



The Unknown Henry Miller: A Seeker in Big Sur

Arthur Hoyle

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Henry Miller was one of the most distinctive voices in twentieth-century literature. Better known in Europe than in his native America for most of this career, he achieved international success and celebrity during the 1960s when his banned “Paris” books—beginning with *Tropic of Cancer*—were published here and judged by the Supreme Court not to be obscene. Until then he had toiled in relative obscurity and poverty. The *Unknown Henry Miller* recounts Miller’s career from its beginnings in Paris in the 1930s but focuses on his years living in Big Sur, California, from 1944 to 1961, during which he wrote many of his most important books, including *The Rosy Crucifixion* trilogy, married and divorced twice, raised two children, painted watercolors, and tried to live out an aesthetic and personal credo of self-realization.

Written with the cooperation of the Henry Miller, Anais Nin, and other estates, *The Unknown Henry Miller* quotes extensively from Miller’s correspondence in order to offer the reader direct experience of the author and man. It also draws on material not available to previous biographers, including interviews with Lepska Warren, Miller’s third wife, and revelations from unpublished portions of Anais Nin’s diaries. Behind the “bad boy” image, the author finds a man with devoted friendships, whose challenge of literary sexual taboos was part of a broader assault on the dehumanization of man and commercialization during the postwar years. He puts Miller’s alleged misogyny in the context of his satire of sexual mores in general, and makes the case for restoring this groundbreaking writer to his rightful place in the American literary canon.

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Lowell Bohler:

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