this poetry number was as little the result of its director's
editorial work, as its offices were still in the Parisian 14th district. When Miller, in a letter announcing his withdrawal from the magazine, cautioned Durrell that he could do as he pleased, "Fred willing - he's the editor, don't forget" (Corr. 147), this was superfluous. Fred, it seems, was more than willing to leave the field to Durrell, who was still enthusiastic about the magazine. The editorial offices were no longer in the Villa Seurat 18, but opposite the 'Windsor Castle' on Camden Hill Road, Notting Hill Gate, where Durrell stayed in the winter months (Labrys.v. 167).

"I am collecting a slow but strong poetry number", wrote Durrell to Henry Miller, asking him to contribute: "Not poems, but little sayings, three or four lines long, taken from your books, notebooks, or written new. Open Tropic again at the first few pages and you will see the short poems there. I WANT YOU IN" (Corr. 149). Durrell wanted Miller in, but, as we shall see in the chapter entitled "Paris 1939: The Leave-Taking of Henry Miller", the American refused to comply. Durrell's urging was the response to Miller's retreat. Full of sympathy at Miller's fear of overworking himself, Durrell advised: "don't write these days: just sit and read and smile and unbrace the enthusiasm a little" (ibid.) - and went on to press his friend for a contribution. He too longed for his island quiet, away from England and London with its literary "fen of adders" (ibid.). He, too, he said, did not belong here, where "the shabby-intelligenced young with all the gut beaten out of them by social credit and monetary yields and workers' rights" were incapable even of drinking a manly toast to the memory of Yeats, "as if such a gesture of simple homage was foreign to them" (Corr. 149f). In France, Durrell added, things were different. No, he did not belong here.

But he stayed for a period of almost five months, and evidently under no obligation. He explained to Miller that in the shadow of war every moment became "unbearably sweet even if trivial things and idiots intervene" (Corr. 150), and what he meant was every moment and anywhere, even if one remained immersed in the hectic flux and reflux of the literary metropolis and even if it was in England.

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In actual fact, much as this "Gauguin of modern poetry" (DSFoP.123) loved his island exile (though perhaps not in winter), much as he delighted in Villa Seurat Paris (but not for too long), he also enjoyed literary London. He felt so very much at home in that exciting and bustling and flattering "fen of adders" that his anti-English utterances (in unison with his praise of France) appear at this point somewhat shallow, anachronistic, mere genuflections to an old and worn sentiment which had once brought Miller, the victim of Newhaven, closer to him, the chronicler of the English Death. Miller was presumably alive to this. He had just been in London, and his view of England had changed in direct proportion, it would seem, to his disillusionment with France. In his 1941 preface to The Renegade he even recalled telling Perlès when he left Paris: "The English will be good to you". And referring to France he said: "You've had a rotten deal here" (Ren.5). And so if Durrell's words were more than gentle signals of friendship, if they were also intended to charm Miller back to the folds of Delta, they went quite amiss. "What I like best of all about the Tibetan and Chinese sages, let me add, is that quality they have of making things difficult for the disciple", Miller had written to Keyserling: "the retreat instead of the push" (IntHML.v.19). Miller was retreating and there appeared no little sayings in the April Delta.

Still, Durrell was able to cope well with whatever difficulties may have arisen with Miller's absence. He was in a good position to do so, having in the past months grown in self-confidence and in reputation. The poetry Delta which he edited in 1938 had still carried the imprint of the Villa Seurat; many of the poems were collected in the Booster period and most of the contributors came from Miller's address book. This time things were different. Durrell had acquired a name, and although he was not widely known - "people who knew about Auden, MacNeice and Dylan Thomas, would not have heard of Durrell" (FrLD.21) - Miller was comparing his success with the early success of Dostoievski (Corr.144f). The Black Book was published with the blessings of Eliot, Desmond Hawkins and Porteus. Some of his poems were printed in books (Proems), in journals and little magazines, while various periodicals asked him to do reviews. Durrell carried more weight than a year before, and this made it easier to collect poems for his second
poetry Delta all on his own.

"Why are you still in London", Dylan Thomas enquired in spring: "has somebody moved Corfu?" (TC.i.4.5). Something had displaced Corfu, in Durrell's mind at least: he was in business and busy as well, too preoccupied to answer Anais Nin's anxious letters, too engaged to apply himself punctually to the manuscript and the proofs of Winter of Artifice. He and his wife were paying for this third number of the Villa Seurat Series, which, Jack Kahane remarked, "I confidently believe will have an important part in the literary history of our time" (Kahane 268f). However, Corfu and Paris and literary history had to wait their turn as a loving and hating Lawrence Durrell explored in London the avenues which his success (and, perhaps, his friendship with the notorious Henry Miller) had opened to him.

These were the months of the emerging poet, days spent reading (as before) in the British Museum, browsing in the manuscript room, drifting in and around Bloomsbury, and down Charing Cross Road with its bookshops (notably Zwemmer's), then for a drink at the Café Royal on Regent Street just in order to confirm again "the opinion I always had of English writers" (Corr.117); a chat with one of the publishers, perhaps a lunch meeting with Eliot or Porteus, an interview with E. Graham Howe, afternoons with old friends or new, Anne Ridler, for example, poet and member of the editorial department of Faber and Faber, a talk with Ronald Bottrall recently returned from Florence, a visit to the Symons' house where Fred Perlès was staying (RT.43), an esoteric evening with that other Villa Seura denizen, David Edgar, perhaps a pub-crawl with Rayner Heppenstall or Dylan Thomas or one of the other younger poets he had recently befriended, an evening at home entertaining with guitar play, wine and - as Tambimuttu recalls - Elizabethan lullabies (Labrys.v.167). Lawrence Durrell's indignant rejection was only the obverse of a profound attraction to London life.

At first, in January, Durrell did not write much, just a poem or two, "good cool poems, like little cold pebbles, still tasting of the sea" (Corr.150). But writing and editing were on his mind and on his tongue: he was a fish in flowing literary waters. He later recalled,
for instance, several discussions on poetic theory with Dylan Thomas (Encounter. ix. 6. 58). On such occasions one also talked about the war and about the future, but chiefly, it seems, about poetry, publishing outlets, publishing schemes and little magazines.

Dylan Thomas once described a visit to him by Keidrych Rhys, editor of Wales. He said that the latter carried on "talking little magazines until the air was reeking full of names and nonsense and the rooms packed to the corners with invisible snobs" (DTSL. 230). With Lawrence Durrell and his little magazine acquaintances things can hardly have been much different. Although Thomas appears to have disliked this kind of bubbling and blustering exchange - living in a remote village in Wales at the foot of Richard Hughes's castle, he had little opportunity to indulge in it anyway - talking little magazines inevitably accompanied (and also preceded) making them. A novice editor like Durrell needed discussions, advice, encouragement and even a bit of snobism and swaggering in order to persevere. Talking little magazines was the way.

Some of the established literary journals like the Nouvelle Revue Française, the now defunct Criterion or Life and Letters Today devoted special columns to reviewing other periodical publications. Here one could find out about the current little magazine situation. However, informal talks among initiates made accessible to the potential editor information that was more intimate and up to the minute. Indeed, once a new review was announced, its editor immediately became a member of a community of mutual interest. One helped another, often generously and undogmatically. Frequently, one editor saw in another an ally rather than a rival, and so there developed something of a system of mutual support and nourishment which not seldomly took little account of aesthetic or ideological differences. Talking little magazines among insiders meant passing on information, exchanging addresses of helpful contributors. It meant sharing one's resources, agreeing to print one another's work, promising to advertise, to review a forthcoming book, to pass on practical experience. Talking little magazines was, in other words, an intricate maze of information, rumour and gossip, comparable perhaps to a sewage system with its manholes surfacing in many different quarters of town, linked together.
by a complicated subterranean flow.

On the whole this system was very elastic, and occasionally the latter day chronicler can only rub his eyes in wonder at the unlikely places in which writers (and especially poets) chose to leave their work. In some instances, such as Karel Capek's or Mulk Raj Anand's contribution to the Villa Seurat magazine, the author will have been ignorant of the character of the periodical he was going to appear in. He may well have later regretted involvement. Mostly, however, a contributor will have had some idea as to where he wanted to appear, and where he was going to be published. If this is true, then more has to be said than hitherto in defence of a literary decade which is often abused as being corralled within political orthodoxies. At least as far as the late 1930s were concerned, variety characterised the scene.

It is occasionally difficult to distinguish between genuine editorial flexibility and the forced solidarity of the literary have-nots. As we have seen, editorial generosity was a hallmark of the Criterion's T.S.Eliot: no matter that many of his younger contributors held views different from his own, no matter that they sometimes even attacked him in public. Roger Roughton, for instance, propagated surrealism in his Contemporary Poetry and Prose and Soviet communism in The Daily Worker, but Eliot published him nevertheless. The Criterion's dispassionate support for young writers served as an example for some editors. But Eliot was also criticised, as we have seen, and that ostensible purist from the Right, Potocki of Montalk, fumed that "Left-wing literary slime" was being encouraged in the Criterion. And yet, funnily enough, his own Right Review was a far more revealing example of the pliancy of this little magazine system, precisely because of its extremism: "The reason why the Right is so weak ideologically — which is almost as much as to say spiritually — is because it is such a very Left Wing Right Wing"(RR.i.np.). This advocacy of a more rigorous right-wing policy, one would assume, ought to have precluded contributions from a different sector of the political spectrum. However, in his first editorial, the violently anti-communist editor proclaimed: "... if any young Poet is suffering from Communism, this will not deter us from printing his poems if they are good"(RR.i.np.). Almost as improbable as this offer was the chance
that a left-wing writer would actually want to be printed in a review which asked of the poets of New Verse and Twentieth Century Verse: "after having plotted against the human mind on behalf of the kangaroos, will these 'poets' have the effrontery to complain if they meet the fate of Lorca?" (RR.vi.np.). Or so one would have supposed. But, surprisingly, one finds in the pages of the Right Review work by several writers who also published in magazines that were either expressly communist or left-wing in tendency...

How these poets came to appear in Potocki's sheet is difficult to say. There were those, friends perhaps, who somehow admired the man, the pungent satirist, the rugged and lone fighter. Perhaps they agreed with Hugh Gordon Porteus who once said:

Count Potocki, with all his eccentricities, merits a hearing and perhaps a following. At any rate he could claim, probably, to stand alone in English journalism for all that is uncompromisingly Right, as distinct from what is merely anti-Left. (Criterion.xvii.66.196)

Some of these poets may have experienced a change of heart - like Derek Savage, who converted to Christianity in 1937 after a period of violent atheism. Some like Lawrence Durrell may have wanted to support him in his shouting down "the prodigious squeaking and chirping that goes up from the leftist barnyards" (RR.viii.np.). Perhaps they were just indifferent to the hysterically reactionary comments of Potocki which surrounded their poems, and, being young, happy to be printed at all.

There appeared in the Right Review the poet A.J.M. Smith, a teacher at Michigan State University. Smith had published not only in the two above-mentioned "kangaroo" reviews, but also in Contemporary Poetry and Prose, the semi-official organ of the surrealists which Potocki so despised. And although he wrote to Potocki: "I am not with you in politics - mainly because I don't like the people who are", he did add: "but in philosophy and faith - Yes!". He considered the Right Review "one of the most living things in England" (PMSC.back cover). J.F. Hendry, nascent theoretician of the Apocalyptic movement, was another contributor to Potocki's journal. In 1936 he had contributed to the communist Left Review. He had also appeared in Hugh MacDiar-
mid's socialist *The Voice of Scotland*. To this journal, the "Organ of Scottish Worker's Republicanism"(Seven.vi.np.) another frequent guest of Potocki's anti-semitic, monarchistic review contributed: Keidrych Rhys, above-mentioned editor of *Wales*. Rhys also published in Julian Symons' *Twentieth Century Verse*. Derek Savage, the "red" turned "reactionary" turned pacifist, who succeeded Henry Miller as European editor of the Woodstock *Phoenix*, had his *Don Quixote* published by Potocki's press in 1939 (1). He also appeared in Julian Symons's poetry review after his conversion to Christianity.

Potocki's journal, a lively outpost at the extreme edge of the little magazine world, clearly still belonged to that world, was part of its frame of reference, accessible in spite of being ignored almost unanimously by published critical opinion. The area on the map which he inhabited was sparsely populated, the *British Union Quarterly* and the *Examiner* scarcely within hailing distance. Still, his idiosyncratic posturings did arouse interest in people who were strangers to these regions or even its enemies. Porteus, as we have said, once remarked that he seemed to be the only person willing to comment on Potocki's hand-printed sheet, and he added: "Considering how widely the *Right Review* is read, sub rosa, by the Left, somebody else might review it from another angle" (Criterion.xvii.66.170). And so, albeit in a furtive manner, Potocki's magazine took part in that little review commerce, which was plainly wide-hearted enough to forgive all sorts of incongruities. Bizarre situations sometimes resulted.

Englishmen were printed in hysterically anti-English 'Celtic' reviews, aesthetes in communist sheets, socially engaged writers in screamingly irresponsible productions. We have pointed out some instances above. Aside from the wholesale invasion by the Villa Seurat renegades of the dignified *T'ien Hsia Monthly* and of the serious *Purpose*, whose editorials bore the title "In the Human Interest", one of the more amusing instances of such tonal incongruency was that the Spring 1940 number of *Seven* which for the first time issued an editorial statement taking a moderately leftish political stand, contained among other contributions "Sed Risus Cum Tiger Manebat" by Count Potocki of Montalk(Seven.viii.32).
A writer-editor like Potocki was nevertheless clearly on the perimeter, and although his shrill voice carried far, his monthly shared the lot of many other "loony and eccentric small magazines" (NV.i.2.ns.49) that made up the fluttering fringe of the journalistic world: it remained without real echo, without weight. Things were very different closer to the heartland, nearer to that more temperate zone which was inhabited by more people sharing more in common. It was here that the pace of exchange and mutual stimulus was the highest. It was also here that, once introduced and accepted, an idea or mode or name or style could hope to gather momentum, influence and adherents - and especially in times of upheaval, especially when an older dominating current was felt to be subsiding, when outlived journals and reviews receded quietly into the background or were in the process of disappearing altogether.

Early 1939 was such a time, as we have seen, a period of endings, of rearrangement and transition. For some it was a time of beginnings. As the Criterion and New Verse and Twentieth Century Verse ceased, the small magazine world witnessed new names moving into the headlines. New possibilities were opening up. The thirties were closing down, but the forties were coming on strong. Here was a chance for a younger generation and for outsiders. When Durrell arrived in London he must have quickly understood the opportunity, perceived that the wind was no longer blowing in his face, that the moment was just right to launch another "strong poetry number". It was time to demonstrate, and place beside the Black Book success his qualities as a poet, and this issue, which was going to be much along the editorial lines of its 1938 predecessor, was now in accord with the searching and opening and eclectic spirit of the times. It was also in line with two other little magazines pressing strongly into the foreground, with Nicholas Moore's Seven and Poetry London of Tambimuttu.

There were one or two other publications of a similar kind. Ronald Duncan's Townsman, for instance, had started, like the Booster, as an outsider, taking from the outset in January 1938 a consciously aesthetic and non-political stand. The editor was well aware of the charges that it was foolish to launch in such political times a
magazine dedicated wholly to art. Durrell may have felt a certain attraction to this sheet which insisted in its first editorial:

The INDIVIDUAL is in so far as his experiences are personal. Ready-made literary standards, mass-produced moral values and best-selling political parties imply and make for a static, fixed, dead automaton. (Townsman.i.1.1)

The individual, said Duncan, was faced by "the Left Right Book clubs, surrealist cliques and Marx and Spencers, slide-rule naivété" and so on, and, at the time he was writing, it seemed to him that there was little chance of changing things (ibid.). Still, the Townsman insisted that political events were "relatively unimportant to permanent mental attitude", that they "can't alter permanent dimensions of individuals", and it was these 'dimensions' which counted. Like Durrell, Duncan said: "the artist's business should always be the same, with the permanent"(ibid.i.2.1). Townsman was, in short, a review in a specifically modernist tradition, a fact which is underlined by its contributors. Eliot and Cummings and Ronald Bottrall, paintings by Hilaire Hiler and drawings by Gaudier-Brezka were printed here, work by Parker Tyler, and especially by Ezra Pound. Pound was the Townsman's patron poet, his poems and pronunciamenti (including the score of a 'Villon' opera) appeared in every one of the first issues. What seems to have weakened the review's thrust was that the names it presented, which also included Saroyan, were not all that new, except perhaps Ronald Duncan. Duncan's verse dramas, however, tended to occupy an immodestly large amount of space. There might have existed some links between Delta and the Townsman, perhaps via Eliot or Bottrall or Nicholas Moore. Nevertheless, as far as co-operation with other little magazines was concerned, Durrell's attention was concentrated on Poetry London and Seven. Indeed, the one-time editor of the Millerian Booster slipped with an astonishing ease into the role of collaborator with Tambimuttu and Nicholas Moore. In fact, he worked together with them so intensely that the results of their individual labours seem at times virtually indistinguishable...
When, in that fluent system of information, rumour and opinion which characterised the little magazine sphere, a number of young editors shared aims and attitudes in the way that Tambimutu, Durrell and Nicholas Moore did, their combined impact on the literary scene could be expected to be not negligible, especially if the structure supporting the same was as brittle as it was in 1939. How did these editors co-operate? What were the editorial concepts behind their little magazine work? These two questions which will now be discussed are closely connected, the answer to the first leading to that of the second.

Some variants of mutual aid have been mentioned above. Practical information and experience were exchanged. The summer 1939 number of *Seven*, for instance, was printed in Belgium - like the last issues of *Delta*. The idea was presumably to avoid the unofficial and internal censorship practiced by most British printing firms and to take one's chances with the Customs officials(2). Another example of cooperation: the reviews generously advertised each other, *Delta* and the productions of the Obelisk Press were announced in no less than five issues of *Seven*. And, in the Villa Seurat review, advertisements for *Seven* were almost all that remained of the great bouquet of commercial ads from the *Booster* days. Also, questions of lay-out may have been debated: the final *Delta* resembled more closely than its predecessors Nicholas Moore's magazine. More important, however, *Seven* and *Delta* were linked together in material terms. The title page of Durrell's sheet bore the following surprise: "A magazine in French and English published by JOHN GOODLAND". The name, printed in bold type, belonged to a young man, whom Dylan Thomas found an unsympathetic sap, with blue eyes like "pools of piss - aristocratic piss"(DTSL.223). Goodland, whose father was a wealthy businessman, was the publisher of *Seven*. According to Nicholas Moore, he was chiefly interested in collecting manuscripts from famous poets, and although he paid the printing costs, he appears to have had little - or at least diminishing(3) - influence on *Seven*'s content. As Nicholas Moore put it: "The literary side of it was largely left to me"(Letter 23rd Aug.1982). As far as *Delta* was concerned, the arrangement with Goodland was probably not very different.
Cooperation extended also, and perhaps crucially, to contributions and contributors. They printed each other's work and shared each other's contributors. Delta issued altogether seven poems by Nicholas Moore, and Seven printed even more work by Lawrence Durrell, including an excerpt from The Black Book, a translation of a Greek poem, as well as the prose pieces Zero and Asylum in the Snow. Tambimuttu published poetry and criticism by Durrell and he boosted Moore, who, along with Kathleen Raine and David Gascoyne, became "the chief new poets he supported" (Letter 23rd Aug. 1982). The Easter Delta contained Tambimuttu's "Ceylonese Love Song" no. vii, while the first four stanzas of the poem appeared almost at the same time in Poetry London in April.

They publicised each other as well, not always uncritically though - as Philip O'Connor's review of The Black Book in Seven shows. Contributors were passed on, especially influential writers such as Kay Boyle, who, as Moore recalled, "was very helpful to me in those days in sending me worthwhile contributions from her friends and acquaintances" (4). Nicholas Moore also remarked that he drew "heavily on the Villa Seurat people and their friends" (5). Several of the new poets in Durrell's Easter number came from Moore's circle of friends. The exchange was beneficial to all concerned. Of the eighteen poets of the final Delta, for instance, only four never appeared in Seven (6).

A number of the contributors to Seven were associated with Durrell and the Villa Seurat circle without ever appearing in its house organ. The Booster never printed the Potocki article which Durrell had collected in 1937 (Corr. 117), but Moore's review, as we have seen, did open its pages to the Polish count in 1940. Another example: Herbert Read, who was an old admirer of Henry Miller, reviewed in Autumn 1939 The Map of Love for Seven. Also, another correspondent of Miller, James Laughlin IV, editor of New Directions in Prose and Poetry, contributed to Moore's review a short story about the Spanish Civil War. He never appeared in the Booster or Delta. Hugh Gordon Porteus, whom Durrell had wanted to ask for a piece "but forgot", conducted his "Observations of X", a critical review of Grigson and Symons, in the summer Seven of 1939 (Corr. 119).
In short, the various circles, the area of whose overlappings made much of the Booster/Delta, were closely related to, at times even identical with, those giving shape and content to Seven, and, to a somewhat lesser degree, to Poetry London. With the possible exception of Durrell's friend John Gawsworth, whose poems Moore found "very bad" (PL.i.2.np.), most of the poets would appear as easily in the one review as in the other, a fact which might also help explain the demise of Delta after the second poetry number. There existed such a close affiliation between these three reviews that those areas where they did not overlap entirely are worth pointing out.

In the first place, Nicholas Moore's correspondence with Kay Boyle had slightly different consequences than her short appearance in the first poetry Delta. Contributing from Megève, Haute Savoie, the one-time editor of Short Stories 1934 induced, as mentioned above, several other poets to send material to Seven. These included her husband Laurence Vail, Emanuel Carnevali, Wallace Stevens, as well as Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler. The latter two, former editors of the well-known Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms (which had closed down in 1931), are worth mentioning especially. Ford, the editor of another expatriate little magazine of the 1930s, the Majorca Caravel, was later to found and edit with Parker Tyler View, an important New York magazine that focussed on surrealist art. He often collaborated with Tyler. An experimental novel which they had written together, The Young and Evil, was published by Kahane's Obelisk Press in 1933. The book, set in New York's homosexual underground, had been praised by Gertrude Stein and Djuna Barnes. It was promptly banned and burnt in the United States and England. Strangely, while Delta was orientating itself increasingly towards England and the London literary scene, Seven invited contributions from beyond the Atlantic. Tyler was a frequent guest. He edited at least one issue of a magazine called Poetry World, which presented among others, Henry Treece, Dorian Cooke and Nicholas Moore (Seven.vi.np.). But although neither Tyler nor Ford nor any of Kay Boyle's acquaintances appeared in Delta, it may not be entirely coincidental that both Durrell and Miller later contributed repeatedly to View, and that July-August 1939 numbers of Poetry World re-printed "The Sonnet of Hamlet", that fourteen stanza sequence which was the pride of Durrell's second poetry Delta (7).
Another direction that was pursued more intensely by **Seven** than by **Delta** was the rich regional tendency which branched out to the poets and editors of Scottish and Welsh nationalism. Some of these have been referred to above: Wales was "a nationalist quarterly published at a shilling from Penybont Farm, Llangadoch, Carmathenshire" (LLT.xvii.10.10). Its editor Keidrych Rhys appeared in **Seven**, as did the famous MacDiarmid. The latter opened the doors of his Gaelic quarterly, **The Voice of Scotland**, to Nicholas Moore and his co-editors G.S.Fraser, a Scotchman, and Dorian Cooke from Cornwall. Stephen Spender once said: "Regionalism counts as a literary movement and not just as politics masquerading as poetry or propaganda for advertising certain cliques, but because it contributes to the creation of a virile, tough poetic language"(SSPoetry.59). Dylan Thomas did write to his fellow Welshman Henry Treece that he never really understood all that "racial talk" about the Welshness of his poetry. And he said that his friend Keidrych Rhys "always has a lot to say about it". Rhys, Thomas remarked, was "an ardent nationalist, and a believer in all the stuff about racial inspiration etc", and: "he's the best sort of crank"(DTSL.199). Still, **Wales** was considered an excellent little magazine in its day, an important vehicle in the upsurge of poetic regionalism. The "Celtic Front" - thus the title of an issue of **The Voice of Scotland** - included among others two who also appeared in **Seven**: Paul Potts (a Canadian, curiously) and Philip O'Connor, "revolutionary poets" as MacDiarmid called them in an advertisement for his Penny Broadsheets, which had such speaking titles as "A Poet to His People" and "Speaking for Scotland" and "Communist Poetry"(8). **Delta** had no immediate part in this development, especially in its more political aspects; still, Durrell, who always prided himself on his Irish origins, probably felt more sympathetic towards the colourful and savage irrationality of these Celtic revivalists than to the poets of the Auden generation.

A third direction which Lawrence Durrell did not attach himself to was closely connected with the Celtic path. The critic Geoffrey Thurley has said that the Apocalyptic poets, led by Henry Treece and J.F.Hendry, followed their idol Dylan Thomas and "took a nose dive into Celtic mysticism to rid themselves of the hard sensible vision of
the 'thirties' (Thurley 137). The Apocalyptic group, which has been mentioned in our chapter on the first poetry Delta, was to be regarded in future years as the "only considerable 'movement' of the forties" (Collins 130). In 1942 Orwell called it "the most recent movement in English poetry, indeed the only new movement that can be said to have appeared since the war" (GOLW.81). Although it was later much disparaged for inviting a facile obscurity into the house of poetry, as well as a "sloppy Bohemian neo-romanticism" (MWW.321), in 1939 the nascent Apocalyptic poets were a factor to be reckoned with.

There were very many connections with Nicholas Moore's Seven. Indeed, Moore himself was a leading Apocalyptic poet for a time. Every one of the issues of Seven featured work by the writers associated with the Apocalypse: Tom Scott, Philip O'Connor, Gervase Stewart, Vernon Watkins, Henry Treece, J.F. Hendry and others, who all belonged, as Spender said, to a new generation of writers moving "away from a conscious and intellectual style of writing towards the involuntary, the mysterious, the word-intoxicated, the romantic and the Celtic" (SSPoetry.44). Indeed, most of them were from Scotland, Wales or Cornwall. But just as Seven never became a 'Celtic Front' review, it did not turn into a mouthpiece of the New Apocalypse either. In January 1939 Thomas was in a slight confusion when he wrote to Treece: "Apocalypse is a different affair, isn't it? I mean surely Seven hasn't taken that as a new name?" (DTSL.222). It had not. Seven remained open to many other writers who were never close to the Apocalypse, such as Frederic Prokosch, Potocki of Montalk, or the Villa Seurat. However, the overlappings were very obvious. Not only Moore but his co-editors Fraser and Dorian Cooke were deeply involved in the new movement, as was John Goodland, the publisher, as we have said, of Durrell's second poetry Delta. A closer look at this literary group, several of whom appeared in Delta as well, seems called for...
Because its major anthologies, *The New Apocalypse* (1939), *The White Horseman* (1941) and *The Crown and the Sickle* (1944), appeared in the war years, the Apocalyptic movement tends to be regarded as a war phenomenon. But Henry Treece, J.F.Hendry and G.S.Fraser had in fact worked out a platform as early as December 1938, sketching out briefly those ideas that were to be expanded in the later collections. No more than three years later these ideas, previously an attitude limited to a handful of small coteries (such as the Villa Seurat), had spread so far that Francis Scarfe could say that no poet "fully alive to the conditions of our time would disagree with these points" (FSAA.155). Most young poets, as John Atkins of the Tribune said in 1942, "definitely label themselves romantic" and many belonged to the Apocalyptic School (GOLW.83). By the early 1940s, then, this movement had quite an impressive following; aside from those poets mentioned above its anthologies included work by Norman McCaig, Terence White, Fred Marnau, Alex Comfort, Peter Wells, Robert Herring, and Dylan Thomas. Apocalypticism was a valid continuation, as Scarfe said, of impulses reaching from Lawrence and Yeats and Herbert Read to the surrealists. Most important of all for the movement was the influence of Dylan Thomas, who according to Francis Scarfe was "practically its god"(FSAA.xiv). But what precisely were the school's articles of faith? In 1938 Fraser, Hendry and Treece had proclaimed these points:

1. That Man was in need of greater freedom, economic no less than aesthetic, from machines and mechanistic thinking.
2. That no existent political system, Left or Right, no artistic ideology, Surrealism or the political school of Auden, was able to provide this freedom.
3. That the Machine Age had exerted too strong an influence on art, and had prevented the individual development of Man.
4. That Myth, as a personal means of reintegrating the personality, had been neglected and despised. (FSAA.155)

Fraser' review of *The New Apocalypse* anthology for Moore's *Seven* was one of the first to attempt to explain in detail the aims of the movement. It was significantly entitled "Towards Completeness" (Seven.viii.27ff). Here, as in the group's other programmatic notes,
the old romantic notion of "completeness" and "wholeness" played a central role. The assumption was that some new attitude, a new outlook, was needed in order to do justice to man "as a complete living organism" (ibid.27). In "Considerations on Revolt" Henry Treece proclaimed: "Apocalypse means: apprehending the multiplicity of both Inner and Outer worlds, anarchic, prophetic, whole and balanced ..." (HISA.21). And elsewhere still, he said that Apocalyptic writing "will teach man to aspire towards wholeness"(HISA.82). As the original manifesto had said, there was, in the opinion of the Apocalyptics, no political or aesthetic system existent which allowed this form of comprehensive apprehension.

Against the universal disintegration, caused by what J.F.Hendry tended to call the "machine-world", the Apocalyptics proposed to hold the 'myth', which was defined as "the living and organic expression of human need"(WH.9). The myth, said Hendry, was "to-day of extreme importance ... for the re-integration of the personality" (NA.9). It was necessary, said Hendry, to stress the subjective and prophetic, the symbolical and anarchical, and to reject those modes of thought, scientific rationalism and "mechanistic-materialism"(NA.12), which dissected experience and implied a "surrender to the machine" (NA.13). The machine metaphor figured prominently in Apocalyptic programmatic writings, indeed, Hendry claimed that many of the better English poets and writers had 'surrendered to the machine'. Rather brutally, he denounced Eliot and Auden and Allott and Lewis as "machine-men" (NA.12f). Though Fraser felt that one ought not call writers of the stature of Eliot and Auden and Lewis "machine men", he did agree with the concept behind the judgement: the notion that "they were victims (in various degrees) of too rigid and mechanical false-objective systems of thought" (Seven.viii.30).

The Apocalyptics defined themselves mainly against the thirties generation and against surrealism and they dissociated themselves from both. William Tindall put this rather bluntly: "Auden was too external and social. The surrealists were too mad"(Tindall 243). The differences, however, with the thirties generation were of a more categorical kind than those with Breton's set: "The Auden group were in what...one may call a classical tradition, and the Apocalyptics are..."
what...one may call romantics", like the surrealists (WH.25). In "Apocalypse in Poetry" of 1942, Fraser pointed out what distinguished the more public poetry of the Auden generation and the more private work of the Apocalyptics:

Auden and his group are interested in making things generally accessible and expressing and translating their complicated and confusing experiences into conversational, or philosophical, or rhetorical language; the Apocalyptics are more interested in grasping the complication and the confusion of their private experiences, and expressing that as adequately as possible for themselves. (WH.27)

As far as the surrealists were concerned, the Apocalyptics felt themselves to be a step beyond. Surrealism's importance, however, was acknowledged. Though verbal automatism was rejected and a more consciously formative and critical attitude was adopted towards the material supplied by the associative process; though surrealism's essentially materialist foundations were questioned to such a degree that Francis Scarfe could say: "Apocalypse is, then, a de-mechanizing, or a de-materializing, of Surrealism"(FSAA.158), the Apocalyptics conceded that they were of surrealist descent. In Spring 1940 Fraser pointed out that Apocalypticism should be considered a "dialectical development of Surrealism"(Seven.viii.27). It insists, he said, "on the reality of the conscious mind, as an independent formative principle"(ibid.). This introductory passage was taken over almost verbatim in his White Horseman contribution. It was important enough for Treece later to use it in one of his own illustrations of Apocalyptic aims (HISA.175):

The New Apocalypse, in a sense, derives from Surrealism, and one might call it a dialectical development of it: the next stage forward. It embodies what is positive in Surrealism, 'the effort', in Herbert Read's phrase, 'to realize some of the dimensions and characteristics of man's submerged being'. It denies what is negative - Surrealism's own denial of man's right to exercise conscious control, either of his political and social destinies, or of the material offered to him, as an artist, by his subconscious mind. It recognizes, that is, that the intellect and its activity in willed action is part of the living completeness of man, just as the formal element is part of the living completeness of art. (WH.3)
It must be pointed out that the dissociation both from the Auden generation and from surrealism was understood as part of "a drive for individual expression and integrity" (FSAA.158f), for individual freedom. The ideas of "completeness" and freedom of expression were closely linked. Fraser said that the New Apocalypse asked "for freedom for man, as a complete living organism" (Seven.viii.27), and as the peroration to his "Towards Completeness" shows, in late 1939, 'freedom' meant for these poets first and foremost the relegation of the wider and optimistic socio-political nexus that had been prevalent for so long. It meant a moving into the foreground of the personal, the intimate, and the individual:

We've been hunting ourselves, too long, unnecessarily, out of a stupid loyalty; loyalty not to ourselves or our friends, not to permissible ideals like happiness, knowledge, or the good life, but to false-objective systems, one-sided nationalisations. We have created rigid and mechanical moulds of ideas - Fascism (and Communism, too, I think) - which constrained us to deny half of our perceptions, half our impulses. And the idea is now that we should take the risk of saying what we see and expressing what we feel - that we should be ourselves, with all our obvious weaknesses, vices, and limitations.... Let us be honest enough to admit, too, that for most of the sufferings, most of the mean, piddling humiliations of man's daily life, we have no adequate, no rational remedy; but we can give these sufferings the dignity and beauty of a myth. (Seven.viii.31)

Fraser reviewed The New Apocalypse in the winter months of 1939. By this time, however, the widespread retrenching from public to personalist positions was already well under way. Still, the Apocalyptic leaders had no qualms about advertising themselves as original, finding their first anthology "comparable in importance with 'NEW SIGNATURES' and 'NEW COUNTRY'", saying that the Apocalypse "ultimately takes a stand which may well be the beginning of a New Humanism" (Seven.vii.31). Indeed, for a time, hopes were set upon the movement and even an outsider like Francis Scarfe, whose Auden and After was subtitled "The Liberation of Poetry 1930-1941", saw the Apocalyptic poets as continuing and systematising "the great movement of liberation" which the surrealists and Dylan Thomas and George Barker had begun before them (FSAA.155). He said the collective action of these poets was not only significant, "it is in their hands that the destiny of our poetry might be shaped after the war" (FSAA.156). And G.S. Fraser prophesied in The White Horseman, that "if the poetry of the Auden
generation had a certain immediate political and social value, the poetry of the Apocalypse is likely to have a certain permanent clinical value for the human race" (WH.29). But things turned out different in the end...

In the pursuit of individual 'freedom', the New Apocalypse could not be burdened by anything "like a rigidly unified attitude", and so G.S. Fraser noted in his early review: "The writers don't make out a case for themselves, or anything" (Seven.viii.28). He praised the philosophy of Hendry as a "flexible philosophy; a philosophy which hardly dictates to anyone how to write or feel" (ibid.). Hendry himself said about the Apocalyptic poets that "they advocate nothing at all" (NA.10). 'Flexibility' was a virtue of Apocalyptic philosophy, a reason why poets as diverse as Dylan Thomas and Nicholas Moore could meet under its banner – but it was also a cause for its remarkable lack of direction and drive. Whereas diversity, flexibility and openness seemed in 1939 a most adequate and even necessary stance for a probing little magazine, their worth as essential qualities of a movement (this implying dynamism, motion, direction and purpose) is a different matter altogether. A later critic said: "In spite of the expression of the movement's aims by its leaders it was not easy to discern a distinctive coherent purpose" (Collins 130), and so, its members pulling in various directions at the same time, not making out a case for themselves or anything, the movement had difficulties getting under way...

The Apocalypse gave little impetus and no new direction. As a reader of this thesis must have noticed, its concepts were in fact the easily accessible instruments in the arsenal of that wider neo-romantic trend which had set in some years before and was carried by poets like Thomas, Gascoyne and Barker. There was hardly a point in their programme which had not been enunciated before; the outbursts against surrealist automatism were entirely out of time, and not only because the summer of English literary surrealism had long before passed away. To insist on "the reality of the conscious mind, as an independent formative principle" (Seven.viii.27) in the way the Apocalytics did was like running against open doors. The same applied to the criticism of the Auden school, which had abdicated well before the first anthology
appeared in the winter of 1939. The general Apocalyptic drift was also fairly close to the outlook of the Villa Seurat. Indeed when in The White Horseman Fraser spoke of the movement's "large accepting attitude to life" and insisted that the group's philosophy was a wide and flexible one, echoes of Miller and Durrell were unmistakable. All the philosophy said, remarked Fraser, was:

'Be honest, allow for complexity, and be yourself; you matter more than wars and politics, more than creeds, system, and ideas: these things, so far as they are anything, are just your sprawlings and gropings, where you are still blind to your real needs'.(WH.6)

In later years, Henry Treece, describing the romantic revival, said that it had taken "various routes in making itself vocal", and he named in one breath "the Paris Movement (though it never gave itself such a name) of Perlès, Henry Miller and Anaïs Nin" and his own Apocalyptic school(HISA.175). What Treece, knowingly, it would seem, forgot to point out, was that the 'Paris Movement' had begun making itself vocal five years or more before the first Apocalyptic anthology ever appeared - and it did not help that he antedated the Apocalyptic beginnings to "two or three years before Munich"(!)(ibid.).

The Apocalyptic theorists elected as "immediate forebears" Kafka, Epstein, Picasso, Yeats and Dylan Thomas, and proclaimed: "This movement has now a great number of supporters among other writers and artists in Europe and America"(Seven.vi.34) - but the important and emerging English neo-romantics remained aloof, while even the better poets of the Apocalypse steadily went "their own way" and had done so even before the movement's inception(9). Stephen Spender was probably exaggerating only slightly, when he said that of the Apocalyptic poets only Treece and Hendry really had "any aims in common"(SSPoetry.58).

Fraser concluded his 1939 review by noting that The New Apocalypse was important, not so much for its poetry, which even he found mediocre, but "because it takes a stand"(Seven.viii.30). As it happened only one aspect of his assessment held true in the end: the Apocalypse 'dwindled into embarrassment and finally into oblivion because the 'stand' it took was felt to be unoriginal and because the work it produced was generally considered not very impressive (MWW.324). Even the well-wish-
ing Francis Scarfe said that "much of the Apocalyptic work is rather disappointing"\(\text{FSAA.159}\).

Revealingly, Dylan Thomas, the movement's hero, was suspicious of the Apocalypse from the start. Henry Treece had sent to him a manifesto, with a request for support, but while promising a contribution (for cash) and while agreeing with much of the programme, Thomas flatly refused to sign the paper. He found parts "manifestly absurd" and others "rather like flogging a dead force"\(\text{DTSL.219}\). That was on New Year's eve 1938, about the time Thomas first met Henry Miller. Thomas was wary enough not to be lured even by Treece's "promise of Apocalyptic 'publicity'" either \(\text{ibid.220}\). Though "The Burning Baby" was re-issued in the first anthology, he was sceptical about the poignancy of a movement whose aims were not clear to him - "Is the anthology Apocalyptic? - whatever that means?"\(\text{DTSL.226}\) - and whose supporters he did not rate highly either. To John Goodland, who was also involved in the nascent New Apocalypse, Thomas wrote on December 22nd 1938:

> It isn't for me to criticize, not having read the manifesto nor knowing what you mean by apocalyptic writing; but many of your suggested contributors are, I am certain, by any definition, among the least apocalyptic writers alive; and that says something. (Of course, if you announce well beforehand a symposium of apocalyptic writing, you'll have almost every hack poet, hitherto content with imitations of the queenly social verse, with forced echoes of a schoolboy enthusiasm for jokes and bums, with stupidity about sanity, whipping himself into a false delirium, snatching - in case the apocalyptic game flourishes - at the chance of a frenetic reputation, downing Auden on a pylon for Blake on a bough.). (11)

Thugh the Apocalyptics "used the name and work of Thomas as sponsor and touchstone of their own movement"\(\text{DSDT.161}\), though he sold them some work of his, Thomas basically refused to take part. Others, however, younger poets like Dorian Cooke and G.S.Fraser and Nicholas Moore subscribed. They were, as Fraser recalled, "too naive, then, to realize the disadvantages of being given a label"\(\text{MWW.324}\) and of being put in an anthology with a name that "lent itself all too easily to jokes about epileptic, apoplectic, elliptical and apocryphal writing"\(\text{10}\). Henry Treece was convinced that it belonged to those literary phenomena "whose existence seems to be of something more than
temporary importance to Twentieth Century Romanticism" (HISA.175), but what the New Apocalypse possessed in the way of swaggering self-importance, it lacked in direction, force, originality and even group coherence. Fraser noted that he only "met Treece long after the party was over, and never met Hendry" (MWW.324). It is small wonder that he later wrote the Apocalypse existed "more as a concept than as a reality" (MWW.324). In a way he had not meant, his point that Apocalypticism was a dialectical development from Breton's storming and exacting and successful surrealist orthodoxy did prove correct after all...

Though he himself was to contribute to the Apocalypticists' embarrassing self-inflation in The White Horseman, Fraser had earlier criticised the pretension to be found in some of Hendry's programmatic utterances: "One shouldn't claim that one's own little group is the only group that is alive and significant; that is damned Scotch intolerance and sectarianism" (Seven.viii.30). Quite apart from anything else it was this sort of posing coupled with unconvincing literary performance (12) that may well have put off writers like Lawrence Durrell, poets who were not at all deaf to some of the movement's ideas, poets who may have sympathised or even contributed (Dylan Thomas) but who did not wish to be labelled or grouped in this obtrusive manner...

"Towards Completeness" was the title of the young G.S.Fraser's review, and paradoxically the movement's non-critical "flexible philosophy", which welcomed almost every writer and told no one what to do and made a principle of it, actually pushed the Apocalyptic chiefs towards pretentiousness and minor cases of megalomania. An amusing example of this can be found in a notice which Hendry and Treece published in the Autumn 1939 issue of Seven. Apocalypticism was there described as "a European movement or tendency" which also had a counterpart in the United States. "The American section is now organized as The Workshop", they pointed out, adding that there were some differences between the two. The European section could not support their American colleagues' acceptance of the surrealists, the "followers of Jolas", and the anti-mechanist Phoenix group. Over half the announcement was in fact devoted to describing the Apocalyptic attitude to the
"machine" and "organic action as true living"; casually, almost in passing, Treece and Hendry pointed out that they "hereby disclaim all responsibility for the publication of certain names in the Workshop Declaration, Seven No.5" (Seven.vi.34). With this, the "British Directors of Workshop" signed off.

The Workshop Declaration referred to was a document which occupied a whole page in the Summer 1939 issue of Seven. Its seven point transitionesque programme was introduced by a stilted call for artistic unity: "No systematic effort for unity of the arts and movements advancing new frontiers of creative expression has been made up to now, and desirous of crystallizing this accomplishment...". The climax of the declaration, however, was a list of some seventy-two "Members of The Workshop who have contributed to the advancement of pushing back the frontiers of creative expression", a list of names that included Arp, Beckett, Breton, de Chirico, Cummings, Dali, Duchamp, Eliot, Eluard, Ernst, Fargue, Jolas, Joyce, Kandinsky, Klee, Magritte, Miro, Oppenheim, Henry Moore, Picabia, Picasso, Pound, Man Ray, Read, Schwitters, Saroyan, Wallace Stevens, Tanguy, Tzara and many others. The Villa Seurat writers, Miller, Durrell, Perlès and Anais Nin, were not left out, nor Kay Boyle, David Gascoyne or Dylan Thomas - who had just written to Treece: "I wouldn't sign any manifesto unless I had written every word of it" (DTSL.219). The DIRECTOR (in upper case and bold type) of this ambitious undertaking was one RAE BEAMISH from Rochester, N.Y., hitherto distinguished by a somewhat more modest accomplishment: he had edited Chameleon (a 'native quarterly' of poetry and prose), one issue of which had appeared in September 1936 and no more.

If one considers the reaction of the Apocalyptic chiefs to this masterpiece of fraudulent pretense, one might take into account youthful enthusiasm (though both Henrdry and Treece were in their late twenties), as well as the usual measure of clamouring, name-dropping, drum-beating exhibitionism, and panache which accompanied the birth of a literary movement. Even so, it is difficult to understand why they limited their disclaimer to criticising the printing of "certain names" (sic!). How they could still express rapport and call themselves "British Directors of Workshop" (13) without feeling unbearably silly,
is quite beyond comprehension. Miller's earlier jeers at another clique of English artists who called themselves Unit One come to mind, a group which, in his view, was "not composed of modern artists nor of individuals, but of rank imitators, men without originality who have banded together in self-defence" (CosE.181).

Cyril Connolly once remarked about little magazine publishing: "Mutual respect, and, if possible, affection, are essential to editor and backer as everyone else concerned will try to separate them; it is better still if they can share the same purpose" (CCEC.427). To an equal extent at the very least, this would seem to apply to a literary group: mutual esteem between its members (vide the Auden circle), as well as respect for, or belief in, the movement's essential importance and urgency. In this respect, the Apocalyptic group was by all accounts not immoderately blessed. Understandably, criticism from the outside was sharp and merciless. When he compared The White Horseman with Imagist and post-1918 anthologies, Stephen Spender noticed "at once the lack of rhythmic tension, the confused imagery, the over-literary fashions of thought, the uncritical writing which stakes all its ambition on a vague faith in inspiration or on some preconceived if chaotic attitude towards life" (SSPoetry.58). In spite of being almost tailor-made for the post-Auden world, for the dark years to come, the Apocalypse, it seems, commanded no extraordinary sympathy and faith. An ambitious movement which did not create a new literary fashion and did not even move faster than the contemporary current of literary taste, might reflect and influence to a certain extent the climate of art. In the end, however, it was almost bound to be a disappointment. This was certainly the case with the Apocalyptic movement which in the 1950s dwindled into an embarrassment, and then fell to oblivion, forgotten by all but specialist literary historians....

What is important as far as the Booster/Delta adventure was concerned, however, was that the Villa Seurat writers were among those who had anticipated many of the ideas that were to gain a wider following in England in the 1940s via the Apocalyptic School and other neo-romantics. Indeed, if one recalls for example how deeply Miller impressed the Apocalyptic 'God', Dylan Thomas, if one remembers that Nicholas Moore was one of the first to write a praising book about
Miller, it is even possible to say that the Villa Seurat not only anticipated, but directly and indirectly influenced the Apocalyptic programme as well.

"It is not to the 'movements' that I would look for any signs in English poetry today", Stephen Spender wrote after the war, "but to poets and to poems" (SSPoetry.90). His counsel to the reader applied to the end of the 1930s as well. One did not look to schools or movements, not even to budding ones like the New Apocalypse but to individual poets and to poems — and to the eclectic little magazines which still published them (Seven.vii.np.).

Return to Delta.

Poetry London, the semi-Apocalyptic Seven and Delta collaborated closely; their cooperation extended to contributions and contributors. Just as important, however, were the congruencies in editorial policy, and these policies (like those of the later Apocalyptic anthologies) were characterised by flexibility, openness and eclecticism.

It was an editorial outlook which an increasing number of literary journals had begun to adopt by the time the year 1939 had ended. Once the war began "a magazine had to be eclectic to survive" (CCEC.425). In autumn 1939 a broad editorial attitude was felt to be a precondition of survival and the image Connolly conjured up was appropriately that of the Ark: "It was the right moment to gather all the writers who could be preserved into the Ark and only then could the Ark get by the Paper Control — by earning dollars or aiding prestige" (CCEC.425). John Lehmann's left-wing New Writing, for instance, widened and loosened to become New Writing & Daylight in 1940 and later still the popular Penguin New Writing series. Connolly's own Horizon, like the Oxford publication Kingdom Come, did not have to change. It first appeared in the winter of 1939/40. It was conceived in the drôle de guerre autumn of 1939, a war baby, and its first "Comment" made this clear:
the war is separating culture from life and driving it back on itself, the impetus given by Left Wing politics is for the time being exhausted, and however much we should like to have a paper that was revolutionary in opinions or original in technique, it is impossible to do so when there is a certain suspension of judgement and creative activity.(Horizon.i.1.5f)

These remarks were followed by an outline of the flexible editorial view. "The aim of Horizon is to give writers a place to express themselves, and to readers the best writing we can obtain". And then Connolly added the lines: "Our standards are aesthetic, and our politics are in abeyance"(ibid.). This appears to have been the only reasonable and realistic attitude to adopt - apart from being one most fitting for Connolly, who was a born editor, enthusiastic, passionately independent and refreshingly inconsistent (14). The review's immediate success - the first issue quickly ran into a second printing - bolstered the assumption that he had chosen the right course of action(15).

Horizon was also attacked. In good humour Connolly listed some of the more colourful reproaches in his second editorial. He replied with a statement which was so simple and sane that the circumstances which necessitated it were thrown into a sharp and unpleasant relief:

If literature is an art, than a literary magazine should encourage the artists, whether they are Left or Right, known or unknown, old or young, and Horizon therefore makes no more apology for Priestley's admirable essay, or Sir Hugh Walpole's revealing glimpse of Henry James, than it does for Orwell's analysis of Boy's papers or Auden's Elegy on Freud... (Horizon.i.2.71)

The accusations levelled at Horizon ranged from escapism, lack of serious purpose, self-absorption, all the way to going "back to the 'twenties"(ibid.68). These attacks are worth mentioning not because the title of Orwell's earlier New English Weekly review of the Booster, as we have seen, had been "Back to the Twenties" (NEW.xii.3.30f), nor because Connolly did not hesitate to print his old Parisian friends, Fred Perlès and Henry Miller, but rather because another surviving little magazine felt compelled to take issue with Horizon's "insufficient" attitude, proposing in turn the idea of a socialist society. This objecting voice was not that of a diehard
LETTER FROM A SOLDIER
by Goronwy Rees

REFLECTIONS ON WRITING
by Henry Miller

A LOVE STORY
by Elizabeth Bowen

A DESPISED LIBERAL
by F. MacEachran

I LIVE ON MY WITS
by Alfred Perles

POEMS by W. H. Auden and Stephen Spender

LETTER FROM AMERICA by Louis MacNeice

THE WORKS OF B. TRAVEN by A. Calder-Marshall

MONTHLY: ONE SHILLING NET
JULY VOL. 1, No. 7 1940

Edited by Cyril Connolly
survivor from the Popular Front days, but of Nicholas Moore's *Seven*.

Throughout its two-year existence *Seven*’s standards had been nothing if not aesthetic and its politics hitherto very well-concealed. Why suddenly this talk about the "desired society", which Dylan Thomas, whose political views of 1934 were quoted, no longer believed in anyway (HTDT.31)? "*Seven* has never thought it necessary to take up an editorial attitude, being a literary magazine" (Seven.viii.32) - wrote the editor, meaning presumably, a *political* editorial attitude. But still the question is why a review of so manifestly eclectic a character as *Seven*, which promised even in this editorial to "continue to publish the best writing it can get hold of" (ibid.), thus echoing almost verbatim Connolly’s "Comment", wanted to dissociate itself from *Horizon*, a journal with aims seemingly little different from its own. It is difficult to say. Perhaps a certain rivalry was involved, or the sense that Connolly had too blatantly touched upon a taboo. The war, it seems, had also brought about a change in Nicholas Moore who subsequently attacked *Horizon* from a 'revolutionary' standpoint for supporting the war against Hitler instead of helping to destroy the "decadent and dying system of society" (Horizon.ii.12.284). A peculiar reversal of roles had occurred: the liberal leftist Connolly who regretted that no revolutionary and dynamic periodical was possible at the time, was busy editing with success an aesthetic and eclectic review, while the editor of *Seven*, hitherto an example of openness and flexibility, now suddenly expressed dissatisfaction with a less political view of art. As if to underline Connolly’s words that in the war a magazine had to be eclectic to survive, the number of *Seven* which printed the political announcement was also the last ever to appear.

More important than these twining developments was the fact that there did exist differences between *Horizon*’s editorial eclecticism and that of *Seven*, *Delta* or *Poetry London*. The latter three magazines had pursued flexible policies long before the war situation forced a similar outlook onto editors like Lehman and Connolly or the editors of *Kingdom Come*. It was only in its second number that *Horizon* conceded that although the "Marxist attack on the Ivory Tower dwellers" had been beneficial in the beginning, the fire
grew out of hand, and, now that it is burning itself out, we can see that many green young saplings have been damaged, and the desolation is hardly compensated for by the poems of Swingler and Rickwood, or the novels of Upward and Alec Brown. (Horizon.i.2.70)

Durrell and Tambimuttu had proclaimed this view a year before. Their eclecticism was a conscious and ante bellum position that grew directly out of their emphatically individualistic aesthetic.

Connolly later contrasted the 'eclectic' magazine with the 'dynamic' magazine; the latter, he said, resembled "a commando course where picked men are trained to assault the enemy position". Of the former he said: "An eclectic editor feels he has a duty to preserve certain values, to reassess famous writers, disinter others" (CCEC.414). He mentioned as examples the Criterion, The London Mercury, Life and Letters Today and Horizon. Seven, Delta and Poetry London were also eclectic but they fitted neither the category of established journals concerned with preservation and reassessing of famous writers, nor were they 'dynamic' reviews. If Durrell and his friends wanted to preserve anything it was the artist's aesthetic prerogative which, as they thought, had suffered in the socio-political swamp of the bygone years. "A MAGAZINE OF GOOD WRITING" read an advertisement for Seven in the September 1938 issue of Life and Letters Today. This was the objective of Durrell and his editor friends: to publish "GOOD WRITING".

When the Villa Seurat review first appeared on the scene, followed by Seven some months later, eclectic little magazines were very uncommon. By the time Horizon got under way this had changed. Though Connolly was still attacked for being "open to the most diverse points of view" (Horizon.i.1.5f), the eclectic magazine was coming on strongly. In the time inbetween, in the months following the Munich débacle when the thirties movement died away "without bang or whimper" (JS30s.147), an increasing need was felt for open publishing outlets, flexible little reviews, small platforms for stock-taking, for uncovering other artistic modes, for bringing to the fore new talents. Small magazines were needed, in short, for an aesthetic re-orientation. To publish 'good poetry' was the declared aim of Poetry London, Delta and Seven,
and if at all, good poetry was to be defined not in non-literary terms, not in political terms. Tambimuttu said that the "criteria for choice" were "a catholicity which can always move to the level of a work which has been executed under particular laws necessary for its creation" (PL.i.2.np.). It was strongly felt that poetry ought not be confined to one specific sphere of human experience, that it need not adhere to one particular style, that its quality be assessed from poem to poem flexibly. Everything was worth considering. "A catholicity which is 'not a party and therefore has no policy' and is important as a principle, in life and art" (ibid.). "Towards Completeness", the title of Fraser's review of The New Appocalypse in the 1940 issue of Seven, seems almost a collective heading for what had been happening in English poetry in the year before. Even earlier, the Boosters had found another way of putting this when they proclaimed that their magazine would be "non-successful, non-political, non-cultural" (Corr.15), that they were "fluid, quixotic, unprincipled" and had "no canons to preserve or defend", that their review would be "eclectic, flexible, alive" (B.i.5)...

Durrell's poetry Deltas, as we have pointed out before, were self-consciously arrayed against the constrictions which were associated with the left-wing orthodoxy and its little magazines. He and his friends exaggerated and they simplified, but they seem to have had a point as well. We have mentioned before Durrell's attack on New Verse which was published in the correspondence section of the second Poetry London. We have mentioned the criticisms of George Orwell, Derek Savage, David Gascoyne, Hugh Gordon Porteous, Wyndham Lewis, Tambimuttu and others on the literary establishment. In the early months of 1939, such attacks, it seems, increased in number and became a part of the clean-up, the necessary and very conventional disparagement of immediate antecedents by a younger generation eager to achieve a literary profile. And yet it was not only a matter of "literary tactics"(16). Even Dylan Thomas, who owed much to Grigson and Symons, felt that some new poetry review was called for. Referring to Poetry London he said: "It's needed alright, verse magazines in England are very sad" (DTSL.187), and Tambimuttu's journal, the first issue of which came out in January 1939, was applauded for providing new opportunities, for being flexible, for freeing lines of communicaton
and for being handsomely produced. It was welcomed - with certain reservations.

Finding the presence of John Gawsworth F.R.S.L. difficult to stomach (especially set next to an admired poet like Louis MacNeice), Dylan Thomas warned neophyte Tambimuttu: "one trouble I see is that, in an attempt to include many sorts of poetry, you're liable in the end to sacrifice poetry for variety". And he added in his own graphic manner: "To try, in paper or book, to represent the whole 'field' of contemporary poetry is to take a turd's eye view"(DTSL.188). Durrell proceeded more tactfully but cautioned as well. Having beaten with a heavy stick the many heads of cliquishness, he offered to Tambimuttu, as we have already said, some advice: "poets are queer fowl, and Poetry will have to be as flexible as rubber and as large as a fishing net to hold them all"(PL.i.2.np.). Durrell congratulated Tambimuttu for giving "an impetus away from mere literary snobism and over-eclecticism", but the unexpected mention of the latter lingered on like a quiet warning.

As future developments were to prove, this warning was not entirely fatuous. In later years the charge was frequently levelled not only against the Apocalyptics but against the poetry of the 1940s as such that its lack of generally accepted critical standards, a laxity of discrimination, had "caused a great deal of bad poetry to be published" (MW3.321). Tabimuttu was the prime publisher-editor of the time. Grigson, as we have seen, attacked from the beginning the 'loony' eclectic reviews, and continued to do so in the years to come. In the 1950s he deplored "that dotty inclusiveness, that mental masturbation which has come to be the character of 'little magazines' during the war and since" (GGCS.163), while as late as 1984 he berated Tambimuttu's lack of critical discrimination saying that the Ceylonese was "less able than most to tell a good poet from a ridiculous or bad poet, a good poem from a bad one in a current fashion"(GGRc.43). But as Fraser has pointed out, the "open-textured world" of the 1940s, which Poetry London and its associates helped to create, a world "with no rigid groups or fixed allegiances, was not hostile to good poetry, even if it let some imperfect poetry through" (MW3.323).
But all that was said many years later. At the time when *Poetry London* first appeared, in early 1939, the world was conceived by Tambimuttu, Durrell and others to be anything but 'open-textured'. It is not quite clear what examples, if any, Durrell had in mind when he warned of 'over-eclecticism'. He can hardly have meant Tambimuttu's sheet, but may have been thinking of anthologies like *The Modern Poet*, *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* which Yeats had edited in 1936, or *The Year's Poetry*, the 1935 volume of which Grigson had blasted with the words: "The book certainly does 'represent' the piping posturing feebleness of the highbrow underworld"(NV.xviii.22). Where precisely the borderline ran between flexibility and over-eclecticism, Durrell did not specify. Asked, he may have pointed to Tambimuttu's somewhat hazy dictum that each poem deserved to be examined according to "the particular laws necessary for its creation" (PL.i.2.np.). Rather more concretely, he may have pointed the reader to his own poetry *Delta*, which plainly suffered neither from 'over-eclecticism', as he understood it, nor from an impeding lack of flexibility or cliquism, for this was, in his own words, a "slow but strong poetry number" (Corr.149).

Notes

1. Seven.vi.32. See also TCA.83.
2. See above; the Farleigh Press of London had refused to print a 'subversive' story by Isaac Babel in the December 1936 issue of *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*. Belgian printers had no such qualms.
3. In 1938 he was still named as editor and publisher, a year later only publisher and distributor.
4. Letter 13th Sept.19 82; Moore dedicated a poem "A Wish in Season" to Kay Boyle (PL.i.4.105f).
5. Moore goes on to say: "others who were key people in helping me were Kay Boyle and my friend G.S.Fraser, whom I had met the year before when I was a year at St.Andrew's University. I also met in 1939 Tambimuttu, 'Tambi' who was starting his poetry magazine" (Letter 23rd Aug.1982).
7. see: FrLD.219, 224; TCL.vii.4.183ff.
8. Seven.vi.np. Dylan Thomas spoke highly of Wales, as did Connolly who said that this review and Twentieth Century Verse and Seven were "stimulating successors" to New Verse (CCEC.425).

9. MWW.324; Seven.viii.29.

10. MWW.324. Dylan Thomas, however, liked the name (DTSL.219).

11. "Also, you suggest Read to write the preface if Yeats isn't willing. A preface by Read is suicide; as soon as he gives a 'movement' his good wishes, it dies with indignity; his name on the cover of a new book or magazine establishes its good taste and failure; he has supported, with condenscension and theoretical nonsense, almost every popular-at-the-time dud from Blunden to Dali, but the worst of it is that he has also lent his support to some honest writers and writing"(DTCL.345).

12. Dylan Thomas: "What, by the way, is Hendry's criticism like? His poetry seems to lack it" (DTSL.231). G.S. Fraser: "Treece, incidentally, might do with some of Hendry's hated objectivity as a critic; it's rather shrill (and not quite true) to say that 'Surrealism is never poetry'; and Calderon, not Lope de Vega, wrote La Vida es Sueno" (Seven.viii.30).

13. Seven.vi.34; in the Chicago Poetry a shorter notice on 'The Workshop' appeared in the September 1939 issue. The next number printed the following disclaimer by the editors:
"we have learned that certain phrases and passages in its manifesto, including the group name, were taken from an article by Eugene Jolas in the March 1932 issue of Transition. Mr. Jolas feels that a misundertsatnding may arise and asks us to inform our readers that he has no connection with the project" (PC.1v.2.111).

14. SS30s.87ff; SSwww.294f.

15. In the words of Stephen Spender Horizon "showed that values of civilization, literature and art could be sustained at a time when everything seemed shrouded by the austerities and exigencies of war" (SS30s.90f).

16. MWW.323; Press 14.
VIII. Durrell's Poetry Delta, Easter 1939.

Lawrence Durrell's "strong" poetry number was strong because there was in this issue at least one work which he knew was "GOOD WRITING", good enough at any rate to devote about one-third of the whole issue to it. It was his own "The Sonnet of Hamlet". The Easter Delta was split into two parts. The first was a respectable selection of contemporary verse, roughly thirty poems by seventeen different poets (eighteen if one takes into account David Gascoyne as Pierre Jean Jouve's translator). The second part of the booklet was the "Hamlet" sequence of fourteen poems, made up of seven couplets each. These two parts seem somehow unrelated. While the poems of the first part mix and jumble and crowd each other in an apparently haphazard, yet appropriately little little magazine way, Durrell's "Sonnet", a sequence formal and rigid in appearance, stands out emphatically both in volume and in lay-out. It was set apart from the other poems by a blank page, another page for its title and motto (from Nostradamus) and yet another for the dedication to 'Ophelia' and Anne Ridler. It was the editor's undeniable prerogative to present emphatically his own work, but, as the example of Ronald Duncan's Townsman showed, there was always the danger of accentuating it to a point where other contributions would seem mere garnish. Under normal circumstances, Durrell might have been better advised to print "The Sonnet of Hamlet" separately in a slim pamphlet à la Booster Broadside. In view of the political upheavals at the time, he may, however, have just wanted to publish it as quickly as possible. Before turning our attention to the strange sequence of "sonnets", a work which also marked a climax in the pre-war poetry of Lawrence Durrell the other poems and poets in Delta must be discussed.

The ex-Villa Seurat review was still good for some surprises. Of the actors assembled to perform in Delta's finale only a handful had ever appeared in its pages before. The list of absentees is revealing: most performers of the Jitterbug Shag Requiem had either declined to participate or were not solicited by Durrell. Also, less than a third of the players of the other poetry number accompanied him in Delta's final performance. Perlès, Durrell, Dylan Thomas and Nicholas Moore
were the only writers who appeared in all three Deltas. David Gascoyne and John Gawsworth joined them in both poetry numbers. There was, in short, a great fluctuation in the troupe, and although most of his contributors also published in Seven and Poetry London, and some appeared with him in Proems, no one could accuse Durrell of 'cliquism'. Even so, that distinctly internationalistic and expatriate flavour of Delta's boosting antecedent and of the Spedal Peace and Dismemberment Number had once again given way to the limited focus on the poetry scene in England. The vast majority of contributors were now either English or 'Celtic' or resident in London. Tambimuttu's "Ceylonese Love-Song", characteristically a translation into English, was but a dim reminder of the Booster's taste for the outlandishly bizarre. There was no back-cover poem in an exotic tongue and script, not even one in English. Alfred Perlès' poems, which he did not rate very highly himself - "It isn't much of a poem, but then I am not really a poet", he said of "Les Moineaux du Printemps" (RT.24) - do warrant the review's old claim that it was "A magazine in French and English", but, significantly, the only French poet of stature to contribute, Pierre Jean Jouve, was offered in translation only. Even that robust transatlantic connection, which still enlivened the pages of the Dismemberment Delta had dwindled away; the young Anglo-Canadian Elizabeth Smart - who later met George Barker and became mother of four of his children - was the only New World poet left. The movement away from a burlesque and carefree cosmopolitanism to a concentration on England, the sober England of T.S. Eliot and his little magazine islands of cultural survival, was almost complete. Durrell's editorial flexibility operated within this limited frame of reference. The palette of poems he offered to his reader was various but insular.

As in the first poetry Delta, certain thematic preoccupations predominated. The Booster's categoric imperative resounds: "We are not interested in political line-ups, nor social panaceas, nor economical nostrums"(B.i.5). The poems exhibited subject-matter which might be called private and perennial. Concerns of the "Pylon Verse Establishment"(Labrys.v.104) echo no more than faintly in one or two contributions. But even these, Dorian Cooke's "The Idlers" for example, demonstrate far more emphatically than anything else neo-romantic qualities like a loosely associative style, a florid profusion of
imagery, density and obscurity.

The Delta poems tended to be focused on the topics of a romantic personalism: Love, Loneliness, Birth, Death, Art, the Child, the Waste Land, Nature, Myth and God. Of course, themes such as Love and Death were not shut out from the better poetry of the thirties generation, and Auden's "Lay your sleeping head, my love" is one of the century's most famous love-lyrics. What distinguished Durrell's Delta from the thirties poetry magazines, among other things, was not only the subjective and dark quality of some of the poems, but also the unchallenged pre-eminence ascribed to these 'universals'. As we have noted, this was nothing new for the Boosters, but it was now much in accord with the spirit of the times in post-Auden England.

The Villa Seurat had always said either: "With a little good will and a little common sense, all the world problems could be solved, today as ever"(RT.23) or: "We believe the world will always be a trying world to live in, but a good place just the same"(B.i.5). Now, a new generation of English poets was chiming in, believing with Tambimuttu that: "Men should realize that all social problems can be solved on a very simple basis"(PL.i.l.np), or alternatively with Kathleen Raine: "that political change can improve the human condition only in very limited ways" (WLHL.88). The inner world, so distant from the terrible frustrations and complexities of the outside, so mysterious and yet so clear in its 'mythical' and 'timeless' contours, was beckoning and the titles of Perlès' short lyrics stood out only because they were in French: "Espoir Esotérique" and "Poème Occulte" and "La Mort". Topical poems, perhaps about the recent return of the International Brigades from Spain, or the war anxiety or Karel Capek's death in December, would have stood out in Delta like embarrassing growths.

The circles of "timeless" concern which preoccupied Durrell in Delta were generally vague enough to encompass poems which might in other respects differ remarkably. If the poems in Delta existed in an affinitive relation, it is mainly due to the fact that they were linked topically. The common denominator was subject matter, not treatment. In what follows here attention will be focussed on one central and prominent leitmotif: Love. Then, before turning to
Durrell's "The Sonnet of Hamlet", several poems will be examined in detail, in particular David Gascoyne's Jouve translation and the work of Ronald Bottrall.

"The central topic of the book is an investigation of modern love". Durrell's _Balthazar_ was prefaced by this note. His _Delta_ collection might have been similarly subtitled 'variations on the theme of love'. John Gawsworth's sonnet "Cad" described in straight narrative a profligate prig who "would exploit each female friend / Physically, and have no bother / Of wife that weakens into mother"(D.iii.24). The songs of Nicholas Moore were, again, lyrics of a personal, sexual love, and went well with the second of Audrey Beecham's "Three Poems", where: "The heart unburied beats for the lover's cheek"(ibid.14). Like Elizabeth Smart's sad but shapely "Comforter, Where, Where is your Comforting?" (reference to Hopkins) with its low-toned reference to a modern industrial world of drab "muffled workings", of "bent heads", correlatives of "the revolving wheels, / Of my own heart"(ibid.17), Tambimuttu's "Ceylonese Love-Song", an almost biblical chant, expressed individual longing in terms of external phenomena, in this case of the cosmic processes of nature, the movement of the sea, the flow of rivers, the yearly monsoon, the eternal villager. "Poetry", said Tambimuttu, "is a descent to the roots of life" (PL.i.1.np.).

Dylan Thomas too placed his narrator, an "enamoured man alive in the twigs of his eyes" into a transindividual frame of reference (i). His "January 1939" was a densely packed hymnal, a rhythmic retrospection on the past year's catastrophes, and it ended with the poet looking over the tempestuous sea and uttering a benediction. Thomas's Old Testament imagery was probably intended to give to the poem an impressive portico, but no matter how great the satisfaction derived from recognising the allusions it was also painfully obtrusive: "Because there stands, one story out of the bum city, / That frozen wife whose juices drift like a fixed sea" (D.iii.7). The poet's claim rings hollow: "The salt person and blasted place / I furnish with the meat of a fable"(ibid.).
Two love poems by Anne Ridler manifest a different attitude. A quiet meditation "On Two Photographs", discreetly refers to her beloved's desire "to film / The life of Paul the missionary" (D.iii.5). It is an example of a verse which concentrated on domestic life and married love. A critic said that Anne Ridler's poems often revealed "an awareness of the divine transfiguring the commonplace" (2). According to G.S. Fraser she was "one of the best Christian poets of our time" (FrLD.41). Her "Poem" introduced the Easter Delta, a lullaby, the song of a love that is presented as secure and guided by divine hands, setting a tone that was remarkable in its contrast to the sense of urgency and anxiety that had pervaded the political verse magazines of the thirties generation...

Composed against the background of his conversion and delvings into anthroposophic and theosophical lore (Paracelsus, Trismegistos, Cornelius Agrippa et alii), the poems of Alfred Perlès were replete with admissions of spiritual doubt, of the difficulty of unquestioning belief. Just as in his contributions to the first poetry Delta, the poet presents himself as: "Un homme que ravage / Le mal de soupçon" (D.iii.4). "Deux Illusions" speaks of his unsuccessful effort to achieve "cette autre rive / Que n'éclaire que la pure lumière de l'amour surhumain" (D.iii.19). Somehow, however, these struggles fail to touch the reader, for they occur in ethereal realms, with religious, mystical and astrological references abounding. "Les Moineaux du Printemps" is an exception, otherwise, as in "Bleu Mystique", or "L'Échec" or "Le Poète", Perlès' command of esoteric vocabulary seems almost too easy, seems greatly to exceed the experience itself, the result being a plethora of blown-up metaphors and unoriginal phrases of 'celestial' provenance. However, those "most malignant shadows" (D.iii.19) which kept him from the destination of "holy" love, were happily present in "Nuit Impaire", the only poem with pleasingly sexual overtones. It was quite in the tradition of the blasphemous "Josette". Nevertheless, in spite of injecting it with neutralising elements like Neptunian nights or an edifying infinity's calm, a reformed Alfred Perlès still felt compelled, as if in apology, to subtitle this fully rhymed lyric: "Poème profane"!
The opening lines of Rayner Heppenstall's "Telling a Hand" suggest yet another love-poem complete with mythological allusion: "Your body, you / That questioneth out like a swan's neck in your arm"(D.iii.14). Quickly, however, the mood of the poem changes, and once again youth, beauty and sexual love are set firmly into a specifically Christian context. Continuing in the oddly dislocated manner of the first, the second stanza evokes Christ's agony on the Cross, the idea of Original Sin and human mortality. Like this poem, "Habitations" with its refrain "The times expire, and they all die"(ibid.11) reflect Heppenstall's religious absorption at the time. An acquaintance of Fr. Martin d'Arcy and Eric Gill, Heppenstall had toyed with Catholicism and conversion for some time (3), and, as Bernard Bergonzi noted, his "poetry shows Hopkins' influence in its verbal contortions and its grappling with spiritual crises"(Cont.Poets.676). Less charitable (but wonderfully destructive) was Geoffrey Grigson's assessment:

He (Rayner Heppenstall) is a sluggish bore, a Hopkins-Binyon bore, a tangle of pimpled laurels bore, a costive bore, a really I do not know Sir James Frazer bore; always absolutely a BORE. He is also a yearning, blind, deaf, word-gargling, 1930 book-bedded, prose-snipping, egg-bound bore, a bore pretending to purpose, a culture bore.(4)

Although Heppenstall's crisis (not caused by New Verse's stricures, it seems) calmed by 1939, he continued to write religious verse, and to publish it. "Telling a Hand", for instance, was included in Blind Man's Flowers are Green of 1940. In the course of the war he stopped writing poetry, but in the Delta period he still thought of himself as a poet. In a contribution to Cooney's Woodstock Phoenix, Heppenstall noted: "Only lyrical poetry ever preserves the reality of what it touches because it comes from a more spontaneous source and claims no more than a momentary validity"(Phoenix.ii.2.17f).

David Gascoyne's translation of Pierre Jean Jouve's "Nada" merits some comment, not only because it throws light on a chief literary influence on Gascoyne himself, not only because it gathered together some of the major topical concerns of the Easter Delta, but also because it was eloquent of the change to the religious, the irrational and the prophetic occurring in English poetry at the time. In the works
of Jouve the mysterious relation between Eros and Thanatos was a leitmotif of great importance. The title of one of his poems, that was also translated by Gascoyne, expressed this connection: "The Desires of the Flesh are a Desire for Death". The essentially Freudian dualism between Love (all libidinous and life-forces) and Death (regressive striving towards a tensionless condition) was only a point of departure. Jouve did not stop there, but tried to reinvest these terms with religious meaning: both Love and Death were regarded as dialectical elements of an inner quest for a reunion with God. Death and suffering were necessary, the desert was necessary, and the quest was fired by divine absence, or as Jouve puts it, by. "le monde désert".

David Gascoyne's poetry of the time, too, focused on this spiritual waste, and in a lecture significantly entitled "Waste Land, Holy Land", his friend Kathleen Raine formulated their common belief:

that poetry is in its proper nature the language of the soul; that its proper function is to create for us images of an inner order all share, to open into every present those secret doors, those ways in; to consecrate and redeem for every generation some parcel of the surrounding waste.(WLHL.88)

As we have shown in our discussion of the first poetry Delta, with his emergence from the surrealist discipline with its "denial of the metaphysical"(KRDAS.42), Gascoyne began to see beyond existential explanations of a purely materialistic kind. With Jouve, he came to reject Freudian interpretations (DG.ii.83). His poetry he now called "metapsychological" and a religious re-orientation was forthcoming. His permanent inner crisis, the experience of "le monde désert" (ibid.33) were preparing him for the intense spiritual revelation that he was to experience during the summer 1939. But even in the Paris years, Gascoyne had contemplated writing "a long religious poem"(ibid.79) and had written some shorter metaphysical ones (see the first poetry Delta), his ideas maturing under the influence of Fondae and Jouve. Love he came to see as emanating not from psychological well springs, but from the inexplicable divine love of Christ. "Love's flame too flaming and too crucified / Upon the intimate blackness of the eyes"(D.iii.23) wrote the young Englishman in the words of Jouve,
his admired friend.

But it was not only the poetry of Jouve which inspired Gascoyne. If Gascoyne did not deny responsibility for the rest of mankind, if God never became the deity of the solitary mystics or artist-heroes, but remained the 'Christ of Poetry and Revolution', this was perhaps also due to Jouve's example. In a preface to *Sueur de Sang* (1933) Jouve had defined the poet's role in an insane world hurtling toward disaster as one who holds himself steady against mankind's suicidal impulses, transforming the death-wish into the life-giving power of a divine Eros (Jouve 103). This seems somewhat reminiscent of the Booster, which described itself as "a contraceptive against the self-destructive spirit of the age" (B.i.5). But the Boosters' path was frivolous, irresponsible and comical, while Jouve saw eye to eye with the horror of the time. "There is something miraculous" Gascoyne wrote in his *Journal* when he received Jouve's *Kyrie* in early 1939, "in his being able to continue to create poetry so intense and pure at a time like this". He went on:

Few writers' work could at first sight appear so remote from the world of politics, yet few poets have so profoundly suffered the events of current history, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Spain; and I know of no one who has so fully expressed the apocalyptic atmosphere of our time or with so strong an accent on the 'sublime'. (DG.ii.115)

Gascoyne struggled to respond to the confusion of the times in a similar way, and in the early days of the war, he felt that he had overcome his own despair, emerging "from the dark" (DG.ii.140) in order to strike a vatic note. Paradoxically, this hope derived its strength from the world's great crisis, the horrible waste-land around him, and Gascoyne went on to publish his most poignant collection of poetry in the war years. *Poems 1937-1942* showed the influence of Jouve.

The dialectical imagery of the Delta poem culminated in the lines "Desert of love / Organ of God" (D.iii.23). These call to mind another of Gascoyne's many translations from the French, from Rimbaud's "Deserts of Love" (CPP.ix.39ff). Indeed, his arrival at a point where he endows the suffering of the world with spiritual significance is arguably also reminiscent of Rimbaud's inner trajectory; more
important perhaps, it refers one to Gascoyne's other great teacher, Benjamin Fondane, whose *Rimbaud Le Voyou*, as we have earlier said, he had praised some years before as "a thoroughly convincing study of Rimbaud considered as an expression of the occidental metaphysical temperament" (Criterion. xvii.66.158). The Fondanian-Jouvian confluence of despair and hope, of emptiness and perfect fullness, of divine presence and absence, was all-important to Gascoyne's spiritual awareness, his ability, in Kathleen Raine's words, to behold "the apotheosis of this waste land"(WLHL.93).

"The word 'holy' - a word that had not been found in poetry for many years - is characteristic of him; all is praise and celebration" (WLHL.92). As late as 1976 Kathleen Raine remembered graphically the relief a new generation of poets felt when they first saw the poetry of Dylan Thomas. She described the advent of Dylan Thomas as marking the emergence of new voices, poets in her own metaphysical sense of the word. In them, as she said, Yeats "might have seen the beginnings of the fulfilment of his own prophecy of the 'rise of the soul against intellect'"(ibid.). In her view, the efforts of Yeats and Eliot were taken up again by visionary singers like Thomas and Gascoyne, while Auden and his circle had sought "to cut off the soul from any retreat into those inner sanctuaries where under social conditions of every kind men and women have found refuge and another reality"(ibid.87). Now, however, a new dawn was breaking for "the soul's party"(ibid.80).

A reader of Durrell's *Easter Delta* will have immediately perceived the mythico-religious bias, the review's speaking for the 'soul's party'. Perhaps not all its poems answered to Kathleen Raine's lofty ideals (one recalls her strictures on Nicholas Moore's sexual lyrics). Still, not a few of them did open doors to realms metaphysical, rejecting thereby the suggestion of a profane and rationally comprehensible world. Kathleen Raine, a regular of Tambimuttu's journal, might have been satisfied with the *Easter Delta*, although the various beliefs expressed in it diverged widely. This, however, was no real disadvantage, it seems, as the poems interacted (at their best) to amplify the metaphysical propensity. They complemented one another.
Here is an example: Gascoyne's concern with an inner spiritual awareness expressed in terms of outer sterility and depravation, found an echo in Herbert Howarth's waste-landish "The Singing Corpse", where "the bones / of night strew the deserted valley" (D.iii.18). Similarly, but with more success, Foxall's "The Garden" flanked, as it were, Jouve's contribution. It is true that in this poem for a moment the world of time and New Verse re-entered the scene. After all Foxall had contributed to Contemporary Poetry and Prose and written a masque entitled The Man Who Read Marx (5). In "The Garden" the possibility of transcendent hope seems shut out of a world: "Where death is the man power / And angels walk in vain" (D.iii.16). Quickly, however, this note is submerged in a welter of imagery suggesting mysterious decay, neglect, menace and disease, the absence of cultivation, Eliot might have said, of "controlling hands". Foxall left little doubt which land was in decline: "The world my garden, our / Garden of weeds" (ibid.). Although the poem ends in a sombre mood, a strange sense of expectation is evinced, coloured by bucolic, perhaps even religious sentiment: "Alone the peasant / Remembering accustomed ways cries holy holy".

The following stanza expressed anticipation of meaningful action, blessed by a noumenal "Father". "We will tear the rust from the plough, / When rain wins and the wind / Pulls down the last leaf". Still, who could say with assurance that that latter clause implied messianic hope for a point of zero from which a spiritual renewal might proceed, rather than the revolutionary's faith in the eventual overthrow of the old order? David Gascoyne's lines from "Ecce Homo" come to mind, the invocation of a God who was not outside but a 'Christ of Revolution and of Poetry'. And so, without retracing all the subtle interchanges between the various poems, it seems fair to suggest that this was the kind of interactive imagery between poems, (not to mention the thematic similarity) which a poetry editor might hope for: one poem nourishes the other, complementing, illuminating, contrasting.
With Dylan Thomas and David Gascoyne, Ronald Bottrall was - at the time - perhaps the best known poet to contribute to the Easter *Delta*. He belonged neither to the Auden group of poets nor to those of the romantic revival. In the 1930s he was considered to be the prime follower of the tradition of T.S.Eliot and Ezra Pound (GBTMP.162).

In 1939 Bottrall returned to London after having spent a good part of the decade abroad. He had taught in Helsingfors, in Singapore and Florence. In 1941 he was to set out again for Sweden, and from there on to Italy, Brazil, Greece, Japan... "Of the 53 years since I left Cambridge", Bottrall wrote in 1982, "I spent 43 years outside this country, in the service of the Crown or the United Nations or accompanying my wife"(Letter 14th July 1982). The continual absence from London was one of the reasons put forward by G.S.Fraser to explain why Bottrall - in this way remarkably akin to Durrell - was always outside the mainstream of English poetry and why in spite of promising beginnings he remained a neglected poet(Cont.Poets.153).

Bottrall had been at Cambridge in the late 1920s, one of "the remarkable generation"(DG.i.11) which Gascoyne described in the Introductory Notes to his London *Journal*. Not a homogenous group in the sense of its Oxford counterpart, these undergraduates included not only Charles Madge, Kathleen Raine, Hugh Sykes Davies, Humphrey Jennings, J.B.Bronowski, George Reavey, Michael Redgrave, Richard Eberhardt, Julian Trevelyan and William Empson, but also Michael Roberts, John Lehmann and Julian Bell(SSPoetry.40). Cambridge was, in fact, often juxtaposed with Oxford, a scientific and analytical tradition with a more romantic and worldly one, and, as far as the poetry of the thirties was concerned, Ronald Bottrall with W.H.Auden (MWW.312). Reviewing in the Chicago Poetry a book of poems by Bottrall, Richard Eberhardt said in November 1939:

The way to begin a review of Bottrall would be to talk about Auden. Auden is the head and pleasure of the Oxford school, if there is such; Bottrall represents Cambridge attitudes. Counter scientific to humanistic if you will. ... Auden has taught contemporary poetry how to sing, as he says it should do. Bottrall cannot, or does not, sing. At Cambridge one thought too much and sang too little. (PC.Iv.II.101)
Ronald Bottrall was associated with that famous and influential Cambridge institution, F.R. Leavis. Like T.S. Eliot, who in 1932 told a leading New York newspaper that the most important of younger poets writing in England at the time were Auden, Spender, MacNeice and Bottrall (RBCP.iii), so the author of New Bearings in English Poetry (1932) had expressed in that work unequivocal praise of Bottrall's poetry, a praise which began with the provocative assertion: "There is another young poet whose achieved work leaves no room for doubt about his future" (NBEP.201). Bottrall's "The Thyrsus Retipped" even provided one of the epigraphs for Leavis' book. And yet, Leavis' support proved a doubtful blessing indeed. Under his influence and that of Richards the intellectual self-consciousness of the Cambridge poets in general and of Bottrall in particular grew so as to be almost inhibitive - "Those scientists of the imagination arrived at such minute particulars that one experienced no direct reactions to their poems" (PC.lv.ii.101). Furthermore, his ostentatious backing, the view that the poetry of his protégé was in many ways superior to Ezra Pound's, more assured of success than William Empson (NBEP.201) placed an excessive burden on the shoulders of Bottrall (TTC.290).

Bottrall was a poet in the modernist tradition of Eliot and particularly Pound. He reviewed for Scrutiny the first thirty Cantos, and admitted later: "The greatest influence on my early poetry was Ezra Pound's Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" (Cont.Poets.153). Leavis, however, maintained that for all his indebtedness, Bottrall "is radically unlike Mr Pound" (6), stronger in emotional and intellectual rigour. Critical opinion thought differently, however, and Harry Blamires noted as late as 1980: "A disciple of Pound, he emulated his master's cosmopolitan sophistication and his work is often metaphorically dense and obliquely allusive" (7). This critique is as nothing compared to Grigson's (characteristically) savage attack on Bottrall's second volume of poems, Festivals of Fire, in a 1934 number of New Verse. And it is here that one realises clearly that if there was a conception of poetry which Auden and his friends reacted against particularly it was that of Eliot and his epigoni. Grigson's pen struck out at Bottrall's alleged imitations, his "invalid ambiguities in evasive, unevocative words, covering blurred observation of the obvious; clichés and poetical word-hang-overs slightly bent; rhythmical sore throat"
Grigson felt that these poems were distinctly modish and their "faults of thickness and pretension appear to me so obvious that they deserve no destructive examination"(8). Bottrall, it must have seemed to Grigson, was working to turn the clock back to a period that, in the words of Geoffrey Bullough, had been stultified by poets setting up a little culture and despising men after considering only their common denominator, taking an extravagant pleasure in the delight of the intellect to feel itself alive, turning fastidiously inward to play with witty comparisons, academic ironies, remote symbols, memories of books, machines, and laboratories... (GBTMP.162)

But contrary to what Grigson said, at a distance Bottrall's poetry can hardly be called modish. His following the example of Pound and Eliot had nothing in common with the dominating current of social realism of the 1930s, where, as Fraser noted, the taste was not for "allusive obliqueness but for a certain directness of emotional impact" (TTC.290). Indeed, Bottrall the multi-lingual cosmopolitan and European (like Durrell), was out of step - and a critic like Michael Schmidt, deploring that the modernist seed sown by "Prufrock" and "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" flourished in England hardly at all, might have said: unfortunately so (9). But he remained out of time, even when a later generation of Movement poets disinterred "the equally learned and obscure poetry"(TTC.291) of William Empson, but passed him by.

In spite of this "bad luck"(TTC.291), Bottrall continued to write poetry, happily experiencing in his late years "an extraordinary new burst of creativity", which resulted in a collection of meditative and descriptive verse of a "new serenity, simplicity and directness" (Cont.Poets.153f). One of these poems, "Talking to the Ceiling", has been described as "an extremely vivid, loving and Chaucerianly humorous evocation of his Cornish childhood and his father, sixty years ago"(ibid.). G.S.Fraser added: "It is a poet's late assertion of the sacredness of roots, the strength of family ties, and the richness of life, a kind of counterblast to The Waste Land" (ibid.).
Some forty years before, F.R. Leavis had seized on a quality in Bottrall's poems which he called a "certain positive energy" and a "positive assurance", characteristics that distinguished him from Pound and the early Eliot (NBEP.206f). It was something which brought him much closer to the Villa Seurat than one would have imagined. According to Richard March who reviewed The Turning Path, Bottrall has disdained to bolster himself up with the pious hopes of the millenium waiting round the corner (towards the Left usually). For him the world is what it is, he has used all the bric-a-brac of the modern scene as grist for his poetic mill. (Townsman.ii.5.22)

And, despite the darkness all about, March said, Bottrall "has justified the note of affirmation sounded in his earliest poems six or seven years ago" (ibid.22). His taking the world as it was and still striking a positive note approximated Booster positions to a remarkable extent. It was this affirmative note, evident, in the view of Leavis, especially in his forceful rhythms, which C. Tomlinson underlined in his 1961 Introduction to The Collected Poems of Ronald Bottrall, and Fraser, who seems the poet's most balanced critic, has written: "Nor is there any final philosophy of life in his poetry except that of the sceptical, disabused, but always eager and curious spectator and critic of life, an urbane cynic coupled with a lyrical celebrator" (Cont. Poets.153).

The positive note, sounding through all consciousness of death and disillusion, was also manifest in the poems which Bottrall contributed to Durrell's Delta. "A Grave Revisited" and "Genesis" were collected in The Turning Path, his third volume of poems which was dedicated to Laura Riding, published in June 1939 and prefaced by a letter from Robert Graves. Edith Sitwell wrote of the book: "It has a vitality of thought and of language, and it has vision". Her review appeared in Life and Letters Today:

Under this remarkable vitality (illuminating the words, springing up from the page) lie depths of truth, hardly and painfully delved for. There is no sloth of thought here, no shrinking from reality. The poems have, too, a high degree of originality. I should be hard put to it to name the poet whom Mr. Bottrall resembles. (LTT.xxiii.27.239)
Edith Sitwell, a favorite target of Grigson's derision and scorn, was presumably alive to the attacks on Bottrall, her observation on his originality was in part a response in this direction. Still, there was something in her remark, at least as far as the influence of Eliot and Pound was concerned. A glance at the two Delta poems shows this clearly: there is little, as far as we can see, of the "cultural-reference-jock-jumping style"(NV.viii.19) of many of his earlier poems, no dark complexity, none of "the clipped tones of Ezra Pound's 'Cantos'" (ibid.) which Grigson found so annoyingly pervasive. Richard Eberhardt would not have agreed, saying that the author "is not going to be caught short of hard-worn intellectual constructions expressing his most subtle or recondite meanings"(PC.lv.ii.102). But if at all, in these two poems technical echoes of The Waste Land and "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" were weak, still detectable perhaps in rhythms, in some images, but otherwise quite faded. It was not the voice of the metropolitan satirist that spoke from Delta, nor the ornate lament of Western decline, of the "old bitch gone in the teeth"(10). Rather one perceives here Bottrall's "directly lyrical gift, for modulation and phrasing"(Cont.Poets.153). Having said that, it is necessary to point out that Bottrall's lyricism operates within 'intellectual constructions'. One hears the voice of the celebrating singer, without being left entirely in the dark as in Dylan Thomas's early dream celebrations or the work of many of the Apocalyptic poets. Bottrall put forward an idea or situation, works it out dramatically in its implications, while holding (at his best) a balance between statement and image, an instance not common in the pages of Durrell's poetry review.

"A Grave Revisited" is a poem dealing with a universal human concern, the confrontation with death. The poem opens at the threshold of death. The reader is implicated. The inevitability of the situation justifies the poet's speaking in the first person plural. After adieus and lamentation, the dying everyman hopes for a celestial serenity. But there is no peace, neither for the dying nor for the deceased. His last moments are filled with barely perceived "thick clotted words" (D.ii.9), with violent and strange cries, "the belly-piercing shriek of the tropical king-fisher" and the "monotonous tock-tock" of another exotic fowl; the "brain-fever bird" is also a painful allusion to his
mother's death of cerebral meningitis; the poem was written on this occasion. Then there is a meaningful ambivalence: the living, who are, after all, only the dying, are surrounded by the waste and senseless annihilation, much as are the deceased themselves, hurtling towards complete dissolution. The living and the dead are the same; death is the leveller; no one is spared. Both mourner and departed are robbed of the "familiar / Accent, of the accustomed carriage of the head". A divine providence seems denied as the depravation "Brings us back from halo and harp / To dust, to horizons of senseless rocks / And what the sea shifts and rejects, corpses". The wasteland is on both sides of the grave; there is no godly embrace, only "The white isolation of local stone-bound graves", the epithet 'local' neatly demolishing speculation about an afterlife.

"In the winter's bud is furled summer's flower". The second stanza wheels, answering to the first with a note of assurance and with imagery of growth, husbandry and life. Nature and its harmonic motions are called upon to carry this volte-face, which surprisingly does follow from the first stanza's "stone-bound" argument. If death is inextricably implicated with every living thing, then perhaps life is inherent in everything that has died as well. Death is no absolute, and just as the past is woven into the present, so what appears dead today may be active for the future. "Dead bodies have the power / To fertilize", Bottrall bluntly asserts, and the isolation of the dead, evoked in the first stanza, dissolves quietly in that vital principle of continuity and change which is nature.

The poem then shifts again. Celebrations of nature's workings, of its cyclical rhythms which transcend death and decay, lend themselves readily to religious sentiment, and religious connotations and a (presumably more authentic) sense of expected salvation are suddenly reintroduced. Bottrall's fruit-bearing grave, an image which is worked out only superficially, echoes the old womb-tomb pairing and is also reminiscent of the lines from The Waste Land: "That corpse you planted last year in your garden, / Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?".
And so "A Grave Revisited" may be said to describe a balanced figure, a balance, however, which is far from perfect: the initial rejection of a spiritual smugness towers high above the second stanza's somewhat forced affirmation. In spite of his fine workmanship and apt placing of words, a poem by Bottrall, said Richard Eberhardt, hardly ever "works as a whole poem should" (11). "A Grave Revisited", which Bottrall came to be dissatisfied with, was no exception: "It is not very good" (Letter 14th July 1982). As far as the diffuse ending of "A Grave Revisited" is concerned, one would turn to G.S. Fraser, who saw in Bottrall's poems (especially his later poems) a dangerous "natural fluency", which "makes it hard for him to eliminate and condense" (Cont. Poets. 13).

"Genesis" described the poet's loss of the direct and imaginative experience of reality that he was capable as a child. Bottrall did not shun the clearly comprehensible statement, using it as a cornerstone. In the first four stanzas he explained and showed with powerful images and strong cadences the poet's acute awareness of his fallen state. His condition of artificiality and oversophistication (12) are juxtaposed with moments of sparkling memories of an earlier visionary ability. The fifth and final stanza resolves the poem's conflict by suggesting that the attentive man may re-experience the wonderful imagination of a child.

Allusions to the romantic canon are strong, as when Bottrall says that a child "Fathers a world in nooks". Acknowledging the Wordsworthian debt so clearly gave a certain depth of tradition to the poem. The juxtaposition of meaningful rural childhood and meaningless urban adulthood is also evident in Bottrall's imagery, which is particularly vivid, visual and concrete when relating to youth remembered. Dylan Thomas' Fern Hill seems here anticipated. The freshness and wonder of spring which explodes into the keenly sensitive, pre-lapsarian awareness of the child is well captured by Bottrall in the stanza which reads:
Time was, in the days of pilgrimage
When the equinox leapt as a ram, green
As an emerald at the moment of its cleavage,
When the word ran rippling in a rune.

Contrast is also the principle by which the stanzas are arranged. The first and the second put forward the poem's theme: in each of them vision and loss are explained in relation to one another. The next two stanzas (one of which has just been quoted) amplify the opposition by focusing childhood's heaven and the hell of a life in metropolitan literary circles into a stanza each. There is no connection between the two worlds; one is isolated from the other by a gap wider than the white empty space on the paper - or so it seems. In the fifth and final stanza the contrast is recalled, but (again) by way of a natural analogy a reversal occurs. The movement is no longer away from but towards the vital. From the point of view of content, in short, the poem is structured both antithetically, moving forward in the direction of a resolution, and circularly, the solution pointing right back to the beginning; "infant cries" are the last words and point to the "child" of the first line.

A closer reading reveals that the poem's positive climax is not contrived, but prepared for. The lines which are explicitly negative in meaning, for instance, are undermined by means of poetic technique: in the fourth stanza the poet describes how time-serving urban literary pedants "envy no man's pedestal of rhyme". It is not a coincidence that the latter phrase, so deprecatory of rhyme, fully rhymes with the preceeding "teasing the sublime"! With this little trick the poet subtly dissociates himself from the literary circus.

Rhyme is in fact a formative element in "Genesis": one needs no special perceptiveness to see that a change to an enclosing rhyme scheme in the final stanza serves to underline the poem's circular movement(13). Moreover, rhymes of some variety charge the poem with a vibrancy, with rhythms, which surge over the moments of disgust and frustration, calling to mind Leavis's comment (on another poem by Bottrall) that the "assurance justifies itself: those rhythms are not to be dealt with by argument"(NBEP.208). A good example is the simile: "and slatted prison walls / Fracture the fringes of our winter
sun"(D.iii.15). It was only in parentheses that Dr. Leavis noted: "Mr Bottrall, indeed, has learnt something from Hopkins technically" (NBEP.205). Had he seen The Turning Path his view might have been modified. Hopkins loomed large in "Genesis". The evident pleasure Bottrall took in stressed and abrupt rhythms, in consonantal emphasis and alliteration, suggests a non-ironic bow to the poet of "The Windhover". In "Genesis" rhyme is explicitly, stressed rhythm implicitly, associated with a more natural, simpler, almost childish form of poetry. The loss of vision, Bottrall points out, is closely paralleled by a loss of the immediacy and vitality of language. In "Genesis" he looked to Hopkins for remedy, to Hopkins—and beyond. While Durrell, plagued by the same sense of linguistic feebleness in contemporary English writing, established his linguistic ancestry among the troglodytes with their "murderous syllables, that were not words but spoken actions"(BB.159), Bottrall proceeded more quietly. Hopkins in mind, and perhaps also Auden's early experiments (though without his unsentimental tone and focus on the present) Bottrall pointed by way of poetic techniques (alliteration, consonantal stress, assonance, etc) to the vital origins of the English language, to its Anglo-Saxon childhood: "When the word ran rippling in a rune" (D.iii.15).

With these observations, "Genesis" seems still not exhausted. It is a one of those poems whose imagery, as Bottrall once said, "derives from my early years in Cornwall in the country and by the sea" (Cont.Poets.153). Indeed, the poet found "Genesis" one of the best of The Turning Path, noting that it has been "frequently quoted and anthologized"(Letter 14th July 1982). And Richard March used it to illustrate that when Bottrall "succeeds in completely realising the implied idea, in, as it were, making it corporeal, firmly modelled throughout, his language moves with an austere and ordered beauty" (Townsman.ii.5.24). Richard Eberhardt noted that although Bottrall's work failed to 'sing' and was always 'dense', it is writers of this kind who preserve the seriousness of intellectual attitudes, who try to articulate meanings not focussed on easy and many readers, and who are unable to use the prop of cliques. He has his own courage, originality, schemes. (PC.lv.ii.101f)
If his own "The Sonnet of Hamlet" is anything to go by, it was writers of this kind, poets who were concerned with celebrating the world as it is, who were outside the literary establishment, who were concerned with revitalising the language of poetry, possessed of sense of form and control and who had "a saving crudity, a kind of naive strength, which is the conterpose to 'the educated and allusive'" (RBCP.vf), that Durrell wanted in his 'strong' poetry volume.

How many of the Delta poems merit a second reading? It is difficult to decide. In spite of Delta's emphasis on "timeless" themes, quite a number of the poems will be read today for other than purely literary reasons. J.C.Hall, for instance, may be remembered for bringing to the attention of a wider public the work of Edwin Muir, rather than for his own poetry, though one might add that "And What For Praise", first published in The Oxford Magazine and then in Delta did find its way into Jonathan Cape's The Best Poems of 1939 anthology (14). Some of the Delta poems, however, stand out as poetic achievements in their own right, as challenges to the critic's discrimination. Of these, Durrell's "The Sonnet of Hamlet" is eminently one.

Several months after its publication, G.S.Fraser said that the "Sonnet" was quite superior to anything in The New Apocalypse (Seven.viii.30). In 1968 he still called it "the finest, the longest, the most intricately ornate of his early poems"(FrLD.41). Anais Nin, too, was impressed. She wrote to Durrell in February 1939: "I think the Hamlet is really perfect, a culmination"(Mosaic.xi.H.2.47). Indeed, this sequence was perhaps the climax of Durrell's pre-war poetry, a difficult poem, even more obscure than The Black Book or his earlier prose phantasmagorias Asylum in the Snow and Zero. It was a culmination, but it hardly attracted critical attention at all.

It was a difficult poem and very much open to misinterpretation. Fraser, one of the very few who actually commented on it, changed his mind about it several times. He was probably referring to "The Sonnet of Hamlet" when in the article "apocalypse in poetry" he called Durrell a "brilliant visionary of defeatism", setting him against the optimistic poets of the Apocalypse (WH.6). That particular point, as we shall see, is worth considering, but how he came to see in Durrell...
a left-wing poet and how he came to contrast him with writers "on the right" like Eliot and Anne Ridler is hard to say. The density and difficulty of Durrell's poetry invited misunderstanding. Like much of Durrell's earlier work, however, "The Sonnet" held bright flashes of meaning, especially for the reader who was acquainted with the poet's recurring concerns. In fact, much that is at a first glance incomprehensible can be interpreted in the light of that psycho-aesthetic fire which Durrell kindled with such diligence in his Hamlet letters and in many subsequent essays and reviews.

Curiously, however, the most immediately striking feature of the sequence, which Fraser in 1968 called "a kind of exercise in wild verbal felicity, in baroque improvisation" (FrLD.41) was its rigid and regular stanzaic shape. Durrell, as we have seen, enunciated a (conventionally) modernist aesthetic, created a violently dark mixture of imagery, symbol and allusion, and then poured this into the sonnet form which was not only rigid and restrictive, but also most traditional. The question, which touches upon a central dilemma in the art of Lawrence Durrell, is why did he do this?

Referring to Durrell's poetry in general, Fraser once remarked that there was some more personal quality which he felt was lacking: "Hysterico passio, the really wild dance, the throwing it all away", and he added with special citation of the Hamlet sequence: "perhaps there is often a contrast between the measured exactness of the cadence, and the too literate violence of the images" (FrLD.42). The sharp contrast between a fixed pattern of fourteen sonnets and their seemingly chaotic content is of precisely the same unsettling quality. With her good critical sense as regards the productions of her Villa Seurat friends, Anais Nin put her finger on the problem in 1939. She wrote:

I feel that you are so lyrical, so emotional deep down that you are right in seeking a form to rule all this ocean. And being masculine - you seek your form as a container, a frame ... for this even the form of the poem. You seek the intellectual control. Fine. It's your way. But inside you there's a runaway horse of sensation. (Mosaic.xi.H.2.47)
A somewhat more critical view, though one essentially pointing in the same direction, was offered by Fraser in The White Horseman anthology of 1942. Comparing Durrell with Anne Ridler and T.S. Eliot he noted:

Durrell, more pessimistically, seems to say, 'Look what sheer chaos I get when I give rein to all my impulses. I must find order, I must select, even though this leads neither to a coherent philosophy nor a real religion, but only to an ornamental madness.' (WH.6f)

The precise relationship between form and content, between order and giving rein to one's impulses, a relation whose complexity he demonstrated in the Hamlet sonnet's extreme tension, came to gain in time ascendancy in the aesthetic thinking of Lawrence Durrell. Later, the author of Einsteinian quartets, quincunxes and double-decker novels was to conclude emphatically: "If the form comes off, everything comes off" (PR.281). In the tumultuous years before the war, however, the question was still very much open to inner debate and experiment.

For as in the Booster editorials, the injunction of the Black Book's hero resounded in Durrell's early work: "There are no canons - should be none" (BB.66). The crusts of "literary dogma" ought to be done away with, or as Durrell put it in an essay on E. Graham Howe written around the time "The Sonnet of Hamlet" was composed: "To the pure imagination Truth is free of all particularities; and the law for living beside the Truth is the law of acceptance" (Purpose.xi.2.85). Such maximalist demands may have called to mind Breton's automatic ideal: "Thought's dictation in the absence of all control exercised by the reason and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations" (DGSS.61). Indeed, as has been noted before, Durrell accepted much of the "superb critical apparatus" of the surrealists (HR.4). Still, non-critical openness, Millerian acceptance, what Breton's group called passive receptivity, posed for the nascent poet Lawrence Durrell (and for the young editor contemplating the dangers of 'over-eclecticism'!) difficult questions, and the surrealist answers to these questions were found unsatisfactory. Acceptance was the objective, a stance which was "neither partial nor exclusive" (Purpose.xi.2.86), but how could one know what to include if "there is no category of irrelevances" (BB.66), if one insisted that "everything must be included" (BB.66). And in what
form was one to present this?

There existed in Durrell's idealistic blueprint, as we have seen above, a contrivance which in theory pointed a way out of the dilemma. The pivotal rock which weathered all iconoclastic blasts, all disillusionment and even the cathartic effect of poetry, was that mysterious psycho-religious entity called the "SELF" (BB.147). There are no canons, maintained Durrell, but one: "FAITH. Have you the faith to deliver yourself to the inner world of Gauguin, or haven't you?" (D.ii.40). Good writing, good poetry, had to do with the set of realities called variously, 'self', 'inner man', 'the Heraldic Universe' or even 'God'. We have explained this above. The crucial, "inevitable and necessary" thing was "for the writer TO BE HIMSELF on paper"(D.ii.39), and more, this pursuit would lead him invariably to those mythical regions where Durrell deemed the true well-springs of all great art. He often quoted Eliot's dictum about the "sudden raids on the inarticulate"(Alyn 62). Varying that insight in his own "The Prince and Hamlet" of 1937, he wrote: "It is from the remote battle-front of the self that the artist sends us back his messages, gnomic scribbles, fragments, which we can never understand, but which thrill, us pierce us and remain with us for centuries as a sort of tribal experience" (NEW.x.14.271). The Hamlet sonnet's oblique and cryptic flavour had its origins in this familiarly romantic belief, and, importantly, in Durrell's eyes, what seems chaotic and obscure was in fact of archetypal and collective value. The relation between form and content suddenly appears in a different light.

The quasi-magical "territory so remote from the mind and heart of the ordinary man that it would appear very near madness"(15) - and overrun by enthusiasts of every denomination. A youthful Lawrence Durrell insisted on its original and unspoilt nature, vastly significant, archetypal and impersonal quality - no matter that this territory had been charted by Freud and Jung and their epigoni many years before, no matter that other artistic explorers had searched out and described in manifold ways its every square yard. Durrell brandished with pride a great discovery: communications from that realm would carry its especial stamp and flavour; they would be ideogrammatic, condensed, inexplicable, emblematic, non-rational, impersonal, endowed with a
certain extra-temporal, spatial quality and universally relevant (Corr.19).

In one of his letters to Miller, Durrell called his vision of poetry 'classical'. He used the term in fact as synonymous with mythical or archetypal, noting that the "next phase is a CLASSICAL phase, a form of diathermy, a writing on the womb-plasm with the curette"(Corr.128). Genuine poetry, he maintained, was "timeless" and "spatial", had more to do, metaphorically speaking, with sculpture than with the written word: "in writers every new effort being vitiated by rationalisation - whereas in sculpture you find your way sensually through your fingertips" (Corr.128). As one can see, Durrell's attitude was based on non-rational, sensualist premises and it evinced the intense desire to achieve a wider 'classical' validity. None of his contemporaries, he felt, had achieved that phenomenal, spatial purity. Durrell said: "You see, today all writing is pretending to be Classical (Eliot, Hemingway, Stein) whereas the origins of it are really ROMANTIC. Compare Waste Land with Baudelaire, Stein with Alfred de Musset" (Corr.128).

Durrell's term 'classical' owed much to Wyndham Lewis' promulgation of the "Classical Man" in Time and Western Man. Lewis had described his "Classical Man" as "that inveterate spatializer", wholly "in love with Plastic" (TWM.407). At the same time Durrell's denigrating use of the term 'romantic' in this particular context is reminiscent of the vigorous blasts against the schools which Lewis had seen sprout up around the "Time-doctrine", around the philosophies of Bergson, James, Whitehead, Alexander, Spengler and others who maintained the primary reality of Time, "belittling and discrediting the 'spatializing instinct' of man"(TWM.449). In Time and Western Man Lewis had been critical of Joyce (Miller quoted from this), Gertrude Stein, Pound and others, including the surrealists and other "romantic simpletons", and he resolutely maintained: "Bergsonian durée, or psychological time, is essentially the 'time' of the romantic."(TWM.24). For Durrell the word 'romantic' here implied a similarly subjective restriction, a certain limitation to a personal sphere which he, another 'inveterate spatializer', wished to transcend as well.
Though Durrell owed much to Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent", his sights were set higher than the Pound/Eliot doctrine; to get beyond the merely personal, to reach that ideal extinction of the artist's personality in the poem was only a first step. In theory, he aimed for more than a fruitful association with "the mind of Europe": his ambition was to penetrate into a universally valid realm, to create, as he put it in that Delta letter to Henry Miller: "those immense mythical figures which will fertilize all our books for centuries ... and our minds" (D.ii.41). And this was the only truly 'classical' art which he accepted. It was an almost utopian ideal.

Fortunately, Durrell's lofty heraldic realm was provided with exit routes which lead immediately to less exacting standards more in keeping with his own abilities; "flying Truth", said Durrell, "outstrips the vague patterns of our conceptual schemes - the sparrowshot of systems and cosmologies" (Purpose.xi.2.85), and with this he deftly stepped out of the exigencies of his own conceptual scheme. Paradoxes abound. Durrell exclaimed: "Away with these old buggers who want art to be a superior cabinet-making" (Spirit 47), but admired their poetry. He said that only "the poem or the parable can spread a pattern large enough to reach the wing-tips of this bird; and it must be only because the poet and the healer accept words, not as Truth, but as embroideries on Truth" (Purpose.xi.2.85), but he plainly felt that - acceptance or no acceptance - some embroideries were more significantly inspired and executed than others, some more poignant, more moving and successful. He demanded faith in his Heraldic world, called for "Chaos as a form of order" - and constructed his poems most carefully, agreeing with Michael Roberts who once said of Gascoyne's early surrealist efforts that "the 'order' of such poems is not necessarily identical with the 'imaginative' order of myth and legend" (FabBMV.20). He proclaimed with the other Boosters: "we are incurably romantic and enthusiastic" (B.1.5), and chimed in when Miller wrote: "THE GREAT ARTIST IS HE WHO CONQUERS THE ROMANTIC IN HIMSELF" (BS.194). He enunciated an introvert aesthetic, but as Anais Nin noticed: "He likes Henry's ruthlessness. He calls it anti-romantic. He calls it the truth. He himself writes without feeling, impersonally" (AN.ii.231). At odds, in short, in the heart of the young Lawrence Durrell, were on the one hand the absolutist of a Millerian cast,
Many years later Durrell again expressed his belief that the "contemporary artist, having reached the end of a subjective cycle in Lawrence, Joyce, (though we might carry the story as far forward as Henry Miller) is turning his face away from autobiographical form" (Key 66). He added that the artist "has become aware of the necessity to transcend personality"(Key 87). Transcendent art, a new non-personal and collective mythology based on the language of the dream, was the 'classical' ideal Durrell aspired to, the aesthetic objective of one whom Anais Nin called: "a romantic seeking to repudiate or deny this"(AN.ii.231).

It is here that the important difference between Wyndham Lewis and Durrell may be discovered. Plainly the former's understanding of a classical ideal had little in common with the latter's psycho-mystical bias. What Lewis admired was Classical Man's "objectivity, his sensuousness, his popular and common-sense view of things"(TWM.406). Lewis noted in Time and Western Man: "I prefer the chaste wisdom of the Chinese or the Greek, to that hot, tawny brand of superlative fanaticism coming from the parched deserts of the Ancient East, with its ineradicable abstractness. I am for the physical world." (TWM.130). Durrell was not quite certain whether he was for the physical world or for the Heraldic Universe. He never really made up his mind.

Many years later Durrell observed: "The rectangle is the system; the circle is the organism. The struggle for our culture is played out between the two forms. And the tragedy is that we need them both. We are caught."(Alyn 42). His pre-war quasi-surrealist pronouncements on
the need for freedom and unpremeditated art were clearly only the obverse side of a deep feeling for order, form and tradition. Referring to a poem by Edwin Muir, G.S. Fraser said that it seemed to illustrate what might be called "a classicizing of romanticism" (MWW.338). This is a phrase which might characterise the spirit and tension manifest in much of Durrell's work as well. Quite apart from their controlled artistry, which we will discuss later, his poems, like those of Auden or Bottrall, were never markedly intimate, never "really brutally in the first voice" (FrLD.27). They were de-personalised, playful, cleverly attuned to psychological and aesthetic implications - and, if one compares them with the world of Gascoyne and Dylan Thomas, curiously lacking in emotional intensity as well. A hesitant enthusiast, a self-conscious romantic, well-read in psychology, Durrell's "first voice is already public, informed with a certain social and aesthetic suavity" (FrLD.27), or - especially in his earlier poems - it remains hidden under layers of obliqueness allegedly archetypal. "The early poems, like the later poems, were self-communings, but there was nothing excessively or rawly private" and if there was, it was wonderfully camouflaged in the thicket of 'classical' imagery (FrLDWW.17).

Like so many other twentieth century writers, disillusioned and in search of a faith, Durrell hunted for 'objective' corroboration of his vision, for the grand 'objective correlative'. Very often, as we have said, this search led to traditional fields of reference. Quite in keeping with the idea of 'classicising romanticism', quite in the spirit of the modernists before him, traditional elements were put to use as stones in a personal mosaic, and the most traditional element which Durrell used in his Hamlet sequence was that age-old literary form, the sonnet. The poem's formal arrangement, then, was not only a means of containing the "runaway horse of sensation" (Mosaic.xi.H.2.47), as Anaïs Nin observed, his dark rhetoric, nor only a reference to its subject matter's Elizabethan origins. It was also a function of his search for permanence, for certain trans-individual, 'classical' values: "Art must no longer exist to depict man; but to invoke God" (BB.243) - and Durrell's God looked benevolently on the sonnet's traditional sense of order and proportion. Durrell was evidently willing to pay the price for this sense of order, which was
a certain limitation in flexibility, in the capacity for sudden shifts which had characterised the earlier poems of Eliot and Pound. It is important to see, however, that Durrell was nevertheless closer to these poets than to Auden, who too had found traditional forms alive, but had put them to a different use: 'depicting man' instead of 'invoking God'.

G.S. Fraser once described Durrell as being "not an inventor of new poetic concepts". He added: "For him, as for the Elizabethans whom he loves, the originality of the poet lies not in the discovery of new topics, new moods, but in ingenuity, in invention, in what the Elizabethans called 'device', in handling the old ones" (FrLD.38). There is much to be said for this view, especially as regards Durrell's technique. But this appraisal seems not quite appropriate to his aims as revealed in the Hamlet sequence. There was more involved than the modest pleasure of operating successfully within the framework of old forms. The young man's ambitions were still immense, the 'great poem' a real possibility for the writer not yet content with a reputation as the poet of the Mediterranean genius loci, the post-Alexandrian expert on 'modern love'. For all his flaunted modesty - "My ambitions are hedge-hopping and clipped of wing" (Corr.54) - his youthful objective was no less, as noted above, than a new post-subjective classicism.

Durrell's insistence on the 'Hamlet' theme in the years before the war must also be seen in this context. It was a part of his search for the generally accepted, the 'classical' paradigm. Like Dylan Thomas with his reversal of Bunyan's book, Durrell was most aware of the central importance of Shakespeare's drama to the imagination of his countrymen. Unlike Thomas, whose attempts in the "Prologue to an Adventure", as we have said, originated in the avant-garde impulse to do violence to bourgeois convention and smugness, Durrell, as I have said, regarded Hamlet as exemplifying the universal conflict between the 'real self' and the outside forces which incessantly opposed it. The concept of individuation behind was, as has been shown above, vaguely Jungian.
"The Sonnet of Hamlet", however, also made use, albeit more obliquely, of Freud's famous interpretation of the Shakespearian hero. It is hardly necessary to mention that Freud's reading of Hamlet in Die Traumdeutung was as much responsible as the Sophoclean tragedy itself for the literary confirmation of the Oedipus complex, this - in Freud's view - universally effective ordering of man's psychical material. We will return to this below. The point here is that once again we find Durrell using what he knew to be elements which (allegedly) had a wider, trans-personal frame of operation. Durrell was indeed engaged in "classicizing romanticism" - and pulling out all stops. Whether he succeeded or not is a different matter.

"You must rewrite Hamlet", Durrell always maintained: "You must make the leap outside the womb, destroy your connections" (AN.ii.233). The Black Book was his own attempt to rewrite Hamlet, "to try and break the mummy wrappings - the cultural swaddling clothes which I symbolized here as 'The English Death'" (BB.9). "The Sonnet of Hamlet", written very shortly after that work was published in 1938, reiterated in short-hand fashion and against the background of the original Tragedie, many of the ideas, themes, images and symbols which permeated Durrell's portrait of the artist as a young man. At a first cursory reading much appears strange. Yet one's eyes quickly grow accustomed to the dark. In fact, the conventional romantic concern with 'universals' strikes one immediately, with death and rebirth, with love and with myth, self-fulfillmentand struggle, with suffering, sexuality, insanity and art and so on. One finds, unsurprisingly, the children (vide "Genesis") who "from their pillows prophesy" and the habitual identification of the poet/Hamlet with Christ. One reads again the self-descriptions of the poet as the lonely creator, who in the face of a hostile society follows his call tragically to its bitter ending. Much of this rings familiar in the ears of someone who has read Durrell's preceding work.

Further, one discerns through the clouds of imagery the old Laurentian idea that the death and destruction of modern England would make possible the renascence of a mythical world - but with a slight shift. In The Black Book's central valedictory epistle to "Alan", the narrator had still felt certain that his book could revive that "whole
dormant Platonic principle which, in its essence, is England" (BB.135). The belief in the power of poetry was still unshaken. In "The Sonnet of Hamlet" a change has occurred. Here Durrell is closer to the "Blind Man's Buff" diatribes of David Gascoyne who said: "Nothing could be more desirable or more edifying than the violent dissolution of the British Empire" (B.iii.34). In "The Sonnet of Hamlet" Durrell prayed for the fury of "a European justice", so that "death's pure canon" might again "lure the fabulous lion from his walks" (D.ii.35). Perhaps here was the reason why Fraser called Durrell a 'defeatist' in 1942. In the apocalyptic gloom of early 1939, however, the vision of a phoenix-like resurrection of England after the fire was for many a sign of optimism, almost the only hope left, and, revealingly, Fraser's own first comments on this poem in 1940 lacked any reference to defeatism....

Durrell knew that merely to write about 'universals' and to use the sonnet form would not suffice to realise the 'mythopoeic' ideals he had invoked in "Hamlet, Prince of China" and elsewhere. There were difficulties, and a very important one was, as one critic pointed out, "that the English language is not ideogrammatic at all; it is not spatial or mythic" (Labrys.v.164). How did Durrell go about solving this problem? First, one might point out that his verse is not ethereally ineffective (like the poems of Alfred Perlès, for instance), that his poems, as Derek Stanford suggested, "hinted at a kind of unifying shorthand", while their "reductive or abstracting sign-language was frequently achieved without the exclusion of a concrete texture so often accompanying such usage" (Labrys.v.105). And the reason was that he conceived of poetic diction in terms that were in the imagist tradition.

There are critics who would disagree: writing in 1963, John Press felt that much of Durrell's verse reflected the deficiencies of The Alexandria Quartet, and he quoted with approval Frank Kermode's strictures on Justine: "over-perfumed manner, the insistence on exotic sin and fatigue, the Huysmans-like neurasthenias, the perpetual straining of the prose to produce dazzle and the consequent bathos" (Press 210). True, Durrell's temperament led him at times and even before the war away from clarity to a Yeatsian obsession with 'myth'.
involving him in an almost inevitable haze of meaning. His verse, nevertheless, including the Hamlet sequence, fulfilled very often, at least as far as its pictorial effects were concerned, the imagist demand that poetry should be "hard and clear, never blurred or indefinite". Here, incidentally, Durrell was closer to Grigson than to the Apocalyptic poets. The imagist manifesto had said that "concentration is the very essence of poetry" (FabBMV.13). Durrell, "a very patient reviser of metaphor" (FrLDWW.22), agreed. He strove for poems that were "tight as diamonds and very brightly coloured" (Corr.68), pared down in language, precise even in their obscurity. Dylan Thomas said of his own verse: "Much of the obscurity is due to rigorous compression" (DTSL.196). Durrell probably thought the same of his own poems. We will have occasion below to unravel a cluster of dark images from "The Sonnet of Hamlet" in order to support this view.

Durrell's spatial aesthetic was well-suited to his elliptical, frequently economical style (Fraser spoke of a "controlled poignancy" (FrLDWW.16)). No matter how silly was his assertion: "I AM SLOWLY BUT VERY CAREFULLY AND WITHOUT CONSCIOUS THOUGHT DESTROYING TIME" (Corr.19), no matter that poetry would forever lack a sculpture's tangibility, at least words and images could be chosen according to the sense of compactness and the illusion of solidity which they might evoke in a reader. Whether Durrell succeeded or not depends also on the reader's own attitude to the power of words or symbols. Durrell certainly believed in the power of the word and so felt that the feat might be accomplished with an effective poetic technique. Abstract terms were shunned - or involved with attributes implying spatiality: "So birth and death are knitted by a vowel". Metaphors suggestive of a concrete, three-dimensional object were preferred to impressionistic or abstract images. Although Durrell later said: "Poetically, words are less important for their dictionary meanings than for the vibrations they set up in the middle ear - the pineal ear so to speak" (Moore 164), the imagery in "Hamlet" is essentially visual, objective. Durrell's sequence resounds with decisions such as the following: "By the trimmed lamp I cobble this sonnet" (D.iii.29). Condensation, a love for controlled multiple meaning, merged with the bias for the pictorial and the hard, the 'objective correlative'. In that particular line a poem is likened to
a shoe or boot and one is referred to Durrell's sculptural spatial ideal. At the same time one is also motioned to the narrator/Hamlet's self-conscious attempts to write; he is no sculptor, nor even a shoemaker, no more than a coarse and clumsy mender of shoes.

Sometimes a pictorial effect is achieved at the cost of lexical or rational meaning. Referring to Ophelia's suicide, the poet writes: "Cold water took my pretty by the beard"(D.iii.32). One must dig deep to discover some sense - unless a-logicality and disruption of expectation are understood as integral parts of the pattern. Again, as if to emphasise the 'timelessness' of his work, Durrell places with words of old or even archaic usage (the mystic's taws, the greenest willow-wand, the courtier's fang, the cover of thrrostle and dove, swart Ophelia) phrases of distinctly modern provenance (a rubber widow, a frigid autist). His rich vocabulary put at his disposal unusual words that disrupt the flow of reading (MFS.xiii.3.328). Sometimes metaphors are mixed to produce a violently catachrestic dissonance: thus "pain forever green"(ibid.30) and "the carrion's scientific torpor"(ibid.32). The fact, however, that both of these (at a first reading almost surrealist) juxtapositions are part of a group of very similar images qualifies their individual oddity and obscurity. One finds that to the latter metaphor the image of the "enduring geometric egg"(ibid.30) and "the mathematics of the wore(ibid.31) correspond in construction, while the word "green", Durrell's favourite colour in The Black Book, occurs no less than seven times in various constellations in the sequence, some less nonsensical than others.

Repetition is a form of meaning in a poem not immediately intelligible. One does not have to go as far as John Unterecker, who said that the repeated motifs in Durrell's work "arrange themselves into what Jung called archetypal patterns - man's secret means of ordering the accidental imagery of his life into a useful design"(Unterecker 27). It is plain enough that by virtue of their frequency these images - one might mention also the repeated reference to the Trinity - contribute to the poem's structure. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the sequence's tremendous emphasis on the circle and things circular.
Durrell once described a reader's first encounter with *The Waste Land*: "He hunts for a plot, for a structure, and finds instead flight after flight of carefully woven images, sequences of moods which at first look haphazard, but later come to be recognized as skilful patterning of feelings" (Key 145). The patterning in the *Hamlet* poem is essentially of a similar kind though it evinces far less complexity and skill, fixed as it is to the sonnet form and in a rather transparent way to a circular structure, circular, that is if one follows the author's view (and John Unterecker's) that an almost excessive abundance of images connoting roundness signify or symbolise circularity. We quote from Unterecker:

Setting up in the opening lines of the first of the fourteen sonnets an image of the spherical world ('the curve of the embalming winter'), Durrell carefully continues the line of his curve through section after section, until in the fourteenth and last one he can complete it by pointing out 'I bend a sonnet like a begging-bowl'. (Unterecker 31)

Almost every single section, in fact, refers the reader to the idea of a circle or a curve: "the ocean curved beneath his dreams", thus a line from the second poem, "the hollow curvature of the world" in the fourth, and "oval singers of the Cretan eikon" in the fifth, and so on. The tenth sonnet speaks of the "curved meridian of hazard like a bow" and the last of "the sweet spherical music". One finds the aforementioned "enduring geometric egg", drum-heads and drums and tabors, "a sparrow's egg", "the round skull", "the wheel and the berry", various hooks, "the mystic's taws", "the eye-ball lense" and numerous rounded exclamations: "O". Finally, the fourteenth sonnet points one right back to the first: the poet bending his sonnet like a begging bowl in the former corresponds to the cobbler in the latter, and similarly the "three-stringed oracle" to the "father, son and the marble woman", "the fabulous lion" to the lion guarding the "enchanted skulls" and so on.

Quite aside from its formal, structuring functions, as it were, the underlying reason for this strong emphasis on the circle was again Durrell's preoccupation with recreating the dream's spatial quality in art. The circle, or rather a movement, reminiscent of the old mystical sign for eternity, uruboros, the snake feeding on its own tail and
generating itself, was a form he thought to be appropriately significant and symbolical. Of course, the fact that his fourteen fourteen-line poems convey the sense of a square, was no accident either. But the circle was particularly important. He had written to Miller: "... in Capricorn your new attitude will be definable (surely not) as CLASSICAL, in the sense that a circle is classical" (Corr.128). If one believes, as Durrell did, in the reality of a symbol, in the influence it wields beyond the conscious level of the reader, such formal (half concealed) structures were immensely significant. A quotation from The Black Book may help to clarify: "I tell myself continually that this must be something which will never end, but conclude only when it has reached its own genesis again: very well, a piece of literary perpetual motion... " (BB.66). A "literary perpetual motion" was what Durrell proposed for "The Sonnet of Hamlet" as well.

As in The Black Book, he was confronted with a written work's linearity, the fact that it has a beginning, a middle and an end. The narrator of his first novel Pied Piper of Lovers had asked: "How in hell can I express the volume of things by daubing ink on paper" (Labrys.v.163). Four years later Durrell was still preoccupied with counteracting the inexorable forward movement and with creating by means of all sorts of tricks that might "serve to disrupt normal time sequences" what he called the timeless "enormous Now" (BB.244). The acute architectural sense evinced under the chaotic surface imagery brings one back to the aesthetic implications of the anti-critical 'acceptance' attitude and to Durrell's relation to the surrealists.

"To me, the poetical 'impulse' or 'inspiration' is only the sudden, and generally physical, coming of energy to the constructional, craftsman ability", Dylan Thomas once noted: "The laziest workman receives the fewest impulses. And vice versa" (NV.xi.8). Lawrence Durrell agreed. "Like Flaubert, a stickler for the right word" (Moore 95), Miller once called his young friend who had revised and reworked The Black Book for eighteen months and more. Presumably "The Sonnet of Hamlet" was also the result of long labour. Like Dylan Thomas, he too was "a very patient reviser of metaphors" (FrLdWW.22), which distinguished both of them from the more orthodox proponents of
surrealist art and from many other New Apocalypts, whose "grip on the reins" was generally felt to be slack, their writing often "imitative or weakly associative" (MWW.325). Durrell was a craftsman.

"Surrealism demanded the abnegation of the self" (Thurley 105), and just like David Gascoyne (in the end), Lawrence Durrell was unable to comply. The Black Book already found him parading "the dislocated manner of the early Surrealists" (BB.215). He used surrealist modes and surfaces — but only as means to a non-surrealist end. A genuine surrealist image ideally "ceases to be the vehicle for the expression of something other than itself" (Ray 48). In praise of Eluard's La Rose Publique, for instance, David Gascoyne wrote: "Every line means exactly what it says: thus imagery becomes completely free of symbolism and refers to nothing but itself" (NV.xiii.18). The void yawning between this aesthetic of imagery and that of "The Sonnet of Hamlet" is obvious, for as we have shown, Durrell's images were purposive, rhetorical and carefully patterned. The Black Book's phantasmagoric pictures, according to Paul Ray, "do not communicate themselves as the pure surrealist image does, but rather are the vehicle for the author's particular emotional state — an unsurrealist use of surrealist devices" (Ray 307). Precisely the same applies to the images in "The Sonnet of Hamlet". Indeed, the images there are not only expressions of the poet's "emotional state" but carefully selected to manifest his Weltanschauung as well.

Condensation, the "short cut across the accepted linguistic relations" (Key 56f), and timelessness, the expression of all phenomena in spatial terms (MFS.xiii.3.326f), were among the characteristics of Freud's universal "dream language" (Key 52). Both the surrealist aesthetic and Durrell's had roots there. Unlike the surrealists, Durrell, however, deliberately imitated and used the mechanisms of the dream and the unconscious for his own purposes. "Durrell is less interested in revealing the spontaneous chemistry of the mind in action than in intellectualizing its impressions" (MFS.xiii.3.322). In the 1950s Durrell lectured on the difference between the pre-Freudian artist and his self-conscious successors: "It is one thing to use free-association and images before Freud and Frazer: it is quite another thing to use them when they have become conscious, when their
value is clear even if their meaning is not" (Key 145). Without surrendering his aesthetic prerogative, in the years before the war Lawrence Durrell worked in the awareness of the Freudian 'laws' of the unconscious and of the 'value' of its images (17).

For Durrell, however, the Freudian shadow implied more than an aesthetic of dream images. It also influenced the selection of subject matter. For if many a note he struck in his own poem resounded with echoes of Shakespeare's work, and if the poem depended crucially on that effect, his melody mixed with the echoes of other interpretations of the drama as well. Of these Freud's very own, as we have suggested above, was centrally important.

Here is an example: a line from the third sonnet once again bears upon Hamlet, the fledgling writer: "I take her image on my screaming nib" (D.iii.30). It would seem almost unnecessary to comment on the implied relation (a Villa Seurat favourite) between art and action, sexuality and violence, if the woman referred to were not Hamlet's "outlawed mother". One might point out that Durrell once offered to an interviewer a vaguely Freudian interpretation of his own psychical development, stressing how much he loved his warm-hearted spoiling mother and how he felt a latent hatred for his father (whom he came 'to identify with the despised England!') (Alyn 26ff), a personal backdrop that might be held in mind since in Zero and Asylum in the Snow the narrator - "I am Lawrence Durrell, the writer" (Spirit.263) - is expressly identified with the character called Hamlet - "I come to you (that was I) because you more than anyone understand"

What is more significant is this: we have said that Durrell's images are referential and that this crucially distinguishes them from surrealist work. But referential to what? The quill-dagger-phallic image offers a key to the understanding of the poem itself, indicating not only the background of Shakespeare's drama, as well as Durrell's own Hamlet variations and interpretations, but also Freud's Hamlet explication.
The original *Tragicall Historie* flashes on the mind as one comes upon the outlawed mother impaled on a screaming nib, its tangled complexities, the protagonist's never ending hesitations, his incapacity for spontaneous revenge, the wildly passionate love for (and abuse of) the Queen. "What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me?", she cried, but Shakespeare's Hamlet was unable to act. The crucial question, one which had tested the minds of Goethe and Nietzsche and so many others, was, of course: why did he not act? Before coming to the Freudian view of *Hamlet* and its bearing on "The Sonnet", it must be repeated that the question of true and meaningful action wholly preoccupied Durrell in the pre-war years. It was the central problem of *The Black Book* and I have written extensively on it in the discussion of "Hamlet, Prince of China". But curiously there existed a slight difference of emphasis between Durrell's theory and his quasi-Jungian exegesis in the *Hamlet* letters to Miller - and what he wrote in his prose and poetry. Here, the mother-son relationship took on a far greater importance. The Oedipus Complex is a central symptom of the English Disease so graphically described in *The Black Book*. 'Death' Gregory, a latter day Hamlet, does not kill himself either but enters the tomb of petit-bourgeois convention, noting in his testament: "To my mother I offer my imperishable soul. It has never really left or keeping" (BB.212). Sadly this veritable caricature of the Freudian concept looked back to Fanny, a girl he knew when he was young: "There was a psalm due to you, but sitting at my mother's knee, pale and domestic, regimental in my starched collar, I could not make it" (BB.203).

Like 'Death' Gregory, who wrote "disparagingly of Shakespeare in an advanced review - and then returned home to my guardian virgin as the snow and dressed in horn-rimmed spectacles" (BB.196) - the Hamlet of Durrell's sonnet sequence feels sterile and hopelessly ineffective, dropped by his mother "seedless like a pod" (D.iii.35). These are the sonnet's crucial closing words. The point is: the allusion to that central psychoanalytic category, the Oedipus Complex, in "The Sonnet of Hamlet" was no coincidence but an aesthetic decision.
Durrell may not have been familiar with Ernest Jones's *Hamlet* analysis (he probably was), but the relevant passages in *Die Traumdeutung* cannot have been lost on him. I do not mean that they explain the many 'phallic' images, which pervade the poem - and I leave their interpretation to the psychoanalytic critic, or to John Unterecker who saw in this "host of temporal verticals ... imagery appropriately associated not only with this mortal life but specifically with the various kinds of big and little deaths that in one way or another end it...."(Unterecker 32). Rather I have in mind the following: Freud, one may recall, explained Hamlet's inability to act, to revenge his father, by drawing attention to the fact that Hamlet was not in the least incapable of action itself (vide Rosencrantz and Guildenstern sent to their death, the passionate stabbing of Polonius). He was only incapable of one action; he could not kill his uncle. The reason, according to Freud, was that Claudius had done no more than realise his, Hamlet's own repressed desires. Claudius' crime manifested Hamlet's own deepest wishes and in effect those of the audience itself, hence, according to Freud, the play's timeless aesthetic appeal. These desires are, of course, to kill his father and to sleep with his mother. In a sense then, Hamlet and the audience are as guilty as the murderer himself, Hamlet's ruminations on suicide the result of an unconscious identifying with his punishable uncle. This, basically, was Freud's interpretation.

The question is, were there any signs in Durrell's poem that suggest a congruence? His Hamlet is oppressed by feelings of guilt. "Guilt can lie heavy as the house of tortoise", he says in the sonnet referring to his mother, and it is he who feels it: "O I walk under a house of horn seeking a door" (18). More important is that that Hamlet appears to identify with his uncle, which must seem a curious fact unless viewed in the light of Freud. Both Hamlet and Claudius wear black, and in the twelfth sonnet, which is dominated by a powerful contrast between black and white (references to chess, to a chequerboard, to piano keys) the queen plays against the prince with "her man in black". Her man in black is Claudius - but he is also Hamlet. This seems a contradiction unless recalls that Durrell always insisted that there were two Hamlets, the Prince, defined by social norms and taboos, a kind of personified super-ego in other words, and the hidden
'inner man', the id as it were, speaking only obliquely "through the chinks of his armour" (Corr. 26). And so the Queen was in fact playing with Claudius and the 'inner' Hamlet against the Prince. This view is in fact clearly alluded to in "The Sonnet of Hamlet", where Hamlet is the "double fellow in the labyrinth" (D. iii. 35).

Durrell saw Hamlet's radical disjunction of personality in psychological terms. Freud said that if someone called Hamlet a hysteric, he would regard this as a logical consequence of his own view. Durrell followed that logic. His first Hamlet spoke from the pages of Asylum in the Snow; he is an inmate and obviously what one would call a schizophrenic. Another of Durrell's Hamlets appeared in the third Booster editorial, where "on the title-page of the 20th century Hamlet still walks with his palms turned outward, smiling the insane smile of the schizophrenic" (B. iii. 5). According to psychoanalytic teaching, hysteria, a psycho-neurotic symptom resulting from a violent and inadequately resolved conflict between the affective demands of the id and the ego cum superego, can occasionally lead to a splitting or doubling of the personality. Although Freud may not have had this consequence in mind when thinking of Hamlet, Durrell took it to its extreme conclusion. His Hamlet is not a hysteric but a schizophrenic. In "The Sonnet of Hamlet" the protagonist/narrator speaks of himself as "A frigid autist pacing out his rope" (D. iii. 35). Autism is regarded as another form of schizophrenia.

Referring to that particular line, G.S. Fraser has said that it was "interesting" that the young Lawrence Durrell "knew the precise meaning of the word 'autist'" (FrLD. 43). In fact, Durrell not only knew the precise meaning, but used the word in exact keeping with his view of Hamlet as a double personality: "Two chronologies: two lives: two separate sanities: two planes of action moving disjointedly along together: and two protagonists who are one. Hamlet and the Prince" (NEW. x. 14. 271). What is far more "interesting", however, is the following: having traced (in Key to Modern Poetry) the development of English poetry in the previous hundred years or so along a "gradual subjective curve" to the mid-1950s, Durrell pointed out that in that time-span the "artist became an autist (to borrow a word from psychology which is derived from 'autos' meaning 'self'), he became a
Needless to say, we are again in the middle of that obsessive Villa Seurat discussion concerning the precise relation between art, self-realisation and insanity, and indeed, just as in the pages of the Hamlet sonnet it is sometimes difficult to determine whether it is the poet speaking or the soliloquist himself, so Durrell in a review of early 1939 maintained firmly that Hamlet was not a madman "but simply an artist"(PL.i.2.np). We are back at the centre of a crucial debate, but will not remain here. The point has been to show that beneath a single line of poetry like "I take her image on my screaming nib" there are concealed resonances of meaning and references that ripple across a dark pond, one which seemed at first glance forbidding and unfathomable, the patterning and construction of which, however, is to a large extent artificial.

I have said that Durrell's patterns are certainly not accidental or spontaneous. They are rather deliberate and created in the hope that they might appeal to the reader's subconscious world, that archetypal 'heraldic' realm where Durrell discerned the possibility of a new non-personal, 'classical' mythology. His ambitious attempts to forge a new 'classicism' by a skillful employment of poetic technique and 'archetypal' subject matter were undertaken in the awareness that by 1939 a basic knowledge of Freud was common to most readers of avant-garde poetry. He was aware that with this spreading of Freudian ideas the crucial unconscious workings both of dream aesthetics and of the Oedipal allusions were endangered. Lecturing in 1956 about the Oedipus Complex, Durrell said:

Presumably by making the mechanism of this complex conscious Freud has deprived the artist of his greatest subject-matter, deprived him of a source-book of suffering upon which to draw for emotional material. Can a public which has been instructed into the meaning of this basic pattern, this source of early suffering, ever enjoy its Hamlets any more?(Key 66)

In the same lecture, Durrell noted that at least one attempt to "rewrite Hamlet" at any rate had "not completely come off"(Key 87). He did not mean his own "Sonnet" but T.S.Eliot's The Family Reunion. It was his "humble opinion" that the loss of "the Oedipus Complex as a fund of emotional material" was responsible for the failure of play.
Importantly, however, in the years before the war Durrell's opinion on this 'version' of Hamlet was altogether different. Reviewing The Family Reunion around the time "The Sonnet of Hamlet" was first printed, Durrell felt that in this play "Eliot takes full possession of the territory which he only glanced at before", that "area of experience" where "the unexpiated sin lies in wait for the hero - the dragon of blood-guilt which must be slain" (PL.i.2.np). In these years, as we have seen, Durrell still believed that a new 'classical' art also based on the findings of psychoanalysis might be achieved. The Black Book was his first attempt, as he said, it was "the projection of my battle with the dragon who disputed my entry into the heraldic baronies"(BB.219). "The Sonnet of Hamlet" was no less ambitious. When he composed this sequence, he apparently believed that in spite of an ever-widening awareness of Freudian concepts, 're-writing Hamlet' was not only a real possibility, but even a necessity. Of course, with the psychoanalytic searchlight probing ever deeper into the mysterious workings of art, poetry was obliged to retreat more and more into the dark recesses, hence the metaphoric densities and obscurities of his poem. But as far as artistic objective was concerned, Durrell was anything but the "brilliant visionary of defeatism" which Fraser later saw in him (WH.6). Indeed, at a time when many poets were resigning and preparing inwardly for the great conflagration ahead, the young Lawrence Durrell underlined with "The Sonnet of Hamlet" his romantic faith in possibilities of art. Others, full of disillusion, were realising that art made nothing happen, but for Durrell art was "GOING TO BE PROPHECY" once again (Corr.19). In "Hamlet, Prince of China", that long essay which was printed in the Dismemberment Delta and which I have spoken of above, he mapped out the path that Miller was to follow in his mythographic pionneerings, calling it "Hamlet squared, Hamlet cubed, Hamlet in an atmosphere which gives trigonometry cold fingers and logic blunt thumbs" (D.ii.41). In the end, a new Hamlet of this dimension was written neither by Miller nor by Durrell nor by any of the other members of the Villa Seurat circle. But although there is about the utopian always something slightly ridiculous, Durrell's verveful attempt in "The Sonnet of Hamlet", undertaken in the general glum of the pre-war months, was in the end more significant than his failure to arrive...
Notes

1. "January 1939" was first issued in Twentieth Century Verse (TCV.xv/xvi.149) in February 1939, in bookform in The Map of Love. It cost Durrell 7/6, cash rather than a book-token: "My bowels need more than consonants and vowels" (TC.iv.4).

2. An otherwise antagonistic reviewer in Scrutiny is forced to concede: "Her verse has qualities of simplicity and execution, and sometimes a clarity and exactness of expression, which enable her frequently to succeed in her limited sphere" (Scrutiny.xii.2.138).

3. cf. Four Absentees and The Intellectual Part

4. Quoted from JS3os.72.

5. cf. Proems, CPP.iv/v.88, viii.159.

6. NBEP 202,203.

7. Blamires 31; Bullough called Bottrall "pedantic", "trying to combine the manners of Mr Eliot and Mr Pound in a mood of world weariness". His first two volumes of poetry were said to "reveal a poetic talent smothered by intellect and jargon" (GBTMP.162).

8. NV.viii.19; also: NV.v.22.


10. Which speaks, for instance, from his earlier "The Future is not for us".

11. PC.lx.ii.103; once again Dr. Leavis suggested the precise opposite (NBER 210).

12. One cannot help but read this poem with an acute sense that Bottrall was trying to come to terms with his own Poundian past.

13. It may be exaggerated to suggest that the introductory stanzas' five lines with their unobtrusive ababa rhyme scheme (near rhyme) reflect the poem's contrastive method and its ring-shape.


15. PL.i.2.np; Kermode 148.

16. Corr.19; S.L.Brown was mistaken when she claimed that "at the time of the writing of The Black Book, Durrell's notions of time were essentially those of Henri Bergson" (MFS.xiii.3.321).

17. Derek Stanford on some of Nicholas Moore's earlier verse (FoP.145).

18. In a review written about the same time as "The Sonnet of Hamlet Durrell noted: "Hamlet is always contemporary - a sort of guilt-state to which all European genius aspires" (PL.i.2.np). It is perhaps relevant for the poem's undercooled emotional charge that Durrell, who, admittedly, sometimes reminds one of Auden, "the Freudian tourist armed with a guide-book" rather than of Gascoyne "the natural denizen" (Thurley 101), conceived of "guilt" as a psychological mechanism. "The mechanism which Jung calls the guilt-responsibility" he said in a letter to Miller (Corr.53).
Miller did not contribute to Durrell's poetry *Delta*. While his young friend busied himself putting together the last issue of the Villa Seurat review, he retreated into the peace of his studio. At a time when Durrell was coming to feel at home in the "fen of adders" (Corr.150) that was literary London, Miller made another attempt to lead the quiet life which the September Crisis had so rudely interrupted. However, again, his efforts were in vain. Circumstances seemed to conspire to sabotage his undertaking at every turn. When spring came, his anger and disappointment at what he considered the world's exceedingly slow and inadequate response to his work, burst forth again and swept away the brittle structures of his quietistic stance. In these months the publication of *Tropic of Capricorn* was postponed time and again. Kahane's timidity and hesitance thoroughly infuriated Miller. Four of his books were set to be printed, but he was asked to wait. In addition the *Nouvelle Revue Française* publishers -"damn their bloody quaking souls"(Corr.153)- decided not to do the translations of his works. *Black Spring* was accepted by Denoel & Steele, but still, Miller let his angry passions rise: "That's France, the supposedly most liberal country in the world"(Corr.152). The last thing he ever wrote in pre-war Paris was an essay on Balzac, which ended, as he told Durrell, "with a peroration against the French, as it should" (Corr.153). Miller was growing increasingly tired of France and tired of the French.

Circumstances were against him. The state of his health was not all that good either, and he wrote to Durrell of "painful and depressing" medical treatment (Corr.156). Further, his finances were in a bad condition as well. A constant worry, his debts were devouring what scant royalties he received. Even the cost of correspondence seemed at times forbidding and the money he occasionally received from literary journals was negligible. His water-colours did not sell either, and in March he was pleading with Frank Dobo to find a collector who would purchase his handwritten books - at only 100$ a piece(HMGN.254). By May, the situation had improved somewhat. He had managed to persuade Kahane to give him a monthly allowance of 500 fr. against royalties.
Also, forty copies of Cancer and Black Spring were successfully smuggled into the United States, and for these he received $200 (Martin 339). Still, as Anais Nin noted laconically: "He is not getting his due materially"(AN.ii.333), and it must have seemed at times to an angry Miller as if, at least in this respect, all the work and hardships of the past decade had been to no avail. But what was more distressing than anything else, it seems, was that these exasperating worldly concerns were incessantly keeping him from becoming the man he wanted to be.

In the bright days of the Booster, Anais Nin had boosted Miller's Black Spring by drawing attention to his dual nature: "Like some hybrid out of ancient myth he walks the earth surefootedly and is one with the earth; but he can also depart the earth at a bound and soar to unheard of realms, and, if it please him, remain there forever" (B.iii.27). Every blurb is a distortion, and Anais Nin's was a distortion in at least two respects. The first is the suggestion that Miller could (in art and life) soar up to metaphysical heights and remain there 'forever'. However much such a thought might have pleased him, every time he believed that he had left the earth behind, it unfailingly, brutally, and, if one recalls Moricand's words on Nijinsky, fortunately, called him back again (in art and life). Miller himself was aware of this - sometimes. In 1935 he noted: "The condition of ecstasy is, as we know, not a permanent state of being"(CosE.187).

Anais Nin's second distortion lay in the impression conveyed that the dual nature of Henry Miller was somehow free of tension, one of equilibrium and contentment and in a way exemplary. The great problem which plagued Miller in the dusk of his Paris day was that this was simply not true.

How to be a mystic? Or rather, what are the consequences which followed, or ought to follow, from an experience of ecstasy such as mystics have? "The man who is with God, who sees God and talks with him, returns to the world of reality profoundly altered", Miller said in 1935, and he added: "By means of his experience he in turn alters reality itself. He puts a little more of God into it, so to speak" (CosE.187). This was a programmatic utterance and it was not merely
about art and literature. The primarily and immediately effective agent of 'God' in the world was not art or poetry but the mystic the 'man of God' himself. The man was (most, but not all of the time) more important in Miller's eyes than the work of art (unless it was that of one's own personality), and the difficulty was precisely being in the real world the man who had been 'with God'. One could, of course, create, write poems, paint and preach. Miller, however, came to feel that not only a certain mental attitude, but, growing from it, a definite way of life and conduct had to follow from the mystical immersion. The experience of being at one with the universe, one's consciousness having "so far expanded as to embrace the opposite poles of his being" (CosE.187) should change one's life radically. The question was how to become, not only on paper and in ink, the true mystic-returned-from-ecstasy, how to live the life of the Boddhisatva artist. This question, one which the Boosters had steadily answered so flippantly with remarks about the Golden Age of the here and now, was for the post-Munich Miller, with an urgency hitherto unheard of, the existential question per se.

Of the great number of mystical paradigms available, Miller generally tended towards an Eastern variety. He projected his ideal on Chinese or Tibetan sages, smiling (and curiously inhuman) embodiments of tranquillity, equanimity and meditation. On to these examples were concentrated his efforts at self-development. To reach that ideal state of quietude had been a very conscious undertaking, off and on, for a good part of the decade. It was a matter, as Miller felt, of learning from the example of great men and of exercising (as Rank had proposed) creative will upon his own person. Life was also a work of art and malleable in the hands of the true artist. Theoretically, at least, the path was determined: one had only to accept everything, thereby allowing one's mind to broaden to "embrace the apparently conflicting opposites" (B.iv.21). Miller had said this in the Booster, and everything, so he thought, would follow from there. Acceptance was, as usual, the key-word.
Miller wanted to be an Oriental sage—not only in his writings. He believed he could achieve this by sheer persistence and desire, much as he had before become a writer. "I wanted so much, so much, to be a writer", he said in 1958, adding the revealing distinction in parentheses: "maybe not to write so much as to be a writer" (AO.29). Miller believed that it was possible, believed it even more obstinately when the deteriorating world situation was reducing inexorably many opportunities of individual action. Anything, even avoiding war and disease was possible, "just by wanting" (CosE.163), and in the late 1930s what Miller wanted, so much, so much, was to become in life completely at one with his Chinese ideal.

He worked hard at it, had to, and sometimes made a fool of himself. "He asks me to get him some ginger, which he eats while making faces", Anais Nin mocked: "But it's Chinese and he must get to like it" (AN.ii.333). His desire was so intense that he succeeded—almost at least. People, strangers apparently discovered an aetherial quality about him. The keeper of Balzac's house, he proudly told his friends, "knew immediately I entered that I was a mystic" (Corr.141), and even sceptical Anais Nin was impressed: "Henry is going through a mystic stage, he looks fragile, luminous almost"(AN.ii.324). That was in February 1939.

The road to Utopia, inner ones included, is long and hard, and, as with Durrell's efforts to re-write Hamlet, the fact that Miller set out on it is perhaps more important than his repeated failure to arrive. Despite the Boosters' cry of "we have succeeded!", in reality there were simply too many obstacles. To become what he wanted to be was not only drudgery for Miller, but a terrible, Sisyphean struggle. There were the antagonistic forces of the world outside, those forces which had demolished his Oriental peace more than once. "Henry's Chinese talk of wisdom had not stood the test of reality", Anais Nin wrote not without a certain gratification(AN.ii.309). Allied with these outside annoyances were many of his critics and his friends, who preferred the angry not-so-young man or the clown to the mystic. "You are going soft, my boy, warm, affectionate, philosophical—you are consorting too much with those Chinese philosophers"(Hamlet 298). More important, however, was the fact that standing firmly in that
impressive united front of detractors were also Henry Miller the instinctive man, the brutal satirist, the buffoon, the street walker. The term "instinctive man" is taken from a passage in which Anais Nin describes the inner feud:

Henry is going through a kind of agony of his ego. He is trying to kill the selfish man in himself, the ego. He wavers between wisdom, understanding and sudden attacks of aggressivity and dictatorship. He loves to recall all his insolences, his tauntings, and could murder those who oppose him. The war calls out his fear, self-preservation. The spiritual man is struggling against the instinctive man. I can see the conflict, for he expresses both simultaneously. He is angry one moment, and the next he talks like Buddha.(1)

Anais Nin made these observations in the spring of 1939. The intensely mystical phase that had begun so hopefully in January was already drawing to a close. "What I wish to stress at this point is that, coincident with the feverishness of the times, the increased tempo, the peculiar derangement which everyone suffered", Miller later remembered, "writers more than others perhaps, there was noticeable, in my own case at any rate, a quickening of the spiritual pulse" (DiP.20). As shown above, times of darkness are usually detrimental to experimental art and other forms of creativeness. However, Miller fed on the sombre Zeitgeist, needed it - or so he continually said. While others were bracing themselves for the inevitable plunge into the cold, and - in 1939 especially - wanted a moment of calm in order to compose their nerves for the upheaval ahead (Hynes 341), Miller's order of the day was to make the most of it, to revel in "this merry, devil-may-care atmosphere"(DiP.20). That, at any rate, is what he wanted outsiders to believe.

In point of fact, when in early 1939 Miller's "spiritual pulse" began to quicken again, the pace of his life slowed down markedly. Instead of wildly dancing (perhaps the jitterbug) on the volcano's edge like David Gascoyne, who hastened through some "crazy, dostoevskian nights"(DG.ii.112), Miller withdrew to the Villa Seurat ashram and began living the wise man's life. He felt detached, so apart that he would tell his acquaintances (echoing his re-born friend Fred Perlès) that even if he were put in a concentration camp it would not matter (Martin 339). Glimpses of this long desired Eastern existence, of this
exile within exile almost, are offered in Anais Nin's diaries:

He sees few people, goes rarely to cafés, prefers meditation, reading, returns to his studio filled with ideas, plans, is writing about Séraphita, about his past and June as a great crucifixion. (AN.ii.324)

Oblivious to the world, Miller was realising his Chinese dreams: "He wrote a whole small book by hand for my birthday, he fixes up his notes, he paints beautiful water colors, listens to music, is content with his explorations"(AN.ii.324ff). The reader finds him writing more little books for his friends by hand: "They are delightful, personal, enchanting. A delicate Chinese Henry working these jewels of friendship with playful spirit"(ibid.333). A delicate Chinese Henry proofread Winter of Artifice and Capricorn in meditation and full of playful aetherialness. "You used to be all for the earth", said his friend David Edgar, "and now you're all for heaven"(ibid.).

Returning from London in January, the Villa Seurat must have seemed to Miller strangely deserted. He was happy, as we have seen, full of the good memories of his trip, full with a sense of being accepted by important writers like Eliot or Dylan Thomas. He was happy. His friends of the Booster days, who had given him an almost equally uproarious time in London, were now absent. Perhaps he missed them; and yet was this peace and quiet not a magnificent opportunity? "I want to live a deeper life", he once said after the blustering Booster weeks in November 1937, but for a time he had playfully allowed himself to be led off the path of good intentions by Durrell and Perlès, much to the dismay of Anais Nin (AN.ii.273). Now he was alone, once again intent on leading a "deeper life", his heart fortified by the afterglow of the London visit, his anger at the world abated, his clowning instincts pleasantly weary. There was also the eager encouragement by Anais Nin and her humourless friend, the dandy astrologer Moricand.

Strangely, the incipient light of this new spiritual phase was no Chinese sage, nor a Tibetan saint, nor Indian holy man, but a Parisian of the nineteenth century. Under the aegis of Moricand, the amazed Brooklyn Boy entered the world of Honoré de Balzac. Moving along the
broad and generous road of impressionistic, 'poetic' interpretation, where astrological symbols, mysterious concurrences, magical movements were felt to be lurking around every corner, Miller was held spellbound by Balzac's mystical books. They allowed him, he thought, to discover 'deeper' meanings in the world around him, helped him to experience much of his remaining time in Paris in the peculiarly 'mystical' way he did. Looking back from the 1950s, he wrote that in those days there was too much to do, too much to see, taste, and so forth - the past and the future converged with such clarity and precision that not only friends and books but creatures, objects, dreams, historical events, monuments, streets, names of places, walks, encounters, conversations, reveries, half-thoughts, all came sharply into focus, broke into angles, chasms, waves, shadows, revealing to me in one harmonious, understandable pattern their essence and significance. (DiP.23)

In early 1939 Miller had said precisely the same, certain that he was living "in that period of grace wherein all my wishes are answered" (Corr.48). He felt blessed: "I have merely to ask and it is given, to knock and the door is opened. From all sides things are conjoining and contributing to my development and enrichment" (ibid.).

In particular Miller felt enriched by the visionary Balzac, who spoke to him from the pages of Séraphita and Louis Lambert. Moricand had urged him to read these works and presented him with a copy of his own essay "L'oeuvre et le génie de Balzac devant l'Astrologie" (2). A veritable passion for Balzac promptly seized Miller who started "doing research" (Corr.143) on Séraphita and its author. He read biographies, especially Ernst Robert Curtius' Balzac, carried Séraphita (a portentous gift from Moricand) around with him in quiet devotion, and visited the house in the rue Raynouard like a pilgrim: "I picked up the bronze hand which Balzac left behind on his writing desk and I kissed the hand that had written Séraphita" (Corr.143). He decided to write an article about the book, to publish this with the Durrells' money and, as Anais Nin said, to "give the world something it cannot assimilate, just at the moment" (AN.ii.325). When it found another publisher in The Modern Mystic in Spring of 1939, he had already completed an even longer piece: "Balzac and his Double". This essay, which was eventually issued by the New York Twice a Year, Miller
decided to present to the Villa Balzac in Passy (AN.ii.334).

Miller's essays on the artists he admired were always essays about Henry Miller. His Balzacean studies were no exception. Discovery of some resemblance in attitude, vision or experience was a prerequisite for his critical faculties. His natural tendency was, as it were, to write about himself, he felt at home there, and so the greater the degree of correspondence with his essay's subject, the greater was his critical self-assurance and drive. With Balzac, the "analogies between his secret life - and known life too, for that matter - and my own" were "startling" and manifold (Corr.147). And so when he wrote about the author of Séraphita and Louis Lambert it was, as he said, "with certitude" (Corr.148).

Many of the relevant analogies he pointed out himself in his essays and letters. He saw, for instance, and remarked upon, parallels between the world situation then and in the early 19th century: Europe was in "the throes of dissolution"(WoH.193). Other correspondences have to be inferred, but even so, for one familiar with Miller's books and biography these essays resound with echoes and allusions: as was frequently the case, references to seers, mystics and artists, to geniuses and the like may be read as pertaining to himself. When he spoke, for instance, of "the slow development common to great geniuses" (WoH.211), one recalls that his own breakthrough came only in his mid-forties. The correspondences with Balzac were indeed multifarious, according to Miller, reaching from the high spheres of common mystic experience, a common eclectic philosophy of dualism, down to a common negative view of modern life. Miller felt close to Balzac as the artist who had struggled against an antagonistic world full of myopic and malicious critics, cowardly publishers - Séraphita's serial publication, one might mention, was discontinued in 1834 - and an indifferent or hostile public. Miller's words about Louis Lambert apply equally well to his own discursive work: it was "an outcry against the critics for failing to discern in the novelist the more important attributes of thinker, visionary, prophet"(WoH.210). He saw striking parallels in the more personal sphere as well: with his words about the "innate maladaptation of the man of genius" (ibid.223) one is brought abruptly back to his days of inner exile in America; one
recalls that Miller too was criticised for daydreaming: "You are doing nothing!" (ibid.) and suffered from a "lack of maternal tenderness" (WoH.211). And so, when Anais Nin summed up Miller's monthlong preoccupation she seems to have had a point: "He finds similarities between Balzac and himself. Identifies with Balzac"(AN.ii.333).

That latter remark, however, was not entirely accurate. Anais Nin had possibly not yet seen "Balzac and his Double", which was, at the time when she noted how Miller identified with Balzac, on the verge of completion. For by spring, a noticeable change had occurred in Miller's appreciation of the Frenchman. However close he may. have felt to Balzac under the impact of Séraphita, and in spite of all the discovered similarities, Miller's passion had cooled and his assessment had shifted radically. In the end he came to call Balzac a failure, and the question is: what was the reason for this reversal?

An answer can be found in the two essays which bridged this period of time. Miller approached Balzac by way of Séraphita. He accepted it, as he says in the essay of the same title, "implicitly as a mystical work of the highest order", a book which was "a model of perfection". He said it was "spiritually leagues beyond Faust" (WoH.197) and replete with magical and occult, Rosicrucian and Swedenborgian, in short, highly symbolic meaning and structure. Miller's opinion ran contrary to widespread critical opinion that the book was obscure, its mysticism dilettante and painfully eclectic. But, of course, the critics' opposition only confirmed the work's intrinsic merit in his eyes. Miller found himself on home ground:

As a writer, I know that a book such as this could not have been written without the aid of a higher being: the reach of it, the blinding lucidity, the wisdom, not man's certainly, the force and eloquence of it, betray all the qualities of a work dictated if not by God then by the angels.(WoH.196f)

The author of such a book deserves the deepest veneration, Miller said, quoting with approval the story of "that young student in Vienna who is reported to have accosted Balzac in the street and begged permission to kiss the hand that wrote Séraphita"(sic!)(WoH.196). Miller still felt at this point that the work's genius was also its author's
and that *Séraphita* was "probably one of the most unique books in all literature" (WoH.195).

At this stage, Miller was more or less in agreement with Moricand who spoke of Balzac as a "seer of genius"(Purpose.xi.2.95). The American's fluent admiration for *Séraphita* brimmed over upon its author and here the difficulties suddenly emerged. His view changed, parted company with those of the astrologer as well.

*Séraphita* was a model of perfection for Miller(3), its mysterious androgynous hero "prophetic of the dawn of a new day, a day in which not only the boundaries of nationalism will be dissolved, but every barrier which separates man from man and man from God"(WoH.205). What came to disturb Miller so profoundly, however, and to keep him from identifying completely, was that the creator of this bold vision lived a hounded and miserable life. How could someone with the mystic's eye find so very little inner peace? How could someone who had enunciated the "proper" esoteric philosophy remain so shackled to and driven by worldly ambitions, by money, business ventures, a costly life style and lust for power? How could Balzac, who had communed with the angels, allow himself to become a veritable "symbol of the convict condemned to a life of hard labor", and sink "into the morass of the world of things, the world of desire which is unappeasable"(WoH.217)?

Miller had touched upon these questions early on in one of his letters to Durrell. He had even expressed certain reservations in his article "Séraphita". Moricand had said: "Balzac's greatness resides in the fact that he writes under the dictation of the Angel who visited him in childhood, who took up his abode in him and never left him" (Purpose.xi.2.95). It was here that Miller did not agree. The vast bulk of Balzac's work Miller simply refused to consider: "I am not a devotee of Balzac. For me the Human Comedy is of minor importance" (WoH.194). Miller was only interested in Balzac's transrealistic oeuvre, that belonging to the mystical period, which lasted from about 1831 to 1835 (4). Miller's sceptical reserve about Balzac moved into the foreground of his meditations only when he began looking more closely at the autobiographical *Louis Lambert*. The result, "Balzac and his Double", was a Millerian case-history about the difficulties of
the artist's self-realisation. It dealt also with another conflict contained within this great struggle, that between the worldly artist and the otherworldly seer. For Miller, it is important to see, the artist and the visionary were no longer necessarily one and the same. Fully conscious, it would seem, of the 'innumerable' analogies between his own development and that of his subject, Henry Miller returned again and again to the question: why was it that Balzac died a 'failure'?

Lodged among much esoteric abstraction and twisting psycho-biographical analysis, Miller's answer was always the same: Balzac suppressed his visionary alter ego, his angelic "own real self" (WoH.209), which he later came to call Louis Lambert. It was "The Prince and Hamlet" and "Hamlet, Prince of China" all over again. Miller's speculation based firmly on the old idea of an inner betrayal. Balzac's path, he said, was directed towards becoming "a seer rather than a novelist" (WoH.212), but desirous of recognition, success and power he "deflected his great will in order to subjugate the world" (5). The inner man did not stand a chance, and Balzac, insisting on fulfillment 'without', forfeited his soul (WoH.235). "With Louis Lambert there perished a seer; only the artist survived in the person of Balzac. But the loss was irreparable"(WoH.229). Through the eyes of 'Louis Lambert', Balzac was blessed with a glimpse of the beyond, but "when confronted with the sublime duty which his nature had prepared him to obey"(WoH.235), he shied away. From this moment on he was defeated. "Despite the most gigantic efforts ever man made, the real Balzac did not grow an inch from the time he left his prison at Vendôme to enter the world"(WoH.217). In spite of his esoteric theory, in spite of "his own dynamic, positive intèrpretation of what we know as Tao"(WoH.224), Balzac's life was, in Miller's eyes, no less than "a contradiction of his philosophy"(WoH.215). Although he was able to leap forward and envisage an andrygonous Séraphita-Séraphitus, "one in whom good and evil are so balanced that the real transition into a higher state of being is made possible" (WoH.231), in spite of this vision, which in Miller's view: "may yet require thousands of years to justify but which is undeniably true and inevitable"(ibid.), Balzac's was "the most stupid, aborted life that any intelligent man ever lived"(WoH.215). Balzac failed to live according to his vision, and
this the ex-Booster, who now subscribed to Fred Perlès' editorial that said: "L'art, pour nous, est un pis-aller. Nous sommes cent pour cent pour la Vie"(8.ii.6), this, Miller could not forgive:

Art is only the stepping-stone to another, larger way of life. If the artist himself is not converted by the Word, what hope can there be for the masses who read him? It is not enough to lead the life of an inspired drudge; will and faith, activated by desire, should carry a man beyond such a mode of life. I have no respect for Balzac's herculean labors, nor for his colossal output, nor for his genius, when I realize that his life sputtered out ingloriously. If a man cannot find salvation in himself all his words are futile.(WoH.249)

Miller's preoccupation with Balzac, as Durrell's with the character of Hamlet, was no playful speculative diversion. He went to the biographies of 'great men' to test his own ideas (WoH.247). Just as his initial obsession with Séraphita accompanied a new mystic phase, so his realization that one might produce literary masterpieces and still lead a senseless life, influenced his decisions about what to do and how to live in the period that followed. He felt that the dangers which had smothered the life of Balzac were also threatening him. Despite his raving about the failure of the public to receive his work with more enthusiasm, there always had been in him a streak that was suspicious of success. Miller was determined to avoid Balzac's great mistakes. His essays were a means of discovering and analysing these mistakes. To Anais Nin he wrote of Balzac: "He had learned the discipline of work but he had not learned to enjoy the fruits of his labor. He did not take the rest required for true development" (LtAN.183). Activity was not the same as action. True action, Miller said, "proceeds only from a being whose center is at rest"(WoH.236) - and this was his goal in the gloomily oppressive world of 1939. He strove to achieve a still and harmonious centre, from which true action, action shorn of inessentials, would emanate.

And so in his last months in Paris and without ever losing sight of Balzac's obverse example, Miller set about finally achieving this peace. As we have said, spring saw the conflicting impulse of his nature erupt forth again; but even so, for several months, Miller succeeded in bridging what he regarded as a typically Western "divorce between action and belief"(WoH.236). He not only expressed the mystic
view in his writings, had not only become proudly conscious of the "angel" in himself - "I am struck by the prophetic element which is an essential part of me" (Corr. 148) - but had also begun to live according to these realisations.

We have mentioned Anais Nin's descriptions of the Chinese Henry. Miller now spoke jokingly about the 'Balzacean' errors he had been guilty of in the past. Back in 1937, he had confided to her: "I know my defect, I expand too much, I should not, for instance, have done the magazine" (AN. ii. 273). Now, he was saying the same again. For most of the time, Anais Nin "had opposed the Booster, the letter about Alf, the Gold pamphlet, the letters from the messenger boys", and one of the reasons was that "they took so much of his energy, they were mere jokes, and they cost all the money which could have been applied to a book" (AN. ii. 325). Now, in the early months of 1939, she was glad to see that Miller conceded that she had been right all along. He admitted that those burlesque productions had been childish, but he also added, to the slight displeasure of his most critical friend, that he "would do it all over again" (AN. ii. 325).

Even so, as early as January, Miller began to reduce his literary activity to a bare minimum. In the very first Balzac letter to Durrell, Miller had noted: "I learn one great lesson, however, from the study of Balzac's life - that is, not to want to write too much. I am learning how to let the pen drop, which Balzac never learned" (Corr. 141). This insight strengthened as time went by. He learnt how to drop other non-essential activity as well; in late January, a mystic Henry Miller informed Lawrence Durrell on a "meagre" postcard that he was leaving the Delta venture. In a letter which followed, Miller explained his reasons, and behind his shoulder one can discern Anais Nin's delicate shadow and the hulky shape of Honoré de Balzac. It was in this letter that Miller spoke of his own prophetic gift, of living in a period of grace, of the forthcoming Draco and the Ecliptic, which would be "vastly significant" for the future world. Against this background, Durrell's Delta, a poetry number too, must have appeared as nothing, as a silly waste of time, energy and money - and of these Miller, as he made very clear to Durrell, had none to spare: "My time is getting short. I have to utilize my energies in the
best possible way" (Cor.147). The best possible way was obviously, not by working for Delta, but by writing intensively, and, more important, by listening to the 'angel' inside: "I'm going to write more and meditate more" (ibid.). Although in Miller's credo the mystic was always close to the child or the clown, this 'period of grace' was not the time for the Booster's kind of childishness or clownerie. It was not the time for vociferous (if largely ineffective) self-advertisement of the Booster kind either: "I don't have the least qualms any more about not being known or recognized. I think I have already done much more in the way of self-advertisement than I had any business to do" (Corr.147).

Within a few months this indifference to recognition once again proved a delusion. But although Miller's unbridled and un-mystical fury turned once again on a world too slow to see his merit and although he cursed Europe for allowing his carefully constructed peace to be disturbed, it was not long before he sank back once again into a contemplative detachment. But this was not in France. His experience of Greece brought on a new 'mystical' phase and he wrote to Anais Nin: "I put into practice my own words. I stopped. I put a vacuum around this seemingly ceaseless activity" (LtAN.214). In the summer months of 1939, under the hot Mediterranean sun, as the world held its breath in anticipation of war, Miller actually stopped listening to radio broadcasts and stopped reading newspapers, even resolving not to write anything except letters for a whole year (Martin 359).

But even before, in early 1939, Miller thought that self-sufficiency and real detachment were possible; a man could be an island, if he wanted to, even at the very centre of the modern world. And he worked against his dangerous tendency to expand, against the temptation to tackle too many projects at once, writing to Durrell who was still in London: "I realize more and more that I must withdraw from all this kind of activity" (Corr.147). And one of the first burdens he rid himself of was the magazine. Miller decided to put a stop to such 'wastage', as he streamlined his activity, planed away inessentials, becoming more economical all the time. In fact, he was slowly preparing his departure. "I am getting more and more stripped, travelling with less and less baggage", he wrote to Durrell, assuring him of his
blessings and "full support", should he desire "to take over all this activity which I am now dropping" (Corr.149). He himself, as was pointed out, did not appear again in Delta. His name was still on the editorial list, and the executive and editorial offices were allegedly still located in 'Delta-House', 18, Villa Seurat, Paris. But in spite of Durrell's urgent plea that he participate in his second poetry issue - "Will you PLEASE FOR ONCE IN YOUR LIFE CONTRIBUTE" (Corr.149) - a delicate Chinese Henry did not hear.

Sometime in April 1939 that last issue of Delta appeared. Soon after, in the early days of May, the Durrells returned to Corfu. If they stopped in Paris, it cannot have been for very long. They did not await the publication of Tropic of Capricorn on May 10th. This event, as Miller had announced shortly before, would finally set him free to travel, to undertake that visit to Corfu, which Durrell had been urging for so long. Earlier, Miller had, in fact, decided that once Capricorn was through the press, once that tiresome feat was accomplished he would take "a long vacation" (Colossus 6). At first he had not been quite sure where exactly he would go. England and Wales (Dylan Thomas), even America, were possibilities (Corr.156). Eventually, he made up his mind to go south as well. Towards the end of May, then, he left Paris. This journey which took him to the south of France and then on to Greece was a "vacation" in more than one sense of the word. Miller was leaving Paris for good. He left Paris in a most unsentimental frame of mind. His deep emotional attachment to the city and the people, as we have seen, had all but vanished during the Munich Crisis. He was happy to go. He called Paris "a city of sewers" (Martin 356) and spoke of "all the rottenness of France" (LtAN.188). For his friend Fred Perlès, France was no longer his spiritual home. He felt exactly the same now. He was free to go. He wrote to Durrell in May: "You see, I've suddenly realized that I am the freest man in the world. I can do what I please and go where I like and what's to hinder?" (Corr.141). Miller was glad to leave. His departure was inevitable, in any case, as there was always that danger of being caught in the storms of mobilisation and war, and the unpleasant prospect of being drafted into the army as an ami de France. He said to Anais Nin: "I feel like an animal that doesn't want to be caught in a trap" (AN.ii.334). This time he wanted to get out.
well in time.

On May 25th, a Thursday, he moved out of the Villa Seurat: "Glad to get out of the Villa Seurat - what a swamp of details!" (LtAN.186). A few days later and five minutes before boarding the train to Rocamadour, he ran into Blaise Cendrars, the man who first praised Cancer in a published review in 1935. They talked and then said goodbye. Other circuits had been closing as well. The last days in Paris Miller spent in a hotel, just like in the beginning - and he much enjoyed it: "I'm on the street - right at the Porte! A terrific din - an inferno - but pleasant" (LtAN.186). He had been busy winding up his affairs, rushing around, making money arrangements with Jack Kahane, storing his manuscripts in Louceviennes, selling household articles, keeping however "the salad fork and spoon and the thimble and some ashtrays ... as a souvenir of Villa Seurat" (LtAN.186). Then he departed. Brassai has written: "Henry quitta la France sans regret, sans larmes, sans un regard en arrière" (HMGN.263). When Anais Nin left France several months later, it was different: "I knew it was the end of our romantic life" (AN.ii.349). At the time Miller had no such thoughts. His Parisian decade ended on a sober note. His sights were set on the future, as that new phase of adventure and travel, which he had been looking forward to ever since he journeyed to London, had finally begun...

Notes

1. AN.ii.334; "Always talking about China and wisdom, after an evening when he said unwise and brutal things to an English girl" AN.ii.273.
2. This was about to be published in French in Revue de Paris, and translated by Perlès for the April–June 1939 number of Purpose (Purpose.xi.2.90-96).
3. And remained so: DiP.29.
4. Both Séraphita and Louis Lambert are incidentally part of the 'Etudes Philosophiques' in the Comédie Humaine.
5. ibid.215; see also LtAN.183.
X. The Ending of Delta

"We do not intend to make a 'success' of the Booster. On the contrary, our aim is to run it into the ground as quickly as possible. A short life and 'a merry one - that's our motto" (IntHML.iv.22). The Booster itself had enjoyed a short and merry life that ended when the American Country Club gruffly threatened prosecution. But under its new name the Villa Seurat's review had also lived on. In the spring of 1939, however, as with so many other "fly-by-night magazines" (Dylan Thomas' term) that simply fizzled out after half a dozen issues or less, the editors finally bowed down to adverse circumstances and shut down the review for good (DTCL.856). The adaptable Delta had outlived the life span allotted to it by its Villa Seurat progenitors. It had outlived the Villa Seurat itself. As I have said, the final issue of the Villa Seurat magazine was not really Durrell's poetry number but the Special Peace and Dismemberment Number itself.

Durrell probably knew that as far as the Villa Seurat was concerned the Easter 1939 number was no more than a posthumous act. It was more his own creation than that of the group. The old Booster spirit was no more than a friendly spectre of the past. Now, however, the magazine demanded more resources and energy than even he was able or willing to invest. After all Durrell too was primarily a writer and not an editor, and returning to Corfu, he knew, would spell the end of the magazine; for even before, in quieter times, the difficulties of editing and publishing a magazine from his village retreat had been immense. In addition in early 1939 the sense of crisis was again reaching a new peak of intensity. Previously, sitting at his type-writer in a whitewashed room on the sunlit Ionian, he could write passionately about the 'death' of the age - for the death of the age seemed to be happening elsewhere. He had been praised by one critic, who said that The Black Book's "true protagonist is not the narrator or any of the other characters, but the zeitgeist itself" (Hawkins) (Criterion.viii.71.317). But now, after Mussolini had ordered the invasion of Albania, the true protagonists of the times (and of the years to come), fighter-bombers and shock troops were perched on the coast right across the Vorion Stenon Kerkiras, ready to strike. Though
the British government had warned Mussolini not to touch Corfu, it is still surprising that Durrell returned to Greece at all. Then again, prospects in England were not that rosy either:

At the moment things look so bad I simply don't know what to do. Return to Corfu with the Italians outside our house? Spend the summer in Cornwall? OR GO TO AMERICA? (Corr.155)

France, as we have seen, was obviously no longer an alternative. Only shortly before, Miller had described to him the sense of apprehension that held Paris in its grip: "No, Larry, no use trying to reorganize things at present. Business is quite at a standstill now - naturally. People are not buying, nor living, just holding their breath for the expected catastrophe"(Corr.152). The atmosphere was thick with apprehension; France and Italy were engaged in a harsh diplomatic conflict over Tunisia, Djibuti and the Suez Canal, while towards the end of April Hitler announced in the Reichstag that he had asked Poland to return Danzig and for a strip of land across the Polish corridor, denouncing at the same time the naval treaty with Britain and the non-aggression pact with Poland (Corr.156). Those who still harboured hopes for 'peace in our time' were few. And now even the former Boosters, like so many other West Europeans, were busy preparing themselves against the conflagration to come. Miller, as I have said, was ready to leave. And the Durrells, too, left Western Europe and returned to the dubious refuge of their Grecian island.

Durrell's enthusiasm for the magazine may have quieted down by this time anyway. Published critical reactions to Delta had been anything but forthcoming. Durrell felt that he had collected a "strong poetry number"(Corr.149) and he may have been dismayed that once again few reviewers (if any) felt his sheet worth commenting on. He was being recognised as a novelist and as a poet, but his editorial work was all but ignored. Miller, as we have seen, thought that he had done more than enough "in the way of self-advertisement" (Corr.147). Though Durrell probably felt that as yet he himself had not done quite enough for himself, he may well have come to see that for him too, ultimately, editing a magazine was not the most efficient way of achieving that goal.
Usually the history of a little magazine is summarised in its format. The first issue consists, let us say, of sixty-four pages, with half-tone illustrations printed on coated paper. The second issue has sixty-four pages, illustrated with line cuts. The third has only forty-eight pages; the fourth has thirty two, without illustrations: the fifth never appears. (ER.188)

Basically, the Booster and Delta story had stuck to the pattern which Malcolm Cowley outlined for the last chapter of a typical little magazine biography. Having refused to let their review die "gently in the parched wind" (ibid.), the Villa Seurat too had searched around for new sources of revenue. But all their schemes and ruses had not been able to do more than to slow down the 'natural' decline in the magazine's appearance and format...

Linked to the enervating financial question was a point which may have made it easier for Durrell to follow Miller and to "withdraw from all this activity" (Corr.147). In a letter to Henry Treece from June 1939, Dylan Thomas said that he was unable to "keep up with the quarrels that surround Seven, Delta, and the rest" (DTSL.231). The impatient tone of this communication suggests that internal quarrels were not altogether infrequent in these circles. "Mutual respect, and, if possible, affection, are essential to editor and backer", Connolly said in 1964 (CCEC.427). The lack of these feelings was naturally detrimental to a magazine's efficacy. At one point or another, remembering perhaps the Booster's buoyancy and the friendly atmosphere of the old Villa Seurat, Durrell may have decided simply to leave these quarrels behind and to drop Delta altogether.

But was there no more to the Booster/Delta ending than this? Was the history of its demise not capable of inspiring anything but sombre remarks about a little magazine's inevitable decline? In point of fact, there did exist some positive aspects to the closing down of Delta, and they had to do both with the formative role the Booster and Delta played in the story of the Villa Seurat group and with the review's role in the changes in the literary climate and the publishing possibilities of the closing years of the 1930s. The main reason for the ending of Delta was that it had fulfilled its purpose, that there
was no longer a pressing need for any of the ex-Boosters to edit and to publish their own coterie magazine. In the conclusion which follows I will expand on this and attempt a questioning assessment of the Booster/Delta achievement.
v. CONCLUSION
What was the achievement of the Booster and Delta? Although an answer to this question might derive from one of a number of the various contexts I have discussed, the two approaches mentioned at the end of the preceding chapter seem particularly relevant. They might be summed up in the following questions. What did the Booster and Delta mean to the Villa Seurat group itself? And, what can be said about the magazine's role in representing or even influencing aspects of the changing contemporary artistic concerns of the pre-war years?

Alfred Perles dedicated to the Booster/Delta experience an entire chapter in My Friend Henry Miller. Still, he also indicated that he did not think it all that important: "It was no doubt a joyous interlude, but only an interlude" (MFHM.176). In "A Last Boost for the Booster", the introduction to the Booster/Delta reprint, he said that "its intrinsic virtue was indeed its unimportance" (APB.np.). For that matter, in the reminiscences of Miller and Durrell, too, the magazine does not figure prominently. And Anais Nin's opinion that it involved a waste of time and energy has been cited.

When I set out to discover whether the Booster/Delta was more than an incidental accessory to the story of the Villa Seurat this seemed not very promising. To argue that the magazine played a noteworthy role in the literary scene in the years immediately preceding the last war appeared even less promising. Yet as the thesis increased in scope the conviction grew on me that the Booster and Delta held a more than marginal place in the history of the Villa Seurat, and, at least as far as Britain was concerned, it played a not entirely negligible role in the changing literary sensibility of the late 1930s.

The Booster evoked "the collaborative spirit of the Villa Seurat" more clearly and more effectively than any of the other common literary projects in the years before the war. The Villa Seurat spirit, it is true, did not come into the world with the magazine. The frequenters of Miller's studio had helped one another long before the Booster summer and other joint ventures ran parallel to work on the magazine. However, as I have argued, the Booster collaboration had important distinguishing marks, some of which might be recapitulated.
The magazine was a collective oeuvre. It was the product of a group endeavour, and it comprehensively collected the art of the entire coterie. Most other instances of the group cooperating, Miller's correspondence with Fraenkel, for example, the earlier New Instinctivist manifesto, the Siana Series or the Villa Seurat Series involved only two, perhaps three, members of the group; to the Booster and Delta almost all of Miller's Paris friends and acquaintances contributed, even those who had returned to America.

Further, as I have tried to show, the Booster (more than Delta) impressed upon the group's self-perception and on to-the way the editors expressed themselves its own special stamp. Like any other coterie magazine it coloured the activities of its progenitors, drew upon their attention, time, energy, money, etc. But the Booster was special in that it determined in important aspects the tone and nature of its own content. The Booster was the house organ of the Villa Seurat, but, and in this it differed from Delta again, it was also the house organ of the American Country Club of France. For a time, this legacy determined directly (via Club Notes and advertisements) and indirectly (via the Sportslight and Miller's Fashion article) what was printed and what not. The Booster recast Miller and friends as sports columnists, society editors and commentators on Fall and Winter Fashion - and as Boosters. Of course, the new editors took it all as a joke, or rather: the paradoxical inconsistency between the goals and aspirations of its original publisher and their own brought them much amusement and corresponded to their burlesquing spirit felicitously. The Booster influenced the way they saw themselves. The famous Villa Seurat collaborative spirit was given another name. "Remember, we are boosters first and foremost!" (Corr.115).

The review's name was a factor of great influence. The original pre-posterous boosting spirit of the Country Club (Babbitt and Main Street) paralleled the always latent desire to promote their own and each others products and personalities. And so the review's name acquired a momentum of its own, deftly summing up the editors' generally euphoric outlook. Like a battle cry or a political slogan it quickly developed a certain independence and dynamism, thus committing them to the enthusiastic tone. How could a Booster be anything but
enthusiastic? Indeed, one wonders what they would have done had they inherited the Fraenkel review called Death! When he first mentioned the magazine to Durrell, Miller said: "And we are going to boost the shit out of everybody and everything. We are going to take an optimistic turn for the sheer devil of it" (Corr. 110). More so than the usual small review might have done, the Booster shaped those writers who had finally "got it into some decent shape" (Corr. 110)...

The Booster corresponded in significant ways to needs the Villa Seurat habitués. Aside from the more mundane benefits such as a self-advertisement and having a publishing outlet, the Booster adventure happened at a time when Miller and his friends were particularly open to impulses of the collaborative spirit. Miller might declare: "The fear of standing alone is the evidence that the faith is weak" (CosE. 180). He might invoke resonantly the individualist aesthetic and insist that the notion of a Villa Seurat group was pure nonsense. But the Booster was plainly no phantasm. The magazine, however, allowed those who took part to forget the contradiction they believed existed between the individualist prerogative and the group idea. In the discussion of the editorials we saw that in a world still crawling with collectivist quacks and little magazine editors who took themselves seriously enough to claim to be 'right', the flexible Villa Seurat review seemed an ideal refuge for the true artist. It was an ideal refuge especially for the Villa Seurat antinomians themselves.

There was much about the magazine that made it easier for these romantic individualists to come to terms with the embarrassment of belonging to a group, not least the amazing ease with which they gained control over a well-financed periodical. Also, it was assumed that the review would soon die away, a feeling which freed them from any sense of group-obligation. There was that odd connection with the American Country Club, which made it unique in the little magazine world of the day, so odd and 'surrealistic' that under a colourful cover of confusion, irony, obscurity, non-commitment, provocation, and comedy, they could gather together - without openly acknowledging the group principle. The new Boosters might have ridiculed the whole curious arrangement with Elmer S. Prather, and yet for these
circumstances they must have been grateful to him.

The Booster satisfied the needs of its editors. The habitués of the Villa Seurat, brought together by certain common concerns, common beliefs, common themes and attitudes, formed a literary coterie. This simple fact alone pushed them steadily in the direction of publishing together. A common debate asks for a common expression, especially if it is conducted by people in the habit of making public their opinions. The Booster with its editorials was such an expression.

There were other reasons why the Booster adventure met the needs of the Villa Seurat. It added to the cohesion of the circle both in the experience of producing the magazine, and in what it issued in its pages. I have mentioned Miller saying that "even when one is aware of his own creative powers, still one must finally confirm this creation by reading it in the eyes of others" (IntHML.v.16). Signally, those eyes belonged to the closest friends and confidantes, whose 'confirmation' was seldom lacking; hyperbolic literary praise, mostly in the form of flaboyant portraits, as I have said, were a mark of the Miller set and promoted the sense of group conformity. The Booster continued this tradition, enriching it with a shorter variant, the boost. The Booster editorials themselves were self-celebrations, boosting another work of art, that wonderfully 'happy' collective persona the editors had sketched out for themselves. Unlike the poetry numbers, the Dismemberment Delta also moved in this direction especially with Durrell's praise of his friend Henry Miller in the Hamlet essay.

Durrell might say: "I have recovered from the wounds already - other men, they were my wounds" (Spirit 254). Miller might say: "Isolation is the index of profundity" (CosE.180). But there were plainly times when other men were anything but wounds, when neither isolation nor profundity seemed desirable, when geniality, pranks and laughter were needed. Miller and his friends were very much alive to what Otto Rank had described in a chapter in his Art and Artist entitled "The Artist's Fight With Art". Periodically, Rank had said, the artist needed to flee the absolute demands 'creation' made on him (ORAA.385). To find respite from the strains of art, the Villa Seurat artists sought each other's company. The Booster (not Delta!)

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expressed that gregarious 'holiday' feeling, the escape from 'art'. Perlès has said that the Booster story "coincided with the end of Miller's most fertile period in Paris" (MFHM.174). This seems no coincidence. He needed a holiday from writing. Durrell said in September 1937: "Henry could be a real man if he were in life and not a writing machine" (AN.ii.256). Miller needed the Booster experience to be 'in life' again, also to come up for air, to escape from the painfully lonely "tremendous travail of the Capricorn synthesis" (AN.ii.288). The same applied to Durrell himself. Before coming to Paris, working himself to a point of exhaustion on The Black Book, Durrell had said: "I've always wanted to be in a movement of some kind, but I've never found the kind of writing and people I could whole-heartedly back" (Corr.13). In Miller's studio he found what he wanted, just as Miller, as Perlès said, was given "a fresh impetus by Durrell's presence amongst us" (MFHM.174). The Booster collaboration offered them all a joint vacation from the taxingly lonely world of creation. They rejoiced in a communal 're-creation'. In other words, what Anais Nin rejected as an "atmosphere of begging, stealing, cajoling, school-boy pranks, slapstick humor, burlesque" (AN.ii.236) always played a role in easing the strain of more serious work. The Booster was a refuge. In this sense their insistence that it was the fun which they had that really mattered should be seen in a somewhat different light.

But the magazine was more than a refuge. Here one might return to the remark that the editorials, and many of the contributions, celebrated the Boosters' collective persona, and that this collective persona was emphatically a happy one. I have cited Miller as saying that the work of art was nothing, that it was "only the tangible, visible evidence of a way of life" (Seven.iii.22). By analogy, for the Villa Seurat, the Booster was nothing other than the tangible, visible evidence of a way of life, and this way of life was a happy and creative one.

The Booster was important to the Villa Seurat set because it was both a mirror and a part of the luminous summer of 1937, all the brighter, all the clearer, it would seem, for the darkening backdrop before which it happened. For the Boosters these months were magical, a period of personal and professional accomplishment and of promise. This was "the high point of Henry's literary life" (Martin 318) and
Durrell's career was splendidly getting under way with *The Black Book*. Everything seemed possible, horizons were opening up, and for them the Golden Age which they proclaimed in the editorials was no figment of the imagination. They were content, glad to be together.

In the chapter "Contemporary Reactions to the Booster" I have pointed out that some critics apparently thought the Villa Seurat review a direct response to the threatening events outside. George Orwell believed that it manifested "one of the possible attitudes, though perhaps not the most satisfactory one, towards modern life" (*NEW*.xii.2.31). Indeed, against the gloomy background of the decade, the notion was not entirely preposterous that the Booster editorials, their provocative and paradoxical assertions and claims, the apparent zaniness of some of the materials the editors included, the jokey adverts, etc. were part of a desperate reaction to the horrors of the time, one way, as Orwell put it, "though rather a safe and feeble way, of hitting back at Hitler, Stalin, Lord Rothermere, etc."(*ibid.*). However, as I have tried to show, the Boosters' were neither dadaists covering with gaiety a "profound despair"(*AiP*.127), nor were they sardonically desperate in the way that, say, Céline was. Comparing Miller to Céline, David Gascoyne said that the American shared "the same catastrophic vision of a world stifling in disease and filth", but he did have the "same acid and relentless bitterness as Céline", and "at last he gets beyond despair, and achieves a kind of gay and triumphant stoicism" (*Comment*.ii.39.88). I have argued that while the Boosters saw and described with all necessary gusto what they felt was the imminent collapse of Western civilisation, they themselves felt exempt. It is true that as regards the fate of mankind they were pessimists, but as artists they did not associate themselves with common humanity at all. They were "inside the whale", content and safe. Miller said: "it is from the death of the world that the artist is obliged to draw is inspiration" (*WoH*.240). But the artist would not share in this death. He was outside and detached; he was the exemplar of the 'higher type' to come, and he could say with Henry Miller: "Like Lawrence I have put myself outside this time. I disown it"(*Hamlet*109). The Boosters disowned their time - as best they could.
The Booster was 'outside' this time as well, a whale gliding through the storms that were raging in the world outside. The editors proclaimed in their editorial: "In the main the Booster will be a contraceptive against the self-destructive spirit of the age" (B.i.5). Properly speaking it was the Villa Seurat way of life and its 'indifferent' view of life, rather than the magazine itself, which seemed to the editors, for a time at least, a protective against the self-destructive spirit of the age.

I do not wish to review here that questionable quietistic construction which they raised above their work. Rather I want to stress once more that for the Boosters the summer of 1937 was in very real terms a Golden Age. By all accounts the life the Booster reflected was optimistic and gay and it was uncommonly productive as well. Their je m'en fouisme was directed at the anonymous world outside; within the radius of their immediate and personal experience, however, a euphoric happiness determined the atmosphere. A letter which Lawrence Durrell sent to Miller shortly after the war in Europe had ended splendidly if nostalgically evoked the creative mystique of the Villa Seurat days:

Ah Henry, Europe is so far upside down that it will take a few years to settle. I reckon we have five years before the atom war. Can't we all meet and create a little of the warmth and fury of the Villa Seurat days: a glass of wine and pleasant soft furry murder of typewriters going; Anais in her cloak and pointed ears; the letter to Nijinsky; Fred and Madame Kalf; Betty Ryan and Reichel. It is all fixed now inside like a kind of a formal tapestry - you with the skylight open, typing in your hat, and little Joe unwrapping the cheese with delicate fingers murmuring 'Ja Ja das ist gutd.' And do you remember Mr Chu? And the chiropodist whose legs you cut off before throwing her in the Seine in No.2 of The Booster. And Valaida Snow? Have you a set of Boosters? And Herbert Read in the black muffin of a hat giving his young son an ice at the Deux Magots, and how you insisted on paying Chez Henriette to the acutely British discomfort of the same? And how furious you were when you tried to sell Booster No.1 to some bastard in a bar and he was insulting about it? And those long icy walks by the Seine with Anais in her cloak through the garish sulphurous ruins of the Great Exhibition into the Latin quarter to find the little street where Dante wrapped his feet in straw and where you only found the suicide Max? And those strange evenings on La Belle Aurore with Moricand the astrologer? And walking in the Louvre like mad angels? And the sudden scream that Soutine gave one night? Had he discovered another painting? And Fred writing letters to himself in that little dog-leg room, starving to death. And Edgar talking talking talking, his noble pure face caught in a tic of anguish like a curtain pulled back. It was a complete finished little epoch. I
remember the particular smell of the *Tropic* typescript, and the early novel you showed me. And lovely black little Teresa Epstein at the Closerie des Lilas. Hell, what are we going to put up against all that now that the war is over? I think Athens is a convenient mythopoetic centre, with Paris coming up all the time. (Corr.211)

The chapter in which Jay Martin described the Booster period was entitled 'The Last of the Best Days' (Martin 327ff). They were warm enough to create friendships that were to last a lifetime, stimulating enough to propel each of the protagonists into a new phase of personal and artistic development (for Durrell and Perlès this meant moving away from Henry Miller), intense enough to become 'mythical' even as they were happening, at least that is what the Villa Seurat thought. Inevitably, perhaps, they could not last. And when they ended, the Booster in its old form could be expected to perish as well...

"It was a complete finished little epoch", Durrell would say in 1945. But the complete finished little epoch was in fact finished long before the war broke out. As the Munich Crisis brought panic to Paris and London, Durrell was already looking back on the Booster days with a wistful longing:

I don't lift a finger but sit with my feet crossed and feel the ceiling closing in on me. In Paris we made something, by God. There was a good, firm freemasonry laid there between us all. And now when I am alone in myself and forcing my hysteria back against the wall, I think of those days like comets, and the good warm contact of wills. This is an interval in which we have to bear up under the malignant opposition of the stars. Later it will all lift. (Corr.130)

The gloom never lifted. The glorious Villa Seurat epoch, as we have seen, ended somewhat ingloriously when Miller fled from Paris in the summer panic of 1938. He did return to Paris, but by all accounts the magical *deus loci* had departed: "Today the Villa Seurat no longer exists"(Hamlet 367). All that followed was already like a post-mortem. In September 1939 Anais Nin said: "Villa Seurat and other places once so illumined with life began to die under my eyes"(AN.ii.340).
The particular variant of the Villa Seurat life, however, which Durrell had in mind when he spoke of comets against a dark background, had begun to die a good while before September swept away so many illusions. Importantly, the change of atmosphere had actually preceded his departure to Corfu earlier that year in April. Indeed, that was the month in which the fifth number of the magazine appeared; as if to mark an ending, and perhaps a departure too, it appeared under a new title. The reader may have noticed that the name of Delta was missing in Durrell's retrospective on the warmth and the fury of the Villa Seurat days quoted above. Of the nine pages Alfred Perlès devoted to the magazine in his Miller reminiscences only one dealt with the three issues of Delta. Delta is in fact usually all but ignored in histories of the Miller circle. The reason was that, despite some continuities, the magazine (and this applies to the Dismemberment Delta as well) no longer reflected the Villa Seurat life. It no longer mirrored the boisterous communal side of the Villa Seurat experience for two reasons. First, the life it might have reflected had itself changed in the course of the winter 1937/38, as the warm optimism and sense of community had slowly begun to deteriorate under the pressure of public events. Second, Durrell no longer wanted the magazine to reflect of the boisterous, playful, outrageous and chaotic group life....

I have shown that it was not Durrell alone who was responsible for the death of the Booster. His first Delta no more than gave it a quietus. Miller had begun tiring of the magazine anyway. If it is true that the Booster provided a haven from the exigencies of creation, it is also true that the Boosters would also want to leave that haven sooner or later. As early as November 1937, Anais Nin quoted Miller as saying: "I want to live a deeper life, I know my defect, I expand too much, I should not, for instance, have done the magazine"(AN.ii.273). Each in his own way, Miller and Durrell had begun dissociating themselves from the Booster spirit. Other concerns were pressing into the foreground again. After merriment and communality, the direction for Miller was once again isolation, art and profundity, the 'deeper life'. For Durrell it was a more serious consideration of the possibilities of a little magazine publication.
Every coterie magazine has at least two objectives, to manifest in some way the group spirit itself and to act as publishing outlet, to be an instrument for disseminating the art of the contributors. These ingredients can be mixed according to varying recipes, and thus, although the cooks at work may be the same, the food resulting need not be. The blending of Delta was different from that of the Booster. The latter was successful in expressing the group life; its effectiveness at propagating the work of the group, however, was found wanting. Where the Booster was a direct mirror and an integral part of the group experience with its lively debate and its charm, it was also clouded by the circle's privacies, its idiosyncratic thematic obsessions, confusions and inside jokes. Though the Booster was not without ambitions in the wider literary arena, the editors' prime concern, as I have said, was with the inner circle of initiates. "It made fun", first and foremost, and those who did not understand be damned: "The man who sticks to his guns has the world at his feet" (Corr.107). The Boosters had stuck to their guns - but the world had more or less ignored them. "The clowning is regarded with distaste, and the serious part of it is so snowballed in mysteries that people excuse themselves hurriedly and make a wry mouth" (Corr.119). Durrell especially wanted to change that.

The poetry Delta discontinued the Booster's introversion. Miller and his Villa Seurat friends, Durrell said, had created "such a bubble" around themselves and were apt to "talk such a personal and strange language" (Corr.119) that readers simply did not understand them. Delta changed that. Although the group's exceptional charm now no longer lit up the pages of the magazine, access to other readers was facilitated. Delta aimed for a larger audience. Its editor wanted to advertise the work of the Villa Seurat poets (chiefly himself), to promote their writing both directly via the magazine, and indirectly by establishing new connections to other little magazines. Although these motives had not been altogether absent in the old Booster, the fact that most impediments originating in the group formula had been removed, turned the poetry Delta into a more purely promulgatory, more public and altogether more literary enterprise than the Booster.
Durrell may have initiated this more outgoing and purposeful policy; with the Special Peace and Dismemberment Number, however, Miller and Perlès were not long in following suit. As we have seen, this issue of Delta was assembled (and advertised) before the dismemberment of the Czechoslovak federation. Though it was given its impressive new name after the Crisis had died down, its form and content had been more or less settled by Miller and Perlès in the earlier part of the summer, before Durrell came up from Corfu. Though at first sight the Dismemberment Delta had little in common with Durrell's poetry number, it too missed the special collaborative spirit which had characterized the Booster. The Dismemberment Number, like both poetry numbers, did not mirror directly a certain way of life in the way the Booster had, did not hum with the group's erratic liveliness. Certain of its contributions described articulately elements of the Villa Seurat canon, the good bad life in "Josette" or the expatriate dream of France as expressed in "The Day Face and the Night Face". Sometimes, in fact, these depictions were more expressive than comparable Booster contributions. But one could not fail to notice about them a retrospective, even nostalgic quality. They were strung together, presented, in a way that a competent anthologist might have done, to the scrutiny of an outside readership. The ex-Boosters were here fluent mourners rather than practitioners of the "happy life of shame". The Dismemberment Delta was a lively requiem.

Of course, there were differences between the Jitterbug Shag number and Durrell's poetry issues. The former collected many of the writers who had been part of Miller's orbit in the Paris years. The poetry numbers were far more limited in scope. They pursued very specific artistic goals in a very specific literary environment, the narrow realm of English verse on the eve of the Second World War. The Dismemberment Delta, like the Booster before it, remained more obviously expatriate and cosmopolitan in tone - though on a dying fall. Another difference was that in the Dismemberment Number the editors not only finally published in little magazine form a true cross section of their work, but for the very first time it was not exclusive of the obscene. The Booster, too, as I have pointed out, had not dared to touch upon those areas, taking care even to expunge offensive words. Still, all three issues of Delta were alike in that
they tended to exhibit a more sober awareness of the extrovert aspects of the little magazine operation, which, of course, does not mean that they were necessarily more successful than their playfully uneven antecedent...

We have arrived at the second aspect of my assessment of the magazine's achievement. The question which I will now consider is whether the review succeeded in its self-advertising aims, in expressing and perhaps even in influencing certain aspects of the contemporary artistic concerns of the time.

At a first glance, as I have already said, there were reasons that weighed against ascribing to the Villa Seurat magazine any kind of importance in the shifting literary consciousness of the time. The review was hardly ever mentioned in the later critical literature about the period, even in that of the more specialised sort. Miller commentators have tended to regard the Booster and Delta as just another Villa Seurat prank. With few exceptions little magazine historians have either ignored it or spent no more than a handful of words on it. The same applies to contemporary comments, which, as I have tried to demonstrate, were as irresolute and inadequate as they were sparse. Although they advertised Delta saying that the Booster had "created attention in Europe and America" (Seven.ii.back cover), even the Boosters, not known for their modesty or understatement, did not seriously claim for their review an importance which reached far beyond their own little circle.

Further, looking through the forests of little magazine and periodical literature of the day, the fact was forced upon one again and again that the Booster/Delta was only one of numerous other little magazines, that these little magazines in turn represented only a small part of the multifarious journalistic world, which was only one side of the world of publishing, in itself no more than one aspect of the literary world, which in turn was only a fairly unimportant fraction of the larger world outside. For those not directly involved in its publication, so it appeared, the Booster/Delta was prima facie simply not an important event.
Was it even possible for a little magazine of the Booster and Delta class to make itself heard in the loud and frenetic literary world around? Little magazine editors themselves certainly thought so. Cyril Connolly has said: "Little magazines are the pollinators of works of art: literary movements and eventually literature itself could not exist without them" (CCEC.414). He even felt that little magazine contributions might "shape the times which they reflect" (CCEC.427). So the notion that that the Booster and Delta were necessarily insignificant facets of a larger world plainly deserved some revision. The question remains, however, whether the Villa Seurat review should be counted among the wheat or among the chaff?

Of course, the silence of contemporary critics and later literary historians was ominous. But plainly there were sometimes other, extra-literary factors involved when this or that publication received no critical attention. A critical hush, as I have tried to show in the chapter on contemporary reactions to the Booster, was not an infallible sign that the publication in question was not read. Certain periodicals, Potocki's lively Right Review, for example, were circulated and read, but also hardly ever referred to by other contemporary journals on political grounds. Critical silence sometimes says more about the literary climate than about the value and influence of the published work itself. Perhaps one would not have resorted to such an argument, were it not that in these years Miller himself thought his books were receiving similar treatment. As David Gascoyne pointed out in his Miller review for several years they were scarcely mentioned in the English press, while a predominantly left-wing literary establishment had all but black-balled Tropic of Cancer in America. Still, Miller had made his way. As he wrote to the New Republic in May 1938: "A conspiracy of silence, like censorship, can defeat its own ends. Sometimes it pays not to advertise. Sometimes the most effective, realistic thing to do is to be impractical, to fly in the face of the wind" (The New Republic.xcv.1224.49). Cancer had even brought him "fame and recognition" (ibid.). Neither the Villa Seurat review's small circulation nor its almost non-existent publicity signified conclusively that it was altogether disregarded.
What positive signs were there to suggest that the Villa Seurat review did in fact reach a readership? To begin with, there was clearly a will to publicity on the part of Miller and his friends. With varying degrees of urgency, they wanted to reach a wider audience. Robert Boyers has said that "very few artists actually believed it might be possible to produce important work without ever passing beyond that original little-magazine readership" (LMA.57). The Boosters were no exception. They certainly knew that, before passing beyond the original little magazine readership, they had to reach and win it. The question about the Booster/Delta is, had it been able to catch the ear of 'that original little-magazine readership' outside or not.

I have said that the Booster's priorities were somewhat distinct from those of the more extrovert Delta. Still, the route which led beyond the magazine's own 'original' readership of sympathetic friends and perturbed Country Club members was much the same. An early stop was the influential critic, literary commentator or fellow writer. The Boosters knew how to make use of such opinion leaders. Miller said about his Aller Retour New York pamphlet: "Would sit down and think up names - like André Gide or Paul Morand, and send them out" (IntHML.vi.17). That eager strategist of self-advertisement had not only "a host of friends and connections", but also "a good list of about 250 names to circularize" (Corr.36). A good number of the more important writers, critics and little magazine editors of the period figured on it. Many of these, perhaps all of them, received first a Booster letter and then, gratis or not, a copy of the magazine. The Booster and Delta helped to circulate Villa Seurat names and Villa Seurat writing.

Little magazine publicity accompanied the Miller set on the road to success. Without the little magazines their rise would certainly have taken longer, especially, and it was here that they differed from the majority of their fellow writers, as their most important books were banned in the United States and Great Britain. When Dylan Thomas said in September 1939 that he had read Tropic of Capricorn only in little magazine passages this was indicative of the importance of the little magazine for the Villa Seurat writers (DTSL.236). The little magazine contribution was almost the only public voice of the Villa Seurat
writers in the English speaking world. But if their ordinary contributions to literary journals pointed the reader to their books while these books' notoriety in turn tended to generate interest in their periodical publications, the same reciprocity applied to the Booster and Delta as well, only more so. The magazine was a poignant vehicle for advertisement of Villa Seurat literature, just as the reputation of Miller and Durrell drew readers to the magazine.

The magazine was not merely a good joke, not just a mirror of their way of life, not only a focal point of their art, but in an important way bound up with their literary reputation and with their impact on the literary sensibility of the time. I think that this thesis has shown that to explain Miller's and Durrell's literary prestige in the late 1930s by looking only at the effect their (banned) books had is not enough. The Booster and Delta, as well other little magazine publications, need to be considered as well. Similarly, the question whether the Villa Seurat review affected the climate of literary opinion in the late 1930s cannot be answered independently of an assessment of the group's growing literary prestige.

As we have seen, the reputation of Miller and Durrell grew suddenly in the immediate pre-war years. There was also a noticeable increase in the number of reviews prepared to publish their work. In this process of expansion the fact that they produced their own magazine, a focus for what appeared in more scattered ways in other little reviews, was not only important, but well nigh crucial. At this important stage of their careers, the Villa Seurat authors had at their disposal a magazine, an instrument of literary influence. They were no passive participants in the scurry for publishing outlets, but editors themselves.

Before 1937, the Villa Seurat writers were outside the little magazine system; after 1939 they were on the inside. We have seen that the Booster and Delta were central to this entry. Miller had previously railed against the closed system of glossy magazines like Vanity Fair and Esquire, that "wonderful pipeline system leading to the affiliated organs such as Harper's, Vogue, Atlantic Monthly, etc., etc." And then he added: "It's like boarding an open trolley and getting a
transfer. Or like passing from one wet dream to another and waking utterly refreshed" (ARNY.33). By 1939 the ex-Boosters were in a wonderful pipeline system of little magazines and it was only a matter of time before they would rise higher...

If the Villa Seurat writers succeeded in penetrating with the help of the Booster and Delta that closed system of little magazines and journals, they did so not only because they had a little review on offer. They became a part of that little magazine system because their work, as expressed in their books, their magazine and their contributions to other journals, fulfilled a necessary precondition without which that 'journey to success' would have ended, as it did for many other little magazine contributors and editors, in the waste paper basket of those influential writers, publishers and critics to whom they addressed themselves: it was believed to be of high literary quality and it was thought to have a certain, not insignificant relation to that elusive entity called the spirit of the times.

1937 to 1939 were years of great change and re-orientation also in the artistic and literary climate in England and France. Speaking generally, in the Booster summer of 1937 a conception of literature which demanded a social perspective was still widely accepted among the most advanced writers of the time; when the last Delta appeared around Easter 1939 this aesthetic had all but disappeared. "The bankruptcy of sociological literature and art should by now be fairly obvious even to the most zealous activist of art" (Transition.xxvii.9). Eugene Jolas' jubilation in the Spring of 1938 was perhaps somewhat premature. At this point, as I have tried to show, the politically conscious thirties movement still seemed to the contemporary audience in France and in England a monolithic edifice, an impressive and rigorous structure. Still, throughout the decade that particular view of art had never been wholly unquestioned either, and when the Booster summer arrived the paint of that great sinistral building had in fact already begun to crack and peel off at important places...
Many years later, Spender was to say that the momentously symbolic departure of Auden and Isherwood to America in January 1939 was not the reason why the political artist had gone into decline in England. Rather, he said, the thirties movement had "already been made bankrupt by events" (SSWWW.297). Even before the final series of events which culminated in the Nazi-Soviet pact of summer 1939 drained away "the great tide of Left wing feeling"(JS30s.147), there had been definite indications that the foundations of its art were breaking up. What Samuel Hynes has described as a "general withdrawal of the literary Left from commitment" had set in even before the Villa Seurat magazine took up publication. We have exemplified this process of a "general diminishment of revolutionary fervour" (Hynes 264f) by discussing in detail the philosophical and poetical development of David Gascoyne away from his surrealist and communist engagement.

Nevertheless, it has been emphasised that the retreat of the New Signatures generation was slow and uncertain and continued for several years. The point was that against this still powerful but fading background, the fact was not lost on a number of prominent English critics that that generation's self-doubts and hesitancies contrasted noticeably with the enthusiasm and gusto that seemed to be radiating from the fourteenth arrondissement south of Montparnasse.

In January 1939, as has been said, Lawrence Durrell told the readers of the New English Weekly that the reputation of his friend, Henry Miller, was "already strong among those for whom most of today's writing resembles the lifeless pokerwork of a village barber"(NEW.xiv.16.241). I pointed out that prominent literati like Eliot and Herbert Read, Rebecca West and Havelock Ellis would have agreed that Durrell was not exaggerating. We have mentioned that Desmond Hawkins praised Black Spring saying it had "freshness, vigour, panache, and an intimacy with his environment that our native gentility has lost" (Criterion.xvi.64.503), while his colleague, Montgomery Belgin, had earlier noted of Cancer: "Above all, there is dynamism" (Criterion.xv.58.86).
Yet it was not only the dynamism of Henry Miller that was juxtaposed with London's 'native gentility', but Durrell's as well. For T.S. Eliot, *The Black Book* was "the first piece of work by a new English writer to give me any hope for the future of prose fiction" (Seven.ii.inside front cover). Elisabeth Bowen said: "It is, in fact, not another of anything" (Purpose.xi.2.117), and Hugh Gordon Porteous told the reader: "Get down on hands and knees to this work" (Seven.iii.inside back cover). Desmond Hawkins proclaimed: "*The Black Book* is liable to be as important for fiction as Auden's first poems were for verse" (Criterion.xviii.71.318). In the 1938 *Enemies of Promise*, Cyril Connolly surveyed what he saw as the bleak and cheerless field of English and American prose, noting that after ten years of an increasingly 'tyrannical' realism there were finally glimpses of a "revival of imaginative prose" (CCCP.90). Among the handful of titles Connolly mentions was *Tropic of Cancer*, which he had earlier praised with the words:

Apart from the narrative power, the undulating swell of a style perfectly at ease with its creator, it has a maturity which is quite unlike the bravado, the spiritual ungrownupness of most American fiction. (CCCP.118)

Had Connolly finished *Enemies of Promise* a year or two later he might have included *The Black Book* as well. Desmond Hawkins at any rate said that to the contemporary novel "taken broadly in its stale and vapid naturalism", Durrell's book brought exactly that "which it lacks". And he went on to say:

It is indeed an understatement to say that this is the most important first novel of the year. Its topical relevance - that is to say, its revolutionary impact - is so considerable that one would be happier reviewing it five years hence, when the book itself has emerged from its immediate effect. What I am hinting at is that *The Black Book* may not continue to support the kind of untempered enthusiasm which it is likely to arouse, and which for excellent reasons it should arouse. What is instantly apparent is an infectious exuberance of phrase. Mr. Durrell's sentences are charged with a tonic gusto which no living novelist can match. (Criterion.xviii.71.316)
Like Connolly, Orwell said that the writing of Miller evinced "a flowing, swelling prose, a prose with rhythms in it, something quite different from the flat, cautious statements and snack-bar dialects that are now in fashion" (CE.i.545). In short, what the Villa Seurat writers were felt to contribute to the revival of imaginative writing (not in the least via the Booster and Delta) was stylistic verve, a powerful feeling for rhythm, a rich, highly colourful vocabulary, an inquisitive sense regarding the potential and value of language. Hawkins called the "Paris American idiom" of Miller "the one impersonal contribution to imaginative prose style in our time" (Criterion.xvi.64.503). Some of its constituent elements seemed familiar. Orwell said: "The adjective has come back, after ten years' exile"(CE.i.545). And Hawkins:

All your old friends are here: there is the Hemingway touch, the amusing dirty story, the whole bohemian ritual, the homage to Joyce, the homage to Stein, the homage to Jolas, the insistence—if you don't mind—on one's own genius, the naif box of tricks, the reminiscences of dear old America. (Criterion.xvi.64.502).

As was suggested in the very first chapters of this thesis, Miller and friends were self-consciously in the line of Anglo-American expatriates of art. "Prose in this country suffers from its avoidances, from the narrowness of the channel permitted it", Elizabeth Bowen said, adding: "For the present, the writer who makes a new mode must be published abroad" (Purpose.xi.2.116f). Miller and Durrell published abroad and lived abroad. They were also in the tradition of Pound and Graves and Joyce and Stein by promulgating a more purely aesthetic view of art. George Steiner later praised Durrell for his "effort to keep literature literate" (Steiner 53). The Villa Seurat too had attempted to keep literature literate (as they saw it), and towards the end of the decade, as we have noted, the number of observers who thought as they did that the exclusively political view of art was based on false assumptions increased sharply. In May 1939, Stephen Spender admitted: "Far too many writers and artists have been driven away from the centre of their real interest towards some outer rim of half creating, half agitation". And he added: "A great deal is said about saving culture, but the really important thing is to have a culture to save" (Hynes 364). This discontent was widespread, especial-
ly, it would seem among younger poets (HISA.21). To some of these, Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell represented a striking alternative. No matter that on closer scrutiny Villa Seurat writing was anything but 'non-political'; held up against the left-wing writers of the period the Boosters had not allowed themselves to be driven from 'the centre of their real interest'. Their much admired stylistic gusto was felt to have its origins in their almost unconditional adherence to this artistic imperative.

In 1940 George Orwell traced what he regarded as the decade's poverty in imaginative prose in England to a lack of aesthetic 'vision and courage on the part of the artist. For Orwell (silent about the work of American novelists like Dos Passos, Faulkner, Steinbeck and the recently deceased Thomas Wolfe) Henry Miller was the notable exception: "Good novels are not written by orthodoxy-sniffers, nor by people who are conscience-stricken about their own un-orthodoxy. Good novels are written by people who are not frightened (CE.i.568f).

The Booster, too, was anything but conscience-stricken about its own un-orthodoxy, and I have mentioned that Hugh Gordon Porteus' comments on the Booster ended with the words: "All this is admirable - anything that brings poor old art up to the public platform is to be praised" (NEW.xii.6.112). In the autumn of 1937 this contribution to keeping literature literate was still considered to be eccentric. Just over a year later, as shown, the stock of 'poor old art' was rising again, and with it that of the Villa Seurat...

Frederick Hoffman has said about the end of the decade feeling: "More than anything else, the artist has been frightened by the imminent loss of his aesthetic prerogative" (Hoffman 188). In 1938 and 1939, one might say rather sweepingly, the artist began to regain his prerogative. In the Booster days, Villa Seurat enunciations were sounds coming in from the outside; in the closing year of the decade its misgivings about the doctrine of the committed artist seemed vindicated. The third Booster editorial had jeered from Paris that the contemporary poet was "buttering his bread with a fountain-pen, and writing poetry with his knife" (B.iii.5). By 1939, Auden, Spender and others were saying as much, questioning the old faith and talking
about the survival of poetry and culture.

The reaction in England against the belief that art and politics were indivisible took on various forms reaching from E.M. Forster's reassertion of a quiet Bloomsbury liberalism to the pompously neo-romantic proclamations of the Apocalyptic group. And it must be said that not everyone now shied away from political involvement. Julian Symons has pointed out that there were some, like Louis MacNeice, "who felt that they had lived too much in the world of personal relationships, and that Fascism presented a threat before which all individualism must seem finicky" (JS30s.140). Geoffrey Grigson might be named here, and the Delta contributor Nicholas Moore. Still, the retreat towards "a political quietism" was very much in evidence, and linked to it, there was a renewal of the belief that the artist's true commitment was to his art.

Spender said: "I think that there is a certain pressure of external events on poets today, making them tend to write about what is outside their own limited experience" (Hynes 364). Julian Symons later noted: "What we saw during the Thirties was an attempt to deny utterly the validity of individual knowledge and observation" (JS30s.125). I have tried to show that individual knowledge and personal observation were the cornerstones of the Villa Seurat art and that these individual emphases (with their literary correlatives) answered in 1939 to the needs of a growing number of readers. But of course, Miller and Durrell were not the only ones opposed to social realist doctrines, not the only ones who regarded themselves as preservers of "the precious seed of individuality" (JS30s.150).

First, many of the writers of the Auden generation were themselves inwardly divided between the belief that the age demanded "social action, class action, mass action" with its concomitant simplicity and directness of expression, and the belief that good art demanded personal truthfulness, subtlety and complexity (JS30s.150). Julian Symons has said that "from these irreconcilable propositions the best of the Thirties writers and painters made art" (JS30s.151).
Second, the crowded assembly of writers who saw themselves as outside the left-wing literary orthodoxy was impressive; as far as the literary landscape in England was concerned, its influence was anything but non-existent. Here were heard the older voices of Eliot, Leavis, Empson, Wyndham Lewis and Edith Sitwell, and these mingled easily with those of a younger generation of nascent romantic revivalists, the followers of Dylan Thomas and George Barker, modernistic Townsmen, latter day Laurentians, reactionaries of art such Potocki of Montalk, Derek Savage or Roy Campbell, as well as distant expatriates like Pound, Graves and Laura Riding, and even echoes from across the Atlantic, the voices of Wolfe, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Santayana and others. Miller and Durrell would always stress that they were singular phenomena in the world of the 1930s - "Alone in my private glory" (Martin 310). But this was not true. The romantic extremists from the Villa Seurat were not alone.

The Villa Seurat group and its review were shown to be a part of a larger pattern, the intricate conflict "around two opposing conceptions of poetry; those sometimes called classical and romantic, or cultural and emotional, or cerebral and sensual" (FSAA.xii). This dualism was more a hypothesis for the literary tacticians of the day than an adequate description of a reality which was far more complex, untidy, confused and full of contradictions. Still, there was some truth to it, enough at least to show that many of those concerns (especially the psychoanalytic penchant) which coloured the writings of Miller and friends were not at all uncommon in the literary world of the thirties.

One example which has proven particularly fascinating was the Booster's politics. In 1940 Orwell noted that "the literary history of the thirties seems to justify the opinion that a writer does well to keep out of politics" (CE.1.568) and he presented Miller as a non-political voice from the crowd, as the very antithesis of the propagandist writers of the 'Pylon Verse Establishment'. But Orwell here (still) ignored the American's work's decidedly political tendencies. I mentioned in particular the questionable artist-as-hero outlook which was found to echo in many ways the philosophies of those writers who populate John Harrison's The Reactionaries. Though commentators have
tended to pass by this side of Miller and the 'hilarious' Booster, neither in an artistic sense nor politically was the editors' insistence on the superiority of the creative individual a quantité négligeable in the 1930s. The Villa Seurat and the Booster were part of a larger pattern.

But the Boosters' stress on the individual had less dubious aspects as well. Miller's programmatic words - "I believe in nothing except what is direct, immediate and personal" (IntHML.v.19) - struck, as noted, an increasingly sympathetic chord among many writers. After a period of faith in collective action, after turning one's eyes outside to face the social evils of the time, the private and imaginative voice now seemed called for. The public role which so many young writers had opted for in the earlier part of the decade had been repudiated by events:

...old and young, Right and Left were not essentially different in their notions about the poet's task: for both, art could only play a passive role - comforting, but not directing. No one could demand any longer that the writer 'make action urgent and its nature clear', for action no longer seemed possible. (Hynes 337)

After the Munich Crisis and the collapse of the Spanish Republic action and the art of action no longer seemed possible. The private voice was sought by many of those who were innerly preparing for the apocalyptic time ahead. Villa Seurat art and the personalist attitude which animated this art responded to the zeitgeist in a most happy way.

Looking with apprehension into the immediate future, David Gascoyne said in 1938: "What is so detestable about war is that it reduces the individual to complete insignificance. Our private destinies are swamped by the private destinies of nations" (DG.ii.61). In the late 1930s, many thought, as has been shown, that the coming war would be "the Apocalypse that would destroy culture" (Hynes 292). Where the outlook on the future was not quite that terminal, it was believed that with the war the public importance of the individual human being would be blotted out. The thirties generation's idea that theirs "was one of those intervals of history in which events make the individual
feel that he counts" (SS30s.25) had already all but faded. Now, however, caught in the machinery of another European war, individuals were certain to count as nothing. Many of those outside the thirties movement, too, critical of the reality of what Spender praised as "individualistic anti-fascism" (ibid.), now thought that individual values, and thus "the continuity of culture", as Eliot put it in his "Last Words", were in grave danger (Criterion.xviii. 71.274). The lumbering destinies of nations would grind into insignificance indiscriminately both the individualistic anti-fascists of Malraux's generation and the artist-heroes of Wyndham Lewis' party of genius.

In early 1939, the immediate future looked very grim. Though not everyone shared Orwell's fear that some form of fascist rule would be imposed on England as soon as the war began, at the very least nevertheless censorship and a new collective atmosphere of patriotism and propaganda was felt to be sure to demand of the writer the kind of conformism that had been the worst feature of the past 'left-wing orthodoxy', a new simplification of expression, a new distorting singleness of purpose. David Gascoyne noted: "That's what I'm most afraid of: the stifling atmosphere of lies and distortion and hypocrisy that war brings with it"(DG.ii.71). Whatever the response to the impending cataclysm, there was little doubt that in one way or another the integrity of the artist was going to be put to the test yet again (Hoffman 218f).

The gloomy drôle de paix period was one of waiting and of reorientation. The twilight seemed to many a last chance to to come up for air and to sort out and reassert personal values. Some, like the nascent Apocalyptics, turned away from the outside world, "took a nose dive into Celtic mysticism" (Thurley 137), seized upon 'timeless' subject matter and celebrated the 'myth'. Some, like Kathleen Raine and David Gascoyne, looked to metaphysical regions, embracing a more spiritual conception of poetry, whose function was to create inner sanctuaries, and "to consecrate and redeem ... some parcel of the surrounding waste" (WLHL.88). The direction, for a time at any rate, was inward, towards contemplation and passivity. Many, it would seem, now agreed with G.S.Fraser when he said: .
Let us be honest enough to admit, too, that for most of the sufferings, ... we have no adequate, no rational remedy; but we can give these sufferings the dignity and beauty of a myth. (Seven.viii.31)

Samuel Hynes has called the writing of this final year of not-war a "Literature of Preparation". The stress was on retrenching, on survival, and the individual coming up for air was part of this. Indeed, as he said, Orwell's Coming Up For Air was one of "the most representative books" of that time (Hynes 367). Interestingly, Roberta Kalechofsky has pointed out that the protagonist of Coming Up for Air, 'Fatty' Bowling, grew out of Orwell's "enthusiasm for James Joyce's Ulysses and Henry Miller's Tropic of Cancer" (Kalechofsky 86). One might repeat this here: Miller's outlook, as evinced in Cancer, strongly influenced one of the two "most representative books of that time", Miller's friendly advice to the ailing Englishman in April 1938, as I have shown, not having fallen on deaf ears:

stop thinking and worrying about the external pattern. One can only do his bit - you can't shoulder the responsibilities of the whole world... Do nothing! You'll find it's very difficult at first - then it becomes marvellous and you get to really know something about yourself - and thru (sic!) yourself the world. Everyone is micro- and macrocosm both, don't forget that... (BCGO.367f)

In these months, as we have seen, a gloomy Orwell believed that Miller's books were eloquent of a stance which was not only an alternative for the novelist but the only possible attitude in a world that "is not a writer's world":

It seems likely, therefore, that in the remaining years of free speech any novel worth reading will follow more or less along the lines that Miller has followed - I do not mean in technique or subject-matter, but in implied outlook. (CE.i.576)

A sensitised contemporary will have recognised in the pages of the Villa Seurat review not only an stance that brought "poor old art up to the public platform"(Porteus)(NEW.xii.6.112), but also 'the implied outlook', evidence of the personalism, which appeared a prerequisite to the survival of literature as such.
I have already said that there existed a nexus between the rise in appeal of the Villa Seurat and their little magazine work. The Booster and Delta revealed many of those qualities which readers admired in their novels. However, the review also evinced more, those particular traits that characterised a new generation of little magazines.

Hynes has described the early months of 1939 as "a time of endings, but of no beginnings". However, I have tried to show that this view was not entirely correct. It was a time of endings, but of beginings as well - even in the little magazine world. A new wave of little magazines, experimental, aesthetic and eclectic was pressing forward. Geoffrey Grigson would denounce these as "the new crop of loony and eccentric small magazines" (NV.i.2.ns.49). But contrary to his disparaging remarks in the very last number of New Verse their appearance was welcomed in 1938 and 1939.

In the little magazine field, openness, experiment and flexibility were the editorial concomitants of the new "individualistic approach" (HISA.173). The logic was that a personal response, subject to "the more free and autonomous laws of artistic creation" (DG.i.67) will tend to be more complex and contradictory than one ruled by collective exigencies; it will require a publishing outlet that is more generous and tolerant of dissent; it will want a magazine that is not governed by censorious editors, by those "cock-sure partisans telling you what to think" (CE.i.549). An eclectic magazine will be more contradictory and, as was sometimes deplored in the years to come, more indistinct in contour and direction than one streamlined by political exigencies. Still, just as the personal voice was felt by many to be needful in this shadowy period, so a more generous and less doctrinal editorial policy seemed necessary. Flexible little magazine editors were entering the scene that was being abandoned by those of the Auden generation. It was all a part of the climate of re-orientation and preparation. The words with which Twice A Year, a New York review that commenced publication in autumn 1938, advertised itself as: "ATTEMPTING A CLARIFICATION OF VALUES" (D.ii.np.). That precisely was the programme of the twilight peace leading into the summer of 1939.
The **Booster** was "eclectic, flexible, alive"(B.i.5). When in 1937 the editors proclaimed the **Booster's** openness, there was still a note of defiance in their voices. "Unlike most magazines the Booster has no fixed policy"(B.i.5). It was non-political, non-educational, non-progressive, non-co-operative, non-ethical, non-literary, non-consistent, non-contemporary. It was **non-contemporary**. Catholicity of content was widely criticised, eclecticism denounced as compromise, flaccid inclusiveness and "mere vagueness of intent" (Purpose.x.4.238). By 1939, however, as I have tried to show, the situation had changed. An editorial policy of having no fixed policy was suddenly at a premium. Suddenly the **Booster's** policies were **contemporary**. The second **Booster** editorial had said: "Notre programme, c'est de ne pas en avoir" (B.ii.5). Now, in line with the change of literary atmosphere, more magazines were steering an inclusive, less polemical and more specifically literary course.

Two distinct strands of motive fed into the new little magazine climate. On the one side there was the flexibility associated with new journals like **Horizon** or **Kingdom Come**, as well as some older ones like John Lehman's **New Writing** and the **Partisan Review**, on the other the eclecticism of magazines like **Poetry London**, **Seven**, **Townsman** and the **Villa Seurat** review. The flexibility of the former group had its origins both in the disillusioned reaction against political commitment and in the war-situation. Connolly noted that the Marxist fire had damaged "many green young saplings" (Horizon.i.2.70) and that **Horizon** would now print the best work available, regardless of its political implication. More important, perhaps, at the outset **Horizon**'s aim was conservative, the keeping alive of culture. Connolly later cited the image of an Ark. Editorial flexibility had become a part of the struggle for survival: "a magazine had to be eclectic to survive" (CCEC.425). Geoffrey Grigson might rail: "There is nothing so blinding as trying to see both sides" (NV.i.2.ns.63) - but his advice was ignored and **New Verse** did not survive. The new standards were, for the time being, aesthetic and not political. The emphasis, as in the field of poetry, was on art's survival and the way to survive was to be eclectic.
The Boosters' editorial openness, however, was far less a response to the immediate pre-war atmosphere than Horizon was. It was in part a response (though not a disillusioned one) to the doctrinal narrowness of many of the more political literary reviews. But, more importantly, it evolved directly out of that absolute belief in the individual artistic vision that is associated with romantic and modernist art. Unlike Horizon whose first editorial still regretted that a paper which was "revolutionary in opinions" was at the moment impossible, the Villa Seurat naturally felt no such remorse.

However, I have pointed out that this editorial attitude was not entirely exceptional in the pre-war world either. It was part of an older tradition, that of the experimental little magazine of the 1920s. The Villa Seurat, as I have tried to indicate, took up again many of those modernist impulses which Auden and his friends had bypassed in responding to the requirements of the political life. The same applied to their house organ. The Booster in particular called to mind the vivacious and searching spirit of the experimental magazines of the 1920s. When George Orwell accused the Booster of going "Back to the Twenties", he was not wide of the mark. "The twenties were an age of individualists", Hoffman said and an age of individualists inevitably produces the multiplex and "merry confusion which makes the little magazines of the twenties stimulating to read" (Hoffman 81f).

The end of the thirties, witnessing the re-emergence of the individual response, seemed to re-admit a multiplex, confusing and chaotic perception of the world. Though the literary re-orientation of the increasingly depressing drôle de paix months was in many ways distinct from the nervous and 'merry' experimentalism of the twenties with its ever widening horizons, the eclectic editorial stance both of the Booster and Delta was not altogether without antecedents.

Furthermore, as I have shown, the notion that the literary periodicals of the Left, little magazines like New Verse or Twentieth Century Verse or Contemporary Poetry and Prose, were necessarily 'doctrinal', narrow, apt to practice what Tambimuttu called "suppression of free speech in verse" (PL.i.2.np.), cannot really stand up to critical scrutiny and must be described as "an agreed fiction". Even though as G.S.Fraser has pointed out "behind an agreed fiction there are always
some facts", and even though the idea itself, however simplistic and
distortive, was an effective tactical agent (MWW.323), the front line
dividing the old and the new reviews was in reality fairly indistinct,
cnfused, and sometimes next to non-existent.

Also, even before the ending of the thirties movement, in some of
those reviews outside the 'left-wing orthodoxy', editorial openness
was not decried. I have mentioned the tolerance and flexibility of the
more established journals like the Criterion, Purpose and Life and
Letters Today. There were also a number of smaller periodicals whose
editorial policies approximated to those of the Booster. From January
1938 on, we have said, the London Townsman stressed, in a way the
Boosters might have done, the "permanent dimensions of individuals",
which alone were "the artist's business" (Townsman.i.1.1). Jolas'
Transition, as has been pointed out, kept up the experimentalist
tradition of the Paris-American age, placed the artist's imagination
above everything else, and "provided shelter for many refugees from
literary tyrannies" (Criterion. xviii.71.395). In America itself the
New Directions anthologies of James Laughlin practised what Hoffman
called an "intelligent and enthusiastic eclecticism" (Hoffman 215).
One might note that even in the boom days of the Left Review and
International Literature, editorial eclecticism was no altogether
unique phenomenon.

The Villa Seurat review was part of a wider trend in the little maga-
zine world, before and after the ending of the 'Pylon Verse' establis-
hment. It was also a very small review with an almost negligible
circulation in England and America. And its critical reception was
anything but impressive. If, however, its relative importance was in
any way related to the reputation of its individual editors, and I
have tried to show that it was, then the Booster/Delta would seem to
merit more attention than it has hitherto received. The Villa Seurat
review would merit attention not only because it was one of the
earliest manifestations of that wider pre-war trend in the direction
of a more eclectic form of editorial policy, but because it belonged
to a fairly influential group of little magazines that appeared in
England from 1938 on. I am referring to Poetry London and Seven, whose
close links to the Booster/Delta have been discussed in detail. I have
indicated their strong organisational and material overlappings, the fluid exchange of contributions and contributors. I have tried to show that their editorial policies were well-nigh identical, that their standards were aesthetic, their selective criteria flexible:

a catholicity which can always move to the level of a work which has been executed under particular laws necessary for its creation. A catholicity which is 'not a party and therefore has no policy' and is important as a principle, in life and art. (PL.i.2.np)

Tambimuttu praised Seven in 1939. "It is full of life because it is not narrow and not bogged down" (PL.i.2.np.). In all likelihood he had thought of the Villa Seurat review in similar terms. The point is that to assess properly the Villa Seurat review one must take into account not only the impact of the review itself, the influence of its individual editors and the fact that it belonged to a wider trend, but also that from 1938 on Delta was part of this fairly important little magazine group.

Derek Savage noted: "All literary atmosphere is created by a select few and percolates down gradually to more popular levels" (PC.liii.4.203). He was speaking of the Auden group. What he said, however, applied to the following literary decade as well. In the twilight of 1939, many of those young poets who were to shape the literary atmosphere in Britain in the war years appeared in the pages of Poetry London and Seven (FSAA.xiii). As we have seen, many of them had also found a welcome in the pages of the Villa Seurat review. It was a time of endings, but of beginnings as well. Cyril Connolly has said that a literary journal could shape the times which it reflects. This was apparently the case with the triad of Poetry London, Seven and Delta in 1938 and 1939. Poetry London especially played an important role in the romantic shaping of the literary atmosphere of the post-Auden period. Francis Scarfe said in Auden and After:

This battle for the liberation of emotion, and against purely intellectual and cerebral standards, which Lawrence himself had so valiantly preached, was taken up especially by Tambimuttu and his sympathizers in his review 'Poetry'. Tambimuttu has written several essays in which he places 'emotional drive' and 'personal integrity' among the highest qualities of the poet. (FSAA.xiiif)
For a short period of time, *Seven* with its Apocalyptic connections, with its links to Dylan Thomas, Braker, Gascoyne, the Celtic regionalists and to the American neo-surrealists around Parker Tyler and Charles Henri Ford, played an important role as well. And *Delta*, the organ of the 'Paris Movement' of Miller and Durrell, ought not be underestimated either. Scarfe's phrase 'Tambimuttu and his sympathizers' encompassed not only the world of *Poetry London* but that of *Seven* and *Delta* - even when the latter two had passed away. I have said that *Delta* ended when it did because it had fulfilled its purpose. One of these was establishing the association with *Poetry London*, an association which was to bear many fruits in the years to come one of which was Durrell's *Personal Landscape*. An Anthology of *Exile* published by Tambimuttu, another *The Cosmological Eye* issued by *Editions Poetry London* in 1945.

What was the Villa Seurat review's relative importance in the *Seven-Poetry London-Delta* triangle? The *Booster* and the first poetry *Delta* certainly anticipated temporally the editorial flexibility of the other two. Whether it influenced their editorial concepts or whether it was only a *Zeitgeist* parallelism is difficult to say. Nicholas Moore at any rate admitted that he drew "heavily on the Villa Seurat and friends", and he added that *Poetry London* too "drew on the same sources to a great extent, Larry Durrell becoming a firm friend and supporter of Tambi's" (Letter 23rd Aug. 1982). The high esteem Miller and Durrell were held in at this time contrasts markedly with the relative obscurity of neophytes Tambimuttu and Moore, but whether this is an indication that the Boosters influenced the new reviews is hard to say. The short life span of the *Booster* and *Delta*, nevertheless, says little about its weight in this little magazine triad.

What I have tried to show, is that if Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell helped to revive a more imaginative prose in these months of re-orientation, the Villa Seurat review, via the *Poetry London* and *Seven* connection especially, contributed its part to reviving the idea of a more imaginative eclectic little magazine.
I have tried to show that the Villa Seurat group and the Villa Seurat review were part of a larger literary configuration and that as the war drew closer they approximated more and more to the literary mainstream. But we have also seen that in some respects their work was typical neither of that of the thirties generation nor of that of its romantic successors. The circle's curious mixture of pessimism and optimism as expressed in the Booster editorials and in contributions like "The Enormous Womb" would be a special case in point.

"A world, says Miller, in which there must be no hope, but no despair" (Spirit 36). Long before meeting the American, Durrell had singled out for comment the paradoxical co-existence of Miller's clear consciousness of the horrors of modern life and his irrepressible gaiety, his Whitmanesque optimism:

Where all the other people like Joyce and Lewis got stuck in the morass and dirt of modern life, Miller comes out on the other side with a grin, whole, hard and undamaged. (Spirit 37)

I have tried to discuss the phenomenon which seemed to me especially characteristic of the Boosters; despite the chaos around them, they were happy. Orwell said about Cancer: "The thing has become so unusual as to seem almost anomalous, but it is the book of a man who is happy" (CE.i.546). The same was true of the Booster. This was a magazine by a group of writers who were happy. Incongruously, at the end of a decade of economic depression, political upheaval and social unrest, in the dark of the pre-war months, they were cheerful, "whole, hard and undamaged" - at least that is how they presented themselves to the public.

In the autumn and winter of 1938, as Bernard Crick has said, optimism of any kind seemed fatuous and to be darkly pessimistic "was perfectly rational" (BCGO.372). It was rational, reactionaries and progressive writers agreed. "Preoccupation with political events amounted to anguish and created an atmosphere unfavourable to literature" (BY39.277). Still, the "Paris Movement" around Miller did not seem to care about this. On the contrary, in the grim détente that followed the Czechoslovak Crisis, when nightmare and uncertainty were the order
of the day, the ex-Boosters appeared to blossom out. Of course, in September 1938 they too had been shocked and frightened to the bone, but, as we have noted, they quickly found their voices again, picked up (almost) where they had left off, turning out books and articles and stories, "whole, hard and undamaged". They even put together a ninety page issue of their ostensibly defunct little review, a 'requiem' which was nevertheless vivid and alive. It was a "Jitterbug Shag Requiem"! As critics had to admit, the writers around Miller did not fail to describe the apocalyptic climate of the time. Again, they were inside the whale, but (in Orwell's phrase) unlike other literary Jonahs of the day, their whale was transparent (CE.i.572).

If the enthusiastic tone in a number of critical appreciations and the rise in the number of Villa Seurat contributions to other literary reviews are any indication, readers, some readers, at any rate, listened. They listened to writers who did not seem paralysed by doubt, who did not feel the general staleness and depression of spirits that weighed on writers like, say, Eliot. On the contrary, Miller and friends seemed to radiate with a peculiar, indeed, almost messianic self-assurance. Perhaps it is exaggerated to cite here Malcolm Muggeridge who said that in times of apprehension the "eyes of all rest, enthralled, on one who lightens their darkness, makes coherent their incoherence, speaks when they are dumb" (Muggeridge 251). But the Villa Seurat writers, particularly Miller, of course, but Gascoyne as well, sometimes saw themselves in these terms. They had long practiced the song and dance of catastrophe and so when in the autumn of 1938 reality had finally caught up with their visions of doom, they sang and danced when many others were dumb.

Villa Seurat writing had a curious fascination not only because it approximated the apocalyptic Zeitgeist, not only because it tended to include the vision of a new dawn beyond the chaos - "We stand at the threshold of a new way of life" (WoH.85). It fascinated because it was put across with a bravado which could be associated with anything but pessimism, fear and anxiety. From the first lines of Miller's Booster editorial to the last poem ever to appear in Delta, the circle's catastrophic optimism was manifest, a wholly irrational attitude, of course, but one whose gusty enthusiasm and certainty of tone rendered
it effective and appealing. I have pointed out as revealing that Eliot's valedictory words in the last number of the Criterion followed directly upon Miller's elated and apocalyptic review of Gutkind's The Absolute Collective. Eliot printed Miller, as indeed, he may well have had the Villa Seurat's small and obscure magazine in mind when, referring to the "continuity of culture", he said that one should look to the "small and obscure papers and reviews, those which are hardly read by anyone but their own contributors" (Criterion.xvii.71.274)

In these months, then, the Golden Age Boosters, self-proclaimed exemplars of the 'higher type of man' to come, in tune with the Zeitgeist, laughing Jeremiahs, at any rate, seem to have had an audience. Before, when in 1937 the Booster editorials proclaimed that for the Whitmanesque optimists from the Villa Seurat everything was excellent "including the high-grade bombers with ice-boxes and what not"(8.i.5), this must have seemed a joke in bad taste to some, pure insanity to others. People, as Durrell reported from London, would make wry mouths and hurry on. In 1939, the situation had changed. Although the Booster group was itself already in the process of dissolution, the individual editors' spriteliness as evinced in their art seems to have been welcomed. "His voice is heard above the wrack of doom - joyous and prophetic" (Hamlet 90). Even though their irresponsible outlook had hardly changed at all, their voices, joyous above the wrack of doom, were applauded. The times had changed and with them the readership's concerns and needs.

The Villa Seurat fiddled happily, so it seemed to the outsider, while Rome was burning. They even admitted that they needed Rome to burn in order to be able to fiddle (Hamlet 56). And yet at this point, the sound of a fiddle seemed curiously reassuring, necessary even. The ex-Boosters were laughing Jeremiahs but at least they were laughing. Miller would say: "I feast on death"(Hamlet 339), but what seemed important now was that someone was still capable of feasting. Indeed, at a time when not only the ideals of a whole generation of young left-wing poets had turned out a "swindle" (Orwell) (CE.i.577), but those of the reactionaries as well, who would stand up and blame him? Of course, there were other writers writing at the time, other poets composing, other journals still appearing. The ex-Boosters were not
alone in the twilight zone before the war. But there was something special about them. Their joyous fatalism, previously horrific in the eyes of a progressive readership, now coincided in a perverse way with a wider mental climate brought about by the cold and damp shadow of war. How could one feel responsible for and committed to a future that was no future at all? How could one be forward-thinking and criticise the Villa Seurat's stress on the immediate present, on life-as-is and on flavouring their "Requiem" with a "Jitterbug Shag", when (as the dance-craze during the Crisis clearly demonstrated) the present was all that one had and when this present was sure to be a 'Golden Age' compared to the horrific times ahead? How could one dispute the Villa Seurat's disregard for "political line-ups" and "social panaceas" and "economic nostrums", when one's hopes of these as solutions to the problems of the age had been shattered? How could one condemn the inhumane 'acceptance' concept when all the idealism and actionism of the past age had led nowhere, when a liberal humanism was everywhere retreating, and there was now nothing to be done but to wait and accept? How could one contend with the Villa Seurat when in addition to everything else their writing was charged with a narrative power that in its better moments was almost unmatchable even under the happiest of circumstances?

It remains that Mr. Miller does produce a memorable and eddying effect by expressing nausea at the assumed conditions of human existence with never-flagging gusto appropriate to joie de vivre. (Criterion.xv.58.86)

These remarks about Tropic of Cancer appeared in the Criterion in 1935, but while conceding Miller's stylistic power, Montgomery Belgian criticised the book on the whole as "an expression of despair and disgust at human life" (ibid.). In 1939, when despair over the conditions of human existence was no longer 'assumed', no longer a romantic pose, but a depressing reality, when pessimism about the future of Western civilisation was a thoroughly rational position, when few would continue to belittle even the most extravagant predictions of disaster, it was the Villa Seurat's unabated joie de vivre as manifested both explicitly and implicitly in their art, in their unbroken creativeness, in books like Tropic of Capricorn and The Black Book, in their contributions to the Criterion and Purpose and other
journals, and in the various numbers of their house organ, which impressed itself forcibly on the literary sensibility of their readers. In these dark and barren days before the war the Boosters succeeded in growing on the shadowy premises of their Weltanschauung flowers of a most vivid and colourful kind, and people noticed. More than six years later George Orwell, as I have said, admitted that reading Miller's "Via Dieppe Newhaven" which was issued in England in the autumn of 1938 made him feel more ashamed of his country than the ignoble Munich settlement (CE.iv.134). He was probably not alone in forgiving and/or ignoring Miller's anti-social and anti-humanist attitudes at that point in time. As we have seen, he held, Miller on the contrary in high esteem for continuing to produce work of such force and persuasion. The sound of the fiddle, so ignominious in its indifference to the horrors of war and oppression, was welcomed, and art such as this was considered to be no less than a "mode of survival" (Hynes 353), offering in some way a minimal hope for that "continuity of culture" which was not only on the mind of the editor of the Criterion.

In what was perhaps the most famous poem of the age, Auden's "In Memory of W.B.Yeats", there are some lines saying that Time would pardon Yeats (as it had pardoned Kipling and Claudel) "for writing well". Samuel Hynes explained how Auden seems to have understood this line: no matter that Yeats' politics were undemocratic and reactionary, "to write well in such a time is to preserve the human imagination, and thus to defend a human value against the forces of inhumanity" (Hynes 353). By virtue of the same argument, one might now say that the Booster group not only contributed to a certain extent to a general revival of a more imaginative prose in these pre-war years; by continuing to write well in such a time Miller and Durrell and friends might be considered with some justification to be among those who helped 'to preserve the human imagination' as well.

The reader will forgive me for citing a phrase as orotund as that. The last paragraphs of a thesis of this length seem to lead one inexorably to a certain flamboyance and rhetoric exaggeration. Indeed, it is precisely at this point that one should stop and consider carefully. It has been a special emphasis of this work to criticise the more
questionable ideological foundations of Villa Seurat art, the disturbing affinities with other romantic reactionaries, anti-democratic, anti-humanist writers of the period. Time might forgive Yeats, but should all that we have written about the dubious anti-politics of Miller and friends be forgotten now in order to end this thesis on a conciliatory, even laudatory note? When Auden wrote "In Memory of W.B.Yeats" he was aware that Time was already in the process of forgiving Yeats, for the 'nightmare of the dark' which needed voices such as Yeats' to persuade the audience 'to rejoice' was setting on Europe (Hynes 353). Similarly, when Orwell defended Miller in "Inside the Whale", his words were coloured by the apprehensive atmosphere of the Phoney Peace and War period. The emphasis then was on the survival of art. But, as I have shown, Orwell later changed his mind about Miller and he came to stress the more negative elements in the American's work. And we were free to do the same. The complex question of how to assess good writing that bespeaks an inhumane and anti-democratic ideology has been touched upon again and again in this work. In 1939 Auden and Orwell found an answer; I admit at this point that for me it turned out to be a question that cannot be answered or untangled conclusively. In my opinion, Time has not settled the issue. One might say: although Miller would insist that what the world really needed was "traitors to the human race" (Seven.iii.21), in the sense that 'in spite of himself the poet Yeats was "on the right side" by continuing to write well (Hynes 353), the Villa Seurat writers were not 'traitors to the human race' either. But saying that I am immediately aware that a very good case can be made for the opposite view as well. And while I am thinking of all the disquieting analogies with romantic 'artist-heroes' of every denomination it is also true that with the best of their vivid poetry and muscular prose they too helped to preserve good art and to defend a high human value against the 'forces of inhumanity'. It is perhaps no more than a subjective bias which makes me think that despite its enervating irresponsibility, its silly posturings, its seemingly cynical 'detachment' and at times incomprehensible 'philosophising', the Villa Seurat review added by way of a particular liveliness and literary quality of many of its contributions, as well as by way of boosting a more experimental, eclectic and artistic little review, to that small part in the safe-keeping of art which was the individual Villa Seurat writers' achievement in the years 1937 to
1939. In the end then, and with all its imperfections lying on its head, the Booster/Delta proved perhaps after all what its editors had initially hoped it would be, a real and effective "contraceptive against the self-destructive spirit of the age".

Notes

1. SoL.705; Comment.ii.39.87.
vi. EPILOGUE
Bei einem Denker sollte man nicht fragen: welchen Standpunkt nimmt er ein, sondern: wie viele Standpunkte nimmt er ein? Mit anderen Worten: hat er einen geräumigen Denkapparat oder leidet er an Platzmangel, das heißt: an einem "System"?

Egon Friedell
We have come to the end of this thesis. Starting from a very narrow textual base, a rather short-lived, three-hundred page little magazine, this work has grown to more than twice that length. A fairly exhaustive treatment such as this might have been expected to provide the reader with some satisfactorily comprehensive and compact appraisal in the end. Unfortunately, as even a fleeting matching of my foregoing conclusion with the body of the thesis itself reveals, nothing of the kind has really been forthcoming. The conclusion can hardly claim to tie up into one elegant knot all the various strands that had been spun out before. Indeed, to some readers much of what has been left out may well be of no less importance than what has been included. It is at this point that I would like to discuss briefly and personally some aspects of the thesis' modus operandi, to explain why I chose to proceed the way I did.

If in the conclusion I did not present with verve a deftly packed summary of what had previously been collected to explain the Booster/Delta phenomenon, if I concentrated rather on two particular facets - the review's role for the Villa Seurat group and its role in representing aspects of the changing artistic concerns of the pre-war world - this has to do especially with the great distances that have been covered to arrive here. To stop and shift about uneasily after reaching one's destination seems natural enough, and as I stood there, looking back on a long and dusty road, longer and more uneven than I had expected and hoped for, I confess to having been somewhat intimidated by the sheer multitude of souvenirs and experiences acquired on the way. Every time I began to reflect on my impressions of this itinerary as a whole, some recollection of this landmark or that event crowded into mind and succeeded somehow in unbalancing a comprehensive view. What was genuinely memorable and what was merely an interesting discussion became increasingly difficult to hold apart. A conclusion, however, needed to be written, there was no evading that, and so it was composed in the hope that the two chosen angles of vision (the achievement of the review as a group publication and as part of the changing literary climate in England and France) might tie in as many of the other aspects as possible. Plainly, however, some items have
been ignored and left unattended to.

If the bulkiness of the thesis has been, in a way, responsible for rendering most difficult a genuinely inclusive summary, if it has led me to focus on two questions and to neglect others, one must ask what were the reasons for this? Why did one not take the shorter route that would have led directly to a similarly limited assessment of the Booster/Delta instead of perambulating patiently through a multitude of fields and subject matter which would not be seen to at the end anyway? Why, in short, has this work come to be so very long?

The answer to this question may reflect on the author of the thesis himself, pointing to a certain critical indolence, a readiness to succumb to the temptation of an alluring detour. There have been admittedly very many such digressions. Perhaps, on one of these, the reader may have felt that the author's predilection for bringing together large amounts of secondary and source material, may in some way be the obverse side to an irresolute vision of the essential. A recurring point which this thesis has stressed has been that the phenomena were usually more complicated and contradictory than literary opinion, past and present, would have had them be. I will stick to this view; nevertheless, one truth can serve to conceal a less flattering one as well. Perhaps there lurked behind that insistence on the complexity of matters a hesitancy about risking the more sweeping critical assertion, committing oneself to a definite opinion. Of course, I should want to put this in slightly more positive terms and say that there may have been on the part of the author some unwillingness to work with that degree of violence that is, perhaps invariably, necessary if one is to come to a clear literary evaluation. That such a criticism may not be entirely without foundation can be admitted at this late point. I would, however, prefer to believe that the reason for this work's expansive development was a particular method, a conscious decision, in other words, brought about by a number of sound considerations.
It is true, the impression is not wholly absurd that this thesis lacks, to a certain extent at least, a rigorously methodological approach, and that its bulk is only the inevitable result of that lack. The logic is familiar: if one wishes for a clear answer, one's questions must not only be clear, but also guided by a principle of thought and purpose. The enquiry should represent the shortest and most direct line of argument between question and answer. I here concede that the methodological purist would have offered the reader both a shorter thesis on the Villa Seurat magazine and one which would have answered all the questions that he, the inquirer, might have put. But whether this way is more valid, whether a strict point by point analysis would have better explained the phenomenon of the Booster and Delta, I question.

For it is not that the particular design of our thesis has offered no answers at all. On the contrary, as I have said, the difficulty which confronted me at the end was that, in all modesty, there seemed to be simply too many answers. I examined the Booster/Delta in so many contexts (biographical, philosophical, critical, social and political, commercial etc) that my suitcases were bulging with answers. They were bursting with answers, with unanswered questions and even with unasked questions. Although the main part of this thesis has followed more or less chronologically the development of the Booster and Delta, I have ranged far and wide, it seems, moving freely, at times perhaps too freely, from one area of concern to another in order to explain the magazine and its world. I have gone from investigating the personal evolution of the Villa Seurat protagonists, for example, to detailed discussions of numerous individual contributions to the magazine, from the more pragmatic, commercial and legal aspects of little magazine publishing to describing and assessing the wider and increasingly ominous, socio-political backdrop of the period. I have wandered from discussions of the all-pervasive myth of literary exile in the twentieth century to surveys of the little magazine world that have extended from Shanghai to London and from Paris to Corfu and New York. I have gone from a close observation of the operations of a small literary group, the coterie mechanisms and interactions, to extensive discussions of contemporary literary currents and shifts in Western Europe from 1937 to 1939, I have drifted from literary anecdotage.
like the story of the takeover of the American Country Club sheet to tragic accounts like the murder of Benjamin Fondane, Reichel's internment in Gurs and Valaida Snow's ordeals in a Nazi concentration camp. I ranged from the highly important question of the philosophico-political implications of the Booster editorials, from investigating the magazine's merit in the artistic development of its main protagonists to the presentation in this unusual context of individual writers as various as Capek and Céline, Anand and Artaud, Potocki of Montalk and Shestov, Keyserling and Orwell. I have returned from the Booster/Delta circuit, my suitcases bulging.

Again, if the criterion for quality is a singleness of vision that is typically the outcome of methodical rigour, my thesis cannot really compete. If, however, one assumes, as we do, that the direct route is not necessarily always the most rewarding one, that there are also more ways of arriving at one's destination than one, indeed that unless one has considered so many other possibilities, one has not really arrived at all, then perhaps a slightly different picture emerges.

At the outset a choice had to be made. The methodical approach promised argumentative tautness, clarity of direction and swiftness of execution. On the other side there was the lengthy and inclusive, rather circumstantial mode, a method, one might say, more organic in character, which by examining as wide a selection of aspects as one felt competent to do, seemed likely to do justice to the astounding diversity and complexity of the phenomena involved. Perhaps one ought to say: "to do more justice", for it was clear that even this approach, however circumstantial, would not do without simplification and selection. It was not an easy choice.

Perhaps in the end, this simple fact helped me to a decision, that the number of contributors to the Villa Seurat review was more than fifty, that the number of literary works published in it was three times that, and that these contributions were often not self-enclosed entities but excerpts from novels, parts of verse cycles, integral parts of works that were not printed in the review itself. Everything pointed to expansion, the sheer quantity of literature involved, the
number of writers contributing. It is true that I never believed that
I would be able to discuss all contributors and all contributions with
equal attention. Nevertheless, any mode that would have proposed to
flit over or cut away all but the innermost circle of Villa Seurat
contributors would have seemed to me to be crippling, impoverishing,
incapable of explaining the phenomenon of the magazine as such.
Nothing less than a fairly expansive method appeared to be adequate.

Another point contributed to my decision to opt for the inclusive
mode. I have always felt uncomfortable about the fact that from any
given literary epoch later critical opinion tends to select a handful
of poets and novelists for praise and even adulation and to ignore the
existence of those writers who had previously made up the artistic
environment. At some point in time, these writers were judged,
rightly or wrongly, second and third raters and henceforth vanished
into oblivion. In my view, this is a great injustice, for quite aside
from distorting painfully the view of the elect few themselves, those
who will now appear as the lone giants which frequently they were not,
it also covers the premises of the past with a hard and smooth layer
of cement, premises which, as a glance at any of the little magazines
named in this thesis shows, are still teeming with life for the present
and ought to be allowed to speak freely. This thesis is also a
plaidoyer for the chaff, those whose modest existence in the yellowing
pages of small magazines often holds more fascination for a reader
than the routine presence of the arrivé writer in anthologies and
literary histories about the period. I have not felt inclined,
therefore, to remove from the field of consideration all except those
Booster and Delta contributors who later gained literary repute
(although the quantity or lack of source information naturally pushed
one in the direction of the more frequently discussed poets and
writers); rather, I believed that although there would be some
among those fifty contributors who might not merit more than a word or
two, a good number would be of unexpected relevance and interest, and
I think now that I have not been disappointed in this assumption.
I was aware of the difficulties involved in the circumstantial approach. Still, I did not want this thesis to be like a shining freight train with its headlights cutting through the night; rather it was hoped that on a quiet and unhurried walk through an ever-changing and fascinating land new and surprising aspects might present themselves. One disadvantage this mode has entailed has not been mentioned before: our leisurely pace, our stopping here and there and pottering about at those sites where tourists seldom go, has greatly taxed the reader's attention. At the end of this thesis then I would like to offer my apologies and to thank him for his patience.
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