HENRY MILLER

NEW PERSPECTIVES

Edited by James M. Decker and Indrek Männiste

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In memory of Edward Abplanalp and Thomas Nesbit

Contents

Notes on Contributors

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Katy Masuga holds a PhD in comparative literature and a joint PhD in literary theory and criticism. Her first book, *Henry Miller and How He Got That Way* (2011), sets Miller in relation to his major sources of influence: Walt Whitman, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Arthur Rimbaud, Lewis Carroll, Marcel Proust, and D.H. Lawrence. Her second work, *The Secret Violence of Henry Miller* (2011), is a treatment of Miller's experimental and ekphrastic language in relation to the work of Maurice Blanchot, with comparisons drawn between James Joyce, Franz Kafka, and Marcel Proust via Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze's theory of a minor literature. Masuga has also published numerous articles and chapters on Miller and on topics including Ludwig Wittgenstein, Maurice Blanchot, Samuel Beckett, D.H. Lawrence, Shakespeare and Company in Paris, contemporary art, image and text relations, Frankenstein's Creature, and half a dozen short stories. She teaches comparative literature at Skidmore College in Paris.

Ondřej Skovajsa defended his doctoral dissertation *Written Voice: Leaves of Grass* (1855) *and Tropic of Cancer* in the Department of Comparative Literature at Charles University, Prague, in 2014. The dissertation re-conceptualizes oral composition theory to discuss modernist works. He translated and prepared a Czech edition Henry Miller's *Essays* (Dauphin 2011) and is currently working on a Czech translation of Whitman's first *Leaves* (1855). He spent a year 2011/2012 as Fulbright Scholar at University of California, Santa Cruz, and works as an assistant professor of English at Purkyně University, Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic.

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Foreword

You would be hard pressed to find any serious representation—most often you would find none—of Henry Miller's works in the present U.S. academic world. For instance, he remains conspicuously absent from the most notable anthologies of American literature. Beyond that, refereed academic articles on his works come few and far between in today's well-known U.S. critical journals, which in effect both reflect and help constitute the zeitgeist of American literary studies. Perhaps, most telling of all is Miller's notable absence from pedagogical arenas. I seriously doubt if any of his works (not just *Tropic of Cancer*, *Tropic of Capricorn*, and *Sexus*, but relatively noncontroversial ones like *Black Spring*, or even the topically innocuous "travel" work, *The Colossus of Maroussi*) makes its way into regular syllabi of college and university courses in American literature and/or American studies. Indeed, I am fairly certain I was the first and possibly the last instructor to assign *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn* in a course I taught at Dartmouth College for close to forty years.[1]

Why this *miss*-representation? As with Mark Twain's major novel but without his canonical credentials, Miller's major self-referential works recurrently get censored for different reasons in different periods. George Orwell, for example, defended Miller early on but questioned his anarchic (i.e., nonreformist) politics. In former times, U.S. censorship of Miller's *Tropic* narratives mainly stemmed from how their "obscene" language and representational materials violated middle-class American moral standards. Miller himself anticipated this contemporary reception while writing *Tropic of Cancer*: "Sometimes I would lie abed till noon. There was nothing pressing, except to finish the book, and that didn't worry me much because I was already convinced that nobody would accept it anyway" (CAN, 223).

Today, his texts run into a different kind of moral censor. The "cultural studies" paradigm that dominates the current American academy openly judges written works mostly according to their propagation of liberal social values. In this politically charged context, Miller's writings get cited if at all as pejorative demos of politically incorrect views: sexism, racism, ethnic stereotypes, and even anti-Semitism.[2] This devalued view of Miller more or less gets summarized by Salman Rushdie's elitist dismissal of Miller's work on the grounds of his apoliticism: "Miller's reputation has more or less completely evaporated, and he now looks to be very little more than the happy pornographer beneath whose scatological surface Orwell saw such improbable depths." Indeed, few so-called "creative" writers before the Beats have felt beholden in some way to Miller's literary precedent.[3]

One can complicate if not entirely rebut the aforementioned charges,[4] but to what end given academic reliance on a categorical imperative defined by one or another version of identity politics? Yet, why even take a defensive posture with Miller's

works at all? He himself (again) anticipated such a future reception and, eschewing programmatic political alternatives of every kind, in effect set down the terms for interrogating beforehand his present academic censorship: "…to be human seems like a poor, sorry, miserable affair, limited by the senses, restricted by moralities and codes, defined by platitudes and isms" (CAN, 259). Put another way, Miller's works put in question the unquestioned axioms behind such academic mala-judgments. At the very least, literary-critical studies would do well to follow the principle that Fang Lizhi remarked as a sine qua non of scientific investigation: to begin its own formulation about any subject with a good measure of methodological self-doubt. In fact, why not try suspending the hermeneutics of suspicion with works like Miller's and adopt a "second naïveté" so as to find a new, positive relation to them?[5]

The following collection attempts to do just that and from an impressive variety of disciplinary angles. The chapters in this book allow for a critically aware double reflection on these works, including how they concern at least one favorite subject of recent American studies: a transnational tableaux. Nonetheless, Miller's *bête noire* was and remains "identity politics" itself, whatever its avatar. A spiritual pragmatist, as it were, his writing instead constitutes a project precisely to deracinate his civilized self—its succumbing to one or another identitarian category—in order to engage a cosmic anonymity of self, as much as he could realize it in and through his writing: "What is war, disease, cruelty, terror, when night presents the ecstasy of myriad blazing suns? What is this chaff we chew in our sleep if it is not the remembrance of fang-whorl and star cluster" (CAN, 254). This book defines Miller's relation to writing from beginning to end. His works therefore request dialectical critical responses, the better to register his *post*-hedonist relation to sex (*pace* Rushdie) and other basic appetites, particularly as recorded in the two *Tropic* narratives and *The Rosy Crucifixion*.

Among other things, viewing Miller's writing as enacting symbolic strategies, to adopt a Kenneth Burkean term, would also allow us to re-view his loud deployments of ethnic stereotypes as purposeful signifiers of social–cultural formations into which one—he too—tends to fall, and which therefore require the deconstructions afforded by rhetorical modes of "obscenity." Such critical formulations show Miller's writing to be a kind of spiritual experiment. In that sense, another Henry, one whom he considered an authorial precursor, might very well have situated Miller's works within the paradoxically marginal mainstream of U.S. antinomian writing and living: "Books, not which afford us a cowering enjoyment, but in which each thought is of unusual daring; such as an idle man cannot read, and a timid one would not be entertained by, which even make us dangerous to existing institutions—such call I good books." [6]

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Notes

1 Herbert West, a Dartmouth professor of Comparative Literature at Dartmouth College, was one of the first to write a "serious" academic review of *Tropic of Cancer* in the *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* (1937). See Robert Ferguson, *Henry Miller: A Life* (New York: Norton, 1991), 270, 291.

2 See, for example, the by now familiar charges again deployed by Jeanette Winterson in a review of Frederick Turner's book on Miller's writing of *Tropic of Cancer*: "The Male Mystique of Henry Miller," *The New York Times Sunday Book Review* (January 26, 2012).

3 Rushdie's remark occurs in his essay taking Orwell to task for not maintaining the "political" standard entailed in literary work; hence the latter's wrong-minded defense of Miller in his 1940 essay "Inside the Whale." Rushdie, "Outside the Whale," *Granta 11* (1984), http://www.granta.com/Archive/11/Outside-the-Whale/Page-4. To a query in 1958 about his opinion of Miller, William Faulkner—one of the very few modernist American writers whom Miller had ever praised—responded: "Sorry, I don't know him. Should I?" *Faulkner in the University*, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph Blotner (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1959), 282. Even hyperbolic hawkers of Miller's "genius" by early and late peers like Karl Shapiro and Norman Mailer failed to inspire any academic-critical reopening *chez* Miller.

4 For example, the Miller narrator arguably exposes (and so tries to separate himself from) a nihilistic, reductive male sexism in his *self-evidently* burlesque caricature of Van Norden in *Tropic of Cancer*. As for Miller's use of ethnic stereotypes, if nothing else, he was an equal-opportunity stereotyper, and not least of his own German-immigrant relatives about whom he remained caustically critical throughout his autobiographical works.

5 Paul Ricoeur makes this proposal in *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986). Cf. Wendy Doniger's heuristic suggestion in a 2008 Convocation talk at the University of Chicago where she applies Ricoeur's notion of a "second naïveté" specifically to contemporary academic subjects: "We need to balance what literary critics call a hermeneutics of suspicion—a method of reading that ferrets out submerged agendas—with a hermeneutics of retrieval, or even of reconciliation. … [W]here in our first naïveté, we did not notice the racism, and in our subsequent hypercritical reading we couldn't see anything else, in our second naïveté we can see how good some writers are despite the inhumanity of their underlying world views." http://divinity.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/imce/pdfs/publications/criterion/winter_09.pdf. My thanks to Jed Dobson for pointing me to these references.

6 Henry David Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, A Penn State Electronic Classics Series Publication, ed. Jim Manis (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 73.

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James Decker would like to thank his coeditor, Indrek Männiste, for pursuing a wonderful idea with aplomb and acumen. I also wish to pay tribute to Roger Jackson, whose tireless efforts on behalf of Henry Miller paved the road. The combined efforts of the contributors to *Nexus: The International Henry Miller Journal* have proven invaluable not only to me but also to all of the contributors in this book. Thanks as well are due Kenneth Womack and D.A. Pratt, whose curiosity and skill always spur me on. I also can't say enough about Karl Orend, whose groundbreaking scholarly work continues to stimulate. I would also like to acknowledge the amazing Henry Miller symposium hosted by Guy Stevenson, Dominic Jaeckle, and Caroline Blinder of Goldsmiths, University of London. I learned so much! Thanks to Megan Ames, Stuart Boyd, Josh Butler, Trevor Crawford, Ethan Hedman, Alexis Maloof, and Zac Maloof for so ably distracting me from deadlines with parties and trivia nights at Blue: Go Cloppers! Of course, no list of acknowledgments would be complete without thanking my amazing and talented children, Siobhan, Anastazia, and Evan. You make me proud. Finally, no words can do justice to Stephanie Guedet, the astonishing dynamo who inspires my every moment and owns my heart. Thank you for all of our remarkable verbal duets—whether fueled by glasses of wine or water—and, most of all, for your love.

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Chronology

1891 Henry Valentine Miller was born on 26 December in New York to Heinrich and Louise Miller (née Nieting)

1906 Miller attends Eastern District High School in Williamsburg

1908 Miller and his friends found the Xerxes Society

1909 Miller graduates from Eastern District; Miller wins a scholarship to study German at Cornell University but even with the scholarship, his family could not afford it; in September Miller enrolls in to the tuition-free City College of New York but leaves the college after six weeks and later takes a job as a clerk at the Atlas Portland Cement Company; begins an affair with Pauline Chouteau (née Laura May), a thirty-seven-year-old divorcée

1912 Pauline becomes pregnant but loses her baby in the fall; in March, Miller goes to New Mexico to work as a cattle herder but due to the lack of need is forced to work as a picker on a lemon ranch in Chula Vista; attends a talk by the notorious anarchist Emma Goldman in California and becomes fascinated by anarchist ideas; Miller grudgingly agrees to take an apprenticeship at his father's tailor shop in Manhattan

1915 Miller has vague ideas about becoming a writer; in October, Miller meets and falls in love with Beatrice Sylvas Wickens

1917 Miller leaves the tailor shop and marries Beatrice, partly to avoid the draft

1919 Henry and Beatrice's daughter, Barbara Sylvas, is born on 30 September

1920 Miller is hired as an employment manager at Western Union Telegraph Company

1922 Miller writes his first book *Clipped Wings* on a three-week vacation from Western Union

1923 Miller meets and falls in love with June Mansfield (born, according to Ellis Island records, Julia Smerth); on 21 December, Beatrice divorces Miller

1924 on 1 June, Miller and June get married; in September, Miller quits his job at Western Union to live the life of a writer

1927 Miller writes his second book *Moloch*; June abandons him for Europe but returns a few months later

1928 Henry and June visit Europe for the first time

1929 Miller and June return to New York

1930 on June's insistence, Miller returns to Paris alone to continue his literary career; Miller reacquaints with Alfred Perlès (whom he had first met in 1928)

1931 Miller meets Walter Lowenfels and Michael Fraenkel; Miller works as a proofreader for Paris's *Chicago Tribune*; starts working on his "Paris book" that would eventually become *Tropic of Cancer*; meets Anaïs Nin, with whom he starts both a literary and love affair

1932 Miller's first Paris-based short story "Mademoiselle Claude" was accepted for publication in the anthology *Americans Abroad*

1934 *Tropic of Cancer* is published by Obelisk Press and immediately banned in the United States and Great Britain; divorces June by proxy in Mexico

1935 Miller briefly visits New York

1936 *Black Spring* is published in June by Obelisk Press

1937 Lawrence Durrell visits Miller in Paris

1938 *Max and the White Phagocytes* is published by Obelisk Press after having been turned down by Alfred A. Knopf in the United States and Faber and Faber in Britain

1939 *Tropic of Capricorn* is published by Obelisk Press. James Laughlin's new firm New Directions brings out *The Cosmological Eye* in the United States; travels in South of France and, with the war impending, goes to Corfu to stay with Lawrence Durrell and his wife

1940 Miller returns to New York in mid-January. In late October he begins a road-trip around the United States with Abe Rattner in order to write *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*; publishes *The World of Sex*

1941 Colt Press publishes Miller's Greek book, *The Colossus of Maroussi*

1942 in June, Miller settles in Beverly Glen in California; starts to work on volume one of the *Rosy Crucifixion* trilogy, *Sexus*

1944 Miller moves to Big Sur. Marries Janina Martha Lepska

1945 *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* is finally published. In October, Miller and Lepska's daughter, Valentine Lepska, is born

1948 in August, Lepska gives birth to their son, Henry Tony

1949 *Sexus* is published in Paris

1952 Miller and Lepska divorce; *Books in My Life* is published

1953 in December, Miller marries Eve McClure; *Plexus* is published in Paris

1954 Miller and Eve visit Europe for the first time after the war

1955 *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch* is published

1959 Miller and Eve travel around Europe; *Nexus* is published in Denmark

1960 Miller and Eve divorce

1961 on 24 June, Grove Press publishes *Tropic of Cancer* for the first time in the United States. (68, 000 copies were sold in the first week); In July the book is banned in Massachusetts; a series of court cases begins; *Tropic of Capricorn* is published to circumvent piracy

1964 The United States Supreme Court (case Grove Press Inc. v. Gerstein) overrules the state court charges of obscenity in *Tropic of Cancer*

1965 Grove publishes the *Rosy Crucifixion* trilogy

1967 Miller marries Hiroko Tokuda

1969 Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* attacks Miller's works as chauvinistic and misogynous

1977 Miller and Hoki divorce

1980 *The World of Lawrence* is published; Miller dies of cardiovascular failure on 7 June

Abbreviations

ACN *Air-Conditioned Nightmare* (New York: New Directions, 1945).

BIML *The Books in My Life* (New York: New Directions, 1952).

BS *Black Spring* (New York: Grove Press, 1963).

BSOHB *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch*. (New York: New Directions, 1957).

C *Capricorne—Ebauche de Tropique du Capricorne* (Paris: Blanche, 2013).

CAN *Tropic of Cancer* (New York: Grove Press, 1961).

CAP *Tropic of Capricorn* (New York: Grove Press, 1961).

CBF *Complete Book of Friends* (London: Allison and Busby, 1987).

CC *Crazy Cock* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991).

CE *The Cosmological Eye* (Norfolk: New Directions, 1939).

CHM *Conversations with Henry Miller*, ed. Frank L. Kersnowski and Alice Hughes (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994).

COM *The Colossus of Maroussi* (New York: New Directions, 1941).

DB A Dream of a Book (Big Sur: H Miller, 1958).

HAM *Hamlet* (with Michael Fraenkel) (London: Carrefour, 1962).

HMC *Henry Miller in Conversation* (with Georges Belmont) (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1972).

HMJL *Henry Miller and James Laughlin: Selected Letters* (with James Laughlin) (New York: Norton, 1996).

HMW *Henry Miller on Writing* (New York: New Directions, 1964).

INL *Into the Night Life* (with Bezalel Schatz) (Berkeley: H. Miller, 1947).

LAN Henry Miller (with Anaïs Nin) *Henry Miller: Letters to Anaïs Nin* (edited by Gunther Stuhlmann) (New York: Putnam, 1965).

LE *Letters to Emil* (New York: New Directions, 1989).

LKM "Letter to Kate Millet, May 27, 1969" *Nexus: The International Henry Miller Journal* 8 (2011): 3–4.

LP *A Literate Passion: Letters of Anaïs Nin and Henry Miller 1932–1953* (New York: Harcourt Brace Company, 1987).

MOL *Moloch or, This Gentile World* (New York: Grove Press, 1992).

NEX *Nexus: Book Three of "The Rosy Crucifixion" Trilogy* (New York: Grove Press, 1965).

NI The New Instinctivism (A Creative Duet) (With Alfred Perlès) *Nexus: The International Henry Miller Journal* 4 (2007): 3–56.

PLEX *Plexus: Book Two of "The Rosy Crucifixion" Trilogy* (New York: Grove Press, 1965).

R *Reflections* (edited by Twinka Thiebaud) (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1981).

RTR *Remember to Remember* (New York: New Directions, 1947).

SAW *Sunday After the War* (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1944).

SEX *Sexus: Book One of the "The Rosy Crucifixion" Trilogy* (New York: Grove Press, 1965).

SMF *The Smile at the Foot of the Ladder* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1948).

SSLH *Stand Still Like the Hummingbird* (New York: New Directions, 1962).

TNR Letter to the Editor (re: Dreiser's Style) (*The New Republic*, 28 April 1926: 308).

TOA *The Time of the Assassins: A Study of Rimbaud* (New York: New Directions, 1956).

WOH *The Wisdom of the Heart* (New York: New Directions, 1941).

WOL *The World of Lawrence: A Passionate Appreciation* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1980).

WOS *The World of Sex* (Chicago: J.H.N. [Ben Abramson], 1941).

WR The Waters Reglitterized: The Subject of Water Color in Some of Its More Liquid Phases (London: Village Press, 1973).

Introduction

In 1976, Norman Mailer observed that "Literary criticism has left a space around Henry Miller."[1] Nearly forty years later, Arthur Hoyle ends his biography of Miller by drawing attention to the writer's "continuing [academic] exile,"[2] and an essay in *The Guardian* remarks that Miller holds "more influence on other writers than mainstream audiences."[3] Indeed, it seems almost obligatory for writers on Miller to lament the critical wasteland in which Miller apparently exists. Nevertheless, if one peruses the secondary literature prior to the 2000s, one will discover a narrow but steady stream of articles and books that explore Miller's importance as a writer. With a few important exceptions, however, this criticism may have harmed Miller more than it advanced his case within academe. Broadly, the earlier analyses of Miller focused on four principal areas: biography, self-liberation, sexuality, and sexism.[4]

Often, critics in all four categories made little attempt to distinguish between Miller and his narrator and tended to trust Miller's own comments and timelines with little question. As Karl Orend's pioneering biographical work demonstrates, however, correspondence between the biographical Henry Miller and the "Henry Miller" who populates the narratives is problematic at best.[5] The actions and attitudes of "Henry" differ in significant ways from those of Miller and, as Katy Masuga convincingly argues, an uncritical acceptance of the biographical similarities between Miller and his narrator, while encouraged by Miller himself, reduces the scope of both the text and the critical approach.[6] Such conflation of narrator and writer also tends to elicit commentary that assumes a moralistic tone (either celebratory or reproving) and suggests that not only does Miller qua author/man endorse the actions and beliefs of his character, but also that he *is* his protagonist.

Commencing with the new millennium, however, critics started to engage Miller in a more theoretically informed way, fulfilling the promise of Ihab Hassan, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatarri, and other pioneers who saw the narratives as more dynamic and challenging than many early readers.[7] Miller studies have never seen a richer, more varied critical practice than that of the last decade or so. In addition to an academic journal devoted to Miller and his circle,[8] numerous monographs addressing the writer have appeared in the last fifteen years, none of which are "general" studies of the type that typified early scholarship. Miller's critics are also achieving success in significant journals and making some inroads in more general studies of American modernism and the novel. Unlike the past, moreover, when scholars of Miller—as suggested by

Louis Renza in his foreword—worked in isolation and rarely had the opportunity to form the community of researchers necessary to build a writer's critical reputation, a rich dialogue replete with diverse theoretical convictions has commenced. In September 2014, for instance, Goldsmiths, University of London hosted a lively international symposium on Henry Miller that revealed tremendous new insights about little studied aspects of Miller's work. Arthur Hoyle is also helping Miller reach a new generation via his articles for *The Huffington Post*. Miller's critics, furthermore, are citing, helping, and challenging one another in ways that strengthen their praxis and generate wider interest in the author.

All of this, of course, begs the question of why readers should study Miller in the first place. Beyond the obvious answers—his groundbreaking representation of sex; his influence on writers such as Philip Roth, Thomas Pynchon, Jack Kerouac, and Lawrence Durrell; his connection to the European avant-garde; his delirious use of language; his critique of American materialism; his relentless self-examination; his spiritual mysticism—a key reason that readers need to investigate Miller closely involves his ability to generate discomfort in his audience. As many of the contributors to this book note, this uneasiness embodies many forms, wears many masks. Both in the 1930s and now, readers of Miller respond viscerally to his narratives, for his words touch exposed nerves, bring anxieties to the surface. His Whitmanesque contradictions decenter readers, unsettle them in a way that many more famous books no longer have the power to achieve.

In Miller's books, such contradictions occur at the anecdotal level, to be sure: anti-Semitism and philo-Semitism; misogyny and philogyny; wisdom and ignorance; materialism and asceticism; arrogance and doubt; beauty and ugliness; good and evil. Miller's more perceptive readers, such as Michael Fraenkel, Anaïs Nin, and Lawrence Durrell, noted and applauded such incongruities from the start, although many others accepted or rejected his work based on only one side of the equation.[9] As with his hero Whitman, indeed as with many of the writers and traditions that attracted him, Miller does not attempt to explain away such contradictory impulses or treat them separately. For many of his Western readers, used to comfortable binaries, such acceptance breeds anxiety, discomposure.

Beyond the level of "plot," however, Miller reveals (ostensible) inconsistencies at the level of tone, style, and form. Miller's words explode off the page in a hate-filled jeremiad only to float back to earth with a tender disquisition. Sprawling lists, indignant diatribes, tributes to other writers, and micro-essays on music, art, and love sit adjacent to sexual encounters, bizarre fantasies, hallucinatory reveries, burlesque slapstick, and anecdotes about boyhood or corporate America. As Miller wrote to Emil Schnellock, "The hell with form, style, expression, and all those pseudo-paramount things which beguile the critics" (LE, 72). Miller was anathema to formalists, to put it mildly. Readers, even sympathetic ones, often lament Miller's lack of plot, criticize his "uneven" prose, lose track of his digressions within digressions, fret over his amalgamation of genres.

Eighty-plus years after the publication of *Tropic of Cancer*, Miller exists on the margins of academe, yet his power to stir readers, to frustrate them and engage them,

is undeniable. Far from merely personifying Kingsley Widmer's "rebel buffoon"[10] "revel[ing] in the degradation of women,"[11] as Jeanette Winterson accuses, or even exemplifying Karl Shapiro's "wisdom writer,"[12] Miller epitomizes Claude Lévi-Strauss's "bricoleur," "speak[ing] not only *with* things … but also through the medium of things."[13] As Lévi-Strauss conceives it, bricoleurs employ a kind of "mythical thought" wherein they "build up structures by fitting together events, or rather the remains of events."[14] In this way, the bricoleur uses the same material as "ends or means."[15] Miller's use of fragments and repetition, his problematization of photographic realism, his systematic rejection of system, all point toward the metaphoric and the metaphysical even in his most seemingly truthful and mimetic passages. His medium *is* his message, and it is a message designed to coimplicate the reader in language's failure to communicate shared experience and external "fact," much less the essence of identity or spiritual energy.

Miller argued that the most interesting and successful writers possess the "ability to 'exploit' the vast silence which enwraps us all" (BIML, 38). In continuing to produce such strong and varied responses within his audience, Miller reveals his own facility for exploiting this vast silence—whether or not readers want to listen. Such an aptitude warrants interrogation. Such a capacity merits moving beyond initial impressions, received opinions, and theoretical prejudices regarding Miller's work. The present book offers the first collection of chapters on Miller in over thirty years.[16] Additionally, unlike the previous three collections, which relied heavily on reprinted articles, *Henry Miller: New Perspectives* consists of entirely new chapters and attempts to investigate the various ways in which Miller's narratives function. Additionally, the various chapters within *Henry Miller: New Perspectives* typify the more nuanced methodologies the current generation of critics are applying to Miller's narratives.

In the first chapter, "Henry Miller's Inhuman Philosophy," Indrek Männiste explores the relationship between philosophy and Miller's ideas. Against the critics, who have habitually denied that Miller's theoretical insights form a coherent philosophical system, Männiste argues that by focusing on Miller's key concepts such as the *traditional* and the *full present*, as well as his notion of the *inhuman artist*, Miller's thinking does indeed form a systematic set of ideas that he labels as Miller's metaphysical sense of life or his *inhuman philosophy*. By disclosing these two oppositional realms—*traditional* and *full present*—as the very source of the conflict between Miller's *inhuman artist* and the modern Western world, he demonstrates that Miller's philosophical dispositions were directed against the most dominant features of the progress-oriented modern age: linear conception of history, time, technology, and the aesthetic notion of art.

In the next chapter, "'The agonizing gutter of my past': Henry Miller, Conversion, and the Trauma of the Modern," James M. Decker explores the twinned concepts of conversion and trauma as they relate to Miller's narratives. Decker demonstrates that the narrator's dissatisfaction parallels the alienation often experienced by those on the verge of conversion. The roots of this profound disconnection lie in the narrator's traumatic relationship with modernity, particularly in terms of material success. Through an examination of the conversion tradition as it applies to the secular, Decker identifies a deep concern for conversion and rebirth within Miller's texts.

Paul Jashan, in his chapter "When Henry Miller Left for Tibet," examines in depth Miller's life-long fascination with Asian cultures and ideas. He demonstrates how Miller's journey from America to France, and then to Greece, before going back to his native country, helped him develop a theory of ethnocultural differences culminating in the vision of a perfect race of individuals, that of the artists.

In his chapter titled "The Religiosity of Henry Miller," Edward Abplanalp examines Miller's views on the topics of religion and religiosity. He discusses Miller's conceptions of God, salvation, heaven and hell, the meaning of life, spirit, the symbols of angels and demons, death, crucifixion, and similar ideas. He also scrutinizes Miller's ideas of birth and rebirth, the Bible, as well as his views on certain religious figures, and organized religion in general. He also offers an insight into Miller's engagements with astrology and how numerous philosophical–theological traditions shaped his overall religious motif.

Guy Stevenson, in his chapter "Henry Miller and Morality," outlines Miller's moral approach by engaging with the 1930s' European milieu; a cultural atmosphere disturbed by the First World War, the economic depression, and the frightening but exhilarating rise of political and philosophical extremism. Through the commentaries of Ezra Pound and George Bataille, two reviewers from the 1930s, who approached Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* from opposite ends of the political spectrum (radical right and left, respectively), Stevenson offers an analysis of the tension and conflicts that these insights reveal regarding Miller's views on morality.

In his chapter, "*Tropic of Cancer*: Word Becoming Flesh," Ondřej Skovajsa offers a compelling reading of *Tropic of Cancer*. He argues that *Cancer* breaks in radical fashion with literature in order to question the linear and meager narrative of modernity with the purpose of resurrecting the readers' bodies, emotions, and dignity. Furthermore, he shows that Miller's textual *I* ventures to *kill* the reader to a more courageous and perceptive life. He examines how this is achieved by drawing on linguistic, anthropological, and theological aspects of oral theory and moving from the *paratextual* level to *style*, *genesis*, *ethos*, and, finally, to the *story* of the *I*.

Anna Lillios, in her chapter "'A dirty book worth reading': Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* and the Feminist Backlash," tackles heated debates Miller's works caused in the feminist theories from the late 1960s and 1970s to the contemporary era. While Miller, Lillios argues, did not quite satisfy the contemporary feminist requirement of "de-idealizing" the woman in order to celebrate the "human," he did indeed celebrate the human connection between the sexes.

Rob Herian, in "Henry Miller: Obscene Other of the Law," offers a Žižekian reading of the notion of law and how Henry Miller's works and their reception exemplify it. His chapter draws on the aspects born in the psychic space of the subject, as elucidated by psychoanalysis, which are in dialogue with the external sociojuridical structure called "law," and which strive to better understand affective and culturally engrained notions of obscenity.

In his chapter, "The Ecstatic Psychotic: Henry Miller via Jacques Lacan," Hamish Dale Mercer Jackson explores the "form of formlessness" of Miller's surrealistic texts with a view to reveal, through Lacanian analysis, his *psychosis* or what is hidden in his unconsciousness. Jackson's analysis is expected to shed an important light to a central