英语文学名著注释系列

BY HENRY MILLER

TROPIC OF CANCER

北回归线

[美国] 亨利·米勒 著 亦霖 注释

译林出版社

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ANNOTATED ENGLISH LITERATURE SERIES / BY HENRY MILLER

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出版前言

学语言，阅读实在至关重要。广泛阅读，利于学习者存储语言信息。随着语言信息量的不断扩大，学习者自会更深层地体会、感受语言，渐至运用自如的境地。

《英语文学名著注释系列》的出版，是我们酝酿已久的。列入本系列的作品均为原版注释本。这么做，目的很明确，正是想给广大英语学习者呈献原始的语言材料，以助他们丰富完善自己的语言知识。做到这一点，是我们的宗旨，更是我们的心愿。

译林出版社
1997年3月

作者小传

亨利·米勒1891年生于纽约市一个德裔美国人家庭，父亲是裁缝。1909年米勒以优异成绩从纽约市立学院毕业。毕业后的12年里，他干过各种杂活，曾做过工人、职员、校对、教师、编辑、人事部门经理等，饱尝生活之艰辛。米勒一生有过5次婚姻，其中第二个妻子琼·曼斯菲尔德对他影响最大。1928年米勒与琼前往欧洲，因此而认识了不少英法当时有名的作家。1929年初他们返回美国。30年代初，米勒独自返回巴黎，在经济拮据的情况下，因朋友的帮助和指点，也因琼的支持，米勒得以坚持写作，并于1934年9月1日，发表了他的第一部小说《北回归线》。二战爆发后，米勒返回美国，定居加州，直至1980年去世。

米勒近40岁才开始发表文学作品，亦是个多产作家。他著有七部小说、两部剧本及许多书评、游记、回忆录、书信集和论文集。两部“回归线小说”当属他最著名的作品，而1949～1960年间出版的《钉在玫瑰色十字架上》三部曲（《性》、《丛》和《关系》），加上《黑色的春天》(1936)和《在克利希度过的平静日子》(1956)这两部纪实小说，亦是研究其生平的重要资料。《马洛西的大石像》(1960)是一部游记，文笔生动、流畅，也很受评论家重视。

米勒自幼聪颖过人，手不释卷，在33岁辞去工作专事文学创作之前就已读过西方和东方许多文学家、哲学家的代表作。他还潜心研究过佛教禅宗、荷兰后期印象派

画家凡高的绘画、日本画家葛饰北斋（1760～1849）的浮世绘、古犹太苦修教派的教义、神秘学、星象学这样一些令常人觉得稀奇古怪的学问。在英语作家中他并不推崇公认的古典大家，却醉心于梭罗、康拉德、爱默生、D. H. 劳伦斯等富于叛逆、创新精神的英美作家，自己也继承并发扬了这种精神。

无论在写作风格还是思想倾向上，米勒均有独到之处。他既不同于以往任何一位英美作家，也比他身后的众多模仿者更具特色。他是美国文坛上“前无古人，后无来者”的一位怪杰。虽然他曾经被社会误解，其才能和地位也是在多年后才得到承认，但他仍是二三十年代美国旅欧作家中最具影响的人物之一。

内容简介

《北回归线》于1934年9月1日在法国巴黎的一家小出版社——奥地利斯克出版社——出版，作者后来的小说大多也是由这家出版社出版，直至1961年，该书才在美国出版。

《北回归线》是米勒的第一部自传体小说，也是他出版的第一本书。此书以回忆录的形式写成，描写一位侨居巴黎、穷困潦倒的艺术家。小说的叙述者虽然是作者自己，却以作者第二位妻子琼的故事和作者自己30年代初在巴黎的经历为素材。主人公在当教员期间感到生活枯燥乏味，因而陷入了精神总崩溃的边缘。米勒旨在通过诸如工作、交谈、宴饮、嫖妓等超现实主义的夸张、变形的生活细节描写来揭示人性，探究青年人如何在特定环境中将自己造就成艺术家这一传统西方文学主题。

本书属于认真、严肃探讨人生重大问题的“实验小说”的范畴。作者用揶揄、夸张的笔触即兴描写自己在一段时间内的全部经历，对幻觉和梦幻的描写更是连篇累牍、不厌其烦，尤其是他对两性关系的随意态度和赤裸裸的、近乎病态的性描写更使得米勒在社会上的声誉始终褒贬不一。而他的存在主义的荒诞人生观、人生如梦的虚无主义思想以及同一切现存伦理规范、社会秩序和制度唱反调的不合作态度亦使他成为美国文学史上最偏激的作家之一。

The Greatest Living Author*

I call Henry Miller the greatest living author because I think he is. I do not call him a poet because he has never written a poem; he even dislikes poetry, I think. But everything he has written is a poem in the best as well as in the broadest sense of the word. Secondly, I do not call him a writer, but an author. The writer is the fly in the ointment of modern letters; Miller has waged ceaseless war against writers. If one had to type him one might call him a Wisdom writer, Wisdom literature being a type of literature which lies between literature and scripture; it is poetry only because it rises above literature and because it sometimes ends up in bibles. I wrote to the British poet and novelist Lawrence Durrell last year and said: Let's put together a bible of Miller's work. (I thought I was being original in calling it a bible.) Let's assemble a bible from his work, I said, and put one in every hotel room in America, after removing the Gideon Bibles and placing them in the laundry chutes. Durrell, however, had been working on this "bible" for years; I was a Johnny-come-lately. In fact, a group of writers all over the world have been working on it, and one version has now come out.

There was a commonplace reason why this volume was very much needed. The author's books have been almost impossible to obtain; the ones that were not banned were stolen from libraries everywhere. Even a copy of one of the nonbanned books was recently stolen from the mails en route to me. Whoever got it had better be a book lover, because it was a bibliography.

I will introduce Miller with a quotation from the *Tropic of Cancer*: "I sometimes ask myself how it happens that I attract nothing but crackbrained individuals, neurasthenics, neurotics, psy-

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 This essay first appeared in *Two Cities*, Paris, France.

chopaths — and Jews especially. There must be something in a healthy Gentile that excites the Jewish mind, like when he sees sour black bread." The "healthy Gentile" is a good sobriquet for Miller, who usually refers to himself as the Happy Rock, Caliban, "just a Brooklyn boy," "Someone who has gone off the gold standard of Literature" or — the name I like best — the Patagonian. What is a Patagonian? I don't know, but it is certainly something rare and *sui generis*. We can call Miller the greatest living Patagonian.

How is one to talk about Miller? There are authors one cannot write a book or even a good essay about. Arthur Rimbaud is one (and Miller's book on Rimbaud is one of the best books on Rimbaud ever written, although it is mostly about Henry Miller). D. H. Lawrence is another author one cannot encompass in a book "about" (Miller abandoned his book on Lawrence). And Miller himself is one of those Patagonian authors who just won't fit into a book. Every word he has ever written is autobiographical, but only in the way *Leaves of Grass* is autobiographical. There is not a word of "confession" in Miller. His amorous exploits are sometimes read as a kind of Brooklyn Casanova or male Fanny Hill, but there is probably not a word of exaggeration or boasting to speak of — or only as much as the occasion would call for. The reader can and cannot reconstruct the Life of Henry Miller from his books, for Miller never sticks to the subject any more than Lawrence does. The fact is that there isn't any subject and Miller is its poet. But a little information about him might help present him to those who need an introduction. For myself, I do not read him consecutively; I choose one of his books blindly and open it at random. I have just done this; for an example, I find: "Man is not at home in the universe, despite all the efforts of philosophers and metaphysicians to provide a soothing syrup. Thought is still a narcotic. The deepest question is *why*. And it is a forbidden one. The very asking is in the nature of cosmic sabotage. And the penalty is — the afflictions of Job." Not the greatest prose probably, but Miller is not a writer; Henry James is a writer. Miller is a talker, a street corner gabbler, a prophet, and a Patagonian.

What are the facts about Miller? I'm not sure how important they are. He was born in Brooklyn about 1890, of German ancestry, and in certain ways he is quite German. I have often thought

that the Germans make the best Americans, though they certainly make the worst Germans. Miller understands the German in himself and in America. He compares Whitman and Goethe: "In Whitman the whole American scene comes to life, her past and her future, her birth and her death. Whatever there is of value in America Whitman has expressed, and there is nothing more to be said. The future belongs to the machine, to the robots. He was the Poet of the Body and the Soul, Whitman. The first and the last poet. He is almost undecipherable today, a monument covered with rude hieroglyphs, for which there is no key.... There is no equivalent in the languages of Europe for the spirit which he immortalized. Europe is saturated with art and her soil is full of dead bones and her museums are bursting with plundered treasures, but what Europe has never had is a free, healthy spirit, what you might call a MAN. Goethe was the nearest approach, but Goethe was a stuffed shirt, by comparison. Goethe was a respectable citizen, a pedant, a bore, a universal spirit, but stamped with the German trademark, with the double eagle. The serenity of Goethe, the calm, Olympian attitude, is nothing more than the drowsy stupor of a German bourgeois deity. Goethe is an end of something, Whitman is a beginning."

If anybody can decipher the Whitman key it is Miller. Miller is the twentieth-century reincarnation of Whitman. But to return to the "facts." The Brooklyn Boy went to a Brooklyn high school in a day when most high schools kept higher standards than most American universities today. He started at CCNY but quit almost immediately and went to work for a cement company ("Everlasting Cement"), then for a telegraph company, where he became the personnel manager in the biggest city in the world. The telegraph company is called the Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company in Miller's books, or in moments of gaiety the Cosmococcic Telegraph Company. One day while the vice-president was bawling him out he mentioned to Miller that he would like to see someone write a sort of Horatio Alger book about the messengers.

> I thought to myself [said Miller] — you poor old futzer, you, just wait until I get it off my chest.... I'll give you an Horatio Alger book.... My head was in a

whirl to leave his office. I saw the army of men, women and children that had passed through my hands, saw them weeping, begging, beseeching, imploring, cursing, spitting, fuming, threatening. I saw the tracks they left on the highways, lying on the floor of freight trains, the parents in rags, the coal box empty, the sink running over, the walls sweating and between the cold beads of sweat the cockroaches running like mad; I saw them hobbling along like twisted gnomes or falling backwards in the epileptic frenzy.... I saw the walls giving way and the pest pouring out like a winged fluid, and the men higher up with their ironclad logic, waiting for it to blow over, waiting for everything to be patched up, waiting, waiting contentedly... saying that things were temporarily out of order. I saw the Horatio Alger hero, the dream of a sick America, mounting higher and higher, first messenger, then operator, then manager, then chief, then superintendent, then vice-president, then president, then trust magnate, then beer baron, then Lord of all the Americas, the money god, the god of gods, the clay of clay, nullity on high, zero with ninety-seven thousand decimals fore and aft.... I will give you Horatio Alger as he looks the day after the Apocalypse, when all the stink has cleared away.

And he did. Miller's first book, *Tropic of Cancer*, was published in Paris in 1934 and was immediately famous and immediately banned in all English-speaking countries. It is the Horatio Alger story with a vengeance. Miller had walked out of the Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company one day without a word; ever after he lived on his wits. He had managed to get to Paris on ten dollars, where he lived more than a decade, not during the gay prosperous twenties but during the Great Depression. He starved, made friends by the score, mastered the French language and his own. It was not until the Second World War broke out that he returned to America to live at Big Sur, California. Among his best books several were banned: the two *Tropics* (*Tropic of Cancer*, 1934, and *Tropic of Capricorn*, 1939); *Black Spring*, 1936; and part of the trilogy *The Rosy*

Crucifixion (including *Sexus*, *Plexus*, and *Nexus*).

Unfortunately for Miller he has been a man without honor in his own country and in his own language. When *Tropic of Cancer* was published he was even denied entrance into England, held over in custody by the port authorities and returned to France by the next boat. He made friends with his jailer and wrote a charming essay about him. But Miller has no sense of despair. At the beginning of *Tropic of Cancer* he writes: "I have no money, no resources, no hopes. I am the happiest man alive."

George Orwell was one of the few English critics who saw his worth, though (*mirabile dictu*) T. S. Eliot and even Ezra Pound complimented him. Pound in his usual ungracious manner gave the *Tropic of Cancer* to a friend who later became Miller's publisher, and said: Here is a dirty book worth reading. Pound even went so far as to try to enlist Miller in his economic system to save the world. Miller retaliated by writing a satire called *Money and How It Gets That Way*, dedicated to Ezra Pound. The acquaintanceship halted there, Miller's view of money being something like this (from *Tropic of Capricorn*): "To walk in money through the night crowd, protected by money, lulled by money, dulled by money, the crowd itself a money, the breath money, no least single object anywhere that is not money, money, money everywhere and still not enough, and then no money, or a little money or less money or more money, but money, always money, and if you have money or you don't have money it is the money that counts and money makes money, *but what makes money make money*?" Pound didn't care for that brand of economics.

But all the writers jostled each other to welcome Miller among the elect, for the moment at least: Eliot, Herbert Read, Aldous Huxley, John Dos Passos and among them some who really knew how good Miller was: William Carlos Williams, who called him the Dean, Lawrence Durrell, Paul Rosenfeld, Wallace Fowlie, Osbert Sitwell, Kenneth Patchen, many painters (Miller is a fanatical water colorist). But mostly he is beset by his neurasthenics and psychopaths, as any cosmodemonic poet must be. People of all sexes frequently turn up at Big Sur and announce that they want to join the Sex Cult. Miller gives them bus fare and a good dinner and sends them on their way.

Orwell has written one of the best essays on Miller, although he takes a sociological approach and tries to place Miller as a Depression writer or something of the sort. What astonished Orwell about Miller was the difference between his view and the existential bitterness of a novelist like Céline. Céline's *Voyage au bout de la Nuit* describes the meaninglessness of modern life and is thus a prototype of twentieth-century fiction. Orwell calls Céline's book a cry of unbearable disgust, a voice from the cesspool. And Orwell adds that the *Tropic of Cancer* is almost exactly the opposite! Such a thing as Miller's book "has become so unusual as to seem almost anomalous, [for] it is the book of a man who is happy." Miller also reached the bottom of the pit, as many writers do; but how, Orwell asks, could he have emerged unembittered, whole, laughing with joy? "Exactly the aspects of life that fill Céline with horror are the ones that appeal to him. So far from protesting, he is *accepting*. And the very word 'acceptance' calls up his real affinity, another American, Walt Whitman."

This is, indeed, the crux of the matter and it is unfortunate that Orwell cannot see past the socio-economic situation with Whitman and Miller. Nevertheless, this English critic recognizes Miller's mastery of his material and places him among the great writers of our age; more than that, he predicts that Miller will set the pace and attitude for the novelist of the future. This has not happened yet, but I agree that it must. Miller's influence today is primarily among poets; those poets who follow Whitman must necessarily follow Miller, even to the extent of giving up poetry in its formal sense and writing that personal apocalyptic prose which Miller does. It is the prose of the Bible of Hell that Blake talked about and Arthur Rimbaud wrote a chapter of.

What is this "acceptance" Orwell mentions in regard to Whitman and Henry Miller? On one level it is the poetry of cosmic consciousness, and on the most obvious level it is the poetry of the Romantic nineteenth century. Miller is unknown in this country because he represents the Continental rather than the English influence. He breaks with the English literary tradition just as many of the twentieth-century Americans do, because his ancestry is not British, and not American colonial. He does not read the favored British writers, Milton, Marlowe, Pope, Donne. He reads what

his grandparents knew was in the air when Victorianism was the genius of British poetry. He grew up with books by Dostoevski, Knut Hamsun, Strindberg, Nietzsche (especially Nietzsche), Élie Faure, Spengler. Like a true poet he found his way to Rimbaud, Ramakrishna, Blavatsky, Huysmans, Count Keyserling, Prince Kropotkin, Lao-tse, Nostradamus, Petronius, Rabelais, Suzuki, Zen philosophy, Van Gogh. And in English he let himself be influenced not by the solid classics but by *Alice in Wonderland*, Chesterton's *St. Francis*, Conrad, Cooper, Emerson, Rider Haggard, G. A. Henty (the boy's historian — I remember being told when I was a boy that Henty had the facts all wrong), Joyce, Arthur Machen, Mencken, John Cowper Powys, Herbert Spencer's *Autobiography*, Thoreau on Civil Disobedience, Emma Goldman — the great anarchist (whom he met) — Whitman, of course, and perhaps above all that companion piece to *Leaves of Grass* called *Huckleberry Finn*. Hardly a Great Books list from the shores of Lake Michigan — almost a period list. Miller will introduce his readers to strange masterpieces like Doughty's *Arabia Deserta* or to the journal of Anaïs Nin which has never been published but which he (and other writers) swears is one of the masterpieces of the twentieth century. I imagine that Miller has read as much as any man living but he does not have that religious solemnity about books which we are brought up in. Books, after all, are only mnemonic devices; and poets are always celebrating the burning of libraries. And as with libraries, so with monuments, and as with monuments, so with civilizations. But in Miller's case (*chez* Miller) there is no vindictiveness, no bitterness. Orwell was bothered when he met Miller because Miller didn't want to go to the Spanish Civil War and do battle on one side or the other. Miller is an anarchist of sorts, and he doesn't especially care which dog eats which dog. As it happens, the righteous Loyalists were eaten by the Communists and the righteous Falangists were eaten by the Nazis over the most decadent hole in Europe; so Miller was right.

Lawrence Durrell has said that the *Tropic* books were healthy while Céline and D. H. Lawrence were sick. Lawrence never escaped his puritanism and it is his heroic try that makes us honor him. Céline is the typical European man of despair — why should he not despair, this Frenchman of the trenches of World War I? We

are raising up a generation of young American Célines, I'm afraid, but Miller's generation still had Whitman before its eyes and was not running back to the potholes and ash heaps of Europe. Miller is as good an antiquarian as anybody; in the medieval towns of France he goes wild with happiness; and he has written one of the best "travel books" on Greece ever done (the critics are unanimous about the *Colossus of Maroussi*); but to worship the "tradition" is to him the sheerest absurdity. Like most Americans, he shares the view of the first Henry Ford that history is bunk. He cannot forgive his "Nordic" ancestors for the doctrines of righteousness and cleanliness. His people, he says, were painfully clean: "Never once had they opened the door which leads to the soul; never once did they dream of taking a blind leap into the dark. After dinner the dishes were promptly washed and put in the closet; after the paper was read it was neatly folded and laid on a shelf; after the clothes were washed they were ironed and folded and then tucked away in the drawers. Everything was for tomorrow, but tomorrow never came. The present was only a bridge and on this bridge they are still groaning, as the world groans, and not one idiot ever thinks of blowing up the bridge." As everyone knows, Cleanliness is the chief American industry. Miller is the most formidable anticleanliness poet since Walt Whitman, and his hatred of righteousness is also American, with the Americanism of Thoreau, Whitman, and Emma Goldman. Miller writes a good deal about cooking and wine drinking. Americans are the worst cooks in the world, outside of the British; and Americans are also great drunkards who know nothing about wine. The Germanic-American Miller reintroduces good food and decent wine into our literature. One of his funniest essays is about the American loaf of bread, the poisonous loaf of cleanliness wrapped in cellophane, the manufacture of which is a heavy industry like steel.

Orwell and other critics tend to regard Miller as a kind of hedonist and professional do-nothing. And morally, they tend to regard him as one of that illustrious line of Americans who undermine the foundations of traditional morals. Miller quotes Thoreau's statement, which might almost be the motto of the cosmic writer: "Most of what my neighbors call good, I am profoundly convinced is evil, and if I repent anything, it is my good conduct that I repent." One

could hardly call Thoreau a criminal, yet he had his run-ins with the law, just as Miller has, and for the same reasons. The strain of anarchism and amorality is growing stronger in American literature, or that branch of it that I am talking about, and Miller is one of its chief carriers. It is not only Emma Goldman, Thoreau, Mark Twain, Whitman, and perhaps Salinger and Mailer, but that whole literature of Detachment from political hysteria and over-organization. I am influenced enough by these people and by Miller to tell my students, the poets at least, to cultivate an ignorance of contemporary political and military events because they do not matter. I tell them not to vote, to join nothing. I try to steer them toward their true leaders and visionaries, men almost unknown in the polite literary world, Reich for instance. Wilhelm Reich furthered a movement in Germany called "Work Democracy"; not machine politics, no politics at all, but democracy within one's immediate orbit; democracy at home. America is still the only country where social idealism and experimentation have elbow room; there are still communities that practice primitive Christianity, such as the Catholic anarchists; and just plain little homemade gardens of Eden such as Miller's cliff at Big Sur. The life he describes in *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch* is a far cry from the little fascist dreams of the New Classicists. And it is a far cry from the bitter isolationism of Robinson Jeffers or even of Lawrence. Morally I regard Miller as a holy man, as most of his adherents do — Gandhi with a penis.

Miller says in a little essay on Immorality and Morality: "What is moral and what is immoral? Nobody can ever answer this question satisfactorily. Not because morals ceaselessly evolve, but because the principle on which they depend is factitious. Morality is for slaves, for beings without spirit. And when I say spirit I mean the Holy Spirit." And he ends this little piece with a quotation from ancient Hindu scripture: Evil does not exist.

Whitman, Lawrence, Miller, and even Blake all have the reputation of being sex-obsessed, Miller especially. Whereas Whitman writes "copulation is no more rank to me than death is," Miller writes hundreds of pages describing in the minutest and clearest detail his exploits in bed. Every serious reader of erotica has remarked about Miller that he is probably the only author in history who

writes about such things with complete ease and naturalness. Lawrence never quite rid himself of his puritanical salaciousness, nor Joyce; both had too much religion in their veins. It is funny to recollect that Lawrence thought *Ulysses* a smutty book and Joyce thought *Lady Chatterley* a smutty book. Both were right. But at least they *tried* to free themselves from literary morality. Miller's achievement is miraculous: he is screamingly funny without making fun of sex, the way Rabelais does. (Rabelais is, of course, magnificent; so is Boccaccio; but both write against the background of religion, like Joyce and Lawrence.) Miller is accurate and poetic in the highest degree; there is not a smirk anywhere in his writings. Miller undoubtedly profited from the mistakes of his predecessors; his aim was not to write about the erotic but to write the whole truth about the life he knew. This goal demanded the full vocabulary and inconography of sex, and it is possible that he is the first writer outside the Orient who has succeeded in writing as naturally about sex on a large scale as novelists ordinarily write about the dinner table or the battlefield. I think only an American could have performed this feat.

We are dealing with the serious question of banned books, burned books, and fear of books in general. America has the most liberal censorship laws in the West today, but we have done no more than make a start. I have always been amused by the famous decision of Judge Woolsey who lifted the ban on *Ulysses*, although it was certainly a fine thing to do and it is a landmark we can be proud of. Woolsey said various comical things, such as that he could not detect the "leer of the sensualist" in Joyce's book, and that therefore (the logic of it escapes me) it is not pornographic. In excusing the use of old Saxon words he noted that Joyce's "locale was Celtic and his season Spring." And, in order to push his decision through, Judge Woolsey stated that *Ulysses* "did not tend to excite sexual impulses or lustful thoughts," and he closed his argument with the elegant statement that although the book is "somewhat emetic, nowhere does it tend to be an aphrodisiac." Emetic means tending to produce vomiting and I doubt that Joyce savored that description of his masterpiece. The implication, of course, is that vomiting is good for you, and lustful thoughts not. Now everyone who has read *Ulysses* knows that the book is based largely on