Chapter IV

Tropic of Capricorn: Individualist Anarchism

*Tropic of Capricorn* (1939), considered by one critic to be the greatest of his works (Gordon xxix) focuses on Henry's life in America as a worker in a Telegraph Company, and as a family man during his first marriage. We also pass through his childhood, and the love affair with the woman who would be his second wife. As usual to Miller's fiction the narrative is never linear; the chronology of events remains jumbled. The reader is taken in a haphazard manner through Henry's impressions of childhood, youth, marriage, work, writing, sex, aimlessness, and also of the Parisian life from where he is making a retrospection of his American life.

In *Capricorn* Henry's anarchism is expressed in the discord with the conformist society. His conflict is a natural corollary of the assertion of his individualist freedom in a society which is traditionally puritanical and materialistic. *Capricorn* is about this period of his life in America, and consists of
the confessions of Henry whose anarchist self rebels against the society that demands his conformity to its values.

In Capricorn Henry's anarchist self is in the struggle for realizing itself, and he expresses it in a metaphor of conception as is seen in his calling his world "an ovarian world, still hidden away in the fallopian tubes" (260). Anarchism shows its distinct marks in Henry's individualism and non-conformism. It is his 'individualist anarchism' that sets the anarchist tone of Capricorn. Historically, America has had a tradition of individualist anarchism (David Miller 4). Reichert states that Josiah Warren, considered to be a pioneer in American anarchism, said that the only possible road to human freedom lies down the path of individual sovereignty. As he viewed the problem, "the great mistake of all society is the compromise or surrender of the sovereignty of the individual." (Reichert 68)

Individualist anarchism sets the individual as supremely significant, and goes about asserting his freedom without taking recourse to any mass or social revolution. It is founded on the belief that every individual possesses a spark of the eternal and the divine, and that he is unique in his own way (Reichert 64). Henry's confession in Capricorn is replete with the self knowledge of his uniqueness, which urges him towards a spiritual liberation even when he conforms externally to the roles society imposes on him.

Henry's anarchist identity is reflected in his painful consciousness of his individual uniqueness, which the society wants to reduce to a comprehensible commonness. During the days of his struggle in America in search of his voice and identity he often becomes an odd-man-out among a pack of intellectually
and spiritually bound individuals by virtue of his liberated nature. The society tries to sideline him from its mainstream because of its intolerance to his individualist non-conformism. There is an instance in Capricorn where Henry's language becomes the mark of his 'difference' which unsettles his prude listeners; it is also a clue to the understanding of his failure, as a writer in America, as an outcome of his anarchism which the rebellion in his language and ideas signifies:

It was always a source of amazement to me how easily people could become riled just listening to me talk. Perhaps my speech was somewhat extravagant, though often it happened when I was holding myself in with main force. The turn of a phrase, the choice of an unfortunate adjective, the facility with which the words came to my lips, the allusions to subjects which were taboo — everything conspired to set me off as an outlaw, as an enemy to society. No matter how well things began sooner or later they smelled me out. If I were modest and humble, for example, then I was too modest, too humble. If I were gay and spontaneous, bold and reckless, then I was too free, too gay. I could never get myself quite au point with the individual I happened to be talking to. If it were not a question of life and death — everything was life and death to me then — if it was merely a question of passing a pleasant evening at the home of some acquaintance, it was the same thing. There were vibrations
emanating from me, overtones and undertones, which charged the atmosphere unpleasantly. (51)

Henry’s anarchism is thus based on the perception of the ‘difference’ inherent in him as well as in all people that are of any worth. It is this difference that gives things their imperishable characteristic traits. He says, “All things, all objects animate or inanimate that are ‘different’ are veined with ineradicable traits. What is me is ineradicable, because it is different” (52). Henry’s anarchism begins in a clash with ‘America that does not accept this difference:

To be accepted and appreciated you must nullify yourself, make yourself indistinguishable from the herd. You may dream, if you are dreaming simultaneously. But if you dream something different you are not in America, of America American, but a Hottentot in Africa, or a Kalmuck, or a chimpanzee. The moment you have a “different” thought you cease to be an American. And the moment you become something different you find yourself in Alaska or Easter Island or Iceland. (52)

Henry understands that the average American is one who has submerged his identity fully into that of the society. But Henry’s individual anarchism that bears the influence of individualists like Nietzsche and Max Stirner places “the individual at the centre” and makes “the creation of his own life the major purpose of life, rather than satisfying the goals of society” (Gordon 43). He therefore perceives the hostility of others to his individuality as an unwillingness
to give ear to his existential questions, because to listen to them will mean to
deviate from their conformity:

Supposing I intercepted one of them and just asked him a simple
question. Supposing I just said to him suddenly: "Why do you go on
living the way you do?" He would probably call a cop. I ask myself –
does anyone ever talk to himself the way I do? I ask myself if there
isn't something wrong with me. The only conclusion I can come to
is that I am different. (94)

From the way Henry reacts to the intolerance of the society it becomes
clear that his individualist anarchism is philosophical rather than revolutionary.9
He does not resort to violence; nor does he have a revolutionary dream. Instead
he accepts the 'other' that is hostile, and sees realistically that he for one cannot
change the society. He would rather wait with a studied nonchalance in the face
of opposition from society, firmly rooted in the faith in his uniqueness:

[. . .] Henry, I say to myself, you are young yet, you are just a spring
chicken and if you let them get you by the balls you are an idiot
because you are a better man than any of them only you need to
get rid of your false notions about humanity. You have to realize
[. . .] that you are dealing with cut-throats, with cannibals [. . .]. The
best thing for you to do now, Henry, is to go and get yourself a
frosted chocolate and when you sit at the soda fountain keep your

---

9 Philosophical anarchists are those "who have reached anarchist conclusions in their search for
universal principles without engaging in any practical activity" (Marshall 7).
eyes and forget about the destiny of man because you might still find

yourself a nice lay and a good clean lay will clean your ballbearing

out and leave a good taste in your mouth whereas this only brings

on dyspepsia, dandruff, halitosis, encephalitis. (94)

Henry does not think that his difference from the rest is a rare

phenomenon. On the other hand he believes that basically every individual is

unique. As children, everyone is different and lives out his/her unique self. But it

is through schooling, which is a process of institutionalizing, that the individual

loses his essential difference, and becomes a cog in the wheel of the societal

machinery. In Capricorn, Miller employs an interesting symbol of the sour rye

bread, whose taste and eating as a boy brings for Henry a whole lot of thoughts

and feelings that are of a liberating and anarchist nature, to drive home the

negative effect of schooling. Henry says, “There is something about the rye

bread which I am trying to fathom – something vaguely delicious, terrifying and

liberating, something associated with first discoveries” (116). The world invoked

by the memory of the rye bread given to Henry as a boy by his Aunt Caroline is

the childhood world of universal individual difference. But schooling, by which the

state/society levels individual difference to customize individuals for its

materialistic/puritanical dictates, erases the difference which is the beauty of the

human being. Henry’s life becomes a constant struggle against this uniformity:

From the moment when one is put in school one is lost. One has

the feeling of having a halter put around his neck. The taste goes out of

the bread as it goes out of life. Getting the bread becomes more important
than the eating of it. Everything is calculated and everything has a price upon it. (117)

But during childhood, the rye bread symbolizes a pristine source of energy that gives life as well as preserves individuality. But as one grows into adulthood this individuality is lost, in the becoming of a citizen, on making it subservient to the authority of the state and societal norms. Henry says:

With the entrance into life these traits of difference fell away and we all became more or less alike and, of course, most unlike our own selves. And it is this loss of the peculiar self, of the perhaps unimportant individuality, which saddens me and makes the rye bread stand out glowingly. The wonderful sour rye went into the making of our individual selves: it was like the communion loaf in which all participate but from which each one receives only according to his peculiar state of grace. Now we are eating of the same bread, but without benefit of communion, without grace. We are eating to fill our bellies and our hearts are cold and empty. We are separate but not individual. (118)

Capricorn reveals the making of Henry's anarchist self in his awareness of his difference, and the urge to spell destruction in order to create. But the time for the destructive outburst of anarchism is not ripe yet; he will need the suffering of The Rosy Crucifixion to convert his conviction into action. For the time being he lives with the feeling of being at the edge of an explosion, which all the same

---

10 See Gordon 44 for an assessment of the concept of 'destruction' in Miller.
is an expression of his anarchism by virtue of its suggestion of the latent energy for destruction in Henry:

I know each time I take my place in the crowd which mills about the platform that I am the most unique individual down there. I look upon everything which is happening about me like a spectator from another planet. My language, my world, is under my arm. I am the guardian of a great secret; if I were to open my mouth and talk I would tie up traffic. What I have to say, and what I am holding in every night of my life on this journey to and from the office is absolute dynamite. I am not ready yet to throw my stick of dynamite. I nibble at it meditatively, ruminatingly, cogently. Five more years, ten more years perhaps, and I will wipe these people out utterly. (201)

The motif of the awareness of the individualist difference and the need for action to realize it recurs, giving the reader the perception that something is amiss in Henry’s existence that negates this urge. This makes Capricorn pave the way for the The Rosy Crucifixion: Henry says in Capricorn:

Sometimes, in the ceaseless revolution of the wheel, I caught a glimpse of the nature of the jump which it was necessary to make. To jump clear of the clockwork – that was the liberating thought. To be something more, something ‘different’, than the most brilliant maniac of the earth! (302)
Though action is delayed, Henry lives true to his anarchist self. His attitudes and positions on the observed reality of America attest to this. His anarchism is in his liberated spirit, which is kept free of the values imposed authoritatively by the society on the individual. Being true to one's nature and self is the ultimate good to him. This anarchist precept can be counted as the cause of all the sufferings of his life, which are the results of his non-conformity. For Reichert says, "Anarchism correctly defined [. . .] is a genuine love of justice, demonstrated by the ability of the individual to remain true to his natural inclinations, whatever the pains and penalties that might be inflicted upon him" (149).

Upon being true to his self, and being aware of his individualist difference, Henry is always plagued by America's values, concretized in its society's philosophy of economic progress, morality, and all that it represents which is against the freedom and fulfillment of the self. As in most of his works, in Capricorn too Miller makes America the symbol of the 'other' which restricts and represses individual freedom and levels differences. The American society, consisting of conforming individuals, appears to Henry like a page out of a telephone book, which is symbolic of the reduction of the individual to numerals:

Alphabetically, numerically, statistically, it made sense. But when you looked at it up close, when you examined the pages separately, or the parts separately, when you examined one lone individual and what constituted him, examined the air he breathed,

11 Henry's poverty, failure as writer, and marital discords can be attributed to his uncompromising fidelity to his innate nature.
the life he led, the chances he risked, you saw something so foul and
degrading, so low, so miserable, so utterly hopeless and senseless,
that it was worse than looking into a volcano. (19)

Anarchism is against violence, though the popular conception of
anarchism goes contrary to it. Almost all major thinkers of anarchism have
abjured violence. Even the American anarchist with extremist orientation,
Benjamin Tucker has conceded to the use of violence only on idealistic terms.
Reichert says that for Tucker

The only possible justification for violence [..] is to break down the
barriers that tyrants erect in order to keep men from truth. When all
avenues to education and discussion within society have been
deliberately blocked by despots who desire to keep the people in
subjection, the sons of liberty will be in the right when they employ
force to strike down these barriers. But short of this condition
violence is always to be abjured. (156)

Henry pulls down the myth of America being the land of peace and
progress. By extending the metaphor of the volcano he states that the
state/society of America is potentially violent; a violence that has no ideological
justification. Even with justification the anarchist in Henry would be against
violence. The violence inherent in America is thus one of the reasons behind his
anti-Americanism. He says:

The continent is full of buried violence [..]. The atmosphere is at
times so electrical that the soul is summoned out of its body and
runs amok. [. . .] The whole continent is a huge volcano whose crater is
temporarily concealed by a moving panorama which is partly
dream, partly fear, partly despair. [. . .] Everywhere the same
fundamental urge to slay, to ravage, to plunder. Outwardly they
seem like a fine, upstanding people – healthy, optimistic,
courageous. Inwardly they are filled with worms. A tiny spark and
they blow up. (38-39)

Anarchism is expressed as anti-Americanism in the caustic observations
of Henry on America. Regarding the question of violence and America’s posture
of pacifism, Henry’s anarchism presents a pungent critique. He does not naively
think that the rest of the world is pacifist. Both the World Wars were fought in
Europe. Europe has witnessed large-scale eruptions of violence in the name of
ideologies and imperialistic expansions. But America by virtue of its geographical
position has had the advantage of being aloof from the historical unrest of
Europe. It has as a result, thinks Henry, fallen prey to the insensitivity and
complacency of materialism which makes people inhuman in the race for profit.
America’s pacifism is seen here as a concocted business arrangement for the
creation of an ambience congenial to business that becomes fundamentally
“cannibalistic” in its profit motives. The mask of its pacifism falls unawares in the
domestic violence that signifies the profound ennui and spiritual dissatisfaction of
its people. In an anarchist critique of this existing condition in America, Henry
laments the lack of self-awareness of the Americans through the metaphor of
sleep and nightmare:
In America they're constantly running amok. What they need is an outlet for their energy, for their blood lust. Europe is bled regularly by war. America is pacifistic and cannibalistic. Outwardly it seems to be a beautiful honeycomb, with all the drones crawling over each other in a frenzy of work; inwardly it's a slaughterhouse, each man killing off his neighbour and sucking the juice from his bones. Superficially it looks like a bold, masculine world; actually it is a whorehouse run by women, with the native sons acting as pimps and the bloody foreigners selling their flesh. Nobody knows what it is to sit on his ass and be content. That happens only in the films where everything is faked, even the fires of hell. The whole continent is sound asleep and in that sleep a grand nightmare is taking place.

(39)

In a metaphor of eating Henry projects his anarchist criticism of the subordination of the human being to the inanimate material, which is the result of America's materialism/capitalism\(^\text{12}\) – another point of reference in his anti-Americanism:

Life drifting by the show-window . . . I too as much a part of life as the lobster, the fourteen carat ring, the horse liniment, but very difficult to establish the fact, the fact being that life is merchandise, with a bill of lading attached, what I choose to eat being more important than I the eater, each one eating the other and

\(^{12}\) See David Miller 9 for anarchist critique of capitalism.
consequently eating, *the verb ruler* of the roost. In the act of eating the host is violated and justice defeated temporarily. The plate and what’s on it, through the predatory power of the intestinal apparatus, commands attention and unifies the spirit, first hypnotizing it, then slowly swallowing it, then masticating it, then absorbing it. The spiritual part of the being passes off like a scum, leaves absolutely no evidence or trace of its passage, vanishes, vanishes even more completely than a point in space after a mathematical discourse.

(91-92)

Henry continues his thought in a vein of bitter irony when he stretches the metaphor of eating to signify the fact that the materialistic society has totally rejected the human wisdom that refuses to be prey to the lure of material comforts. Such comforts are appropriated only in inert complacency, at the cost of one’s humanity:

To chew while thousands chew, each chew an act of murder, gives the necessary social cast from which you look out the window and see that even human kind can be slaughtered justly, or maimed, or starved, or tortured because, while chewing, the mere advantage of sitting in a chair with clothes on, wiping the mouth with napkin, enables you to comprehend, what the wisest men have never been able to comprehend, namely that there is no other way of life possible, said wise men often disdaining to use chair, clothes or napkin. (92)
One of the important expressions of Henry's anarchism is seen in his total disregard for money. America, whose values are founded on the philosophy of financial success, is a place where a man like Henry is a total stranger. This clash with American society in the matters regarding the place of money in life is a major cause in Henry's anti-Americanism. The congenial atmosphere of Paris is chiefly due to its ethos that does not judge a man's worth solely depending on his material possessions. While the traditional aesthetic splendor of Paris with its inherent artistic culture helps Henry in realizing his anarchist self, the city of New York with its monotonous array of skyscrapers and money makers only thrusts his sensitivity into an agonizing perception of meaninglessness and identity crisis. In Capricorn he repeatedly stutters the word 'money' like an autistic as he gets wise to the suicidal lure money exerts on people:

Again the night, the incalculably barren, cold, mechanical night of New York in which there is no peace, no refuge, no intimacy. The immense, frozen solitude of the million-footed mob, the cold, waste fire of the electrical display, the overwhelming meaningless [sic] of the perfection of the female who through perfection has crossed the frontier of sex and gone into the minus sign, gone into the red [. . .] like love over the radio. To have money in the pocket in the

13 Gordon says, "The years from 1911 to 1921 when Miller was reaching manhood were almost a highpoint of prudery. The beginnings of the breakdown of the Victorian ethical system, the rise of realism in Europe, and the growing fear of the vast immigration led to a shoring up of middle class mores. Americanism became identified with financial success, economic conservatism, the gospel of work, and a mid Victorian attitude to sex" 24.
midst of white, neutral energy, to walk meaningless and unfecundated through the bright glitter of the calcimined streets, to think aloud in full solitude on the edge of madness, to be of a city, a great city, to be of the last moment of time in the greatest city in the world and feel no part of it, is to become oneself a city, a world of dead stone, of waste light, of unintelligible motion, of imponderables and incalculables, of the secret perfection of all that is minus. To walk in money through the night crowd, protected by money, lulled by money, dulled by money, the crowd itself a money, the breath money, no least single object anywhere that is not money, money, money everywhere and still not enough, and then no money or a little money or less money or more money, but money, always money, and if you have money or you don’t have money it is the money that counts and money makes money, but what makes money make money? (108-109)

Henry believes that the progress made by America in the field of wealth and material comforts has been at the cost of the spiritual decay of the people. This has created an emptiness of the inner life. Henry would even call America an ‘Inferno’ where the souls are tortured. The torture is the result of the society’s lack of vision that accommodates human nature. The whole society is like a machine that is programmed for the multiplication of wealth, so that the native instincts of man’s spirit go unrecognized, or suppressed. This is especially true in the case of an artist like Henry who abhors the philosophy of success and the
compromises it would ensue. In *Capricorn*, Henry's anarchist criticism takes a street called Myrtle Avenue as a symbol of the emptiness that has grasped American life:

For the genuine inferno which I had to postpone for twenty years I give you Myrtle Avenue, one of the innumerable bridlepaths ridden by iron monsters which lead to the heart of America's emptiness. If you have only seen Essen or Manchester or Chicago or Levallois-Perret or Glasgow or Hoboken or Canarsie or Bayonne you have seen nothing of the magnificent emptiness of progress and enlightenment. Dear reader, you must see Myrtle Avenue before you die, if only to realize how far into the future Dante saw. You must believe me that on this street, neither in the houses which line it, nor the cobblestones which pave it, nor the elevated structure which cuts it atwain, neither in any creature that bears a name and lives thereon, neither in any animal, bird or insect passing through it to slaughter or already slaughtered is there hope [. . .]. It is a street not of sorrow, for sorrow would be human and recognizable, but of sheer emptiness: it is emptier than the most extinct volcano, emptier than a vacuum, emptier than the word God in the mouth of an unbeliever. (271-272)

The creative tension of *Capricorn* is in the conflict between Henry's anarchist non-conformity and the necessity to conform in order to make a living. The only long time employment that Miller undertook in his life had been that of
Employment Manager in the Western Union Telegraph Company. In his fiction Miller nicknames the firm as Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company to suggest the inhumanly exploitative nature of corporate business giants. The company drains the energy and the time of its employee in lieu of the money it offers. More than its profit orientation, what provokes Henry is the power the business firms enjoy in shaping the minds and destinies of the people. The Company symbolizes the puritanical morality of the America of the 1920s that identified business success and the gospel of work with Victorian virtues like prudery, decency, and economic conservatism (Gordon 24).

The years of drudgery Henry spends in the Company gives him insights into the machinations of the business firm which is by proxy the state itself by virtue of the decisive power it exerts on the lives of its employees. It is the unthinking masses that are most easily subjected to government. The business firm through its heavy workloads renders the employee into a thoughtless machine without the sense of human dignity. The Company thus exerts its power even on the spiritual life of the worker. In Capricorn, where the story of Henry in the roles of a worker and family man is told, Miller finds the Company a handy symbol to record his critique of the heartless profit motives of corporate America that converts human beings into working machines.¹⁴ As John Parkin says, Capricorn extends the theme of the rejection of America by an American "by explaining, albeit confusedly and obliquely, how Henry came to exhibit a state of

¹⁴ Gordon says, "Life in the telegraph company became a symbol for Miller of the entire economic structure of the United States" 113.
mind so violently hostile to USA as the apogee [...] of the capitalist world" (184). The job makes him bitterly aware of the exploitativeness and rottenness of the system, and serves as an effective occasion to express the anarchist criticism of the existing order of things:

It was a slaughter-house, so help me God. The thing was senseless from the bottom up. A waste of men, material and effort. A hideous farce against a backdrop of sweat and misery. [...] The whole system was so rotten, so inhuman, so lousy, so hopelessly corrupt and complicated, that it would have taken a genius to put any sense or order into it, to say nothing of human kindness or consideration. I was up against the whole rotten system of American labour, which is rotten at both ends. I was the fifth wheel on the wagon and neither side had any use for me, except to exploit me. (18-19)

What shocks Henry the most is the Company's inhumanity. It never gives another chance to a person who has failed in his duty even if it is a question of life and death. Even God may be convinced of the worth of the failed individuals, but not the Company. In his tenure as Manager, through seeing and listening to the sad plight of the people coming for the job, he realizes the universal nature of exploitation: "[...] I learned that everywhere it is the same – hunger, humiliation, ignorance [...] torture [...] the inhumanity of man to man. [...] The finer the calibre the worse off the man" (30). His moral anger at the state of exploitation makes him burst out:
Wait, you cosmococcic telegraphic shits, you demons on high waiting for the plumbing to be repaired, you dirty white conquerors who have sullied the earth with your cloven hooves, your instruments, your weapons, your disease germs, wait, all you who are sitting in clover and counting your coppers, it is not the end. The last man will have his say before it is finished. Down to the last sentient molecule justice must be done – and will be done! Nobody is getting away with anything, least of all the cosmococcic shits of North America.

(31)

One of the reasons behind Henry's apathy towards business firms is that through its exploitation it makes the individual work his life to death. Work becomes a ploy in the hands of the authority to check the drive for freedom of the individual, and to keep him in the fetters of wants. Work also takes away his independence as his sustenance is at the hands of the employer. It takes an enormous will and the strength to suffer in order to set oneself loose of the vicious circle of work. Henry's gospel against work may sound absurd to the American society whose puritanical culture endorsed by the state has been propagating the virtues of work with the logicality of a philosophy so that the average citizen begins his life with a mind indoctrinated to this effect.

Anarchists have given thought to the question of work. Peter Marshall says that "anarchists [. . .] do not have a strong work ethic and find more happiness in comfortable idleness than in hard labour." Anarchists have classified work into two viz. "moving matter around on the earth's crust and telling
people to do so" (655). Though it is unrealistic to abandon work, the latter kind of work is totally decried by the anarchist as it is pro-authoritarian and against equality. Work is abhorred by anarchism when it goes against the nature of the worker and is forced upon him by external circumstances. In Henry's case this is very clear, as he hates the work at the Company which is against his nature, while enjoying any amount of work namely reading and writing. As Marshall says,

When people are able to choose the nature of their work and control its process they do not wish to avoid it like plague. The most important principle is that everyone should be free to decide when, where and how they work. Work can only be fulfilling if it is undertaken voluntarily. [...] As for the work-shy, it is generally the case, as Berkman pointed out, that laziness implies the right person in the wrong place. (656)

Henry's anarchism is expressed in the assertion of his freedom by refusing to submit himself to the work ethics of America. His independence is rooted in his nature, and his defence against the necessity to work for a living is based on a characteristic trait which makes him not need anything badly. His strength is in his indifference to things that others greatly value:

From the very beginning I must have trained myself not to want anything too badly. From the very beginning I was independent, in a false way. I had need of nobody because I wanted to be free, free to do and to give only as my whims dictated. The moment anything
was expected or demanded of me I balked. That was the form my independence took. [. . .] I was against life, on principle. What principle? The principle of futility. Everybody around me was struggling. I myself never made an effort. If I appeared to be making an effort it was only to please someone else; at bottom I didn’t give a rap. (10)

According to Henry the gospel of work preached to the young is actually a doctrine of inertia. The work undertaken against one’s natural taste is done mechanically with the being and will inert. More often than not the work done for a livelihood is against the nature of the individual. The anarchist stance that work to be fulfilling should agree with one’s propensities is realized by Henry through his personal experience at the Company. Capricorn delineates the struggles of the anarchical spirit of Henry to get free of a society that advocates mechanical and binding work as a national virtue:

If I try to think of a good excuse I can think only of the environment, of the streets I knew and the people who inhabited them. I can think of no street in America, or of people inhabiting such a street, capable of leading one on towards the discovery of the self. I have walked the streets in many countries of the world but nowhere have I felt so degraded and humiliated as in America. I think of all the streets in America combined as forming a huge cesspool, a cesspool of the spirit in which everything is sucked down and drained away to everlasting shit. Over this cesspool the spirit of
work weaves a magic wand; palaces and factories spring up side by side, and munition plants and chemical works and steel mills and sanatoriums and prisons and insane asylums. (12)

Despite Henry being innately free, once he enrolls himself as the Employment Manager of the Company he has no other go but to submit his independent will to the authority of the Company. The situation clearly symbolizes the relation between the state and the subject. The subject is forced to subordinate his will to the decrees of the state, which is an entity with absolutely no regard for the feelings of the subject. In the vicious circle in which man has to conform for his survival all individual differences are reduced to a monotonous sameness. What the Company/state wants is the acquiescence of the worker/subject for its benefit, and in this process it does not tolerate any criticism or opposition. On the other hand it indulges in propaganda to indoctrinate the worker/subject regarding the perfection of its system.

But in spite of the dehumanizing mechanical system of the Company Henry tries to put in the warmth of his individuality in its functioning:

If I had been a stickler for etiquette nobody would ever had been hired. I had to learn quickly, and not from the records or from those about me, but from experience. [...] And no matter how many I hired it was never enough. The next day it would begin all over again. [...] The system was wrong from start to finish, but it was not my place to criticize the system. It was mine to hire and fire. I was in the centre of a revolving disc, which was whirling so fast that
nothing could stay put. What was needed was a mechanic, but according to the logic of the higher-ups there was nothing wrong with the mechanism, everything was fine and dandy except that things were temporarily out of order. And things being temporarily out of order brought on epilepsy, theft, vandalism, perversion, niggers, Jews, whores and whatnot – sometimes strikes and lockouts. Whereupon, according to this logic, you took a big broom and you swept the stable clean, or you took clubs and guns and you beat sense into the poor idiots who were suffering from the illusion that things were fundamentally wrong. (21)

Henry’s anarchist protest at America’s philosophy of success attracts him to people who are failures. It is based on the perception that failure is the token of a superior humanity and individualism. They fail in the recklessly competitive world of materialism because they are guileless and true to their selves, albeit not always self-consciously. Henry’s himself is an epitome of failure from the points of view of money, marriage, and career. But all the same he has a high self-esteem as a result of his egoism; he sees himself as an individual superior to the so-called successes. He regards the failures with the same respect with which he values himself. His meticulous exploration of the lives of failures is a way of registering his individualist anarchist protest in a society that runs after the glamour of success.

In Capricorn Miller spends several pages for Henry’s accounts of pathetic men who come to him for the work of the messenger. There is Carnahan who
ends up in jail for shooting his wife and children though they are not killed. He becomes a symbol of the disastrous dehumanization of the individual by the gospel of success and work on which the American dream is founded. What makes Carnahan pathetically tragic and also ridiculous is his maniacal obsession with success and career improvement, that he makes use of the term in jail for preparing himself for success: “He wasn’t at all dejected. On the contrary, he was looking forward to making the best of his time in prison by “studying up” on salesmanship. He was going to be the best salesman in America after his release.” However Carnahan’s optimism seems to give Henry spiritual refreshment by goading him up to face worse adversities. Though he is a wreck Carnahan is a strong individual and is independent according to Henry “because he was working out his destiny in his own private way” (34).

Another touching account of a failure, which also gives occasion to express anti-Americanism, is that of a Hindu called Guptal. Says Henry:

He was not only a model of good behaviour – he was a saint. He had a passion for the flute which he played all by himself in his miserable little room. One day he was found naked, his throat slit from ear to ear, and beside him on the bed was his flute. At the funeral there were a dozen women who wept passionate tears, including the wife of the janitor who had murdered him. I could write a book about this young man who was the gentlest and the holiest man I ever met, who had never offended anybody and never taken
anything from anybody, but who had made the cardinal mistake of coming to America to spread peace and love. (34)

Prison is one of the potent punitive instruments of coercion in the hands of the state (David Miller 6). It is an institution that plays a prominent role in the curbing of individual freedom. Behind the disguise of its being a corrective force, it more often than not acts as a coercive force of the state that aims at overpowering the individual will. For this reason anarchism is against the institution of prison. Henry's anarchism is expressed through the presentation of the case of Schuldig, a man destroyed by twenty years of life in prison for a crime he had never done:

He [Schuldig] had been beaten almost to death before he confessed; then solitary confinement, starvation, torture, perversion, dope. When they finally released him he was no longer a human being. [. . .] Freed, he was haunted by the fear that he might be obliged to commit a crime and be sent back to prison again. (36)

The inhuman nature of the state is also symbolized in the character of a doctor, a "suave sadist" to whom Henry takes some of the messengers, who are abject failures/misfits, for curing their maladies. The institution of medical care, through the doctor, is depicted as a representative of the state/authority that seeks to maintain the status quo in order to perpetuate itself. In a mutually complementing process the doctor/authority sustains the patients/failures and vice versa. Henry makes this clear when he ironically observes about the doctor:
All the trumpery and quackery of our scientific practitioners came to 
apotheosis in the person of the suave sadist who operated this 
clinic with the full concurrence and connivance of the law. [ . . . ]
Pretending that he understood the secret regulations of the glands, 
invested with the powers of a mediaeval monarch, oblivious of the 
pain he inflicted, ignorant of everything but his medical knowledge, 
he went to work on the human organism like a plumber sets to work 
on the underground drain pipes. [ . . . ] The purpose of his treatment 
was to render the subject fit for society. But no matter how fast he 
worked, no matter whether he was successful or not successful, 
society was turning out more and more misfits. Some of them were 
so marvelously maladapted that when, in order to get proverbial 
reaction, he slapped them vigorously on the cheek they responded 
with an upper cut [ . . . ]. It's true, most of his subject were exactly 
what he described them to be – incipient criminals. (37-38)

Henry has his anarchist insight into the process of being a materialistic 
success. He thinks that it is through being untrue to one's nature, and sacrificing 
one's individuality/freedom that a person becomes such a success. The society 
and the authority that governs it prepare the individual for this falsity through the 
process of socialization. The individual is indoctrinated as a child itself with the 
gospel of success that is founded on the principles of self-aggrandizement and 
utilitarianism. His mind is programmed for making compromises of his freedom 
and individuality in order to suit the image of social success that is demanded of
him. Henry views this commitment to the image of the successful person as a useful citizen as a condition that cripples the innate drives of the self by unconsciously urging it to conform to the demands of the other.

The self-realization occurs with the freedom from the conformist ideas imposed by authority on the consciousness of the individual. Henry stands liberated from the doctrine of success, and gradually finds it difficult to tolerate his friends whose ideas remain bound. In Capricorn Miller describes instances where we get a peep into the intellectual founding of Henry, and see the process of his liberation. One of these is in which Henry is seen thoroughly inspired by Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution*. In trying to communicate the liberating ideas of the book to his friends the realization of the difficulty in freeing one's consciousness from its thought habits dawns on him, and in his decision to desert the friends who do not understand him we see the egoism of an individualist anarchist:

> With this book in my hands, reading aloud to my friends, questioning them, explaining to them, I was made clearly to understand that I had no friends, that I was alone in the world. Because in not understanding the meaning of the words, neither I nor my friends, one thing became very clear and that was that there were ways of not understanding and that the difference between the non-understanding of one individual and the non-understanding of another created a world of terra firma even more solid than differences of understanding. Everything which before I thought I
had understood crumbled, and I was left with a clean slate. My friends, on
the other hand, entrenched themselves more solidly in the little
ditch of understanding which they had dug for themselves. They
died comfortably in their little bed of understanding, to become
useful citizens of the world. I pitied them, and in short order, I
deserted them one by one, without the slightest regret. (199-200)

Anarchist thinkers have varied in proposing an alternate system in the
absence of the state. It is one of the weak points of anarchism that it has not
been able to put up a feasible and unified alternative mode of self-governance to
the State that it abhors. Henry too is at a loss when it comes to proposing an
alternative to the oppressive social system he criticizes. But he transcends this
dilemma in his Rabelaisian abandon of, what Parkin calls, “carnival-grotesque”.15
Henry believes that the materialistic machinations of the American state are
submerging the people into perpetual stress created by the race for money and
success. In this wake, liberation can come only through the demolition of the
strictures of the social values of materialism/puritanism. Henry can see this
happen through a crazy shedding of logic. Only in humour and clownery has
human kind its salvation, suggests Henry. In a typical example of this he calls for
replacing the President of America by a clown of the type he has seen perform,
whom Parkin calls “An archetypal carnival king” (154). Henry says:

He was the whole show and it was a show that contained more
therapy than the whole arsenal of modern science. They ought to

---
15 See Parkin 119-150 for a detailed analysis of “Carnival-grotesque” in Miller.
have paid a man like this the wages which the President of the United States receives. They ought to sack the President of the United States and the whole Supreme Court and set up a man like this as ruler. This man could cure any disease on the calendar. He was the kind of guy, moreover, as would do it for nothing [...] This is the type of man which empties the insane asylums. He doesn’t propose a cure he makes everybody crazy. Between this solution and a perpetual state of war, which is civilization, there is only one other way out—and that is road we will all take eventually because everything else is doomed to failure. (276-277)

The most significant expression of anarchism in Miller is in the symbolic representation of Henry’s self whose anarchism is most asserted in its desire for free and uninhibited expression. Henry says:

I found that what I had desired all my life was not to live—if what others are doing is called living—but to express myself. I realized that I had never the least interest in living, but only in this which I am doing now, something which is parallel to life, of it at the same time, and beyond it. (13)

Miller represents Henry’s anarchist self taking a kaleidoscopic vision of its thoughts, feelings, and the situations through which it passes. One of Henry’s prominent characteristics is his ability to see truth in contradictions. His anarchism makes him rebel against the status quo, and to assert his individualistic difference. His greatest difference is in being a “happy rock”, in
being "incurably optimistic" in the midst of human disasters, registering an anarchist faith in the essential goodness of human nature that is let alone and ungoverned (Marshall 14). The happy indifference is based on the disregard for power structures. His only frustration is in his inability to act out his anarchist protest. However his protest does not aspire to violence, quite in keeping with the anti-violence position of anarchism. Henry says:

The whole continent is a nightmare producing the greatest misery of the greatest number. I was one, a single entity in the midst of the greatest jamboree of wealth and happiness (statistical wealth, statistical happiness) but I never met a man who was truly wealthy or truly happy. At least I knew that I was unhappy, unhealthy, out of whack and out of step. That was my only solace, my only joy. But it was hardly enough. It would have been better for my peace of mind, for my soul if I had expressed my rebellion openly, if I had gone to jail, if I had rotted there and died. It would have been better if, like the mad Czolgosz, I had shot some good President McKinley, some gentle, insignificant soul like that who had never done anyone the least harm. Because in the bottom of my heart there was murder: I wanted to see America destroyed, razed from top to bottom. I wanted to see this happen purely out of vengeance, as atonement for the crimes that were committed against me and against others like me who have never been able to lift their voices
and express their hatred, their rebellion, their legitimate blood lust. (12)

These words of Henry which also condemn the anarchist killing of US President McKinley by Czolgosz clearly state Henry's pacifism, while convincing that the statements of desire for violent action as only rhetorical. Even when prominent anarchists have differed in their positions regarding McKinley's murder, they have all been unanimous in the condemnation of violence. Their difference has been on the standpoint they adopted towards Czolgosz. Emma Goldman, the American anarchist whom Miller adored, had justified Czolgosz's act refusing to concede motives of cruelty to it. She said,

On the contrary it is mostly because of a strong social instinct, because of an abundance of love and an overflow of sympathy with the pain and sorrow around us [ . . . ] a love so strong that it shrinks before no consequence that Czolgosz committed murder (qtd in Reichert 389).

Jo Labadie, another American anarchist, has even refused to subscribe McKinley's killing to anarchism since the killer "was a registered Republican at the time of the deed". But he too believed that Czolgosz was "a victim of a power oriented social system which corrupts both ruler and ruled alike". However Labadie believed that "As for the anarchist, no true believer in the idea could consciously choose the method of violence [. . . ]" (qtd. in Reichert 326).

Henry's opinion agrees with Labadie's position about Czolgosz that he was the product of an evil social system.
Henry stresses his individualism by proclaiming the significance of the recording of his thoughts even though he is aware of its comparative insignificance; that it will have no place in history. Its significance lies in the truth that it expresses:

I was the evil product of an evil soil. If the self were not imperishable, the "I" I write about would have been destroyed long ago. To some this may seem like an invention, but whatever I imagine to have happened did actually happen; at least to me. History may deny it, since I have played no part in the history of my people, but even if everything I say is wrong, is prejudiced, spiteful, malevolent, even if I am a liar and a poisoner, it is nevertheless the truth and it will have to be swallowed. (12-13)

It might be seen that the duality of significance/insignificance or individual/universal is one of the cardinal features of Henry's vision. He feels insignificant when he identifies his self with the mundane self of everyday activities. His ego feels expansive and significant when he becomes conscious about his individual uniqueness and rebels in order to be true to his difference. Solitude is the consequence of this individualist anarchism as the assertion of difference enters him into conflict with society that wants conformity from its members. But in this aloneness he feels the presence of an energy that he would channelize into the expression of protest, which is directed at almost everything around:
Up until this loneliness hit me I too was a bit weary, but suddenly, standing there completely shut off from the world, I woke up with a start. I became so electrified that I didn't dare move for fear I would charge like a bull or start to climb the wall of a building or else dance and scream. (191)

Miller suggests through Henry’s observations that every individual in whom there is the urge for individual freedom experiences this duality. That insignificant self which conforms to the bondage of power/authority and the civic duties becomes a “rootless self”. Henry records the experience of this state in Capricorn:

In this condition I am quite capable of fulfilling the ordinary demands of life – of finding a wife, of becoming a father, of supporting the household, of entertaining friends, of reading books, of paying taxes, of performing military services, and so on and so forth. In this condition I am capable if needs be, of killing in cold blood, for the sake of my family or to protect my country, or whatever it may be. I am the ordinary, routine citizen who answers to a name and who is given a number in his passport. I am thoroughly irresponsible for my fate. (207)

This is the self Henry presents to the world in Capricorn while within him the invisible craving for freedom makes its silent upsurge. The tension of living with the duality of the conforming exterior and the non-conformist interior creates an unexpressed frenzy in him. This frenzied self is a proto type of his anarchist
self that “displays a horror of ordinary life” as Kingsley Widmer puts it (“The Rebel-Buffoon: Henry Miller’s Legacy” 135), and is yet to get expressed in writing. Henry calls this entity within himself; this being which is a palpable presence to himself but unknown to the world, Gottileb Leberecht Muller. Whenever this hidden anarchist self makes its presence felt, through a declaration of boundless freedom, the society alienates him. The majority who fails to understand his position dubs him as crazy. Henry sees them belonging to the class of the ordinary; the ones who willingly accept their bondage with an air of fatalism. Such people are conditioned to be afraid of the state of being free of authority, or in other words anarchy. Henry gets himself away from the ordinary, as he too feels incapable of communicating with those who fail to understand his call for freedom:

Then one day, without the slightest warning, I wake up and looking about me I understand absolutely nothing of what is going on about me, neither my own behaviour nor that of my neighbours, nor do I understand why the governments are at war or at peace, whichever the case may be. At such moments I am born anew, born and baptized by my right name: Gottileb Leberecht Muller! Everything I do in my right name is looked upon as crazy. People make furtive signs behind my back, sometimes to my face even. I am forced to break with friends and family and loved ones. I am obliged to break camp. And so, just as naturally as in dream, I find myself once again drifting with the current [. . .]. Now all my faculties become
alert. [. . .] I know how to fend for myself. I know how to avoid work, how to avoid entangling relationships, how to avoid pity, sympathy, bravery, and all the other pitfalls. I stay in place or with a person just long enough to obtain what I need, and then I'm off again. I have no goal: the aimless wandering is sufficient unto itself. I am free as a bird [. . .] (207)

The identity of the writer/artist is a composite element of Henry's vision of self. His anarchism is thus expressed mainly through the assertion of this identity. It is expressed in Henry's reactions to the external world from the vantage point of a creative writer who struggles to establish his voice in a society that is philistine, and averse to serious and non utilitarian art.\textsuperscript{16} For art to be accepted in America, Henry learns, it should have a consumerist value. It has to cater to the taste of a certain readership, and, most importantly, sell. It may sacrifice originality and even plagiarize style or content provided that it sells or meets some utility.

The event of Henry's first attempt at writing thus also becomes a critique of this attitude of the American society to art and literature. It also evidences his protest at the condition of the downtrodden, which goes unattended by the power/money wielders.\textsuperscript{17} The incident is set at the Cosmodemonic Telegraph

\textsuperscript{16} Kate Millet says, "Before exile in Paris granted him reprieve, Miller felt himself the captive of circumstances in a philistine milieu where artistic or intellectual work was despised, and the only approved avenues of masculine achievement were confined to money or sex" ("Henry Miller" 48).

\textsuperscript{17} Michael Woolf says that "in Tropic of Capricorn [. . .] Miller exhibits a clear political sympathy for the dispossessed" (166).
Company whose Vice President suggests that someone should write a *Horatio Alger* book, an imitation, in order to motivate the messenger force. Henry undertakes to do this and this is his first effort at writing imaginative literature. However his decision is not in conformity with the boss's idea, but, on the contrary, in tune with his anarchist rebellion at the materialistic values of America's money lords who want the work force under complete control of their will:

I thought to myself – you poor old futzer, you, just wait until I get it off my chest . . . I will give you an *Horatio Alger* book . . . just you wait! My head was in a whirl leaving his office. I saw the army of men, women and children that had passed through my hands, saw them weeping, begging, beseeching, imploring, cursing, spitting, fuming, threatening. I saw the tracks they left on the highways, the freight trains lying on the floor, the parents in rags, the coal box empty, the sink running over, the walls sweating and between the cold beads of sweat the cockroaches running like mad; I saw them hobbling along like twisted gnomes or falling backwards in the epileptic frenzy, the mouths twitching, the saliva pouring from the lips, the limbs writhing; I saw the walls giving way and the pest pouring out like a winged fluid, and the men higherup with their ironclad logic, waiting for it to blow over, waiting for everything to be patched up, waiting, waiting contentedly, smugly, with big cigars in their mouths and their feet on the desk, saying things were
temporarily out of order. I saw the Horatio Alger hero, the dream of a sick
American, mounting higher and higher, first messenger, then
operator, then manager, then chief, then superintendent, then vice-
president, then president, then trust magnate, then beer baron,
then Lord of all the Americas, the money god, the god of gods, the
clay of clay, nullity on high, zero with ninety-seven thousand
decimals fore and aft. You shits, I said to myself, I will give you the
picture of twelve little men, zeros without decimals, ciphers, digits,
the twelve uncrushable worms who are hollowing out the base of
your rotten edifice. (28-29)

Henry’s decision to sabotage the Vice President’s purpose of exploiting
more the poor messengers by motivating them with the Horatio Alger type stories
of messengers is seen in his plan to replace the Alger hero with the opposite type
– the abject and irredeemable failure. It also is a statement of disobedience to
authority that spells the parameters of art according to the principles of utility and
profit. The sympathy for the cause of the poor workers and the faith in their
revolutionary and destructive power (they are “worms who are hollowing out the
base of your rotten edifice”) is also a statement of anarchist protest at the nexus
between money and power that conspires towards the pathetic condition of the
workers.

Just as Henry sympathizes with the failures and even prefers them to the
successful ones because of the formers’ greater humanity, he himself as writer
does not hanker after success. The freedom from the desire for success is the
strong point of the anarchist self of the writer in Henry, for it enables him to be uncompromising in his individualist freedom in matters of writing. The outcome of this is economic poverty, as the aversion to success also encroaches into other aspects of his identity like that of family man and citizen thereby making him deviant with respect to the norms of wealth accumulation like frugality or savings. It is in this aspect that Miller comes factually most corresponding to the myth of Henry. The anarchy in the rejection to conform to societal codes of morality for success is a meeting point of the positions of Miller and Henry.

It is a biographical fact that Miller had lived in poverty (even mendicancy) until much late in his life when the ban on his books were lifted in America in the 1960s after a long legal battle. By the time he became financially secure he had gone over seventy years old. This means that he never exploited the notoriety given by the ban on his books as early as the 1930s by writing things which would be palatable to the puritanical judgments of the authorities, and thereby finding a lucrative market for his books in America. The inspiring force behind this restraint is the freedom from the fear of failure, which is a commendable achievement in the ethos of America whose zeitgeist has been that of financial success. It also implies a freedom, from the influence of public opinion and the norms of canon literature, which is the result of a powerful writer's ego that would never submit to authority. It enabled him to be individualistically anarchist, and stick to his own voice and style irrespective of the censure of the society. These
are essentially found in Henry's literary stance in *Capricorn* with regard to the writing of his first book:

That the book was inadequate, faulty, bad, *terrible*, as they said, was only natural. I was attempting at the start what a man of genius would have undertaken only at the end. I wanted to say the last word at the beginning. It was absurd and pathetic. It was a crushing defeat, but it put iron in my backbone and sulphur in my blood. I knew at least what it was to fail. I knew what it was to attempt something big. [. . .] I am proud of the fact that I made such a miserable failure of it; had I succeeded I would have been a monster. (32)

Proudhon's anarchist glorification of the destruction, of the hackneyed order imposed by authority, as a precedent to the setting up of the new and the natural order (Marshall 630) is reflected in Henry's faith in the destructive power of the word. The word appropriates its power to destroy for the creation of the new only in the hands of the person who is spiritually free from the moral repression of society:

Whatever this was, the *word*, disease or creation, it was still running rampant; it would run on and on, outstrip time and space, outlast the angels, unseat God, unhook the universe. Any word contained all words – for him who had become detached through love or sorrow [. . .]. (49)
Miller’s literary anarchism has refused to invest words with moral values. He has never categorized words as decent or obscene. Such categorizations have probably appealed to him as the result of the prudery associated with puritanism that had run deep roots in America (Gordon 24). The compulsive use of the so-called obscene words has thus been the most prominent trait of his literary anarchism. He believed in the efficacy of these words in destroying moral binds, and also in expressing feelings of lust, hatred, and protest at inequality. These words helped him in speaking directly, without circumlocution, about these aspects of reality with the shock value of a language that have been abhorred by ‘decent’ literature. Miller declares the freedom of his language from moral strictures in Henry’s words:

This is all a figurative way of speaking about what is unmentionable. What is unmentionable is pure fuck and pure cunt; it must be mentioned only in de luxe editions, otherwise the world will fall apart. What holds the world together, as I have learned from bitter experience, is sexual intercourse. But fuck, the real thing, cunt, the real thing, seems to contain some unidentified element which is far more dangerous than nitroglycerine. (174)

Elsewhere Henry calls the realm of consciousness which is the source of mysterious energy that sustains humanity “The Land of Fuck”, a realm where all pretensions of morality fall apart (174). The puritanical degradation of the expression of sex in the America of Henry’s youthful period is perceived as a late development in the history of mankind. The ancients were more close to nature
and hence did not differentiate between the decent and the obscene, which were all taken as elements of reality. Henry says:

This is how things stood on the first day of sexual intercourse in the old Hellenistic world. Since then things have changed a great deal. It is no longer polite to sing through your weeny, nor it is permitted even to condors to shit purple eggs all over the place. All this is scatological, eschatological and ecumenical. It is forbidden. [. . .]

And so the Land of Fuck becomes ever more receding; it becomes mythological. Therefore am I constrained to speak mythologically. I speak with extreme unction, and with precious unguents too. I put away the clashing cymbals, the tubas, the white marigolds [. . .].

(175-176)

Henry’s flouting of literary conventions for experimentation goes unaccepted in America. The literary ambience of America, which appeals to Henry as being informed by the moral repression resulting from its puritanical sensibility, is averse to his individualist anarchism in art. The sense of belonging as artist which Henry would later feel in Paris is due to its milieu that accommodates freedom of expression irrespective of style or content. During the days of his life depicted in Capricorn Henry is seen as feeling artistically alienated in a society which according to him is inimical to experimentation in art:

It was just about this time that the Dadaists were in full swing, to be followed shortly by the Surrealists. [. . .] I was perhaps the unique Dadaist in America and I didn’t know it. [. . .] Nobody understood
what I was writing about or why I wrote that way. I was so lucid that they said I was daffy. I was describing the New World — unfortunately a little too soon because it had not yet been discovered and nobody could be persuaded that it existed. (260)

The "New World" Henry speaks about may be seen as an anarchist Utopia that is creative, humanitarian, and free of the destruction, oppression and domination caused by the centres of authority like the state. It is therefore different from the New World that America is supposed to be by his friends:

The one thing they [Henry's friends] did not want to hear about was that life is indestructible. Was not their precious new world reared on the destruction of the innocent, on rape and plunder and torture and devastation? (261)

The greatest problem that Henry faces as a writer in America is thus that of being unintelligible. His difference, which is the manifestation of individualist anarchism, creates a communication gap since it is opposed to the accepted codes of literary expression and societal values. He feels that he and the people are in two different worlds; his free and natural, and theirs artificial and bound:

Any primitive man would have understood me, any man of archaic epochs would have understood me: only those about me, that is to say, a continent of a hundred million people, failed to understand my language. To write intelligibly for them I would have been obliged first of all to kill something, secondly, to arrest time. I had
just made the realization that life is indestructible and that there is no such thing as time, only the present. (261)

Henry finds out that the language he would have to use for artistic expression in order to be intelligible is one that is burdened by morality. He finds this language not suitable for his undertaking. However he is not yet prepared to free his language of moral binds, and would need the freedom in the atmosphere of Paris to emancipate it. Before leaving for Paris Henry's anarchist expression in literature is kept stifled in his mind, making him register his complaint in Capricorn:

How was it possible, when I sat down in the parlour at my prehistoric desk, to use this code language of rape and murder? I was alone in this great hemisphere of violence, but I was not alone as far as the human race was concerned. I was lonely amidst a world of things lit up by phosphorescent flashes of cruelty. I was delirious with an energy which could not be unleashed except in the service of death and futility. I could not begin with a full statement—it would have meant the strait-jacket or the electric chair. I was like a man who had been too long incarcerated in a dungeon—I had to feel my way slowly, falteringly, lest I stumble and be run over. I had to accustom myself gradually to the penalties which freedom involves. I had to grow a new epidermis which would protect me from this burning light in the sky. (262)
In order to express himself Henry envisions a new language “which cuts through the death language of the day like wireless through storm” (264).

Death and decay are metaphors Miller employs to concretize Henry’s vision of the invasion of people’s life in America by the mechanical. What is condemned is the spiritual death that happens while living mechanically at the physical level; a death which is the consequence of bondage and unthinking conformity. The submission to the repression of authority reduces the scope of experience, and makes man live an incomplete life. On the contrary, believes Henry, a liberated individual accepts and lives reality in its entirety, transcending the social and moral restrictions of authority through an assertion of his individual freedom. Therefore we see Henry calling for self-liberation, which places life above everything else, through an all encompassing acceptance, which he crystallizes in the word “Yes”:

The first word any man writes when he has found himself, his own rhythm, which is the life rhythm is Yes! [. . .] No dynamo, no matter how huge – not even a dynamo of a hundred million dead souls – can combat one man saying Yes! (264)

Henry’s life depicted in Capricorn, and also in the subsequent The Rosy Crucifixion trilogy, may be viewed as symbolic of the making of an anarchist artist/writer. He feels in Capricorn that his anarchist self is in a state of hibernation, preparing itself for its emancipation through writing, during the time he lives the mediocre life of a worker and of an unhappy family man. His desperation over his insipid existence bound to routine becomes an expression
of anarchism reminding him of the enormity of strength that he would need to destroy the shell of bondage in order to emerge free as an artist:

All this active life, preceding the final act of desperation, led me from doubt to doubt, binding me more and more to the real self which, like a continent choked with the evidences of a great and thriving civilization, had already sunk beneath the surface of the sea. The colossal ego was submerged, and what people observed moving frantically above the surface was the periscope of the soul searching for its target. Everything that came within range had to be destroyed, if I were ever to rise again [. . .]. (292)

Quite consistent with the vision of self as Protean, which informs all the works under consideration here, in Capricorn too Henry is conscious of this inherent nature of the self. Being true to the self therefore means not to be fixated on any chosen aspect of the self, repressing the others. Such choice is the result of morality. The self of the anarchist rebels against such forces and seeks to express itself in its fullness. Henry says:

The friends who think they know me know nothing about me for the reason that the real me changed hands countless times. Neither the men who thanked me, nor the men who cursed me, knew with whom they were dealing. Nobody ever got on to a solid footing with me, because I was constantly liquidating my personality. I was keeping what is called the “personality” in abeyance for the moment
when, leaving it to coagulate, it would adopt a proper human rhythm. (295-296)

The patience to wait for the personality to adopt a human rhythm reflects Henry's anarchist faith in the innate order of human nature which does not need the coercive force of an external authority to render it ordered. For anarchism believes in the eventual goodness of the natural order, says Marshall, and that everything will turn fine if nature is left to "pursue its own beneficent course" (15). It also believes in the capacity of the self to regulate itself if left free without the legal coercion of the state. Especially individualist anarchism emphatically denounces the interference into the natural rhythm of an individual by others or the society. Henry's patience to abide by time also reflects a stoic quality; a will to suffer passively in spite of the surging protest at the status quo and wait till everything turns to good naturally. It shows that Henry's anarchist stance is essentially of a philosophical nature - one that does not act rebelliously in the society for a change, but only harbours a protest in the individual consciousness and passively waits for a natural change.

Thus for the philosophical anarchist a continuous struggle goes on in the consciousness for freeing it from the authoritarian values coercively imposed on it by the society. As Bakunin said, "the harmony of natural forces appears only as a result of a continual struggle, which is the real condition of life and of movement" (qtd. in Marshall 16). Rechert also mentions the internal struggle that is to be undergone by a person before he can liberate himself to enjoy freedom.
(13). This expression of anarchist position is seen in Capricorn when Henry says about the struggle he goes through at the Company:

Things take place instantaneously, but there's a long process to be gone through first. What you get when something happens is only the explosion, and the second before that the spark. But everything happens according to law – and with the full consent and collaboration of the whole cosmos. Before I could get up and explode the bomb had to be properly prepared, properly primed. After putting things in order for the bastards up above [in the Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company] I had to be taken down from my high horse, had to be kicked around like a football, had to be stepped on, squelched, humiliated, fettered, manacled, made impotent as a jellyfish. (43)

Henry's anarchist vision ultimately rests on the faith in the inherent order of human nature, which is essentially benevolent. It is this vision that gives him a proper perspective of man in relation to universe, and consequently makes him perceive the irrelevance of the authority of man on man which exists under the pretext of establishing order in human society. The faith in human nature is liberating and optimistic; it bathes the world in beauty to Henry despite his acute awareness of human tragedy:

I grow light, light as a feather, and my pace becomes more steady, more calm, more even. What a beautiful night it is! The stars shining so brightly, so serenely, so remotely. Not mocking me
precisely, but reminding me of the futility of it all. Who are you, young man, to be talking of the earth, of blowing things to smithereens? Young man, we have been hanging here for millions and billions of years. We have seen it all, everything, and still we shine peacefully every night, we light the way, we still the heart. Look around you, young man, see how still and beautiful everything is. (205)

At times Henry's faith in nature and its unpremeditated order is absolute to the extent of his losing faith in human struggle, leading him to a philosophy of passive acceptance. He tends to look upon struggle as the very cause of misery: Things happen or they don't happen, that's all. Nothing is accomplished by sweat and struggle. Nearly everything which we call life is just insomnia, an agony because we've lost the habit of falling asleep. We don't know how to let go. (258)

The call to “let go” looks like a solution to the stress of modern life in materialistic societies. The stress resulting from the struggle for success and survival makes man obsessed with the ephemeral, and lose the wider philosophical perspective of self/reality that gives meaning to life. This condition is congenial to the authority/state for keeping the individual, who is unaware of his free nature, bound and conforming. The 'letting go', a stepping out of the competition which is a marked feature of materialism, relaxes the individual. It is in such a state that man becomes conscious of his self, and its yearning for freedom. Henry believes that laughter is a factor that helps him in letting go. He makes a religion of laughter to drive home its importance in life. Laughter
becomes for him an anarchist expression declaring freedom and protest at authority. Elsewhere he suggests that a comedian would make a better President of America. Continuing the same logic he says:

When the whole human race is rocking with laughter, laughing so hard that it hurts [. . .] everybody then has his foot on the path. In that moment everybody can just as well be God as anything else. [. . .] Nobody can persuade you at that moment to take a gun and kill your enemy; neither can anybody persuade you to open a fat tome containing the metaphysical truths of the world and read it. If you know what freedom means, absolute freedom and not a relative freedom, then you must recognize that this is the nearest to it you will ever get. If I am against the condition of the world it is not because I am a moralist – it is because I want to laugh more. I don’t say that God is one grand laugh: I say that you’ve got to laugh hard before you can get anywhere near God. My whole aim in life is to get near to God, that is, to get nearer to myself. (277-278)

The freedom that comes out of letting go is a joyous experience for Henry. As Marshall says “Anarchists experience freedom as potentially joyous” (40). Even the plenty of miseries does not mar Henry’s joy resulting from his inner freedom. To repeat the observation of Reichert, “Freedom on the anarchist view is not a body of formal rights arbitrarily granted to the individual but an inherent quality the individual possesses in his very capacity as a social being [. . .]” (13). Henry’s innate freedom founded on acceptance plunges him into an optimism
and a sense of well being despite the adverse and binding external conditions. The uncommonness of it makes him secretly afraid of himself:

The external situation was bad, admitted – but what bothered me more was the internal situation. I was really afraid of myself, of my appetite, my curiosity, my flexibility, my permeability, my malleability, my geniality, my powers of adaptation. No situation in itself could frighten me: I somehow always saw myself sitting pretty, sitting inside a buttercup, as it were and sipping the honey. [...] It was because I knew how not to resist, I suppose. Other people wore themselves out tugging and straining and pulling; my strategy was to flow with the tide. (254-255)

It is this harmony with the self that makes Henry objectively aware of the miseries of the world. This gives him the negative capability of identifying with the sufferings of people, and makes him express his anarchist criticism of the existing order:

What people did to me didn’t bother me nearly so much as what they were doing to others or to themselves. I was really so damned well off inside that I had to take on the problems of the world. [...] I wasn’t synchronized with my own destiny [...]. I was trying to live out the world destiny. (255)

Henry’s anarchism is seen in his rebellion that tries to pull down the concept of God. His intention here is not in proposing atheism so much as that of freeing the human mind from a faith that dampens the desire for freedom. His
objection to the concept of God is not because he thinks that it is
superstitious, but due to his perception that the belief in it weakens the
individual's faith in his own power to carve his own life. His individualist
anarchism expresses its protest in a blasphemous language:

I had no more need of God than He had of me, and if there were
one [. . .] I would meet him calmly and spit in his face. (9)

Not much later he would call himself God in an apotheosis of individualism for its
being superior to authority/state:

I was not a corporation or a trust or a state or a federation or a
polity of nations – I was more like God, if anything. (16)

Henry's self-identification with God is symbolic of anarchism since through
humanization it deprives the concept of God of its mythical/religious authority. He
sees the agony of Christ as everyman's. The facts of Christ's life become
reference points by which human life can be understood, but not uncritically.

Henry believes that his individualist 'difference', manifested in his optimism and
indifference, is the result of surviving extreme pain unlike Christ:

If one isn't crucified, like Christ, if one manages to survive, to go on
living above and beyond the sense of desperation and futility, then
another curious thing happens. [. . .] one is unnaturally gay,
unnaturally healthy, unnaturally indifferent. (58-59)

Henry imagines this happening to Christ, this paradox of becoming joyfully
indifferent on surviving extreme pain, probably suggesting that since, factually,
Christ did not survive pain to experience it. His experience is of a lesser dimension compared to that of Henry's:

I felt exactly like Jesus Christ would have felt if he had been taken down from cross and not permitted to die in the flesh. I am sure that the shock of crucifixion would have been so great that he would have suffered a complete amnesia as regards humanity. I am certain that after his wounds had healed he wouldn't have given a damn about the tribulations of mankind but would have fallen with the greatest relish upon a fresh cup of coffee and a slice of toast.

[. . .] (62)

Capricorn thus contains expressions of anarchism through Henry's symbolic representation of individualist anarchism that by virtue of its egoism and love for humanity asserts the superiority of the individual to society and its authoritarian structures. Henry says:

I have never found a man as generous as myself, as forgiving, as tolerant, as carefree, as reckless, as clean at heart. I forgive myself for every crime I have committed. I do it in the name of humanity. I know what it means to be human, the weakness and the strength of it. I suffer from this knowledge and I revel in it also. If I had the chance to be God I would reject it. If I had the chance to be a star I would reject it. The most wonderful opportunity which life offers is to be human. It embraces the whole universe. It includes the knowledge of death, which not even God enjoys. (208)