Chapter V

The Rosy Crucifixion: The Making of the Anarchist Writer

Part I

Sexus

Sexus (1949), the first book of The Rosy Crucifixion trilogy, is about the beginning years of Henry's life with his second wife Mona. She is the fictional counterpart of Miller's second wife June. The seven years of life with this woman, the content of the Trilogy, is of essential importance to Henry. She is instrumental in his choice of becoming a writer through her faith in his powers, and the material support she offers to help him write full-time. It is she who paves the way for his crucial migration to Paris, which gives him his break-through as a writer. She becomes a vital part of his life in the trilogy. As William Gordon says:

It would appear that Mona answers a need so basic to Miller that to be deprived of her constitutes a threat to the very existence of his ego; that is to say, Mona answers deep unconscious demands.
which, unsatisfied, threaten to disrupt his sense of fulfillment. (162-163)

Mona’s significance is not of the conventional ‘woman behind the man’s success’, because Henry does not succeed at all as a writer during his life with her. By the time he starts life as an expatriate in Paris she virtually fades out of his existence. The significance of Mona is at a metaphysical plane because her real role is that of a muse who brings out his identity of a writer to himself, if not to the world. It is life with her that lays the foundation of his writer’s destiny. She forces him out of his natural neutrality into the revolutionary act of leaving his job to live the life of a writer. More importantly, life with her is for him a variety experience at the emotional level touching both the heights of pleasure and the pits of depression. Henry is seen in a constant struggle to grapple with the mysterious nature of Mona. As an artist he values his suffering that is the outcome of his marriage to Mona. He considers it metaphorically as the death and resurrection he had to undergo in order to become a writer. He calls it his “rosy crucifixion” because his own volition is involved in the debilitating experience, making it an admixture of the pain and pleasure of creation. He makes this clear elsewhere:

All my Calvaries were rosy crucifixions, pseudo tragedies to keep the fires of hell burning [. . .]. (Capricorn 296)

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18 Gordon says, “An almost indescribable burden of meaning rests upon the conviction with which Miller is able to convey the strength of his attachment to Mona and the misery which follows the disintegration of their relationship” (162).
Though Henry's essentially anarchist self is in perpetual rebellion with the factors that restrict his individualist freedom in America, here we see in him a masochistic invitation to suffering, which is symbolic of his welcoming of the pain involved in the creative process along with the anarchist assertion of his freedom. *Sexus*, as well as the whole Trilogy, is thus a *Kunstlerroman* where the creative process represented is that of the self of the artist himself rather than his work, and the suffering he proposes to voluntarily undergo in his life with Mona is for his own maturation as an artist. As Gordon says,

The ideal-purpose appears in "Miller as artist," his awakened desire to be a writer. But as long as he is dependent upon the woman, Mona, he is not free; he cannot express his true self. Through the relationship with Mona he finds himself. He then frees himself of his dependency upon her, and only then does he become a writer, not before. (140-141)

Life with Mona thus simultaneously constitutes bondage and deliverance for Henry. He is bound to her by love and finds it impossible to grow out of her influence despite her infidelity (he too not being an exception to this in *Sexus*). All the same, being bound to her delivers him from many bonds, most importantly that of work and his unhappy first marriage. It helps his "tortuous emancipation from his Brooklyn background and self-discovery as an artist" (Hassan 87). But it is also painful to his male ego because for the first time in his life he faces the authoritarian values, ingrained in himself, that seek to possess and dominate Mona but is thwarted by her superior liberated nature. His inability to
comprehend the chaotically free nature of Mona, an attribute of her freedom from the puritanical/male concept of womanhood, casts Henry in a light that exposes the vestiges of puritanism in his unconscious in spite of his anarchism at the conscious level – a point Kate Millet seeks to establish in the light of Miller's obscenity and sexism.¹⁹

Mona is a symbol of anarchism. Along with other anarchist perspectives, *Sexus* is a record of Henry's realization that his anarchist self can be raised from its philosophical inaction to its realization in action (of expression in writing) only with the aid of Mona who is even more anarchically oriented. As a corollary to this, in *Sexus*, the expression of anarchism is largely concentrated on sex since the human equation involving Henry and Mona is primarily of a sexual nature, and because with her he finds "for the first time complete, uninhibited sexual release" (Gordon 139). Anarchism here takes fundamentally the form of sexual expression liberated from the inhibitions of puritanical morality.

It is a moot point whether Mona is self-consciously anarchist, because at no instance does she make an unambiguously anarchist statement. She is a taxi dancer whom Henry meets in a dance hall. It is love at first sight, and *Sexus* tells about its consequences in his life. The first and most important one is that he divorces his tiringly prudish and puritanical first wife, Maude, and marries Mona who is a totally new and liberating experience for him because of her bohemianism and lack of moral inhibitions in sex. Henry thinks that she is a

¹⁹ Millet says, "Miller is very far from having escaped his Puritan origin: it is in the smut of his pals; in the frenzy of his partners; in the violence and contempt of his "fucking"" (155).
habitual liar who enjoys mythifying herself. Her behaviour is at times theatrical, which he considers to be the manifestation of a neurotic streak. It is through Henry's perceptions that the reader discerns her essentially liberated nature since she does not betray a self-consciousness in this regard.

Anarchism is embedded in Mona's nature that resists the externally/authoritatively imposed order, irrespective of its agent. Her being is set on a natural order that is innate and indomitable. She poses for Henry a model of the liberated woman – a rare one of its sort in the American puritanical middle class society – who resists being possessed as a commodity.\textsuperscript{20} Her treatment in the Trilogy belies the sexist charge against Miller by virtue of its reverence to her femaleness and freedom. As Alan Friedman says "the Mona/Mara passages are remarkably free of both censorable language and excremental references" (148). It can be seen that in connection with strong individualistic women he never uses his sexist and obscene language.\textsuperscript{21} It is a token of Miller's acceptance of the free woman (in Dury 118), and the fact that he sexually vilifies the submissive and

\textsuperscript{20} Miller being an avowed fan of the American anarchist Emma Goldman one could read the influence of her ideas on the liberated woman in the characterization of Mona. For instance, as Reichert points out, she believed that "Refusing to allow herself to be used as a sexual commodity, woman must assert herself as a social personality. Formulating the doctrine of "free love" [...] Emma Goldman counseled women to make freedom the central fact in all their relationships" (398-399).

\textsuperscript{21} Instances are the laudatory accounts of the characters Rebecca in Sexus, and Karen's mother in Capricorn, among others.
prudish type is to be read as an anarchist protest at the self-degradation of woman without which man's excesses would not reach its existing proportions. Mona's liberated and elusive nature throws Henry into potent passion of love. At this crucial juncture Henry's thoughts register his acceptance of Mona's existential importance to him. He says:

I said to myself over and over that if a man, a sincere and desperate man like myself, loves a woman with all his heart, if he is ready to cut off his ears and mail them to her, if he will take his heart's blood and pump it out on paper, saturate her with his need and longing, besiege her everlastingly, she cannot possibly refuse him. The homeliest man, the weakest man, the most undeserving man must triumph if he is willing to surrender his last drop of blood. No woman can hold out against the gift of absolute love. (12-13)

Mona's freedom baffles Henry. He has been hitherto accustomed only with women who are conditioned by the so-called Victorian virtues like coyness, and prudery. Henry becomes afraid at first on seeing in Mona what he most values in his own nature – freedom. She cannot be judged using the criteria of traditional morality. Nor can she be perceived definitely by her own words or convictions because her nature like Henry's is in an anarchic flux refusing to be fixated to any particular mode of thinking or behaviour or even a set of facts. Henry exclaims:

I'm in a web of lies . . . I'm in love with a monster, the most gorgeous monster imaginable . . . I should quit her now,
immediately without a word of explanation . . . otherwise I’m doomed . . . she is fathomless, impenetrable . . . I might have known that the one woman in the world whom I can’t live without is marked with mystery . . . (15)

Mona’s anarchism gets expressed only through the perceptions of Henry. He believes that it is the destructiveness at the core of both their natures that is the point of intersection of their personalities. In Henry’s philosophy destruction is anarchist in import. For him destruction is synonymous with the ending of authority. Its corollary is freedom/creation. It is a death before rebirth. However pain is inseparable from destruction, be it voluntarily chosen or not. Henry’s destructiveness is voluntarily chosen and self-conscious while Mona’s is inborn:

My thoughts she was never able to penetrate neither then nor later. She probed deeper than thought: she read blindly, as if endowed with antennae. She knew that I was meant to destroy, that I would destroy her too in the end. She knew that whatever game she might pretend to play with me she had met her match. (15)

It is her mysteriousness that attracts Henry to Mona whom Kingsley Widmer describes with epithets stressing this factor as the “Dark Lady of passion. [. . .] the “femme fatale” of the romantic, and inverted traditional muse of the artist [. . .] a witch-goddess of sexuality and power” (69). Henry perceives that her character is so free that it cannot be categorized under any conventional type of femininity. Her realization of freedom through the expression of her desires fearless of moral authority makes her a symbol of the anarchist self. She is
unconventionally frank about her sex life. She is also uninhibited in her sexual behaviour. She proves to be free from the materialistic values of America in loving Henry for what he is rather than for what he possesses, which is naught. Emma Goldman believed that “A woman [. . .] emancipates herself when she admires a man only for the qualities of his heart and mind, asserts the right to follow that love without hindrance [. . .]” (in Marshall 407). Miller probably has been influenced by Goldman’s image of an emancipated woman in the creation of Mona’s character for she evidently loves him precisely for the quality of his mind and heart. If her intention were only materialistic she would rather choose one of her rich and willing admirers for her husband. Her moral freedom is seen in her leaving the job of the taxi dancer for living the poor life with Henry while still encouraging her rich admirers for financially supporting themselves so that Henry can start writing full time without bothering about making money. Though Henry has his misgiving about Mona’s way of supporting him and herself she would not be influenced by his will thus asserting her freedom.

It is with Mona’s anarchist self that Henry falls in love. He is yet to realize that in loving her he is unconsciously loving his own freedom and desiring the realization of his anarchist self. His experience with Mona is thus undefinable for him because of the symbolic significance the relationship, which according to Jane Nelson “represents allegorically the struggle between consciousness and the unconscious” (103). The one thing that Henry realizes beyond doubt is that Mona cannot be possessed and this can be seen as a sign of her anarchist freedom. She is free of his male instinct of shaping her according to his tastes,
which is the vestige of the age-old male-oriented values embedded in his psyche. He says:

I love her, heart and soul. She is everything to me. And yet she is nothing like the women I dreamed of, like those ideal creatures whom I worshipped as a boy. She corresponds to nothing I had conceived out of my own depths. She is a totally new image, something foreign, something which Fate whirled across my path from some unknown sphere. As I look at her, as I get to love her morsel by morsel, I find that the totality of her escapes me. My love adds up like a sum, but she, the one I am seeking with desperate, hungry love, escapes like an elixir. She is completely mine, almost slavishly so, but I do not possess her. It is I who am possessed. I am possessed by a love such as was never offered me before – an engulfing love, a total love, a love of my very toenails and the dirt beneath them – and yet my hands are forever fluttering, forever grasping and clutching, seizing nothing. (150)

The anarchy of Mona's self is expressed in her protean nature that does not have definite contours as a result of its freedom from the authority of ideals, principles, or positions.22 She is true to her nature though Henry tends to reduce her variedness to a propensity for telling lies. But his is a struggle to cope with

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22 Gordon says, "What ultimately proved so disturbing to Miller was his discovery that Mona had no substantial reality. She was an entirely protean being consisting of everchanging external forms with absolutely nothing underneath" (130).
her limitless freedom, which manifests in the different identities her protean self assumes. Henry says:

Studying her morsel by morsel, feet, hands, hair, lips, ears, breasts, traveling from navel to mouth and from mouth to eyes, the woman I fell upon, clawed, bit, suffocated with kisses, the woman who had been Mara and was now Mona, who had been and would be other names, other persons, other assemblages of appendages, was no more accessible, penetrable, than a cool statue in a forgotten garden of a lost continent. [. . .] In her heart a bell tolled, but what it signified no one knew. Her image corresponded to nothing that I had formed in my heart. She had intruded it, slipped it like thinnest gauze between the crevices of the brain in a moment of lesion. And when the wound closed the imprint had remained, like a frail leaf traced upon a stone. (192)

The sense of mystery is the most prominent feeling Henry records in association with Mona in Sexus. Her significance to Henry is in that her mystery leads him to self-understanding. The book is written from a point in time that is twenty years ahead of the incidents reported so that in retrospect Henry is able to say: "[. . .] in that time I have conducted hundreds of experiments. The result is that I know a little more – about myself. [. . .] One discovers nothing about the secrets of the universe; at the best one learns something about the nature of destiny" (193). The greatest emphasis given in the sprawling narrative of the book is thus to the unraveling of the mystery that makes Mona irresistible. Her
beauty, perceives Henry, is more of her free and individualistic spirit than of her body. Her freedom from the puritanical morality renders her anarchical\textsuperscript{23}, and since such freedom has been a rarity in the contemporary American female she becomes mysterious to others.

Henry tries to seize upon her evasive reality by investigating the biographical facts of Mona, which she purposely keeps furtive through contradictory statements. It is his attempt to estimate Mona in terms of the graspable. But she outwits him in this by sticking on to her self-contradictoriness. Like the conscious egoist envisioned in the anarchist theory of Stirner (in David Miller 23) she acts on momentary caprice throwing to wind all consistency, thus declaring her freedom from clinging to the idea of one's own consistent character. Henry realizes this as the quality of his anarchically free self in his later life depicted in \textit{Cancer}. In \textit{Sexus} Henry is only on the path of that realization through his extraordinary life with Mona, and at this point it is bewilderment at the incomprehensible in her that informs his feelings:

As for Mona, it was impossible to guess what her origins were. For a long time she had maintained that she was born in New Hampshire and that she had been educated in a New England college. She would have passed for a Portuguese, a Basque, a Roumanian Gypsy, a Hungarian, a Georgian, anything she chose

\textsuperscript{23} Freedom from puritanical inhibitions has been a major thrust of American anarchism. As Reichert says, "American anarchists have been more interested in sex than in politics because there has always been less freedom allowed the individual in his sexual expression in this country than there has been in Europe" (399).
to make you believe. Her English was impeccable and, to most observers,
without the slightest trace of accent. She might have been born
anywhere, because the English she spoke was obviously an
English she had mastered in order to frustrate all such inquiries as
relates to origins and antecedents. In her presence the room
vibrated. She had her own wave length: it was short, powerful,
disruptive. It served to breakdown other transmissions. Especially
those which threatened to effect real communication with her. (314-
315)

The most important insight Henry gains into Mona's character is that it is
through her "lies" that her extraordinary self can be approached:

[. . .] as I sat blindly groping through the smoke of her words, I knew
that I would fling myself like a madman into every gap of her story.
She was spinning a web too delicate, too tenuous, to support the
weight of my prying thoughts. Another woman acting thus would
have aroused my suspicions. I would have branded her a skillful
liar. This one was not lying. She was embroidering. She was
stitching – and now and then she dropped a stitch. (238)

It is the self-fictionalizing faculty of Mona, interpreted here as anarchist by
virtue of its being founded on the momentary caprice of conscious egoism, that
becomes the model for Henry's concept of literary anarchism, which is a replica
of Miller's concept of it too. Miller's is reflected in his craft characterized by the
mythification of his self based on the loose outline of his biographical facts, and
in the flouting of the aesthetic and moral codes of literature. Mona too does the same through her alleged misrepresentation of facts and amoral attitude. Mona's self-mythification has thus a pedagogic function in the Kunstlerroman of Henry. Though in *Sexus* Henry tries to explain away Mona's propensity for mythicizing as pathological, his vision accommodates the significance of falsification. He can see truth and lie as mutually complementing. Revealing an influence of psychoanalysis he harbours the notion that a person's lies can be the key to the understanding of the self. He says:

> It must have required aeons of time for humanity to raise truth to such a supreme level, to make it the fulcrum, as it were, of individuality. The moral aspect was merely a concomitant, a cover-all for some deeper, almost forgotten purpose. That *histoire* should be story, lie and history all in one was of a significance not to be despised. And that a story, given out as the invention of a creative artist, should be regarded as the most effective material for getting at the truth about its author was also significant. Lies can only be embedded in truth. They have no separate existence; they have a symbiotic relationship with truth. A good lie reveals more than the truth can ever reveal. To the one, that is, who seeks the truth. To such a person there could never be cause for anger or recrimination when confronted with a lie. Not even pain, because all would be patent, naked and revelatory. (245-246)
We see here that other than stating by proxy the foundation of Miller’s mythification of self in his fiction, this observation of Henry, which amalgamates truth and lie, also indirectly acknowledges Mona as a model of his anarchist behaviour and attitudes.

Henry finds the equation of his relationship with Mona in her reflecting his self like a mirror. It is his own yearning for freedom and the consequent anarchist disposition that he sees in her and gets attracted. Inversely Mona would never have got into a relationship with him unless he had been as free a spirit as her. Their relationship is also a consequence of Henry’s creativity, for without his imaginative and perceptive mind her appeal would have been reduced to that of a mere sexually outrageous woman. It is the anarchically creative nature of Henry that distinguishes her in his eyes, and differentiates him from her rich patrons to whom she feigns love. Again it is the anarchist nature of Mona that differentiates her from the several women in Henry’s life. In a visionary remark he tries to assess Mona’s significance:

The creative side of the female operates imperceptibly: its province is the potential man. When its play is unrestricted the level of the race is raised. One can always gauge the level of a period by the status of its womanhood. Something more than freedom and opportunity are here involved, because woman’s true nature never expresses itself in demand. Like water, woman always finds her own level. And like water also, she mirrors faithfully all that passes in the soul of man. (316)
Being thus aware of the crucial role Mona is to play in his life he concludes that he has to surrender unconditionally to his love for her. As surrendering is the acceptance of authority Henry's decision to surrender to Mona's influence unconsciously goes against his individualist anarchist nature. It therefore would have grave implications in his life. It is this willing acceptance of an emotional authority that eventually leads to his "rosy crucifixion" as it amounts to self-annihilation. Since crucifixion in the Christian sense also contains the possibility of resurrection, Henry is suggestively capable of rising from his own metaphysical destruction (Gordon 151). Sexus records his will to surrender to Mona's free nature in an attempt to realize his anarchist self of an artist:

A man can only begin to understand the depths of woman's nature when he surrenders his soul unequivocally. It is only then that he begins to grow and truly to fecundate her. There are then no limits to what he may expect of her, because in surrendering he has delimited his own powers. In this sort of union, which is really a marriage of spirit with spirit, a man comes face to face with the meaning of creation. He participates in an experiment which he realizes will always be beyond his feeble comprehension. He senses the drama of the earth-bound and the role which woman plays in it. The very possessiveness of woman takes on a new light. It becomes as enchanting and mysterious as the law of gravitation.

(317)
The key to the anarchism in the relationship of Henry and Mona may be found in Henry's description of it as "a marriage of spirit with spirit." This signifies that the externalities of their lives do not interfere with their marriage because they are united more in the spirit. Thus they are free of the moral codes of marital relationship. They are basically freedom loving and do not allow themselves to be subjected by authority. Both of them are anarchist in flouting social roles. Their individualist non-conformity makes them different from the common majority. They are morally free in the expression of sexuality, and considering the puritanical repressiveness of contemporary America this in itself may be construed as a significant sign of anarchism. They are not married in the conventional sense. There is a tacit acknowledgement of their mutual freedom in every aspect including, and most importantly, sexual life. It should be admitted that they experience sexual jealousy which is a human factor that limits their anarchist freedom. However they do not indulge in an outright expression of jealousy and possessiveness. Thus theirs is a marriage of two anarchist spirits, and it helps Henry by presenting him the physical and spiritual ambience congenial to the flowering of his art. Henry's vision of their marriage concords with the vision of the American anarchist John Beverly Robinson who envisions a true marriage thus:

To make compulsion under law the cement which binds couples together is to render marriage a form of human slavery. How much more satisfactory it would be if people were left to their own devices. Were force eliminated from marriage scene, only people
who truly loved each other would remain joined together thereby making the institution a joyful one rather than the miserable hell it now so often is. (in Reichert 186)

True to the vision of Robinson the marriage of Henry and Mona, in Sexus, is seen as a joyful institution by virtue of its freedom. The word 'marriage' itself becomes redundant in their case because their relationship is free of the traditional burden of moral and religious values the institution of marriage carries. Henry's marriage to Maude, his first wife, provides a striking contrast to this in its being an epitome of marital discord.

Maude represents the orthodox feminine type that abides by the puritanical moral values. She would have made a good wife to a man who accepts the conventional role of husband. She looks for in her husband a faithful man, a protector and breadwinner, a caring and loving father, and a man who would want to spend his leisure with the family. She wants her husband to accept her prudery in matters of sex because she considers it a dirty activity despite its pleasure. This ensues that sex is to be indulged in only under pretexts and with the secrecy of committing a sin. She bears a tremendous sense of guilt in association with sex. As Gordon says,

Maude has a polar character. She hates sex, finds it disgusting, but when sufficiently aroused she throws herself into it with complete abandon. The great problem is that with her Miller is obliged to work up to the subject of sex so gradually that it becomes unspontaneous and unsatisfying. He must examine bruises on her
legs, imaginary blemishes; he must massage tender spots, arouse her while talking of every other subject under sun, until she is having sex without ever having admitted the fact. (145-146)

Henry, who is the antithesis of such moral stringency, shocks her by his uninhibited sexual demands and behaviour. His indifference and revolt against the values related to the role of husband/father clashes with her expectations which are founded on the acceptance of religious and moral authority, and societal norms. Her fealty is in sharp contrast with his infidelity. His moral anarchy is thus the opposite of her religiosity. He is oversexed and unashamed in his sexual expressions that stray out of wedlock. His bohemianism, financial indiscipline, dislike for work, extramarital sex, and ribaldry are appalling to Maude's puritanical sensibility. Their natures do not intersect in matters of taste or perspective. The marriage thus becomes a prison for Henry who is most repulsed by her philistine attitude to his identity as an artist. It is also a prison for Maude, but she is trained and prepared to live in that prison.

It is a proof of Henry's moral anarchy that he frees himself from Maude in a cold-blooded manner. She slavishly tries to retain him from moving out of marriage even after he admits to her of his affair with Mona (92). For once Maude would shed her sexual delicacy and prudery in an attempt to hold his waning interest in her, making herself a symbol of conventional womanhood which is a construct of the dominating male. The anarchical influence of Mona is so great on him that Maude's efforts do not prevail, resulting in the break with her. Even while he admits the cruelty involved in his action he remains
unperturbed because his individualist anarchism values freedom more than the sentiments of guilt.

Henry's relationship with Maude gets radically changed after their separation. Miller's dwelling on Henry's confession of his affair with Maude even after their separation can be seen as having an anarchist purpose. The post separation period of the Henry/Maude interaction is symbolic of the revolutionary change freedom from legal bind can bring in sexual/love relations. Freedom from wedlock makes both Henry and Maude regain their individualities. In their meetings after separation Maude's sexuality gets liberated. She stops feeling jealous of Mona and even starts getting soft in her attitude towards her. She begins to relish with abandon sex with Henry, shedding the moral inhibitions that had hitherto throttled her. Interestingly, among all the sexually explicit passages in Sexus the most graphically rendered ones are those involving Henry and Maude during the post separation period. Miller minutely traces the positive transition that comes over Maude's nature, which is basically of her sexual attitude that fundamentally gets liberated from its puritanical prudery and possessiveness. Henry says:

And Maude. . . . Having satisfied herself to her heart's content, she had probably realized for the first time that it was useless to harbour a grudge against another woman. [. . .] Perhaps it entered her mind for the first time that possession is nothing if you can't surrender yourself. Perhaps she even went so far as to think that it might be better this way – having me protect her [. . .] and not
having to get angry with me because of jealous fears. [. . .] to be fucking your own husband who is now your friend (and perhaps a lover again), to be taking what you want of him, calling him when you need him, sharing a warm, passionate secret with him [. . .] giving oneself with pleasure and abandon, growing younger again, losing nothing except a conventional tie. . . (221)

Maude’s sexual character is presented as going extremely liberated and anarchical in its moral disentanglement, in a sexual episode towards the end of Sexus in which she goes to the extent of sharing Henry with another woman (Elsie) in the same bed. Significantly this happens shortly before their divorce. This long episode seems to have no justification to its existence other than its pornographic value except in it that here Maude makes an emphatic statement: “It’s wonderful not to be jealous anymore” (349). This statement coming from Maude represents an absolute anarchist revolution in her moral position through its suggestion of liberation from the fixation with monogamy and the institution of marriage.

The sexual episodes in Sexus, including those involving Henry and Maude during the post separation period, are thus expressions of anarchism in terms of their statement of love that is free of moral and legal bonds. They prove what Emma Goldman says of sex, marriage, and love in her feminist theory of anarchism. Reichert says,

*Emma conceived of the sexual function as a sacred aspect of life.*

She considered it outrageous that any mature woman should be
asked to subordinate her own natural sexual cravings to the demands of artificial institutions such as marriage or social mores. Like life itself, sex could only flourish within an atmosphere of freedom. "Free love? As if love is anything but free", she ejaculated. "Yes, love is free; it can dwell in no other atmosphere. In freedom it gives itself unreservedly, abundantly, completely. All the laws on the statutes, all the courts in the universe, cannot tear it from the soil, once love has taken root." Where men and women are bound together by the cold fetters of artificially contrived matrimonial bonds, on the other hand, sex can produce nothing but bitter fruit. Only freedom can be depended upon as the regulator of mankind’s most precious treasure." (399)

A cogent protest against the institution of marriage is symbolically presented in Sexus in the form of a hallucinatory experience of Henry. The chronological position of this incident is towards the end of his life with Mona. In his hallucination he is transformed into an incapacitated slave/dog whose will is subordinated to that of his wife and her lesbian lover. It is a grim picture of his emotional dependence/bondage, and it goes against his anarchist spirit. It also presents an inkling of the suffering of ‘crucifixion’ he is to eventually undergo in his relationship with Mona, though it is a ‘rosy’ one by virtue of its being voluntarily chosen. The experience shows how marriage, when it degenerates into a mere living together by force of legal contract, can constrain the freedom of an individual despite his essentially anarchist nature and thrust him into an
experience of servitude. The unraveling of this "rosy crucifixion" phase of the Henry-Mona relation is saved for the sequel Plexus.

In Sexus, however, Mona's significance is concentrated on the liberation of Henry from the fetters of his social roles. Freeing him from a loveless marriage is her first function. The second and the most important one is in inspiring him into the realization of his real self, which is that of an anarchical artist. Her influence of love on him is channeled into inducing self-confidence that would lead to his acceptance of his artistic identity. She is capable of seeing into the core of his artistic being, and thereby freeing him from the mundane necessity of job in order to take up full-time writing. Her absolute confidence, which does not seek concrete evidence, in his capacity as a writer is the turning point in Henry's artistic life because until then he had not been morally sure of forsaking everything for his art. This frees him from the puritanical/materialistic social norms of America, which insist that it is immoral not to be without a lucrative job, into realizing his self of the anarchist artist.

The recognition of the necessity of freedom as a prerequisite for creation is pronounced in the interaction between Henry and Mona. This well-defined understanding of Mona is one of the factors that makes her a symbol of anarchism. It is in this respect that her role in Henry's life becomes justified and significant. She is the one who is instrumental in freeing him from the need to work, the greatest repulsion harboured by his anarchist spirit against materialistic America. She instills confidence in him saying, "Val, why don't you write in your spare time? . . . I'd rather come home and find you working at the typewriter."
You aren't going to stay at that job all your life, are you?" (173). It is Mona's question that plants the seed of the desire in Henry to free himself for good from the torturous routine of work at the Telegraph Company. On the other hand Mona offers to support the family in order to help Henry work exclusively on writing. Mona's words prove her anarchist importance in his life:

Listen, dear Val . . . you mustn't sacrifice yourself for me. It's bad enough that one of us does it. I want you to free yourself. I know you are a writer — and I don't care how long it takes until you become known. I want to help you. (173)

Henry perceives freedom as something one appropriates through one's perceptions and actions. The world does not change overnight into a Utopia where freedom is realized by all. In fact Henry realizes that the sudden spell of freedom he feels is not a consequence of a substantial change in the external world, but that it is essentially a spiritual experience. Anarchism too has always emphasized the need for the emancipation of the consciousness from the notions that bind it with the servitude to authority. The liberation from authoritarian institutions like state envisaged by anarchism is evidently impracticable and transient as proved by history. The historical revolutions for liberation have only resulted in replacing one form of government by another. Hence the great anarchist thinker Bakunin defines true revolution "as a moment when the human spirit was freed from the deadening routine of everyday life" (in David Miller 71). The "deadening routine" necessary to survive is thus seen as the manifestation
of the servitude to the governing authority. The freedom from it becomes the founding of anarchism.

Leaving his routine-bound job life through Mona's encouragement is a liberating experience for Henry. His understanding of his freedom corroborates Bakunin's view of revolution as spiritual and individualistic freedom from routine. But this does not deaden his sensitivity to the oppression of the governing powers. His anarchist critique of the decadence wrought by authority results in Sexus too in a pungent criticism of the existing order of things. He recognizes that liberation is never social but individualistic:

Looking out on the contemporary landscape. Where are the beasts of the field, the crops, the manure, the roses that flower in the midst of corruption? I see railroad tracks, gas stations, cement blocks, iron girders, tall chimneys, automobile cemeteries, factories, warehouses, sweatshops, vacant plots.... I see it all clearly and distinctly: it spells desolation, death, death everlasting. For thirty years now I have worn the iron cross of ignominious servitude, serving but not believing, working but taking no wages, resting but knowing no peace. Why should I believe that everything will suddenly change, just having her, just loving and being loved.

Nothing will be changed except myself. (11)

Henry's visions of self always entail an awareness of the status quo being unchangeable. His conviction that the individual is powerless at changing the order of things usually results in his characteristic cursing and swearing. In Sexus
he says "Death to the phony status quo!" (12). Or in order to air his censure of the status quo, which is marked by the authoritarian order of things where there is always the ruler and the ruled, the exploiter and the exploited etc., he would make certain other characters his mouth-pieces. Henry's tacit agreement with their statements is that which renders them his mouthpieces. MacGregor, a lawyer friend of Henry, is one such instance where he becomes Henry's sounding board in registering his criticism of the state and its machinations.

Henry says:

If every one could be spied on, trailed, hounded, cross-examined, nailed down, forced to confess, why in his [Mac Gregor's] honest opinion, we would all be in jail. And the most notorious offenders, to take his word for it, were the judges, the ministers of state, the public wardens, the members of the clergy, the educators, the charitable workers. As for his own profession, he had met one or two in his life who were scrupulously honest, whose word could be depended on; the rest which included practically the whole profession, were lower than the lowest criminals, the scum of the earth, the [. . .] dregs of humanity that ever stood on two legs. (121)

Law is the most potent weapon in the hands of the state in imposing its dictates. It is law that primarily curtails freedom. Anarchism, which believes in the self-regulating capacity of human beings, is all against the legal system, which has become the instrument of the oppression and exploitation of the masses by the powerful and elite minority that constitutes the government/state.
MacGregor's attack of it is an anarchist expression that has Henry's approval. In Sexus Miller devotes several pages to the critical outburst of this character, which makes a monologue covering many topics, the prominent one being the existing social order. He condemns the nexus between the industrial system and the state in keeping the intelligence level of the people low. He believes that art, commercialized in America and officially promoted by the state, is one that does not call for the application of intelligence for its appreciation. Intelligence of people, being the factor behind critical faculty, is abhorred by the authority/state as it endangers its survival. MacGregor says:

The way I see it, the world is going to dogs. You don't need much intelligence to get along, as things go. In fact, the less intelligence you have the better off you are. We've got it so arranged now that things are brought to you in a platter. All you need to know is how to do one little thing passably well [...]. If you had any aesthetic leanings you wouldn't be able to go through the stupid routine year in and year out. Art makes you restless, dissatisfied. Our industrial system can't afford to let that happen—so they offer you soothing little substitutes to make you forget that you are a human being. Soon there won't be any art at all, I tell you. You'll have to pay people to go to a museum or listen to a concert. I don't say it'll go on like that forever. No, just when they've got it down pat, everything running smooth as a whistle, nobody squawking
anymore, nobody restless or dissatisfied, the thing'll collapse. Man wasn't intended to be a machine. (125-126)

MacGregor's observations become conspicuously anarchist while touching upon subjects like enslavement, individual freedom, and the machinations of authority. He does not sound differently from Henry in his positions and becomes for Miller an occasion to register anarchist expressions since MacGregor's social standing as that of a lawyer makes his words intellectually convincing. MacGregor says:

The funny thing about all these utopian systems of governments is that they're always promising to make man free – but first they try to make him run like an eighty-day clock. They ask the individual to become a slave in order to establish freedom for mankind. It's rum logic. I don't say that the present system is any better. As a matter of fact, it would be difficult to imagine anything worse than what we've got now. By I know it's not going to be improved by giving up what little rights we now have. I don't think we want more rights – I think we want larger ideas. Jesus, when I see what lawyers and judges are trying to preserve it makes me puke. The law hasn't any relation to human needs; it's a racket carried on by a syndicate of parasites. Just look up a law book and read up a passage (anywhere) aloud. It sounds insane, if you're in your right senses. (126)
Here MacGregor comes to a crisis, which is essentially anarchist. It is regarding the course of action to be taken by the individual once he realizes the evils of authority. It is a fact that the individual is impotent before a colossal machinery like the state. He can only ensure the freedom of his perceptions. The individual if forced to remain only philosophically anarchist by accepting the reality and yet without being enslaved in his ideas. MacGregor however perceives the tragedy of the visionary who ironically has to live a lie in order to survive despite his understanding of reality:

I'd go off my nut if I looked at things with a clear eye. You can't do it – not if you want to keep in step. You've got to squint as you go along; you've got to pretend that it makes sense; you've got to let people suppose that you know what you're doing. But nobody knows what he's doing. We don't get up in the morning and think what we're about. [. . .] We play the game. We know it's a dirty lousy fake but we can't help it – there's no choice. We're born into a certain set up, we are conditioned to it [. . .]. (126)

If MacGregor's anarchism grudgingly accepts inaction, for Henry it is a natural corollary of his anarchist faith in the natural order. His philosophical anarchism realizes that the desire to correct the world can be destructive because the correction of the authoritarian system needs power as a pre-condition. And power is abhorred by anarchism. His faith in natural order proposes the anarchist conviction that human beings will regulate themselves involuntarily if no order is imposed on them using authority. He says:
The world has *not* to be put in order: the world *is* order incarnate. It is for us to put ourselves in unison with this order, to what is the world order in contradistinction to the wishful-thinking orders we wish to impose on one another. The power which we long to possess, in order to establish the good, the true and the beautiful, would prove to be, if we could have it, but the means of destroying one another. It is fortunate that we are powerless. We have first to acquire vision, then discipline and forbearance. Until we have the humility to acknowledge the existence of a vision beyond our own, until we have faith and trust in superior powers, the blind must lead the blind. The men who believe that work and brains will accomplish everything must even be deceived by the quixotic and unforeseen turn of events. They are the ones who are perpetually disappointed; no longer able to blame the gods, or God, they turn on their fellow men and vent their impotent rage by crying 'Treason! Stupidity!' and other hollow terms. (195)

The dissatisfaction with the existing order of things expectedly creates the vision of an anarchist Utopia in Henry. It is a vision that he cherishes right from his adolescence, and sets the anarchist tone of his attitudes: 

I used to occupy myself with those problems when I was younger – when I was fifteen or sixteen. I understood everything then [. . .] that is, as far as the mind permits one to understand things. I was more pure, more disinterested, so to speak. I didn’t have to defend
or uphold anything, least of all a system which I never did believe in, not even as a child. I worked out an ideal universe, all on my own. It was very simple: no money, no property, no laws, no police, no government, no soldiers, no executions, no prisons, no schools. I eliminated every disturbing and restraining element. Perfect freedom. It was a vacuum – and in it I exploded. What I really wanted you see, was that everyone should behave as I behaved, or thought I would behave. I wanted a world made in my own image, a world that would breathe my spirit. I made myself God, since there was nothing to hinder me. . . . (362)

Henry's dream, symbolic of an anarchist vision, clarifies his idealism by virtue of its impracticability. Freedom, the greatest anarchist ideal, is thus more a dream than reality because, as Henry asserts, human beings are more prone to servitude than to freedom. Hence his individualist anarchism that strives to uphold his individual freedom from authority rather than that of the whole society. But anarchism feels fulfilled only when the whole society becomes free (Marshall 36). This is why all great anarchist thinkers have come up with prototypes of free societies where the state is non-existent (see Marshall 625-638). In Henry's case his awareness of the sheer unfeasibility of such ideas often makes him bitter and see the real world as

A world of mutilated hopes, of strangled aspirations, of bullet-proof starvation. A world where even the warm breath of life has to be
smuggled in, where gems big as pigeons' hearts are traded for a yard of space, an ounce of freedom. (394)

In *Sexus*, as well as in the other books, depicting his pre-Parisian life in New York, we see in Henry the conflict between the idealistic and realistic aspect of anarchism. He is rather a dreamer of absolute freedom than one who seeks to realize it in action. This continues until he takes the crucial step of settling to write full-time with the support of Mona (Gordon 140). It is the tension created by the mutual opposition of these forces that speaks for the creative strength of *Black Spring*, *Capricorn*, and *The Rosy Crucifixion*. This tension is lost in *Cancer* where Henry lives out his anarchy. In *Sexus* we find Henry passing through the excruciating conflict between the two forces prior to his liberation from it through the realization of his artistic identity. During this time his anarchism expresses mainly in the euphoria resulting from artistic inspiration. But it is the internal process of his creative mind whose identity is yet to be revealed to the world. To the people around him he presents only his ordinary social self which they recognize, while within the struggle for the expression the real anarchist self goes on:

I had gone to the office as usual in the morning, but by noon I was so feverishly inspired that I took a trolley and rode out into the country. Ideas were pouring into my head. As fast as I jotted them down others came crowding in. At last I reached that point where you abandon all hope of remembering your brilliant ideas and you simply surrender to the luxury of writing a book in your head. You
know that you'll never be able to recapture these ideas, not a single line of all the tumultuous and marvelously dovetailed sentences which sift through your mind like sawdust spilling through a hole. On such days you have for company the best companion you will ever have – the modest, defeated, plodding workaday self which has a name and which can be identified in public registers in case of accident or death. But the real self, the one who has taken over the reins, is almost a stranger. He is the one who is filled with ideas; he is the one who is writing in the air; he is the one who, if you become too fascinated with his exploits, will finally expropriate the old, worn-out self, taking over your name, your address, your wife, your past, your future. Naturally, when you walk on in an old friend in this euphoric state he doesn't wish to concede immediately that you have another life, a life apart in which he has no share. (29)

The conflict between the anarchist self that rebels against authority/conformity and the mundane exterior self that lives the routine-bound life conforming to rules is pronounced in Henry's critical views on the idea of work. The job he does at the Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company is against his will. His job as Employment Manager is one coveted by an average American. But Henry's individualist anarchism abhors everything that coerces and is against his natural likes. When it is said that anarchism is more lenient towards idleness than to hard labour (Marshall 655) its import is that it is against work executed out of coercion, which consequently ceases to be creative. On the other hand for
anarchists work can be “fulfilling if it is undertaken voluntarily” (Marshall 656). Henry hates his work at the company as it does not involve his creativity, and because he does it out of external force to conform to the social role of breadwinner of the family. The expression of his hatred of work is more prominent in *Capricorn* and *Black Spring*. In *Sexus* he expresses his anarchism in an emphatic statement against American culture which apotheosizes work:

> There was another thing I heartily disbelieved in – work. Work, it seemed to me even at the threshold of life, is an activity reserved for the dullard. It is the very opposite of creation, which is play, and which just because it has no *raison d’être* other than itself is the supreme motivating power in life. Has anyone ever said that God created the universe in order to provide work for Himself? By a chain of circumstances having nothing to do with reason or intelligence I had become like others – a drudge. I had the comfortless excuse that by my labors I was supporting a wife and child. That it was a flimsy excuse I knew, if I were to drop dead on the morrow they would go on living some how or other. To stop everything, and play at being myself, why not? The part of me which was given up to work, which enabled my wife and child to live in the manner they unthinkably demanded, this part of me which kept the wheel turning – a completely fatuous, egocentric notion! – was the least part of me. I gave nothing to the world in fulfilling the
function of breadwinner; the world exacted its tribute of me, that was all.

(188)

Work is essentially undertaken more out of necessity than out of a real liking for it. Anarchists believe that in society work is more a need of the profit-maker than of the worker, though authority, with ulterior motives, succeeds in making the common man feel that work is a religious and moral duty. According to Henry's logic the state consequently renders people uncreative, and thereby voluntarily servile and bound. In the anarchist vision of a free society work does not play a moral role. Marshall says

Apart from excluding the young, the elderly, and the infirm, it is a mean principle which says that a person who does not work cannot eat. In an anarchist society based on voluntary and integrated labour [. . .]. Work should finally lose its coercive character and be transformed into meaningful play; it would no longer involve suffering but would become a joyful and graceful affirmation of life.

(657)

After condemning work Henry proceeds to express his wish to be himself. To live out his anarchist self he will have to cease being a "serious member of society" that sublimates work and accepts authoritarian traditions. He believes that to be free one will have to get out of the mechanical grooves of morally approved societal roles like that of the worker. In that freedom the self becomes creative. It is such a liberated self that actually serves society:
The world would only begin to get something of value from me the moment I stopped being a serious member of society and became — myself. The State, the nation, the united nations of the world, were nothing but one great aggregation of individuals who repeated the mistakes of their forefathers. They were caught in the wheel from birth and they kept at it till death — and this treadmill they tried to dignify by calling it 'life'. If you asked anyone to explain or define life, what was the be-all and ena-all, you got a blank look for an answer. (188-189)

Henry's anarchism becomes most significant when it leads to creativity, which for him is synonymous with 'life'. Life subsequently is the realization of truth, which for him is anarchist in its meaning by virtue of its transcending of materialistic/puritanical social codes:

[. . .] I had observed that the men who were most in life, who were moulding life, who were life itself, ate little, slept little, owned little or nothing. They had no illusions about duty, or the perpetuation of their kith and kin, or the preservation of the State. They were interested in truth and truth alone. They recognized only one kind of activity — creation. (189)

Henry's painful awareness of the suffering that the anarchist assertion of his freedom would ensue in the life of those who are bound to him through familial ties, viz. Maude and the child, gives his character an existentialist
dimension (see Finklestein 121-128). It is this awareness that has been delaying his liberation until the arrival of Mona. He says

What I secretly longed for was to disentangle myself from all those lives which had woven themselves into the pattern of my own life and were making my destiny a part of theirs. To shake myself free of these accumulating experiences which were mine only by force of inertia required a violent effort. Now and then I lunged and tore at the net, but only to become more enmeshed. My liberation seemed to involve pain and suffering to those near and dear to me. Every move I made for my own private good brought about reproach and condemnation. I was a traitor a thousand times over. I had lost even the right to become ill – because 'they' needed me. I wasn’t allowed to be inactive. Had I died I think they would have galvanized my corpse into a semblance of life. (189-190)

Mona is the one who is instrumental in freeing Henry from such bondage. But she could provide only the congenial circumstances necessary for this, namely material and moral support, and confidence in his artistic identity. But freedom itself is to be realized by Henry alone in the solitude of his art. He wants his freedom to be most prominently expressed through the medium of his art. He says

But we are all potentially free. We can stop thinking of what we have failed to do and do whatever lies within our power. What these powers that are in us may be no one has dared to imagine. That
they are infinite is everything. Imagination is the voice of daring. If there is anything Godlike about God it is that he dared to imagine everything. (313)

The anarchism of Henry's views on imagination, creativity, and art is in it that he considers these faculties to be the factors that would free mankind from subservience to authority. When speaking about his art in *Sexus* Henry ceases to draw spiritual sustenance from the individualist uniqueness or 'difference' he celebrates in his life before Mona's coming, which is depicted in *Capricorn*. Here the awareness of this difference evolves into a concern for all when he realizes that his liberation should come through art. He realizes that as long as the majority of the people are servile his individual emancipation shall be incomplete. As a result of this, he sheds his egoistic pride in his uniqueness and 'genius'. His artistic identity, getting realized in *Sexus*, cultures a yearning for taking the masses also into the plane of freedom and creativity. Anarchism, despite the inherent individualist egoism of its exponents, aims at revolutionary change only as involving the masses (Marshall 36). Hence Henry's anarchist self, in adopting art as its means of expression, has to consider the 'other' too to complete its process. Regarding the consideration this question has received in anarchist thought Reichert says:

In proclaiming art rather than politics the true revolutionary force in life, the anarchist does not in any way accept the argument of elitists who insist that only the noble few have the power to direct life intelligently. [. . .] We are artists all, the anarchist insists, and the
consequences of our art is inevitably a better and more just world. (15)

The significant shift of emphasis in Henry’s anarchist outlook from the self to the other happens consequent on the crucial decision to live and express as a writer. His perception thus matures into objectivity from the impetuous self-centredness found in his earlier life:

I wanted to enchant but not to enslave; I wanted to free the imagination of all men at once because without the support of the whole world, without a world imaginatively unified, the freedom of the imagination becomes a vice. I had no respect for writing per se any more than I had for God per se. Nobody, no principle, no idea, has validity in itself. What is valid is only that much [. . .] which is realized by all men in common. (19)

If Henry’s egotistic pride in being unique/different or an unknown genius informs the individualist anarchism of his early youth (in Black Spring and Capricorn), now his thoughts develop in a fashion that demystifies or democratizes the concept of genius. This could be seen as a distinct maturing of his anarchist perception, and reflects mainly in his new faith that his writing will level the difference between him and others. Croce believed that it was only a quantitative difference that separated the common man from the artist “for the source of energy for both is their common human nature.” He believed that the cult of genius is a superstition based on the fundamental mistake of taking this quantitative difference to be a qualitative difference (in Reichert 16). Henry
adopts this vision, though for rhetoric he pretends that he has always had it, when he says:

People are always worried about the fate of the genius. I never worried about the genius: genius takes care of the genius in a man. My concern was always for the nobody, the man who is lost in the shuffle, the man who is so common, so ordinary, that his presence is not even noticed. One genius does not inspire another. [. . .]

They feed from the same source — the blood of life. The most important thing for the genius is to make himself useless, to be absorbed in the common stream, to become a fish again and not a freak of nature. The only benefit, I reflected, which the act of writing could offer me was to remove the differences which separated me from my fellow man. I definitely did not want to become the artist, in the sense of becoming something strange, something apart and out of the current of life. ('19)

Sexus, which accounts for the realization of Henry's anarchist self in writing, also contains his views on literary anarchism manifested in the preference for surreal fantasy as a literary technique. He connects anarchism's faith in natural order, manifested in its glorification of chaos, to fantasy's upholding of meaning that transcends logicality. If in anarchism chaos represents
a higher/natural order based on freedom, in literature and art fantasy appropriates the higher reality of imagination.¹ He says,

The great joy of the artist is to become aware of the higher order of things [. . .]. In works of fantasy the existence of law manifesting itself through order is even more apparent than in other works of art. Nothing is less mad, less chaotic than a work of fantasy, which can only be likened to an elixir. This mysterious element, often referred to as pure nonsense, brings with it the flavor and the aroma of that larger and impenetrable world [. . .]. (195)

The very raison d'être of The Rosy Crucifixion trilogy is the recording of Henry's life with Mona, and of the role she plays in the realization of his anarchist self in writing. Sexus tells the story of the early days of their marriage. Here we also see how Mona's significance becomes crucial in implanting in Henry's mind the idea of going to Paris. The anarchist analysis of this book is well concluded with Henry's testimony of Mona's part in his escape from the materialistic and puritanical ambience of America to the anarchist freedom of Paris:

I was like a slave who dreams of freedom, whose whole being is saturated with one idea: escape. Nobody could have convinced me then that if I were offered the choice between her [Mona] and my dream of Europe I would choose the latter. It would have seemed utterly fantastic then, to suppose that it would be she herself who would offer me this choice. (413)

¹ See Jeffrey Bartlett 315-327 for an appreciation of modernist techniques like surrealism, dadaism etc. in Miller.
Part II

**Plexus**

*Plexus* (1953), the second volume of *The Rosy Crucifixion*, is Henry's confession of his marital life with Mona, his second wife, and is considered by a critic as an "emotional parallel" to Henry's erotic life delineated in *Sexus* (Hassan 93). Their life together becomes a symbolic representation of anarchic living because of its freedom from several authoritarian/moral norms of America. Most importantly anarchism is expressed in the couple's (especially Henry's) freedom from the American society's moral insistence on having a regular job, and from the righteousness of the principle that moneymaking is the primary aim of life. Even though they are driven by necessity to take up odd jobs now and then, what is emphasized here is their freedom from the psychological servility to the moral rightness of being employed. Their lives exemplify the fact that socially a person's identity is mostly rooted in his visible work, and that the first step towards the freedom of anarchism is the shedding of that identity. Henry and Mona do this and face poverty, which is the consequence of their assertion of freedom. They borrow and beg without any moral qualms, and play shenanigans to raise money, thus rebelling against the materialistic and puritanical values of America.

This rebellion would not be anarchist unless it is for the greater moral purpose of the individual to live the life he/she wants to live, free from society's pressure to conform to its conventions. For Henry it is the life of a writer, and for Mona it is a life meant to enable Henry to become a writer. This is the moral
foundation on which their anarchism is built. Their anarchism equates creativity to freedom. Henry's rebellion against the social necessity of working is to appropriate the freedom essential for creativity and hence has a moral base, though not of conventional morality. Both Henry and Mona live according to their own laws and govern themselves, and this becomes the basis of their anarchism. As Marshall says:

"The idea of ruling oneself rather than being ruled by others is implicit in the anarchist advocacy of self-government and self-management. The whole thrust of the anarchist argument for social freedom is that the absence of laws would not lead to a state of moral chaos or disorder since people are capable of governing themselves." (38)

Therefore the pivotal point of the narrative in *Plexus*, from the anarchist point of view, is Henry's quitting of his job as Employment Manager at the Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company. His desire for freedom, under the influence of Mona, reaches such a pitch that he walks out on his job one fine morning. He realizes that he has not been living all those years the way he had wanted to live. On the other hand he has been living to fulfil the expectations of the society, and the Company he worked for. He says:

"Finally it came about that I remained away from the office three days hand-running. It was just a sufficient break to make it impossible for me to return. Three glorious days and nights, doing exactly what I please, eating well, sleeping long, enjoying every
minute of the day, feeling immeasurably rich inside, losing all ambition to battle with the world, itching to begin my own private life, confident of the future, done with the past, how could I go back into harness? (34)

Henry sees his abandoning of the job as having a curative effect on his life, which has been restricted until then in opposition to his nature. He says:

It was over with. Like a surgical operation. It didn't seem possible to me that I had spent almost five years in the service of this heartless corporation. I understood how a soldier must feel on being mustered out of the army. Free! Free! Free! (35).

Henry's quitting of his job is not a banal act of leaving one job to take up a better one. It is symbolic of his anarchist assertion of freedom from the authoritarian forces of the institution of working for others to earn a living. Its anarchist implication is in its freedom from subservience to an employer's authority, which is coercive in its compulsion to conform. It can be seen that the anti-work stance persists generally in Henry's thoughts. It is a salient feature of his anarchist position, and is prominently concretized and realized in his life narrated in Plexus. In leaving his job at the Company, he casts off the social role of worker. What ensues is freedom, the supreme principle of anarchism, which he describes as:

I walked about aimlessly for the sheer thrill of tasting my new-found freedom; it gave me a perverse pleasure to watch the slaves fulfilling their appointed rounds. A whole lifetime lay ahead of me. In
a few months I would be thirty-three years of age – and 'my own master absolute'. Then and there I made a vow never to work for anyone again. Never again would I take orders. The work of the world was for the other blokes – I would have no part in it. I had talent and I would cultivate it. I would become a writer or I would starve to death. (35-36)

From the point of abandoning his job at the Company, Henry does only the work of writing where he is his own master and is not subject to the materialistic and capitalist motive of making profit by exploiting others. There are instances in Plexus where necessity forces him to do work other than writing. But then he takes up only jobs as that of a traveling salesman selling encyclopedias or candies. At one point, he and Mona run a speakeasy. But in such deviations from his vow of not to work for others, we see that he does not submit to the authority of an employer. He does the selling job rather sportingly, because he is given the freedom to decide his own business target. Also the ones for whom he works are not authoritative, but his equals. The bossing is absent as a result of this, thereby freeing the nature of work from its characteristic oppression and submission to authority. Therefore, such work does not violate Henry's essential anarchism during the life after quitting the job at the Company.

Henry's decision not to work for others, and to do only that work which is fulfilling to his self, would eventually clash with reality, because his writing is not to bring him any money. His decision to write full-time is reckless, since at the time of taking it he does not even know what he wants to write. What motivates
him is the desire to be a writer, rather than a genuine artistic inspiration. It is this
romantic notion of living the life of a writer that informs Henry’s anarchism at this
stage, because he identifies the idea of writing/creativity with freedom. His
resolution to live as a writer is an expression of anarchism, because in doing so
he is freeing himself from the dictates of a society and its values that coerce an
individual to conform to its materialistic norms. Writing in itself can be seen as
having a lesser promise for Henry than the freedom the life of a full-time writer
would ensure him.

Thus creative writing itself does not attract him when it becomes a job he
will have to do for a boss. For instance in Plexus, McFarland, the editor of a
magazine, asks Henry to write a serial for his magazine. Being impressed by his
way of talking, McFarland wants him to write the way he talks. Henry declines the
offer as it involves coercion and the employer-employee relation. Moreover he
wants to repudiate the demand put on him by Mona and his friends to be a
success. He is averse to success that engenders the compromise of his freedom:

I’m not ready for success yet. Or rather I don’t want that kind of
success. Between you and me – I’m going to be damned honest
with you – I don’t know how to write. Not yet! I realized that
immediately he made me the offer to write the damned serial. It’s
going to take a long time before I know how to say what I want to
say. May be I’ll never learn. And let me tell you another thing while
I’m at it [. . .]. I don’t want any jobs between times[. . .] neither
publicity jobs nor newspaper jobs nor any kind of job. All I ask is to
dawdle along in my own way. I keep telling you people I know what
I'm doing. I mean it. May be it doesn't make any sense, but it is my
way. I can't navigate any other way [. . .] (106)

The crucial role played by Mona in the realization of the writer in Henry
gets the deepest emphasis in *Plexus*. She holds credit in cementing Henry's
anarchism through providing him the freedom from material needs¹, which in turn
results in the emergence of his artistic identity. However the material wants
occupy most of Henry's consciousness, despite Mona's support. The more he
resists allowing them to encroach on his sense of the newfound freedom, the
more their presence is felt. The limits to his freedom, which are mainly the basic
wants like food and shelter, are persistently made palpable. Henry would
eventually transcend these limits through accepting them as a permanent
condition of his life as we see in *Cancer*, in which his life is totally devoid of
security and yet is free. Anarchism too perceives, in this sense, that absolute
freedom is not its ideal. As Marshall says

anarchists do not take absolute freedom as their ideal. Given the
physical and social limits we all experience, the very idea of
absolute freedom is strictly speaking absurd. Without recognizable
limits, a definition of freedom is empty and meaningless. (39)

¹ John Parkin sees the relevance of Mona, in this respect, as equivalent to that of the great
American anarchist Emma Goldman, in Henry's life. He believes that as Goldman awakened his
anarchism Mona "drew him from the centre to the margins of American capitalism" (256).
Plexus is about Henry’s recognition of these limits. His freedom is dependent on Mona’s support and his borrowing from his friends and others, and it becomes meaningful and valued in its constant consciousness of its limits.

Marshall says that if an absolute freedom could exist it would be “like the senseless and hopeless ‘inviolability’ which K experiences in Kafka’s The Castle when people have broken off relationship with him and left him alone” (39). Contrarily Henry’s relationship with people is never broken. In fact, he complains of his privacy being encroached by friends seeking his company, whom he, all the same, cherishes. Thus the freedom Henry experiences is one that admits its limits, which, however, are only physical. Mona helps him overcome them. But more importantly, her anarchist self, characterized by her protean, amoral, and individualistic nature, inspires him into a fuller realization of his own spiritual freedom from the authority of materialistic/puritanical values, which his past has embedded in his psyche.

It is from Mona that Henry imbibes the idea of casting off his past as a move towards freedom of consciousness from authoritarian values. In his later life in Cancer, we see him living in an eternal present in keeping with Stirner’s anarchist principle of conscious egoism that rejects the past (in David Miller 24), where his American past seems to be largely obliterated. In Plexus, Mona’s attractiveness is predominantly due to her keeping her past fluid and amorphous. She seems to have no past as a result of her conspicuous evasion of it. All her

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2 Parkin says that the “contrasts between Henry’s nuclear isolation, cocooned with an attentive Mona, and the nostalgie de la boue which pulls him back into company, represent one of the narrative tensions operating in Plexus” (108).
attention is devoted to the future. On the other hand, Henry tends to repudiate both past and future, and make the present the *summum bonum* of his existence. This he does, in *Plexus*, by putting faith in the inspiration provided by Mona – Whenever I became a victim of doubt or despair I could always rely on Mona to give me a hypodermic. Mona lived entirely on the future. The past was a fabulous dream, which she distorted at will. One was never to draw conclusions from the past – it was a thoroughly unreliable way of gauging things. The past, in so far as it spelled failure and frustration, simply did not exist. (9)

In *Plexus*, Mona’s role in Henry’s life is most valued in her making him accept his artistic identity, and consequently achieve his freedom. For her, Henry’s image as a writer is always linked with that of a man free from mundane chores. This is the driving force behind her wanting him to quit all such situations that would come between him and his art. She becomes a unique phenomenon to him by urging him to appropriate his freedom. She does this by impelling him to leave the Company job, which he could not evidently have done without her moral support. Her faith in his artistic powers is intuitive, and does not call for concrete evidence. Her moral anarchism is seen in her means of making money for their living, which is by exploiting the weaknesses of her male admirers. She does this without any moral scruples, since it is for the higher moral purpose of helping Henry write. Her lack of moral compunction in such matters is the hallmark of her freedom from the tyranny of public opinion. It is with this anarchical power of her nature that she is able to drag Henry out of his hated role
of conventional husband/father/worker. Henry’s initial subservience to the traditional values of these roles is seen in the feeble resistance he puts, in the beginning, to Mona’s call for his emancipation:

Mona encouraged my delinquency. She had never liked me in the role of the employment manager. ‘You should be writing,’ she would say. ‘Fine,’ I would retort, but putting up a battle to salve my conscience. ‘Fine! But what will we live on?’

‘Leave that to me!’

‘But we can’t go on swindling and bamboozling people forever.’

‘Swindling? Anybody I borrow from can well afford to lend the money. I’m doing them a favour.’

I couldn’t see it her way but I would give in. After all, I had no better solution to offer. To wind up the argument I would always say:

‘Well, I’m not quitting yet.’ (15)

It is her lack of moral restraints that informs Mona’s freedom. Henry is occasionally affected, as seen above, by morals. “Anarchists wish to expand human freedom in the negative sense of being free from restraint” (Marshall 36). It has to be noted that both Henry and Mona aspire to this negative sense of freedom, though in Plexus it is Mona who achieves it in a larger measure than Henry by being freer morally. In Plexus, which is totally devoid of any presentation of Henry’s extra-marital sex, Mona’s confessed extra and pre-marital sex, and her lesbian relation with her friend Stasia, make her a precursor of the modern sexually liberated woman, and an uncompromising individualist anarchist.
Henry's anarchism is tempered by his moral sense, in *Plexus*, even though it does not weaken his desire for freedom. He belongs more to that strain of anarchism that sees "freedom in the positive sense of being free to do what one likes and to realize one's full potential" (Marshall 36). What he likes to do most is to write. But it is not for him a pastime activity. It is for him, as said earlier, an expression of his freedom. Thus here too Henry's anarchism takes the form of desire to create, which is his means of self-realization.

The intimation of the possibility of self-realization through writing first dawns on Henry in an epiphany. This happens during the beginning of his life with Mona in a beautiful little apartment, which he calls their "love nest" (29). This is an instance in which he experiences the ecstasy of creation without actually creating anything. Interestingly, this happens before his quitting his Company job. It could be presumed that this experience acts as a catalyst, by virtue of its foretaste of the freedom contained in artistic life, in his decision, which is also inspired by Mona's influence, to quit working forever. Here he realizes the importance of the physical ambience for an artist. The hallmark of this ambience is its freedom from authority. For Henry, this ambience is to result in his creativity, which in turn will bring the experience of ultimate freedom, highly valued by his anarchist self. Henry's vision of self and life becomes anarchist in terms of the its being poised on the mutually complementing relation of freedom and creativity.

One can see Henry getting more and more conscious of God in *Plexus*. On a close reading we find that to Henry, as to the anarchists, the concept of
God has been “rationalized into a principle of harmony” (Woodcock 17). This gives his anarchism the features of spiritual anarchism which “reject[s] man-made laws in favour of a prior obligation to the law of God” (Marshall 6).

Spirituality creeps into his vision when he links his desire to renounce connection with the world with his desire to communicate with God:

I could see how easy it was, given the right ambience, to pass from the life of a paid employee, a hack, a slave, to that of an artist. It was such a delicious thing to be alone, to revel in one’s thoughts and emotions. It hardly occurred to me that I would have to write about something; all I thought of was that one day, in just such a mood as this, I would write. The important thing was to be perpetually what I now was, to feel as I did, to make music [. . .]. It was just dawning on me that to make music one had first to make himself into an exquisite, sensitive instrument. One had to stop living and breathe. One had to take off the roller skates. One had to unhitch all connections with the world outside. One had to speak privately with, God as his witness. (31)

In Plexus, Henry’s approach to writing or creativity evinces the elements of spiritual anarchism. He professes the unconditional surrender of the ego to the over-will as a pre-condition to creativity. He seems to believe that the only authority acceptable to the artist is that of inspiration, which in turn is the manifestation of spirit, or God. He says in the context of an aborted writing attempt:
That night I went to bed rather chastened and humbled. Doubly so, because before retiring I had picked up a volume of Thomas Mann [. . .] and had been overwhelmed by the flawless quality of the narrative. To my astonishment, however, I awoke the next day full of piss and vinegar. Instead of going for my usual morning stroll [. . .] I sat down at the machine immediately after breakfast. By noon I had finished my article on Coney Island. It had come without effort. Why? Because instead of forcing it out I had gone to sleep – after due surrender of the ego, certes. It was a lesson in the futility of struggle. Do your utmost and let Providence do the rest. A petty victory, perhaps, but most illuminating. (43)

The men who inspire Henry are anarchists in their own ways. There are, for instance, Van Gogh, Nietzsche, and Rimbaud – who have been instrumental in revolutionizing the perceptions and sensibilities of the world. Henry identifies himself with the anarchical spirit of such men. About Van Gogh’s letters he says, What excited me was Vincent’s flaming desire to live the life of an artist, to be nothing but the artist, come what may. (61)

What is implied is the yearning for the freedom contained in the life of an artist, though it can be achieved only at the great cost of losing one’s physical comforts. Here, Henry perceives genius as a deviation from normalcy, which humanity much needs but all the same abuses since genius rejects authority:

A little too much light, a little too much energy (here on earth), and one is rendered unfit for human society. The reward of the visionary
is the madhouse or the cross. A grey, neutral world is our natural habitat, it would seem. (64)

Plexus is the part of *The Rosy Crucifixion* where Miller dwells the most on the forces that mould Henry's art. Anarchism, being the driving force of his self, also manifests in his artistic propensities as an admiration for the rebellion in world art against the authority of artistic conventions. As said earlier, Van Gogh in this sense captures his attention and becomes, by virtue of the revolution he brought to bear on aesthetic tastes, a model for Henry's literary anarchism. As Henry regards it, Van Gogh's contribution is in freeing art from the strictures of realism by approximating painting to music, which is the most abstract of arts. Henry says:

In one of the letters – back in 1888! – he [Van Gogh] writes: ‘Painting promises to become more subtle – more musical and less sculptural[. . .].’ He underlines the word colour. How prophetic is his insight! What is modern painting if not a hymn of colour? Tantamount to revelation, the free, audacious use of colour precipitated a liberation undreamed of. Centuries of painting annihilated overnight. Unbelievable vistas open up. (63)

Henry deifies Van Gogh's letters to his brother Theo to the rank of an artistic manifesto. For instance, Van Gogh's revolutionary regard for the black colour symbolically represents for Henry a transcendence, in the field of aesthetics, from the traditional dichotomy between the beautiful and the ugly.
Henry's perceptions here symbolize Miller's own literary anarchy, which expresses both the sublime and the obscene with equal regard —

In those wonderful letters in which Van Gogh relates his discoveries about the laws of colour[. . .]he dwells at some length on the use of black and white. One should not eschew the use of black, he writes. There is black and there is black. Did not Rembrandt and Franz Hals employ black. And Velasquez too? Not just black either, but twenty-seven different kinds of black. It all depends on what kind of black, and how one employs it [sic]. The same for white. (Soon Utrillo is to demonstrate the validity of Van Gogh's apperceptions. Is not his white period still the best?)

I speak of black and white because it was inevitable that this revolutionary in the world of colour should dwell on first and last things. In this he reminds us of those true sons of God who fear not evil or ugliness but embrace and incorporate them in their world of goodness and beauty. (63)

The uniting of these opposites — the black and the white — in art is an assertion of creative freedom, as perceived by Henry. Thus it can be suggested that anarchism is the ideal that guides the sensibilities of artists like Van Gogh. The urge for freedom is that which defines their artistic preferences, and understandably of Henry too, who identifies with them. Considered from the historical point of view, such artists, including Miller, were waging a battle with the strict authority of the artistic conventions of their respective ages. Van Gogh's
call for the equal representation of black and white in painting is symbolically an anarchist and realistic demand for the impossible during his age, as interpreted by Henry. It is this rebellious quality in him that attracts Henry to him. And it is this innate difference in them that leads the populace of their times in dubbing them as freaks. As Marshall says,

> It is usual to dismiss its [anarchism's] ideal of pure liberty at best as utopian, at worst, as a dangerous chimera. Anarchists are dismissed as subversive madmen, inflexible extremists, dangerous terrorists on the one hand, or as naïve dreamers and gentle saints on the other. (ix)

It is in Henry's confessions regarding the formative influences on his art that his data most corresponds with the biographical facts of his creator, Miller. Through Henry's acceptance of the artistic legacy bequeathed to him by men like Van Gogh, Miller is making a veritable autobiographical statement that is free of his usual mythicizing. He proceeds to make a comparison between Van Gogh's age and his own formative period historically marked by the First World War. In a historical consciousness rarely attributed to Henry's thoughts Miller sees something creative about the devastation of the War. He finds the socio political and cultural milieu of the post World War I period instrumental in the founding of his literary anarchism. Henry says:

> The war of 1914 seemed like the end of something; it was however only the culmination of something long overdue. Actually it opened

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3 'Be realistic: Demand the impossible' was a paradoxical slogan of the student rebellions of "libertarian inspiration" in Paris in 1968 (Marshall xii).
up vast new horizons. Through its work of demolition it afforded outlet to vast new fields of energy. The period between the first and second World Wars is rich in artistic production. It is in this period, when the world is about to be shaken to its foundations a second time, that I was taking form. It was a difficult period primarily because one had to rely so exclusively upon himself, upon his own unique powers. Society, torn by all manner of dissension, offered the artist even less support and encouragement than in Van Gogh's time. The very existence of the artist was challenged. But was not everyone's existence menaced? (63)

Since Miller wrote *Plexus* during the post Second World War period, his alter-ego Henry's thoughts naturally slide to the present day from the past that spans the post First World War period. It is conscious about the slackening in the contemporary age's anarchist fervour for freedom. Historically too, international anarchist movement hit the low after World War II (Marshall xi). But Henry, whose anarchist vision has always identified creativity with freedom, is prophetic about anarchist revival through his faith in the creative powers of humanity. We see history corresponding with it:

Events soon proved them [claims that anarchism has failed] wrong. Anarchism as a volcano of values and ideas was dormant, not extinct. The sixties saw a remarkable revival [. . .] many of the themes of the New Left – decentralization, workers' control,
participatory democracy — were central anarchist concerns (Marshall xi).

Eventhough Henry is never depicted as a socially and politically active anarchist, his acknowledgement of faith in the liberating creative powers of humanity is a tacit statement of anarchism. Again in the context of reading Van Gogh, Henry appreciates the role of the sacrifices of artists like him in paving the way for humanity to settle down to a life of creativity and freedom. For, the demonstration of man’s destructive powers by the Second World War teaches that human existence can now be sustained only by the creativity of art:

Emerging from the Second World War, there is a vague feeling that the earth itself is threatened with extinction. We have entered into another Apocalyptic era. The spirit of man is being convulsed as was earth itself in ancient geologic periods. It is death we are shaking off – the rigidity of death. We deplore the spirit of violence which is prevalent, but to burst the bond of death the spirit of man must be driven. The most dazzling possibilities enfold us. We are infused and infested with powers and energies heretofore undreamed of. We are about to live again as human beings, in the full majesty which the word human implies. The heroic works of our forerunners seems now like the work of sacrificial victims. It is not necessary for us to repeat their sacrifices. It is for us to enjoy the fruits. The past lies in ruins, the future yawns invitingly. Take this everyday world and embrace it! That is what the spirit urges. What
better world can there be than this in which we have full responsibility, each and everyone of us? Labour not for the men to come! Cease labouring altogether and create! For creation is play, and play is divine.

That is the message I get whenever I read the life of Van Gogh. His final despair, ending in madness and suicide, could be interpreted as divine impatience. 'The Kingdom of Heaven is here,' he was shouting. 'Why do ye not enter?' (63-64)

Henry believes that the "Kingdom of Heaven" is here on earth when a person identifies with the whole of humanity. It is perhaps this universality of his sympathies that makes his anarchism appeal to all, despite its individualism. As in Sexus, here too he recognizes that it is this ability to merge one's individuality with the general humanity that accounts paradoxically for the 'difference' of the artist. Miller's regard of individualism thus becomes expansive in his mature age of writing Plexus so as to make Henry realize that its existence is not an isolated phenomenon but a continuation of the universal past:

My connections were, so to speak, with man and not with men. Only when I was shunted back to the grand trunk line did I become aware of my real rhythm, my real being. Individuality expressed itself for me as a life with roots. Efflorescence meant culture – in short, the world of cyclical development. In my eyes the great figures were always identified with the trunk of the tree, not with the boughs and leaves. And the great figures were capable of losing
their identity easily: they were all variations of the one man, Adam Cadmus, or whatever he be called. My lineage stemmed from him, not from my ancestors. When I became aware I was superconscious; I could make the leap back at one bound. (224)

Anti-elitism is a characteristic of Henry’s anarchist vision of art. Anarchism fundamentally speaks for the masses. Its ideal is to free people from authority, which is centred on an elite minority. Henry’s idea of literary anarchism manifests itself as a predilection for common people, who are his artistic inspiration and raw material for writing. His difference from them by virtue of being an artist is justified only when his art helps to illuminate the universality of human factors. Therefore he wants his art to communicate with the common man and not with the learned few.

Again Henry becomes Miller’s mouthpiece in airing his anarchist views of literature. The insistence that his writing should become palatable to the common man is that which chiefly differentiates him from his illustrious contemporaries who were more celebrated by the academics than by the ordinary man. Miller did not create and guard anxiously the reputation of a writer of classics. He staked everything to assert the freedom to write as he wished, and as Anais Nin says “to write as one thinks, in the order and disorder in which one feels and thinks, to follow sensations and absurd correlations of events and images” (qtd. in Wickes, “Henry Miller: Down and Out in Paris” 122). Henry means these things when he says in Plexus:
I don't intend to be a thinker, you know. I want to write. I want to write about life, in the raw. Human beings, any kind of human beings, are food and drink to me. [...]. At the bottom I'm just one of those common men, we were talking about. Only now and then I get flashes. Sometimes I think I'm an artist. Once in a great while I even think I may be a visionary, but never a prophet, a seer. What I have to contribute must be done in a roundabout way. When I read about Nostradamus or Paracelsus [...]. I feel at home. But I was born in another vector. I'll be happy if I ever learn to tell a good story. I like the idea of getting nowhere. I like the idea of game for game's sake. And above all, wretched, botched and horrible though it may be, I love this world of human beings. I don't want to cut myself adrift. Perhaps what fascinates me in being a writer is that it necessitates communion with all and sundry. (251)

Henry believes in the undeniable superiority of certain people, which is called genius. But here too, as in Sexus, he does not allow his admiration of genius to estrange it from the common humanity. His perception reflects Croce's saying that genius is humanity itself (qtd. in Reichert 16). It is this faith in the general greatness of humanity that makes anarchism refute the authority of government by an elite minority, which considers itself superior to the common man. His faith in the greatness of humanity, which sometimes reflects in an individual, is seen in Henry's admiration for his friend Karen's mother, in Plexus. The majesty of her personality raises Henry's faith in humanity and restores his
love for fellow beings. This impersonal love for humanity strengthens his yearning for anarchist freedom from all ties and oppressions. The strain of thoughts the noble personality of Karen’s mother triggers in Henry carries these suggestions:

For the first time in my life I had the privilege of gazing upon a mother. [. . .] What I understood heretofore to be human, all-too-human, became magnified to an inexhaustible degree. It was no longer necessary to await the coming of a superman. The boundaries of the human world suddenly became limitless, everything has been given, we are told again and again. All that is demanded of us [. . .] is to realize out [sic] own nature. One speaks of man’s potential nature as though it were a contradiction [sic] of the one he reveals. In Karen’s mother I saw the potential being flourish [. . .]. I saw the feminine principle usurped by the human. I understood that the greater endowment of the human element awakened a greater sense of reality. I understood that, in augmenting the life force, the being incarnating it grows ever closer to us, ever more tender, ever more indispensable. The superior being is not [. . .] more remote, more detached, more abstract. Quite the contrary. Only the superior being can arouse in us the hunger which is justifiable, the hunger to surpass ourselves becoming what we truly are. In the presence of the superior being we recognize our own majestic powers; we do not long to be that
person, we merely thirst to demonstrate to ourselves that we are indeed of that same pith and substance. We rush forward to greet our brothers and sisters, knowing beyond all doubt that we are all kin [... ] (253-254)

In *Plexus*, as in the other novels under consideration, the poverty experienced by Henry is an important factor that accounts for his anarchist criticism of the existing social order. His poverty has a symbolic dimension since it is voluntarily experienced as a consequence of his rebellion against the materialistic values of society. The poverty is also an aftermath of his life of a bohemian writer, which is an expression of moral anarchy. Poverty, the price of his freedom from the authoritarian values of the society, makes him intimately feel the gross injustice in the exploitation of the weak by the powerful minority. Thus poverty, art, and anarchism are organically related in Henry's existence, each justifying and complementing the other. Hence his vision of art cannot be separated from his outlook of the world. His rebellion is against a world that he cannot all the same do away with, because the *raison de être* of his life and art is its resistance to the binding forces of the world. Henry tells Mona in *Plexus*:

'To have your own world, and to live in it, doesn't mean that you are necessarily blind to the real world, so-called. If a writer weren't familiar with the everyday world, if he hadn't been so steeped in it that he revolted against it he wouldn't have what you call his own world. An artist carries all worlds within him. And he is just as vital a part of *this* world as anyone else. In fact, he's more thoroughly of it
and in it than other people for the simple reason that he's creative. The world is his medium. Other men are content with their little corner of the world – their own little tribe, their own little philosophy, and so on. Damn it, the reason why I'm not a great writer [...] is because I haven't taken the whole world unto me yet. It isn't that I don't know about evil. It isn't that I'm blind to people's viciousness, as you seem to think. It's something other than that. What it is I don't know myself. But I will know eventually. And then I'll become a torch. I'll light up the world. I'll expose it down to its very marrow. [...] but I won't condemn it! I won't because I know too well that I'm part and parcel of it, a significant cog in the machinery'. (430)

In Plexus Henry is seen as frequently attesting to faith in God. His thoughts on spirituality and God are, however, free of the subjection to the tenets of the organized Christian religion led by the Church. What they express is the religious essence of faith in the love and creativity of human nature, and the catholicity of the Christian vision. His thoughts on the effect in life of faith in God are in concordance with anarchism. They reflect what Reichert says about the connection between religiosity and anarchism in the history of American anarchism:

One of the greatest paradoxes of American anarchism is that for all its rejection of organized religion and theology, many of those who embraced the anarchism idea were profoundly religious individuals even when they professed themselves to be dedicated to
enlightened free thought. But a careful reading of what anarchists really hold reveals that the apparent contradiction is without basis in fact, for there is much that the Christian holds in common with the anarchist. Both, for example, renounce power and force as legitimate means of attaining community. The more conservative Christian, to be sure, is wary of dispensing altogether with the state as an agency of social control on earth. But the radical Christian, like the anarchist, is convinced that secular government is an insurmountable obstacle in the path of true social community and hence he joins the anarchist in calling for its rejection. (330)

Henry's idea of God is secular. For him, mostly, God is a metaphor of creation, which in turn is the ultimate manifestation of freedom. Henry believes that every person who creates a work of art is becoming God. His democratizes the status of art by sharing the glory of creation with the enjoyer of the art, because art is complete only in its enjoyment, which is a recreation of the artist's experience in the mind of the enjoyer. He turns to the concept of God to come to grip with the sense of wonder he feels about creation:

Suddenly it becomes clear to you, that when God made the world He did not abandon it to sit in contemplation — somewhere in limbo. God made the world and He entered into it: that is the meaning of creation. (33)
Van Gogh, thus, becomes a Christ-like figure to Henry by virtue of the sufferings he undergoes for art and its corresponding freedom. Henry says:

With men of his stripe art becomes a religion. Christ long dead to Church is born again. The passionate Vincent redeems the world through the miraculous use of pigment. The despised and forsaken dreamer re-enacts the drama of crucifixion. He rises from his grave to triumph over unbelievers. (61)

Henry identifies himself with Van Gogh in whose artistic life he reads the enactment of the basic Christian principles of simple living, love for posterity, and lack of ambition. Here religion, distilled of its myths — becomes a universal experience:

Over and over again Van Gogh speaks of desiring nothing more than to lead the simple life. He is extravagant only in the use of his materials. Everything goes into his art. It is such a thorough sacrifice that, by comparison, the lives of most painters seem pale and worthless. Van Gogh knows that he will never be recognized in his lifetime; he knows that he will never reap the harvest of his toil. But the artists to come — perhaps his renunciation will make it easier for them! That is his most profound wish. In a thousand different ways he says: 'For myself I expect nothing. We are doomed. We live outside our time. (61)

Henry's anarchist rebellion against religious symbols is present from his childhood itself. In recollecting a childhood experience he states the protest he
felt at the authority of these symbols, which makes it clear that the anarchist
tendency has been more or less inborn in him, which the puritanical atmosphere
of America only augmented. He tells about a visit he made as a boy to the house
of a friend who belonged to a pious, but poor family, expressing his protest at the
negative influence of religion on the poor:

In every room, it seemed to me, there were rosaries and crucifixes,
votive candles, chromos of the Madonna and Child or Jesus on the
Cross. Though I had seen these evidences of faith in other homes,
nevertheless each time it happened I got the creeps. My dislike of
these sacred relics – if one could call them that – was purely and
simply because of their morbidity. True, I didn’t know the word
morbid then but the feeling was definitely that. When I had first
glimpsed these ‘relics’ in the homes of my other little friends I
remember that I had mocked and jeered. (169)

Henry as a boy refuses to accept the concepts of sin and confession,
which form the foundation of Christianity. In the experience with this family, which
refuses help from Henry in the name of its inappropriateness, he sees the falsity
of morality that leads to self-annihilation. He questions the basic myths of the
religion in a way that appears blasphemous to his young friend: “Just what is the
Virgin Mary?”, “Why do they call her Virgin?”, “What is Virgin anyway?” (172)

Henry’s immunity to the consciousness of sin foreshadows his amorality in later
life. This brings him to the anarchist position against religion:
I came to the conclusion that Catholics were by nature superstitious, just like savages. Ignorant idol worshippers. Cautious, timid folk who hadn't the guts to think for themselves. I decided I would never again go to mass. What a dungeon their Church was. Suddenly [...] it dawned on me that maybe they wouldn't be so poor [...] if they didn't think about God so much. Everything went to the Church, to the priest [...] who were always begging for money. I had never liked the sight of a priest. Too oily and smirky for me. No, the hell with them! And to hell with their candles, their rosaries, their crucifixes – and their Virgin Marys!

(174)

The most important anarchist expression regarding the metaphysical questions of God and religion comes towards the end of *Plexus* where Henry evaluates the relevance of these concepts, morally enraged by a sentence he reads in a book which runs like this: 'WE HAVE NOT YET DECIDED THE QUESTION OF GOD AND YOU WANT TO EAT!' (437) Echoing the Marxian idea that equates religion to opium, Henry takes up issue with the proposition that eating is less important than considering theological problems. His anarchist criticism of this position argues that organized religion is an instrument of oppression by which the basic needs of the masses are trivialized by the authority, by artificially putting metaphysical issues at a superior level to them. He asks:
'Do we insult our Maker by eating what he has provided for us? Do you think He will vanish because we fill our bellies? Eat, I beg you. Eat heartily! The Lord our God has all the time in which to reveal Himself. You pretend that you wish to decide the matter of His existence. Useless, dear comrades, it was decided long ago, before there even was world. Reason alone informs us that if there be a problem there must be something real which brings it to birth. It is not for us to decide whether or not God exists, it is for God to say whether or not we exist' [ . . . ] Whether to eat or not before deciding the issue, is that, I ask you, a metaphysical question? Does a hungry man debate whether he is to eat or not? (438-439)

In Plexus Henry makes a direct statement of anarchism when he appreciates the work of Captain John Brown of America, who was hanged by the State of Virginia on the false charge of treason. In fact Brown had been an activist for the cause of the freedom of slaves, and hence considered to be an anarchist by American anarchist thinkers like Sidney H. Morse. Reichert says:

We may regret that Captain John Brown felt compelled to take up arms to settle his grievance against the immoral state, Morse held. Yet when we analyze his motives we find that he acted upon the very best of sentiments. It was for the purpose of making America what she ought to be that he became a revolutionary. [ . . . ] When he was put to death [ . . . ] the basic rottenness of government became plain for all honest men to see. (58)
Henry too says as much, when he states in praise of Brown:

[. . .] there was [. . .] sublimity in the action of John Brown and his faithful followers. 'No man in America', said Thoreau, 'has ever stood so persistently for the dignity of human nature, knowing himself for man and equal of any and all governments.' A fanatic? Possibly. Who else but a just man could plan to overthrow the stable, conservative government of these United States, with a mere handful of men? Glory be to John Brown. Glory on high! (380)

Another direct statement of anarchism is seen where Henry reports his listening to the speech of Dubois, again an activist for the liberation of blacks. The speech inflames the emotions of Henry into a moral anger that curses the white man for his injustice:

Will the white man drag the Negro down with him? I doubt it. All those whom he has persecuted and enslaved, degenerated and emasculated, all whom he has vampired will, I believe, rise up against him on the fateful day of judgement. There will be no succour for him, not one friendly alien hand raised to avert his doom. Neither will he be mourned. Instead there will come from all corners of the earth, like the gathering of a whirlwind, a cry of exultation. 'White man, your day is over.' Perish like the worm! And may the memory of your stay on earth be effaced! (405)
Plexus thus represents emphatically the intellectual and artistic foundations of Henry, which are anarchist in content. It differs from Sexus, which focuses on Henry's self, in this respect. Consequently, Plexus is almost entirely devoid of the obscenity characteristic of Miller. Its thrust is on the forces in the American environment that moulded Henry's philosophical outlook. As found repeated at the end of the book, we see that the chief of these elements had been his reading of great thinkers who stood for the freedom of humanity, which is the fundamental creed of anarchism. Says Henry:

Yes, I was a fortunate man to have found Oswald Spengler at that particular moment in time. In every crucial period of my life I seem to have stumbled upon the very author needed to sustain me.


There were others, naturally, who were also important at certain moments, but they never possessed quite the amplitude, quite the grandeur, of these four. The four horsemen of my own private Apocalypse! Each one expressing to the full his own unique quality: Nietzsche the iconoclast; Dostoievsky the grand inquisitor; Faure the magician; Spengler the pattern-maker. What a foundation! (459)
Anarchism's uncompromising desire for absolute freedom has rendered it vulnerable to the criticism, especially by Marxists, of being an impracticable, "Utopian Dream" (Marshall 660). It could be that human nature is incapable of such freedom since it is inseparably bound to its own laws, and anarchism itself accepts nature's laws as a limitation to its call for absolute freedom. This is probably why Bakunin believed that "the idea of absolute independence from natural law is a 'wild absurdity'" (qtd. in Marshall 37). Especially in the spiritual and psychological realms, the human nature tends to be oriented towards some point of fixity, which in turn becomes an authority that subtly and permittedly governs its impulses and decisions. Ironically, in such occasions, an anarchist may see absolute freedom as a stumbling block to a more meaningful existence.

Love is perhaps the greatest existential need that exerts power over human nature - a power that overrides the human desire for freedom. Sexual love, at least in Henry's case in *Nexus* (1959), the third book of the *The Rosy Crucifixion*, becomes a bondage that an anarchist involved in it, though temporarily, prefers to freedom. One of Emma Goldman's love relationships too is an exemplary case. She admitted of jealousy and emotional dependence in her sexual love with a young doctor, in contradiction to her philosophy of free love. She recognized this when she wrote to him: "I have no right to speak of Freedom when I myself have become an abject slave in my love" (qtd. in Marshall 407). In sexual love, or in the love between man and woman originating
from the attraction towards the opposite sex, the line dividing free love from possessive love becomes rather vague. This is the existential situation that recasts the anarchist attitudes of Henry in *Nexus*.

*Nexus* begins where *Sexus* ends. At the end of *Sexus* Henry narrates a dream in which he is forced out of his house by two lesbian lovers – one of them being his wife Mona, and the other her lover. In the dream Henry tries to run away, but realizes that he has been incapacitated to live an independent existence because of his long dependence on his wife. He is transformed into a dog who finally returns to its mistress, to shamelessly lick the bone offered to him – “a magnificent knucklebone, full of marrow, encircled by a gold wedding ring” (*Sexus* 462). In fact, she does not give him the bone, but only waves it in front of him to tantalize him into obedience. The bone becomes the symbol of the bondage of sexual love and marriage - the price he pays for the freedom Mona obtains him to become a writer.

It is in this transient bondage that Henry undergoes his “rosy crucifixion”. The suffering of this period plays a significant role in the making of the anarchist artist in Henry. His passionate and binding love for Mona puts him in the unnatural situation of having to share his wife with another woman, Stasia. Mona’s role in Henry’s life goes through a transformation in *Nexus*. Contrary to his position in *Sexus* and *Plexus*, where he is not affected by Mona’s ways of free and amoral love, here his existence is found to be visibly shaken by her. Here the earlier consolation of the belief that his sufferings are for the higher cause of art leaves Henry. The existential agonies of the anarchist whose psyche
clashes with the scope of the freedom he envisions is foregrounded here. The question of life gets prominence over that of art in the context of the defeatism that overcomes Henry with regard to his powers as a writer. To augment this, Mona’s lesbian love goes on in a slow process of marginalizing the role of Henry in her life. Despite the estrangement he feels towards her, he realizes that he has fallen in a bondage from which it seems impossible to liberate himself. His characteristic optimism and rebellious gives way to panic and despair. From the aesthetic point of view this phase in fact lends depth to the psychological characterisation of Henry who, throughout the other books considered here, is generally presented as a “happy rock”. In Nexus this casual approach to life changes. He says:

I was no longer a man; I was a creature returned to the wild state. Perpetual panic, that was my normal state. The more unwanted I was, the closer I stuck. The more I was wounded and humiliated, the more I craved for punishment. [. . .] I was powerless to blame her, or Stasia, or anyone, even myself, though I often pretended to. [. . .] I had enough understanding left to realize that a condition such as we were in doesn’t just happen. No, I had to admit to myself that it had been preparing for quite a long while. I had, moreover retraced the path so often that I knew it step by step. But when one is frustrated to the point of utter despair what good does it do to know where or when the first fatal step occurred? What matters – and how it matters, O God – is only now. (37)
This situation symbolically highlights the plight of human nature when it is pitched against a binding power. The power that enchains Henry is that of the emotional dependence on Mona. The tension, from Henry's perspective, is the result of the conflict between the ideal and the actual. Henry's conception of Mona and his love for her is ideal, while the actuality of the relationship has evolved into a vast difference from the ideal – a difference which the idealist in Henry finds difficult to accept. Anarchism contains this conflict in its core. The freedom from all bondages envisaged by anarchism could be an unattainable ideal in its totality. All the same, the zest for rebellion it inspires triggers the anarchists into acts that would lessen the distance between the ideal and the actual. But for Henry, in Nexus, who is currently steeped in the slavish acceptance of a power that has conquered his existence unawares, the time is not mature enough for a rebellious act of self-liberation. He would, instead, engage in long cogitations regarding his plight, his love for Mona and its multifarious dimensions. He asks the question: “Was it love that kept me chained?” He seems at a loss in perceiving the power in Mona that keeps him enchained, and incapacitates him to live independent of her at that point of his life. In spite of his suffering, his anarchism still tries to conceive an ideal state of love whose hallmark will be absolute freedom:

To be free of the bondage of love, to burn down like a candle, to melt in love, melt with love – what bliss! Is it possible for creatures like us who are weak, proud, vain, possessive, envious, jealous, unyielding, unforgiving? Obviously not. For us the rat race – in the
vacuum of the mind. For us doom, unending doom. Believing that we need love, we cease to give love, cease to be loved. (39)

When Henry's conflict ridden relationship with Mona, at this juncture, is viewed as symbolic of the ideal/actual friction, one can see that it represents an anarchist critique of society ruled by institutional authority. Proudhon, the great anarchist thinker, is seen to have evaluated the development of society based on the parameter of the ideal/actual conflict. As David Miller elaborates:

Society originated in a series of accommodation between egoistic creatures, each of whom was forced to recognize the claims of the rest. Once social relationships had developed, however, men began to form ideal conceptions of those relationships, which Proudhon calls ideas of justice. The development of society proceeds through a series of confrontations between the ideal and the actual. On the basis of the ideas held at any moment, a social order emerges, complete with rules and institutions for enforcing those rules. But ideas of justice continually develop, while the social order remains rigid, so its inhabitants become disillusioned. Rather than trying to change the society, they give way to despair [. . .]. (69-70)

This is the despair to which Henry falls prey. Even when Mona's unnatural relationship with Stasia upsets the order of relationship that had been established between Henry and Mona — an order that is elastic enough to accommodate anarchically Mona's extra marital associations — he finds it impossible to grow out
Instead, he holds on tenaciously to the ideal love on which that order was founded. We see Henry, the exponent of freedom, yielding to an emotionalism that rates love and its bondage superior to freedom. He says:

Fleeting though such a love may be, can we say that there had been a loss? The only possible loss – and how well the true lover knows it! – is the lack of that undying affection which the other inspired. What a drab, dismal, fateful day that is when the lover suddenly realizes that he is no longer possessed, that he is cured, so to speak, of his great love! When he refers to it, even unconsciously, as a "madness". The feeling of relief engendered by such an awakening may lead one to believe in all sincerity that he has regained his freedom. Is it not a calamity to gaze once again upon the world with everyday sight, everyday wisdom? Is it not heartbreaking to find oneself surrounded by beings who are familiar and commonplace? Is it not frightening to think that one must carry on, [. . .] but with stones in one's belly and gravel in one's mouth? To find ashes, nothing but ashes, where once were blazing suns, wonders; [. . .] and all freely created as from some magic fount? (40)

What we see here is the masochistic suffering of Henry. It is worth asking the question what keeps this born rebel, Henry, bound to Mona. Despite the humiliation to which she subjects him, he would not think of quitting the relationship. It has to be surmised that it is an extraordinary power contained in
The Mona-Stasia duo that defeats him. Henry silently consents to the order imposed on him by this power emanating from these women. It becomes symbolic of the order imposed by power on society with its consent, in spite of the society's lack of conviction of its necessity.

The social order is preserved not by genuine moral conviction, but by the combined force and persuasion of state and church. This, for Proudhon, is a period of decadence, and the history of humanity shows many such periods. [. . .] Upward movement occurs when the rift between ideal and actual becomes too great, precipitating a revolution. (David Miller 70)

It can be seen that the role of the state is assumed by Mona (and Stasia) in persuading Henry into maintaining the order of their triangular relationship. It can be contended that, though paradoxically, the power vested in Mona and Stasia lies in the anarchy of their natures by which they assert a freedom that transcends the puritanical norms of femininity. Henry's aspiration to such absolute moral freedom makes him subservient to them because of his unconscious admiration for them. He feels a psychological need for Mona's companionship until he is able to realize fully his anarchist self, which he does in a shortwhile in his expatriate life in Paris, narrated in Cancer. Hence he would tolerate Stasia, who too is a bohemian and a moral anarchist, if Mona finds her indispensable. Henry thus symbolizes the society which passes, as Proudhon suggests, through a "period of decadence". It is in Paris, in his life in Cancer, where he experiences in her absence the rift between the ideal and actual Mona,
that the "upward movement" occurs. Though it is Mona who appropriates for Henry the freedom for becoming a writer, he becomes a writer in the real sense only in Paris, where he frees himself from Mona – the significant revolution in his life.

Evidences can be found in Nexus for the allegiance the characters of Mona and Stasia have with the precepts of anarchism, though not always directly. At the beginning of the book, Stasia’s subscription to anarchism is mockingly seen as a proof of her sanity, who is currently being treated for insanity:

In her [Stasia’s] own handwriting [. . .] I find the following, a quotation obviously from one of the volumes: “The strange thinker, N. Federov, a Russian of the Russians, will found his own original form of anarchism, one hostile to the State.”

Where I to show this to Kronski [Henry’s friend and a physician] he would run immediately to the bug house and offer it as a proof. Proof of what? Proof that Stasia is in her right mind. (8-9)

Mona’s propensity for fabrication may be seen as an anarchist trait whereby she refutes the authority of an unchangeable truth that is to govern one in reporting one’s past. As argued elsewhere, Henry is artistically influenced by the anarchism contained in this mythification of the self. Stasia joins hands with Mona in these endless fabrications by which they throw Henry out of his hold on reality. This probably gives him a painful foretaste of the freedom of
consciousness he attains later, characterised by its fluidity and lack of fixity of attitudes and ideas:

[. . .] I would throw myself on the bed fully clothed and instead of musing about ancient cultures, I would find myself groping myself through a labyrinthine world of fabrications. Neither of them seems to be capable of telling the truth, even about such a simple matter as going to the toilet. Stasia, an essentially truthful soul, acquired the habit in order to please Mona. (10)

Both Mona and Stasia reject their pasts. Their glorification of the present is yet strange to Henry, because he still considers himself as a corollary of his past. It is interesting that with the realization of the anarchist self in Cancer, in the life that immediately follows that of Nexus, he starts glorifying and living entirely in the present in the true anarchist sense propounded by Stirner's theory of “conscious egoism” that calls the egoist to submit only to the present experience, in a negation of past and future (David Miller 24). However in Nexus, the obliteration of the past practised by Mona and Stasia seems like a bewildering proposition to him, and thus exemplifies the throes of the making of the anarchist. He says astonished:

One of the strangest blanks in our intimate conversations [. . .] has to do with childhood. How they played, where, with whom, remains a complete mystery. From the cradle, apparently, they sprang into womanhood. Never is there mention of a childhood friend or of a
wonderful lark they enjoyed; never do they talk of a street they
loved or a park they played in or a game they enjoyed. (11)

Mona, as in *Sexus*, continues to express here too her freedom from
conventional morality. In *Nexus*, she asserts with heightened vigour her anarchism
in terms of flouting the codes of the repressive morality that binds the female.
Here it surpasses the realm of the natural heterosex into that of lesbianism,
thereby baffling Henry himself who is proud of his freedom from morality. In living
her bisexual life under the same roof, with him, Mona concretises Emma
Goldman's anarchist vision of female sexual freedom.

Emma conceived of the sexual function as a sacred aspect of life.
She considered it outrageous that any matured woman should be
asked to subordinate her own sexual cravings, to the demands of
artificial institutions such as marriage or social mores. Like life itself,
sex could only flourish within an atmosphere of freedom (Reichert
399).

The direct importance of Mona's role in the making of the anarchist writer
in Henry is seen in the defense she makes for him to his mother. The mother is a
woman given to the materialistic norms of America. "To her he was a failure, not
like other mothers' sons. She could understand only what sold; she was
unsympathetic to his writing from the beginning" (Gordon xxvii). Mona's speech
reflects her anarchist convictions against materialistic success and work. We
understand here why Henry, in spite of her unconventional sexuality that
humiliates his maleness, cherishes and wants Mona in his artistic life, and also
the depth of the mysterious love between these two anarchical individuals. She says, evidencing her role of an anarchical Muse in his life:

Look mother, it doesn't matter how long it takes for Val to be recognized and given his due. He'll always have me. And I won't let him starve or suffer. [. . .] He is going to do as he likes. I have faith in him. [. . .] Why it is you don't want him to write is beyond me. It can't be because he isn't earning a living out of it. [. . .] If you don't accept him as a writer you'll never have him as a son. [. . .] And what good would it do for him to prove to you or me or anyone that he can be like anyone else? [. . .] What he has to give belongs to the world, not merely to his family, his children, his mother or his father. (93-94)

In *Nexus* we see Henry stating his creed of literary anarchism, which is marked by its conscious egoism, freedom from the value of success, and its desire for the destruction of the existing structures of aesthetic authority:

The only way I can be myself is to smash things. I will never write a book to suit the publishers. [. . .] Every word I put down must be an arrow that goes straight to the mark. A poisoned arrow. I want to kill off books, writers, publishers, readers. To write for the public doesn't mean a thing to me. What I'd like is to write for mad men—or for the angels. (192)

Anarchism's preference of nature's order, which manifests as chaos to the common eye, to the artificial order imposed by authority is reflected in Henry's
views that seek to blend his anarchism with his creativity. Though this is an oft repeated anarchist expression in the works considered here, it acquires greater emphasis in this last book of the *The Rosy Crucifixion*, which tells the story of the making of the anarchist artist in Henry. He says in *Nexus*: “The more deeply we gaze the more we discover of order in disorder, the more of law in lawlessness, the more of light in darkness” (244).

The authority against which Henry’s literary anarchism resolutely revolts is that of literary canon; the aesthetic norms and stylistic influences established by the masters of classics. Every original writer has to carry out this rebellion against his predecessors. But Henry’s revolt becomes anarchical in its total detachment from the existing parameters of artistic creation, with the exclusive aim of rebelling and destroying influences. Its purpose is the human good of awakening the consciousness of people from hackneyed thinking and aesthetic habits. Here rebellion and destruction become an end in itself, devoid of all desire for the production of an acceptable work of art. Henry states his philosophy of destruction in art:

If I craved for magical powers it was not to rear new structures, not to add to the Tower of Babel, but to destroy, to undermine. The novel I *had* to write. [. . .] But after that . . .? After that, vengeance! Ravage, lay waste the land: make of Culture an open sewer, so that the stench of it would remain forever in the nostrils of memory. All my idols [. . .] I would offer up as sacrifices. What powers of utterance they had given me I would use to curse and blaspheme.
Had not the prophets of old promised destruction? Had they ever hesitated to befoul their speech in order to awaken the dead? (247)

It is notable that Miller brings Henry’s views on literary anarchism in Nexus close to those he expresses in Cancer, which reports his life that follows the one in Nexus. This makes the literary anarchist positions in Cancer appear as a natural evolution in the development of the protagonist. Henry, as in Cancer, declares his freedom from the influence of the taste of the reader. His individualist anarchism views his creativity as a private sphere where any external interference is seen with hostility as an invasion (see David Miller 10). Henry condemns the reader by asking in Nexus “Why create a world of one’s own if it must also make sense to every Tom, Dick and Harry?” and saying “Who writes for you writes his own death warrant” (250).

Nexus ends with Henry’s crucial decision to go to Paris with Mona. It ends with Henry bidding farewell to the souls and influences in America who have kindled his anarchical spirit – John Brown, Walt Whitman, Sacco, Vanzetti etc. – a farewell “which signs away the persona’s past and heralds a future which we already know from other works” (Parkin 19). This last book of The Rosy Crucifixion brings a narrative cycle to its completion; the cycle that begins with Cancer, expressing in its course anarchism in its unsystematically variegated forms, with the protagonist Henry’s urge for freedom from authority being the most prominent thematic thread passing through the diverse events.