Chapter 3

Through the Jabber – Lewis Carroll

I hope to go off the deep end, and by that I mean that I am going to write, if I wish, absolute nonsense, you know. I love a man like Lewis Carroll. Alice in Wonderland – *what a delightful thing and how great it was! I believe that when you write freely and easily and joyously, even if it doesn't make sense, that you do more good than when you write seriously with all your heart and soul and are trying to convince people. We have underestimated humor as a leavening, as something to loosen people and make them think.*

– Interview in *Saturday Review*, *Conversations with Henry Miller* (1956)[1]

Lewis Carroll may not be the first, or even last, writer who comes to mind when thinking of Henry Miller. Yet Miller, for one, counts Carroll as one of the writers who affected him the greatest, with *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* occupying a position on Miller's list of 'The Hundred Books That Influenced Me Most' from *The Books in My Life*. Miller was incredibly fond of Carroll, stating in an interview in his later life, 'I would give my right arm to have written his books, or to be able to come anywhere near doing what he did.'[2] At the same time, regardless of Miller's own real-life references to and personal interest in Carroll, it is important to note the direct and strong presence of Carroll in Miller's writing style and the ways in which that presence surfaces throughout Miller's *oeuvre*.

Miller's allusions to Carroll directly in the text are, on one level, very limited, but the indirect allusions and style adaptations are quite widespread. *Black Spring* is the first location to look for indirect as well as overt elements of Carroll in Miller. Not only is *Black Spring* Miller's most surreal and playful text, but the chapter 'Jabberwhorl Cronstadt' contains, as George Wickes notes in 1963 in *Henry Miller*, many direct allusions to Carroll – the title itself being a clear reference to 'Jabberwocky', Carroll's nonsense poem, first found in *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871). Wickes writes that

in Miller's 'Jabberwhorl Cronstadt', indeed throughout the whole of *Black Spring*, 'Miller is a poet of reckless abandon, his language exuberant and prodigal, often used for sound rather than meaning.'[3] Miller's language play is more than evident in *Black Spring* and is manifest throughout the music-like and poetic quality that the wordplay takes on.

The importance of this claim cannot be overestimated. By focusing on 'sound rather than meaning', Miller creates the space where his prose can develop unexpected, indeed unanticipated, significance. Like Carroll, Miller subsequently draws attention directly to the words and not to their potential cultural import. Ironically, however, it is this focus away from the cultural import of the meaning of the text (from the conventional manner in which such playful, experimental writing is regarded) that such texts become significant precisely for their cultural import. Miller's writing, like Carroll's in some ways, lends itself to subversive readings that initially rely on the wordplay itself in order to detract from it, and finally focus on interpretations restricted by cultural parameters, often leading to its judgement as morally corrupt.

Suggesting that Miller's language is used 'for sound rather than meaning' is a claim that automatically challenges negative assertions levied against Miller as misogynistic, such as those of Kate Millett,[4] or as a poor writer, such as the later critiques of George Orwell or Isadore Traschen.[5] In 'Word, Dialogue and Novel' in *Desire in Language*, Kristeva writes, 'We see the problems of death, birth and sex appear when literature touches upon this strategic point that writing becomes when it exteriorises linguistic systems through narrative structure (genres).'[6] When Miller's texts are read for their sound or for the poetic quality of the strings of words, this approach not only undermines conventional readings of meaning but also conventional purposes of literature as a social tool, as somehow inherently representative of the beliefs of either, or both, the author and the lifestyles of the characters.

In *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Northrop Frye aligns such writing with Menippean satire, where 'the opinions and ideas and cultural interests expressed are as important as love-making'.[7] Frye cites the Alice books as 'perfect Menippean satires',[8] specifically defining such prose as developing 'a single intellectual pattern' that is 'built up from the story' and which thus 'makes for violent dislocations in the customary logic of narrative'.[9] At the same time, Frye criticises the perception of this kind of writing as 'careless', explaining that 'the appearance of carelessness that results reflects only the carelessness of the reader or his tendency to judge by a novel-centred conception of fiction'.[10] The 'intellectual structure' requires the reader to suspend judgement and encounter the text in all its 'free play of intellectual fancy' and caricature formation.[11]

Such prose becomes carnivalesque, as defined by Bakhtin and taken up by Kristeva: 'Within the carnival, the subject is reduced to nothingness, while the structure of *the author* emerges as anonymity that creates and sees itself created as self and other, as man and mask.'[12] In referring to the 'carnival' here, Kristeva specifically means that language which includes 'repetition, "inconsequent" statements [. . .] and non-exclusive opposition'.[13] *Black Spring* serves as a prime example of this form of writing, which as a 'more flagrant dialogism than any other discourse',[14] disobeys conventional expectations by residing in the space where subjective and authorial identity are blotted out and replaced by the rhythmic and humorous structures of the words themselves.

In 'Burlesque Dreams: American Amusement, Autobiography, and Henry Miller' (2001), William Solomon writes of Miller:

> His rapid, discontinuous stringing together of a collection of heterogeneous selections that feature the use of an assortment of genres and expressive styles and in which the moods shift repeatedly derives from the succession of acts presented in the kinds of American entertainment he greatly admired.[15]

For Solomon, Miller's dialogism reflects motifs of entertainment, thrill, shock and pleasure found in carnival and burlesque culture such as freak shows, peepshows, roller coasters, carnival rides, belly and erotic dances and other amusements located in places like Coney Island during Miller's youth in the early part of the century. Solomon's analysis is useful in relation to a cultural study of commodity and mechanisation, but there is also more at stake in Miller than his surreal attempts at recreating a variety show in words.

In his emulation of Carroll, Miller invests his entire vision of exploring the limits of language in literature through this type of wordplay. Kristeva states the quality of this literary pursuit: 'Disputing the laws of language based on the 0–1 interval, the carnival challenges God, authority and social law; in so far as it is dialogical, it is rebellious.'[16] The '0–1 interval' refers to Kristeva's theory that 'in a literary text, 0 does not exist; emptiness is quickly replaced by a "one" (a *he/she*, or a *proper name*) that is really twofold, since it is subject and addressee'.[17] As explained in the previous chapter on Dostoevsky, as subject becomes author, neutrality fades out leaving a specific name directing the words. The text is not anonymous; it is not empty, as it always has a subject turned author, according to Kristeva. The writer who invests his or her style into drawing attention to this dynamic is the writer who produces the highly 'dialogic' and hence 'carnivalesque' and 'rebellious' prose, such as Carroll and, in the same vein, Miller.

In 'Carrollian Nonsense Prose in Henry Miller's "Jabberwhorl

Cronstadt"' (2003), Jeff Bursey conducts a very thorough close reading of the seemingly flamboyant word usage in 'Jabberwhorl Cronstradt'. Bursey also notes: 'It might be unnecessary, or unwise, to root around in literature, encyclopedias, and other source works in order to give meaning to every word Miller uses in the piece, as in some cases their selection depends more upon his love of sounds than anything else.'[18] Bursey's reading is as admirable as it is accurate, as he proceeds to parse dense and lengthy passages literally word by word. 'Jabberwhorl Cronstadt' is full of seeming nonsense and appears completely abstruse if not categorically meaningless. However, it is this reading that Bursey challenges, suggesting that 'Jabberwhorl Cronstadt' is also not simply a playful, surreal literary gesture to depict the peculiar character Jabberwhorl Cronstadt as a fictionalised Walter Lowenfels, because 'the emphasis plainly is on words and wordplay, not on character, or caricature'.[19] The language play cannot simply be regarded, and that is to say dismissed, as surreal and nonsense. Rather, as Bursey says, the reader is made to recognise that 'Cronstadt is resident within the language of Miller/Carroll'.[20] In this way, Cronstadt never becomes a person or even a character that the reader can construct out of a narrative. Instead, the reader must admit him or herself into the language play that, as Kristeva suggests, 'provokes laughter but remains incapable of detaching itself from representation.'[21]

In his article Bursey plucks out every last definition of all the obscure, Carrollian-esque words used by Miller. It is almost as if he is undertaking an inversion of what Miller himself must have done when he chose those precise, Carrollian words as he wrote. (In one heavily tuned close reading Bursey writes, 'These notes appear to be random, unrelated jottings, but the marmink and minkfrog may be a nod to Carroll's Jabberwock, Jubjub bird, and Bandersnatch, while a denotative scrutiny of the other words reveals two deliberate sequences.'[22]) Thinking of this process in terms of the author's intent, one might fathom that Miller is employing a Carrollian technique perhaps in order to overlay a story that Miller had in his mind. As such, each word replaces some element to an otherwise potentially coherent narrative concerning Jabberwhorl Cronstadt. Bursey writes, 'Cronstadt exists in a Carrollian landscape made up of language far more than discreet words and images.'[23] The word choices are not simply surreal, nor are they simply vacuous nonsense, insofar as a meaningful, coherent reading can still be extracted from them, even if that reading has nothing to do with a cogent narrative. Bursey locates herein the source of contention for Miller's critics: 'Because surrealism and dream prose are utilised by Miller to get across a character's sensibilities or philosophy, Miller and his writings are

judged and found criminally negligent.'[24] Conventionally, such word-play becomes inexcusable as a mode for literary development. It is for this reason (namely, the basic evidence pointing towards Carroll in Miller's text) that the reader must consider the Carrollian influence itself as far more insightful rather than purely meaningless. It is far more nonsense than that.

By beginning his article literally with what Miller's words mean, Bursey consciously and unconsciously promotes the need for fundamental critical attention to the detailed inner-workings of Miller's texts which is still radically lacking. Bursey's in-depth, close reading of 'Jabberwhorl Cronstadt' highlights, to a very fine degree, Miller's informed technique, demonstrating that the allusions to Carroll are not just well embedded but that, to the perceptive reader, they are sharp, accessible and significant. Bursey acknowledges the lack:

> There is much to be done in uncovering and exploring the many levels of Miller's fiction and nonfiction, and all theories and models are welcome in this process. His concerns anticipate by some years much of today's vigorous debate among literary critics and theorists: the abolishing of divisions between fiction and autobiography, the use of language in the definition of self, the restraints on and freedoms of the shape of the novel, and the place of the author in the text.[25]

There is no question of Miller's influence on the work of writers and literary theorists of the twentieth century; it is simply a matter of recognising this fact and uncovering the connections.

Unfortunately, some of the worst criticism on Miller appears under the guise of support, such as that of Erica Jong and Norman Mailer who encourage highly romanticised readings of Miller's work, highlighting the author's so-called personal philosophies and on the whole bypassing its radical literary contributions, while also disdaining more scholarly close readings, in the vein of Miller's apparent, bohemian aversion to academia. Jong writes:

> Where have high ideals ever led humanity, anyway? To the trenches of World War I? To the apple sellers on the streets of New York? To the mad pseudo-scientific racial theories of the Nazis that promoted genocide? Henry thinks humanity has less to lose by embracing the depths than by pretending to the heights.[26]

Jong's argument succumbs to the slippery slope fallacy, equating 'high ideals' inevitably with mass destruction. Furthermore, trying to identify Miller with the power of 'strip[ping] down to his essential nature' and becoming 'a mass of instincts', Jong creates a caricature extracted from Miller's books. Her analysis may produce an image of a noble, liberated

man, in his ability to 'reduce the world to its basest elements' in order to 'make fire',[27] but what it says for his literary importance remains mostly understated.

As for Miller's infamous support from Mailer, in an essay in *The New Republic* from 1976, Martin Duberman comments on the misogyny debate between Millett and Mailer, writing: 'I prefer the way Miller confines himself to describing an act to the way Mailer and Millett attempt to categorise it.'[28] Indeed, 'Jabberwhorl Cronstadt' serves as a bold example of the line in analysis that demands to be drawn between Miller-the-free-wheeling-spirit and the work produced by the person called Henry Miller, poetic experimenter. Reflecting on 'Jabberwhorl Cronstadt', Bursey concludes, 'Here is one example of where a thorough criticism of Miller's writing – not the philosophy behind it, or its "outrageousness" – is long overdue.'[29] Mailer championing Miller's 'cause' unfortunately does not really give much estimable weight to Miller's literary reputation.

Including positive criticism on Miller that regards the philosophy of his words instead of the words themselves is important in this chapter on Carroll precisely because Miller's interest in and influence from Carroll is one of the most easily misunderstood areas of Miller's writing. It appears as the most easily understandable, in the sense that Miller's Carrollian style does not appear to overtly raise the uncomfortable issues of misogyny and obscenity, but rather of surrealism and playful nonsense. Thus, in order best to engage with the deeper possibilities of this component of Miller's writing, it is important to investigate the text with a sharper eye toward these kinds of allusions. For Bursey, 'Jabberwhorl Cronstadt' is Miller's use of Carroll in order 'to fashion a bridge leading from mid-nineteenth century prose to modernist writing'.[30] The reader sees how Miller forges a connection, as previously discussed with Whitman (though, in this instance, not between two people), between words and the unexplored possibilities of literary language. Miller produces a series of unexpected and often overlooked effects that are calculated and meticulous, even as they appear humorous or even trite.

In *The Books in My Life* Miller writes that certain figures in literature like Alice are 'spacebinders',[31] in the sense that they 'seem to possess the faculty of dominating time and space', as they are 'sustained or fortified by miraculous powers which they wrested from the gods or developed through the cultivation of native ingenuity, cunning or faith'.[32] Other examples of 'spellbinders' that Miller includes here who are also 'spacebinders' are the 'vivid personages' Jason, Theseus, Ulysses, Sinbad and Aladdin, the 'historical figures' King David, Joseph in Egypt and Daniel,

the 'lesser figures' Robin Hood, Daniel Boone and Pocahontas, and, finally, the 'purely literary creations' Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver.[33] Alice, the sole female of this list, is included here, because she 'too, was in quest of reality and proved her courage poetically by stepping through the looking glass'.[34] Miller's point is that the 'moral' underlying a story like Alice's is that 'man is really free',[35] which can only be actualised when it is fully believed. Such a claim raises the question: is language in writing free? What confines language, in part, are conventional interpretations of its use and value. With himself as a manifestation of Alice, Miller embarks on a journey in his writing to explore and experiment with the possibilities of expectations in the world of language.

Though he never writes in verse, Miller's Carrollian techniques are skilful and inventive, and manifest in a wide variety of poetic devices such as alliteration, imagery, rhyme, metaphor and double entendre. The first three lines of 'Jabberwhorl Cronstadt' from *Black Spring* read:

> He lives in the back of a sunken garden, a sort of bosky glade shaded by whiffletrees and spinozas, by deodars and baobabs, a sort of queasy Buxtehude diapered with elytras and feluccas. You pass through a sentry box where the concierge twirls his mustache *con furioso* like in the last act of Ouida. They live on the third floor behind a mullioned belvedere filigreed with snaffled spaniels and sebaceous wens, with debentures and megrims hanging out to dry.[36]

Miller seems to hide Jabberwhorl Cronstadt's location with real yet obscure terminology, producing an effect that forces the reader to consider the sounds of words and their peculiarity instead of their meaning outright or the possible structure of the narrative. It no longer matters where Jabberwhorl Cronstadt actually is, but rather the poetic barrage of the new words themselves becomes the focus.

Once this mode of reading is accepted, however, Jabberwhorl Cronstadt can still be found, but his location seems everywhere and nowhere, in the sense that it must be both extracted from the terms but also necessarily permitted to reside in those elusive, opaque terms – insofar as the text which creates his existence is the very place wherein he resides, and in no other. Deleuze's assessment of Carroll could be likewise applied to Miller: 'This is the domain of the action and passion of bodies: things and words are scattered in every direction, or on the contrary are welded together into nondecomposable blocks.'[37] Like Carroll's description of the Jabberwock, Jabberwhorl Cronstadt's location can be revealed with a dictionary alongside an imagination for neologisms, but, as the text that it is, Jabberwhorl Cronstadt's location

remains hidden through the 'welded' opacity within the 'nondecomposable blocks' of which it is composed.

Later in the chapter, Miller gives an exact description of Jocatha 'the famished cat',[38] but, again, in true Carrollean form, it is not entirely possible to visualise the creature completely, insofar as the individual components of the description do not create a complete picture of a figure that can be envisioned. Carroll begins Jabberwocky with an inveigling, cavorting description: ''Twas brillig, and the slithy toves / Did gyre and gimble in the wabe: / All mimsy were the borogoves, / And the mome raths outgrabe.'[39] Without a working knowledge of the vocabulary, the reader can still take hold of the rhythm and the darkly playful presence of the creature. With the second stanza, the description, paradoxically, grows both vaguer and clearer: 'Beware the Jabberwock, my son! / The jaws that bite, the claws that catch! / Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun / The fruminous Bandersnatch!'[40] The description is clearer here, in that the reader is now certain that the creature poses a physical threat, and the narrator is warning his son as much. However, exactly what that creature looks like is never fully revealed – at least not in any common language.

Carroll's creature ultimately eludes any complete mental picture. Miller attempts a similar feat in his description of Jocatha:

> The beast is bounding and yowling and thrashing and caterwauling: he has a few grains of cayenne pepper on the soft lilypad of his nose, the butt of his nose soft as a dum-dum bullet. He thrashes about in large Siamese wrath and the bones in his tail are finer than the finest sardines. He claws the carpet and chews the wallpaper, he rolls into a spiral and unrolls like a corolla, he whisks the knots out of his tail, shakes the fungus out of his whiskers. He bites clean through the floor to the bone of the poem. He's in the key of C and mad clean through. He has magenta eyes, like old-fashioned vest buttons; he's mowsy and glaubrous, brown like arnica and then green as the Nile; he's quaky and qualmy and queasy and teasey; he chews chasubles and ripples rasubly.[41]

In describing Jocatha's behaviour, Miller uses a style and vocabulary that reflect Carroll's. In this instance he employs the poetic devices of assonance, alliteration and rhyme, respectively with 'mowsy and glaubrous', 'quaky and qualmy', 'chews chasubles', 'ripples rasubly' and 'queasy and teasey'. There is also a poetic rhythm and assonance between several, parallel word pairs that refer back to one another, including 'chasubles' and 'rasubly'.

In describing the actions of Jocatha in this passage, Miller uses a more commonly understandable language, although it similarly is adopted from Carroll. The 'beast' 'has a few grains of cayenne pepper on the soft lilypad of his nose' makes sense grammatically, to be sure, but it has

no actual sense that can be understood from the passage collectively. It is possible to interpret this line metaphorically, but this literary leap leaves the beauty of the words themselves behind. Such wordplay is particularly reminiscent of Carroll's found in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, where commonplace language is often used in a manner that evokes Wittgenstein's philosophy on language games and nonsense in the *Philosophical Investigations* (*Philosophische Untersuchungen*, 1953; in English, 1953). In 'Wittgenstein, Lewis Carroll and Nonsense' (1965) George Pitcher provides multiple useful and very humorous examples of Wittgenstein's theories in action in Carroll. Carroll deliberately makes the mistakes that Wittgenstein warns philosophers against, informing them to distinguish between 'empirical' (sayable) knowledge and 'logical' (restrictively showable) knowledge. To be able to explain that something is true is to know in one sense only, and does not define knowing in any metaphysical way, which can only be indicated through showing or demonstration.[42]

Pointing out this commonly misunderstood distinction between empirical and logical knowledge, Wittgenstein writes, 'Imagine someone saying: "But I know how tall I am!" and laying his hand on top of his head to prove it.'[43] Carroll, evidently himself recognising the distinction, indulges in the humour of the resultant absurdity: 'She ate a little bit, and said anxiously to herself "Which way? Which way?", holding her hand on the top of her head to feel which way it was growing.'[44] As Pitcher explains, Alice's nonsensical gesture absurdly demonstrates, in Wittgenstein's words, merely that 'a thing is identical with itself', such that Alice can 'put a thing' (herself) 'into its own shape and [see] that it fitted'.[45] Wittgenstein declares that for such an action to be more than a ridiculous and meaningless gesture, it would require 'a certain play of the imagination',[46] which, indeed, it does for both Carroll and Miller.

Miller uses this technique to the same comic effect in 'Jabberwhorl Cronstadt' when he has Jabberwhorl Cronstadt declare (referred to as 'Jab'): 'Define your terms and you'll never use words like time, death, world, soul. In every statement there's a little error and the error grows bigger and bigger until the snake is scotched. The poem is the only flawless thing, provided you know what time it is.'[47] The irony is that poetry can only be flawless once it has been defined by an indefinable concept – an evident impossibility. It is as Wittgenstein says in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921): 'Anyone who understands me eventually recognizes [my propositions] as nonsensical, when he has used them – as steps – to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)'[48]

It is similar to Miller's 'poem' (or, rather, Jab's definition of 'the poem')

that requires a metaphysical concept in order to exist and, once it exists, it denounces the possibility of the concept that created it. The concept of 'time' becomes understandable once it has been defined, and thus its understandability is that it cannot be understood. The poem, however, is without this flaw of conscious understanding, but only through the understanding of the not-understanding of time. Wittgenstein's best warning against this kind of philosophical tail-chasing, also mentioned in Chapter 2, is the following: 'Do not forget that a poem, even though it is composed in the language of information is not used in the language-game of giving information.'[49] What is expected from the poem cannot be the same as that which is expected from everyday language – a rule comically, and purposefully, violated by both Miller and Carroll.

As Miller describes the scene of Jabberwhorl Cronstadt, it is evident that part of the image being created is of Carroll himself. Miller writes that Jocatha is 'in the key of C and mad clean through', suggesting homage to Carroll that is reinforced by the initial usage of the phrase 'clean through' in the previous sentence cited above, where Miller alludes to Jocatha biting 'clean through' into the 'poem'.[50] This description is, in a peculiar way, a literalisation of an abstract vision of Carroll's writing, if the reader takes it firstly to be a description of Carroll and secondly the case of biting 'clean through' into the 'poem' as Carroll's literary endeavours. In other words, Carroll himself is 'mad clean through', inasmuch as his characters, like the mysterious, disappearing Cheshire cat (Miller's Jocatha), are able to penetrate the very poem of which he is a part.

Miller embeds, in his own nonsense writing, his analysis of Carroll as the poetic genius who uses Wittgenstein's ladder of metaphysics (the poem exists) and throws it away after the poem is written (the poem is violated by its own existence). Later on, Jab plays 'a fast one' on the piano finally hitting 'the white key C in the middle of the board and the chess pieces and the manicure sets and the unpaid bills rattle like drunken tiddelywinks'.[51] It is 'the white key C in the middle of the board' that recalls not just 'C' for Carroll himself but also the white rabbit, as well as recalling the recurring chessboard in both *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. Even the allusion to 'tiddelywinks' recalls Carroll's Tweedledee and Tweedledum, themselves appearing possibly 'drunken' and 'rattl[ing]' in their bumbling encounters with Alice.

Just before this passage is another direct reference to Carroll, where Miller writes:

> And now the poet himself appears saying what time is it though time is a word he has stricken from his list, time, sib to death. Death's the surd and

> time's the sib and now there is a little time between the acts, an oleo in which the straight man mixes a drink to get his stomach muscles twitching.[52]

Obscure but not Miller's own neologism, 'sib' is a blood relation, as in 'sibling'. 'Surd' means 'voiceless' or 'unvoiced consonant' and, in mathematics, means 'irrational'. Thus 'the poet' has removed time, which is directly related to death, although what he speaks about depends upon the existence of (or at least belief in) time, insofar as he 'appears saying what time is it'. Meanwhile, death is said to be unsayable, and time, like death, is now referred to as a blood relation, but to what or whom it is related is not directly expressed. It is likely to refer at least back to 'death' and perhaps as well to all of humanity, as the passage ends with Jab contemplating time and pointing out that 'a copy of *Humanité*' is in the bathroom. If time is related to all of humanity, then Miller seems to be speaking back to his Carrollian argument of time being both necessary and impossible to the structure of language.

Several passages later, Jab provides another monologue directed towards Miller-the-persona, his guest, who, the reader infers, has at some point declared himself a writer in the unspoken conversation between himself and Jabberwhorl Cronstadt. Speaking of the 'refugees' he must feed and intertwining their conversation on literature and time, Jab says:

> You want to know what the present is? Look at that window over there. No, not there . . . the one above. *There!* Every day they sit there at that table playing cards – just the two of them. She's always got on a red dress. And he's always shuffling the cards. *That's the present.* And if you add another word it becomes subjunctive . . .[53]

These 'refugees' are suddenly none other than Alice and Lewis Carroll themselves playing cards. More accurately, Carroll is 'always shuffling the cards' while Alice waits patiently at the table, in a red dress.[54] This state between them, Jab emphatically declares, '*is the present*', alluding to the timelessness of literature. As 'refugees', however, they have been forcefully removed from their home – the world of imagination – and are stuck in reality, by the writer and reader's doing.

With this scene, Miller suggests that Carroll's poetry, his 'nonsense', suspends time, and the more that is added to it, the more it continues, paradoxically, to remain suspended as it slides conditionally right into the future. Like the Red Queen running as fast as she can with Alice struggling alongside, literary language speeds past, though doesn't actually move at all as much as it seems to be moving. In *Hamlet*, a correspondence with Michael Fraenkel (1939), Miller calls attention to the futility of writing directly in relation to Carroll (in this instance,

referring to Hamlet's speech): 'The best speeches are always made the moment before death. But none of these speeches advance us anywhere. It's like Lewis Carroll's checkerboard.'[55] If the present is the about-to-be-playing cards, and literature is the playing-of-the-cards, then literature is not only indefatigable but is revealed to be impossible yet, paradoxically, only through its coming-into-existence.

Towards the end of 'Jabberwhorl Cronstadt', Jab's speech becomes progressively more nonsensical until he is announcing such things 'about what's inside of you . . . the vertiginous vertebration . . . zoospores and the leucocytes . . . the wamroths and the holenlindens . . . every one's a poem. The jellyfish is a poem too – the finest kind of poem', Jab continues.[56] Finally, Jab's wife Jill says, 'He's losing his mind', to which the response is the following:

> 'Wrong again,' says Jabber. 'I've just found my mind, only it's a different sort of mind than you imagined. You think a poem must have covers around it. The moment you write a thing the poem ceases. The poem is the present which you can't define. You live it. Anything is a poem if it has time in it. You don't have to take a ferryboat or go to China to write a poem. The finest poem I ever lived was a kitchen sink. Did I ever tell you about it? There were two faucets, one called Froid and the other Chaud.'[57]

Bringing several issues together at once, Jab once again aligns the existence of the poem with its placement in time and its disappearance in reality immediately upon its presence.

Jab also refers for the first time to this 'kitchen sink' being 'the finest poem' of all, which will surface again throughout the rest of the chapter among a lengthy, complicated and likely utterly nonsensical series of word-strings that end with Jab's singing and his demand for others to sing: 'Sing while the world sinks . . .' until he is put to bed.[58] Rhyming 'sing' with 'sink' and also creating a nonsensical exchangeability between them, Miller again echoes Carroll's numerous rhyming word reversals or exchanges that usually involve one figure's misunderstanding of another, as well as his toying with languages, invoking in particular the French language as somehow a preferred means for better articulating intellectual concepts.

Jab claiming he 'just found [his] mind' also recalls Alice's encounter with the caterpillar, who demands 'Who are *you?*',[59] whereupon she responds that she does not know, having just undergone an array of unexpected physical transformations. Jab having 'just found [his] mind' suggests he didn't have it before, in the same way that Alice appears to have lost her mind – a sense of herself – by way of the various involuntary transformations. Alice says:

> 'At least I know who I *was* when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.' 'What do you mean by that?' said the Caterpillar, sternly. 'Explain yourself!' 'I can't explain *myself*, I'm afraid, Sire,' said Alice, 'because I'm not myself, you see.'[60]

The double connection to this passage comes with Alice's attempt to explain her confusion by suggesting that the caterpillar too may feel the same way, as he transforms first into a chrysalis and then a butterfly. If the self constantly changes physically, curiously no stability or fixed self exists upon which to rely.

Alice's transformations, causing her existential mystification (soon also to happen to the caterpillar, as Alice explains) can be linked to Miller's allusion from Jab's speech to endless 'soul-worms' that grow in everyone ('Jill's got one inside her too',[61]), which will eventually 'all come whirring out . . . imagine it . . . a great cloud of soul-worms . . . millions of them . . . and so thick the swarm that we wouldn't be able to see each other . . . A fact! No need to write about China. Write about *that!* About what's inside of you . . .'[62] To extract the nonsense from this passage might be to suggest the following: these 'soul-worms' that mark identity ('what's inside you') not only are meant to become the subject of poetry, hence of life, but also obscure the sight of one person from another, hence implying that language is both necessary and obstructive. The transformative quality of poetry is somehow essential but also convoluted.

Reminiscent of the poems in Carroll's work, Miller's descriptions of poems (in this instance Jab's poems, specifically) provide equally endless nonsense (although no one actually ever recites a 'poem' in Miller), least of which is the manner by which, in this case in 'Jabberwhorl Cronstadt', 'fish [are] washed clean and away' by it.[63] The first reference to fish in Carroll is the Fish-Footman in *Alice's Adventures*[64] followed by the Mock Turtle's remark: 'No wise fish would go anywhere without a porpoise.'[65] However, there are more relevant connections to be found in *Through the Looking-Glass*, which begin with Alice preparing Tweedledum and Tweedledee for battle. 'There he lay, opening and shutting his mouth and his large eyes – "looking more like a fish than anything else," Alice thought.'[66] Later, Humpty-Dumpty sings of 'the little fishes of the sea',[67] and much later in Chapter IX, as the White Queen explains to Alice and the Red Queen that Humpty-Dumpty came to the door during a thunderstorm with a corkscrew in his hand (incidentally, an event that is also part of his 'fish' song), Alice excitedly tells them that she knows why Humpty-Dumpty 'wanted to punish the fish' but is cut off as the White Queen continues her story.[68]

Finally, as Alice arrives at her own party that is spilling over with curious guests, she is told she has missed 'the soup and the fish',[69] which later is understood to be that she has missed 'being introduced' to the soup and the fish (as she is subsequently introduced to the living leg of mutton and the plum-pudding).[70] After this introduction (with an exasperated plum-pudding, indignant about being eaten), Alice explains that she has had 'such a quandary of poetry' repeated to her today and that 'every poem was about fishes in some way', she then asks, 'Do you know why they're so fond of fishes all around here?'[71] The response – which is of course no response at all – is another poem about fishes, recited by the Red Queen, which includes a request to '*take the dish-cover up!*' from the fish.[72] The barrage of fish finally ends with a play on words in the form of a question: '*Un-dish-cover the fish, or dish-cover the riddle?*'[73] If, as Alice says, 'every poem [is] about fishes in some way', and, to return to Miller, poetry is just a brief flash that immediately ceases in its moment of creation and becomes life, then looking for the meaning of 'fish' is precisely the most nonsensical endeavour that the reader of either Carroll or Miller could undertake, while simultaneously being the only gesture that gives the works their meaning – which is, of course, meaninglessness, or, rather, nonsense.

This last remark on fish by the Red Queen (the question that itself appears to be a riddle: '*Un-dish-cover the fish, or dish-cover the riddle?*') joins up with Jabberwhorl Cronstadt's comment: 'You think a poem must have covers around it.'[74] Beyond the fact that there are a handful of instances where Alice ponders the meaning of all the poems being about fish, it is simply not the case that 'every poem' in *Through the Looking-Glass* is 'about fishes in some way' (unless to be 'about fishes' means something other than to be about common fish). The conclusions are as follows: every poem really is about fish, in part suggesting that what fish means can never be known, resulting in a perpetual state in which the question will always be asked (similar to the state constantly faced by Alice, where her questions are 'answered' with new riddles). After his comment that a poem needn't have 'covers around it', Jab continues by answering, essentially, both Alice's question and the Red Queen's riddle: to '*dish-cover*' the riddle, that is to say, to be rid of the riddle, is to permit the poem to come to life by ceasing to attempt to contain it, but rather to '*un-dish-cover*' it and give over to it in the present moment. Paradoxically, once the dish is 'un-dish-covered', one finds, yet again, fish on the platter.

Taking hold of Carroll's deceiving simplicity, Miller too toys with the imaginary depths of writing by writing about the impossibility of writing and the overlap between living and writing. The nature of

the language plays an enormous role, such that, like William Carlos Williams, Miller prefers the style of the 'American idiom', which gives him access to a poetic cadence found in common speech. As a music lover himself and an amateur pianist, Miller also uses music to colour his rhythm in prose, which, subsequently, takes on a poetic quality. Bursey notes Miller's immediate reference to music already in the epigraph to the 'Jabberwhorl Cronstadt' chapter and explains it thus: 'The "music" means the "sounds" the reader is about to "hear". It is not Cronstadt's voice that is the music, but the entire play of language.'[75] As stated earlier, the wordplay not only has an overtly musical quality, but the allusions to Carroll and to Carrollian musical wordplay are clearly extensive and quite skilful. Bursey quotes these terms 'music', 'sounds' and 'hear', because it is an unusual quality yet characteristic of Miller to engage in ekphrastic and synaesthetic modes of writing, whereby the words produce both images, not through descriptions but through a form of poetic Imagism, and sounds, not through their literally being spoken aloud but through poetic devices like alliteration, assonance and meter. Miller's prose gives a sense of musical movement that is not random word collections but is well articulated and, upon closer inspection, highly referential and deliberate in allusion.

One of the most interesting qualities in Miller is this ability to both evoke the reader's desire to attempt a close reading and to frustrate his or her attempt with what appears to be a superficial lack of cohesion or depth in the work, taking for example this close analysis 'about fishes'.[76] Whether deliberately or not, Miller makes his reader question how and why a close reading is done in the first place – a tool Carroll already exploits to very humorous ends. Miller's style forces the reader to reflect upon what exactly a close reading can produce as it approaches a text with harsh, direct lighting, determined to reveal elements of meaning that are allegedly undeniably present in the text. Certainly, Miller's work does not shirk the possible validity of a close reading – on the contrary. Miller's style demonstrates that it is precisely that the reader must force a close reading to reveal far more of itself (far more of the language) than what is typically admitted in a close reading.

Critics tend to find what they are looking for, in the sense that they assume a text necessarily always lends itself to the tools and questions of the close reading, giving up its 'true' meaning through all the usual avenues. However, because of the way in which it both offers and withholds these kinds of possibilities, Miller's work challenges his reader not to underestimate what is otherwise present on the surface of the text (again, in the literal language). Like Carroll's work and its subversive, mischievous wordplay, Miller's work demands new approaches to a

close reading that do not make assumptions on meaning and result in conventional assessments based on an inability to make (or locate) a greater sense of the text. To consider Miller's work as surreal ravings or as pornographic, for example, is ultimately a fundamental shortcoming of the reader as opposed to of the text.

Another clear allusion to Carroll occurs in reference to a specific encounter in *Through the Looking-Glass* where the White Queen offers Alice employment as a 'lady's maid'. The Queen apparently needs help 'a-dressing' herself (fixing her hair, making her toilet and so on), as she is in constant disarray. Alice finds this offer humorous, as she seems to consider such a position below her station, and when the Queen tells her that her payment would be 'twopence a week, and jam every other day',[77] Alice laughs outright and tells the Queen, besides not wanting the position, she does not really fancy jam anyhow: 'I don't want any *to-day*, at any rate.'[78] The Queen, however, corrects Alice's misunderstanding and explains: 'You couldn't have it if you *did* want it', for 'the rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday – but never jam *to-day*'.[79] Confused, Alice replies: 'It *must* come sometimes to "jam to-day"', but again she is corrected: '"No, it can't," said the Queen. "It's jam every *other* day; to-day isn't any *other* day, you know."'[80]

Miller takes this wordplay directly into Jabberwhorl Cronstadt, where Jab, after being accused of being drunk says:

> The rule is, jam tomorrow and jam yesterday – but never jam today . . . Wouldn't it be wonderful if you people sat here just like you are and I began to grow smaller and smaller . . . until I got to be just a tiny, weeny little speck . . . so that you had to have a magnifying glass to see me? I'd be a little spot on the tablecloth and I'd be saying – Timoor . . . *Ti-moor!* And you'd say where is he? And I'd be saying – *Timoor*, logodaedaly, glycophosphates, Billancourt, Ti-*moor* . . . O timbus twaddle down the brawkish brake . . . and you'd say . . .[81]

Jab's rants in this instance also refer to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, where Alice consumes the contents of a bottle with the label 'Drink Me', in order to shrink down to a size to fit through a door that is 'about fifteen inches high'.[82] Why, though, when Jab imagines himself of this shrunken, Wonderland size, he is saying 'Timoor' is unclear. However, the next word gives the reader an indication as to the impossible meaning of this passage with 'logodaedaly', which is a neologism meaning verbal legerdemain. This word is followed by a seemingly meaningless reference: 'glycophosphates', which are potent poisons used for killing weeds; Billancourt is a suburb in Paris; 'timbus' and 'brawkish' are meaningless neologisms but perhaps link back, again, in assonance and alliteration to 'Timoor' and 'Billancourt'; and 'twaddle'

is, to round out the characteristically pointless and humorous gist of the passage, trivial or meaningless speaking or writing.

In effect, the text itself always holds far more potential than the reader is able to credit it, inasmuch as innovation in a text is often compromised or misunderstood by conventionalised approaches. Specifically, a good close reading, such as Bursey's, focuses on detail in the language, considering allusion and form, typically overlooked in Miller's work because of the offences it makes against canonical and cultural literary expectations. In *Narrative Detours*, Ibarguen writes, 'Without a thorough, historical understanding of the rise and continued power of canonical modernism, any attempt to "value" competing texts tends either to erase their difference through aesthetic assimilation, or to relegate their study to sociology, where they become documents of dubious empirical value.'[83] The critic tends to focus on elements in Miller unrelated to a direct textual analysis, becoming preoccupied instead with its sociological 'empirical value', as Ibarguen writes, due to his work's tendency toward the anomalous. In reflecting on how Miller's reputation became established, in *Henry Miller* J. D. Brown writes: 'Miller's pioneering treatment of human experience would obscure an appreciation of his more lasting, innovative literary achievements.'[84] The observant reader of Miller is provoked to ask what new tools might be required when confronting texts that challenge the usual methodology. Kristeva makes this need clear, for example, when she writes, 'The way in which European thought transgresses its constituent characteristics appears clearly in the words and narrative structures of the twentieth-century novel. Identity, substance, causality and definition are transgressed so that others may be adopted: analogy, relation, opposition, and therefore dialogism and Menippean ambivalence.'[85] It is incredibly relevant, indeed pertinent, to a good close reading to move precisely beyond the boundaries of what came before.

A simple example from 'Jabberwhorl Cronstadt' highlights this need for a new and eclectic combination of analytical skills for undertaking a more rewarding reading of a cleverly demanding text. Shortly after the passage in which Jab identifies a poem as 'the only flawless thing',[86] he answers the telephone and proceeds to have a peculiar conversation with some one about three apartments he is renting and selling. The conversation, as it stands on the page, leaves out the correspondent's portion of the dialogue. The reader has only Jab's comments and, thus, there is much to be assumed and inferred as to what the correspondent may be asking or saying. 'Yes, there's a bath with a regular toilet. No, not in the hall – in the apartment. One you sit down on. Would you like it in silver or in gold leaf? *What?* No, the toilet!'[87] The reader

can only imagine what the correspondent is asking, but part of the text's novelty is the fact that this portion of the text is not only left out but that the reader's search to fill in the blanks can only yield more absurdity and meaningless assumptions. At the end of the phone call, Jab says, 'There's a billiard room on the top floor . . . *What?* No . . . no . . . no. Don't have such things over here. Mr. Bimberg, you've got to realize that you're in France now. Yeah, that's it . . . When in Rome . . .'[88] Again, whatever the correspondent, Mr Bimberg evidently, has said is completely unknown but, more peculiarly, is precisely not irrelevant.

The text, naturally, with its 'missing' passages, is the only reliable source for understanding, but it is what is missing that makes the passage a complete text. It is as though Miller is drawing attention to the nature of writing as something which necessarily not only leaves its point out of the discourse but leaves the reader to a perpetual wondering as to what the text might mean with its meaning being always a gaping hole in the text itself. By including such an atypical conversation, Miller engages his reader in the frustrated desire to know the missing half of the exchange. At the same time, the text that is present reminds the reader that it is not incomplete, since it is exactly, and only, what the reader is reading and what the text is, insofar as a text is a string of words on the page and nothing more.

Similarly, the change that has taken place in the way in which Carroll's texts are read is directly related to how the reader understands the function of literature in a cultural context. When Carroll wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in 1865, it was readily understood that these works were 'children's tales'. It has only been in the latter half of the twentieth century that new areas of discussion have arisen concerning Carroll's *Alice* in the context of 'adult' scholarship.[89] Over the course of the development of literary theory in the twentieth century, critics have begun asking questions about potential, 'hidden' meanings – Freudian or otherwise – of Carroll's works, and looking at it through the lenses of other forms of criticism. Suddenly it became significant to ask if Carroll's language play, his psychological and metaphorical episodes, could mean something else, something more sinister or something more importantly related to the biography of the author.

Notwithstanding the potential use for these kinds of readings, that Carroll or Miller's texts provoke such criticism and attention towards their ambiguity underscores the very fact that they do not permit clarity of meaning as it is evoked and pursued in their texts. Such texts hardly have a meaning that they can reveal. Rather, the text is precisely about its own inability to reveal its meaninglessness. Once again, the reader

must climb Wittgenstein's ladder and throw it out when the top is reached.

In his short-lived journal *Critique* (1946) Georges Bataille has two articles on Miller. In the first, entitled 'La morale de Miller', Bataille argues in favour of Miller's imaginative and original writing style that embodies a form of 'puerile language'. Bataille contends that subversive childhood incidents, as found in *Tropic of Capricorn* (where Miller describes the semi-accidental death of a boy during a rock-throwing game), leave Miller-the-child unmoved and instead more indulgent in exploiting his childhood innocence, because 'a vagabond child is not immoral, on the contrary'.[90] Miller engages in a form of writing, according to Bataille, that reveals and promotes nonsense and escapes from adult rules that are also not violations from them. Quoting from Miller, Bataille writes: 'So generous and loyal, as children are, this type of "experience of intense immediacy" cannot be suppressed in the world where they play.'[91] Like Alice, Miller-the-child's experiences are entirely innocent, but in their flight away from normal adult strictures they manage to provoke a sinister, sometimes nightmarish quality in their capacity to violate adult boundaries while still remaining within them.

An episode in *Plexus* highlights Miller's interest in language play and serves as a significant example for demonstrating the manner in which literary language in particular proves capable of moving, seemingly paradoxically, beyond its own boundaries and beyond conventional expectations of representation while also invoking this puerile quality, even in content. It is also a more discreet, indirect allusion than 'Jabberwhorl Cronstadt' to Carroll in Miller, which is a combination of the first and second forms of intertextuality – with Carroll appearing to be partially present and non-present, partially consciously and unconsciously evoked. Specifically, in this episode, Miller-the-persona 'promised to tell [a young boy and girl] the story of the three bears'.[92] All the right markers are there for the story to begin, but it is precisely this conscious presentation that begins Miller's preliminary attack on the reader's expectations of literature and literary adaptation. The peculiarity of the story, as Miller begins to make it up as he goes along, is both reminiscent of Carroll's Alice adventures and, in a sense, a parodying of it, or, more accurately, an imitation of it, as a satire of literary language and literary storytelling in general.

Where Carroll begins his tale with a poem evoking the children's interest in hearing the story ('"The rest next time – " "It *is* next time!" / The happy voices cry'[93]), Miller's children are sceptical, and everyone is agitated ('"All right!" I groaned. "Get me some black coffee and I'll begin." [. . .] "I want you to listen carefully. Now shut up!" [. . .]

"That's not how it begins," piped the little girl. [. . .] "He's making it up," said the boy. [. . .] "That's not the way it goes, Mommy!" screamed the little girl." [. . .] "No more interruptions, eh?"'[94]) Carroll muses over Alice's hesitation to drinking from the bottle marked 'Drink Me', having her weigh the consequences: 'if you drink much from a bottle marked "poison", it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later.'[95] Miller's Goldilocks, however, encounters a variety of unknown substances that she unhesitatingly uses in various ways: having already been injured numerous times (later even to be beaten), Goldilocks 'dabbed her ankle with arnica', 'applied [*Sloan's Liniment*] to her wrist', and 'drinking [iodine] straight, she began to sing'.[96] Similar to Carroll, the way in which Miller eventually tells his story indeed seems backwards, if not even more backwards than Carroll. Miller's story is, to say the least, unconventional and satirical and, finally, the end of Miller's version of the story brings it back to the beginning in a cyclical manner with Goldilocks' father beating her and beginning the tale of the three bears to soothe her afterwards.

Miller's story includes a polar bear, a grizzly bear and a Teddy bear, a bottle of 'Blue Label Ketchup',[97] a 'little man with a bow and arrow, whose name, by the way, was Pinocchio',[98] 'a lion with a tail "twisted into forty knots"',[99] 'a little man with the dunce cap',[100] an atlas, an unabridged dictionary, a cow bell, a house with all kinds of peculiar rooms that transform in size and shape, hidden, unimaginable spaces, strange objects such as 'heaps and heaps of bottles, and heaps and heaps of jars',[101] snails, frogs and a magical bottle of schnapps. After exploring the peculiar house, Goldilocks encounters the bears, who proceed to cook and eat her, but not without first undressing her and looking for 'which part was the tenderest'.[102] They then inspect her picnic basket and proceed to eat her acorn pie and drink her magical bottle of schnapps, which suddenly brings Goldilocks back to life, where she is found 'doing a jig on the polar bear's stomach'.[103] She begins to sing again, which, as the reader is informed earlier, is 'in French because her mother had taught her never to sing in any other language'.[104]

Miller's story hints towards perversity but only enough for the reader to acknowledge the impossibility of perversity in a child's tale. Miller uses irony as a dismissal of the potential sexual undertones found in Carroll's work. In 'Lewis Carroll and the Child in Victorian Fiction' (1994) Robert M. Polhemus writes: 'The focus in Carroll is on the child itself, as in a portrait or photograph of a young girl, not on the state of childhood as a prelude to something else. His writing is for fun – the fun of Alice – but it also calls attention to a sense of life's alienation and to both the continuing presence and otherness of childhood for

grown-ups.'[105] Polhemus does not deny that Carroll, in his real life role as Charles Dodgson, was in love with little girls, and particularly with Alice Liddel, the real-life inspiration for the character of Alice. However, Polhemus concludes that Dodgson, 'a witty, repressed, curious intellectual with a brilliantly intuitive imagination' became Carroll due to his 'obvious need to express safely the contents and fantasies of his complexly fissured mind'.[106] Carroll creates a literature similar to what Bataille contends that Miller creates: an avenue of escape but also of innocence, the contrary of immorality in the safety of unexpected and sometimes dark, yet precious and humorous, tales of children or in a kind of language of children.

The actions of Miller's Goldilocks parody those of Carroll's Alice as well as those of the Goldilocks in the traditional tale. However, there are clues that point directly towards Carroll, such as the two references to French in *Through the Looking-Glass*. In the first instance, Alice is instructed by the Red Queen to 'speak in French when you can't think of the English for a thing'.[107] The second occurs when the White and Red Queens are testing Alice's knowledge and the Red Queen asks her, 'What's the French for fiddle-de-dee?'[108] to which Alice responds 'Fiddle-de-dee's not English'. The Red Queen retorts, 'Who ever said it was?' prompting Alice to reply equally cleverly, beginning to learn how to beat Carroll's absurd characters at their own games of nonsense: 'If you'll tell me what language "fiddle-de-dee" is, I'll tell you the French for it!'[109] Whereas Miller's Goldilocks sings only in French because she is told to do so by her mother, Carroll's Alice is 'trained' to speak in French by the authoritative Queens when her native English words fail her.

Humorously, however, 'fiddle-de-dee' is in fact an English word, according to Heath's *The Philosopher's Alice*.[110] Not surprisingly, this fact makes the passage even more significant in that it demonstrates the nonsense between the characters (in both stories) such that not even a simple question can be answered. The words used between the two communicating parties are not understood, despite both being in their native English – a repeated, ironic shortcoming in both texts that reveals both authors' interest in the uses and limits of language.

In his Carrollian passages, Miller universally calls into question any kind of conventional storytelling, a clear reflection of Carroll's influence. However, storytelling is in no sense threatened, only taunted. Miller does not wish to do away with storytelling (that is to say, writing) but rather to push and pull at its limits, another homage to Carroll and to 'literary nonsense'. Carroll's influence on Miller also serves perhaps as an unexpectedly valid example of Bloom's theory of the 'anxiety

of influence', insofar as Miller misreads Carroll, quite deliberately in this Goldilocks instance, but also in a manner that both recreates and means the same as Carroll's story. This Goldilocks' story is an attempt by Miller to see what he can do that is Carrollesque. If the question is whether or not he succeeds, the immediate follow-up question is not simply whether or not that matters at all, but if it is even possible to assess a work in such a manner.

Miller piques the reader's interest as to how and why a text is judged in this way (in relation to other ancestral texts and literary forms). He asks his reader to recognise the arbitrariness of this mode of reading, where influence and literary value are concerned. Miller's work may be imitative, but it is equally experimental for its sheer attempt at discovering the consequences of such an approach to writing. More precisely, Miller raises the question as to what this imitative style produces in the process of writing itself. In his 'bad' imitation, Miller provokes the reader to ask what this kind of literature is doing and to ask what is occurring in a text that undertakes such an exercise and, furthermore, what this specific Goldilocks tale as a bedtime story in the middle of a ranting, experimental novel is doing. Ironically, these questions lead back to the beginning, as Goldilocks' tale itself does, and back to 'logodaedaly' and 'timbus twaddle down the brawkish brake . . .'[111]

The next chapter focuses upon Rimbaud, who is a figure in Miller's work akin to that of Dostoevsky, particularly in light of Rimbaud's renunciation of poetry in order to become a 'normal' person outside of literature (in the sense that Miller is attracted to an image of both Dostoevsky and Rimbaud as such 'normal', downtrodden men). As one of his greatest acknowledged influences, Miller parallels himself with Rimbaud but does so as two figures, as two sides of the same coin: Rimbaud gave up writing early in life; Miller found writing late in life. At the same time, Rimbaud's significance for Miller goes beyond the superficial biographical matches and into their deeply personal and profound views on literature, as with all of the writers in this study.

Notes

1. *Conversations*, 6.
2. Ibid., 52–3.
3. Wickes, 26.
4. See Millett's *Sexual Politics*. New York: Avon Books, 1970.
5. See the *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968, where Orwell reviews *Black Spring* relatively unfavourably. Also

see Traschen's 'Henry Miller: The Ego and I' for similar criticism (*South Atlantic Quarterly*, 65 (1966): 345–54).

6. *Desire in Language*, 75; 'Aussi verrons-nous apparaître les problèmes de la mort, de la naissance et du sexe, lorsque la littérature touché au point névralgique qu'est l'écriture extériorisant les systèmes linguistiques par la structure de la narration (les genres)', *Séméiotiké*, 156.
7. *Anatomy*, 310–11.
8. Ibid., 310.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. *Desire in Language*, 78; 'Dans le carnaval le sujet est anéanti : là s'accomplit la structure de *l'auteur* comme anonymat qui crée et se voit créer, comme moi et comme autre, comme homme et comme masque', *Séméiotiké*, 160.
13. *Desire in Language*, 79; 'Les répétitions, les propos dits "sans suite" . . . les oppositions non-exclusives', *Séméiotiké*, 161.
14. *Desire in Language*, 79; 'dialogisme qu'aucun autre discours ne connaît d'une manière aussi flagrante', *Séméiotiké*, 161.
15. Solomon, 685.
16. *Desire in Language*, 79; 'Contestant les lois du langage qui évolue dans l'intervalle 0–1, le carnaval conteste Dieu, autorité et loi sociale; il est rebelle dans la mesure où il est dialogique', *Séméiotiké*, 161.
17. *Desire in Language*, 75; 'Dans le texte littéraire, le 0 n'existe pas, le vide est subitement remplacé par "un" (*il, nom propre*) qui est deux (sujet et destinataire)', *Séméiotiké*, 156.
18. Bursey, 32.
19. Ibid., 29.
20. Ibid., 29–30.
21. *Desire in Language*, 79; '(ce qui provoque le rire), sans arriver pourtant à s'en dégager', *Séméiotiké*, 161.
22. Bursey, 33.
23. Ibid., 29.
24. Ibid., 26.
25. Ibid., 28.
26. Jong, 11.
27. Jong, 113.
28. Duberman, 265.
29. Bursey, 34.
30. Ibid., 39.
31. *Books*, 167.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. *Spring*, 131.
37. *Essays*, 21; 'C'est le domaine de l'action et de la passion des corps : choses et mots se dispersent dans tous les sens, ou au contraire se soudent en blocs indécomposables', *Critique et clinique*, 34.

38. *Spring*, 133.
39. *Adventures*, 179.
40. Ibid., 179.
41. *Spring*, 133–4.
42. An example on this very topic quickly demonstrates. Humpty Dumpty begins to recite a poem to Alice, 'written entirely for [her] amusement': '"*In winter, when the fields are white, / I sing this song for your delight* – only I don't sing it," he added, as an explanation. "I see you don't," said Alice. "If you can *see* whether I'm singing or not, you've sharper eyes than most," Humpty Dumpty remarked, severely. Alice was silent' (123).
43. *Investigations*, §279; 'Denke dir Einen, der sagte: "Ich weiß doch, wie hoch ich bin!" und dabei die Hand als Zeichen auf seinen Scheitel legt!' *Untersuchungen*, §279.
44. *Adventures*, 13.
45. *Investigations*, §216; 'Ein Ding ist mit sich selbst identisch', 'Es ist, als legten wir das Ding, in der. Vorstellung, in seine eigene Form hinein, und sähen, daß es paßt', *Untersuchungen*, §216.
46. *Investigations*, §216; 'Spiel der Vorstellung', *Untersuchungen*, §216.
47. *Spring*, 137.
48. *Tractatus*, §6.54; 'Welcher mich versteht am Ende als unsinnig erkennt, wenn er durch sie – auf ihnen – über sie hinausgestiegen ist. (Er muss sozusagen die Leiter wegwerfen, nachdem er auf ihr hinaufgestiegen ist)', *Tractatus*, §6.54.
49. *Zettel*, §160; 'Vergiß nicht, daß ein Gedicht, wenn auch in der Sprache der Mittelung abgefaßt, nicht im Sprachspiel der Mitteilung verwendet wird', *Zettel*, §160.
50. *Spring*, 133.
51. Ibid., 135.
52. Ibid., 134.
53. Ibid., 138.
54. Carroll never indicates a colour for Alice's dress in the story; however, it has often been depicted in illustrations as being yellow or red. The original drawings by Tenniel were black-and-white, but in the first colour editions Tenniel subsequently illustrated the dress as blue with a red-lined pinafore. It is not of tremendous importance, but perhaps Miller read an illustrated version in which the dress was coloured red. The red dress in Miller's passage may also subtly refer to the rose-tree that Two, Five and Seven are secretly, painstakingly and perpetually painting red to correct their error of having planted a white rose-tree instead of a red one at the behest of the Queen of Hearts. To that end, it is equally plausible that Miller is referring here not at all to Alice but to the Queen of Hearts, who surely would be wearing a red dress (or the Red Queen from *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*, who is undeniably in a sort of red dress). The same analysis given above applies, such that Carroll is shuffling the cards, and his character who sits with him at the table – whether it be Alice, the Queen of Hearts or the Red Queen – is patiently waiting for the unfolding of the game. (Two points worth repeating: Miller has *Alice in Wonderland* on 'The Hundred Books That Influenced Me Most' list in *Books in My Life*. Carroll's poem 'Jabberwocky' originally appears

in *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*.) In the instance of Miller's figure in the red dress being the Queen of Hearts, this unfolding involves the dealing out, literally, of the figures of her court.

55. *Hamlet*, 22.
56. *Spring*, 145.
57. Ibid., 145.
58. Ibid., 147.
59. *Adventures*, 60.
60. Ibid.
61. *Spring*, 144.
62. Ibid., 144–5.
63. Ibid., 146.
64. *Adventures*, 76.
65. Ibid., 155.
66. *Looking-Glass*, 79.
67. Ibid., 124.
68. Ibid., 186.
69. Ibid., 194.
70. Ibid., 195.
71. Ibid., 197.
72. Ibid., 198.
73. Ibid., 199.
74. *Spring*, 145.
75. Bursey, 28.
76. *Through the Looking-Glass*, 197.
77. Ibid., 86.
78. Ibid., 87.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. *Spring*, 142–3.
82. *Adventures*, 8.
83. Ibarguen, online.
84. Brown, *Miller*, 2.
85. *Desire in Language*, 86; 'On pourrait démontrer à travers le mot et la structure narrative romanesque du xx^{e} siècle comment la pensée européenne transgresse ses caractéristiques constituantes: l'identité, la substance, la causalité, la définition pour en adopter d'autres: l'analogie, la relation, l'opposition, donc le dialogisme et l'ambivalence ménippéenne', *Séméiotiké*, 69.
86. *Spring*, 135.
87. Ibid., 136.
88. Ibid.
89. In his article 'Lewis Carroll and the Child in Victorian Fiction' (1994), Robert M. Polhemus writes, 'Lewis Carroll's two books, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (865) and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871), regarded when they were first published as amusing pieces in the developing subgenre of "children's books," turned out to be major works of nineteenth-century literature and part of the history of serious imaginative writing' (578).

90. Bataille (my translation); 'Un enfant vagabond n'est pas immoral, au contraire', *Critique*, 44.
91. Bataille (my translation); 'Si généreux et loyaux que soient des enfants, ce «sentiment intense» ne peut être étouffé dans le monde où ils jouent', *Critique*, 44.
92. *Plexus*, 306.
93. *Adventures*, 14.
94. *Plexus*, 307.
95. *Adventures*, 22.
96. *Plexus*, 309.
97. Ibid., 308.
98. Ibid., 310.
99. Ibid., 309.
100. Ibid., 308.
101. Ibid., 310.
102. Ibid., 311.
103. Ibid., 312.
104. Ibid., 309.
105. Polhemus, 585.
106. Ibid., 585.
107. *Looking-Glass*, 41.
108. Ibid., 183.
109. Ibid.
110. Heath, 227.
111. *Spring*, 143.