

# HENRY MILLER

AN INTERVIEW WITH

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# AN INTERVIEW WITH HENRY MILLER

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AN INTERVIEW  
WITH  
HENRY MILLER



A Note.

From June 3 to June 7, 1962 Henry Miller was in Minneapolis, Minnesota to meet members of the Henry Miller Literary Society, and during his stay he spent many hours discussing a wide variety of subjects with, among others, Edward P. Schwartz, the president of the Society, and Thomas H. Moore, the Secretary. He also talked informally with radio interviewer Audrey June Booth, with Mr. Schwartz and Mr. Moore in the studio with him. The interview was a particularly illuminating one and Mr. Miller referred to it, in a letter to the Society, as "Probably the best interview I have ever had." It is here included in its entirety, with the exception of Miss Booth's introductory remarks and the closing comments of Mr. Schwartz and Mr. Moore.

Q How long have you been in Minneapolis, Mr. Miller?

A Just three days.

Q Three days, and you're enroute to Big Sur, California?

A No, I'm enroute to the penitentiary at Jefferson City, Missouri. To see a -

Q Just a visit, I trust.

A No, to see a friend who's a lifer there, who is one of my fans, if I may call him that.

Q Yes?

A I got into correspondence with him through his reading my books, and I paid him a visit a few months ago on my way to Europe, and I'm hoping that I can get him out on parole soon.

Q Oh, that would be wonderful, wouldn't it?

A Ah, he's in for life, plus, I think, 18 years.

Q Do you quite frequently meet and become friends with the people who do read your books?

A Oh, yes, naturally, I mean, how can you avoid it, ha, that is, they are coming to see me, don't you know, or if I'm traveling, they're sure to meet me somewhere, you know, in a public place,

Q (Your paths do cross.)

A - even on the street they come up, don't you know. Just in Berlin recently and every day there were students running after me in the street; "Aren't you Henry Miller?" You know this happens everywhere, mm.

Q This would be a wonderful --

A Sc I get some idea of who my readers are. Sometimes I'm very disappointed.

Q Are you?

A Oh, yes. I mean not in general. I make exception for the young people. I think young people are the better readers, my best readers, more intelligent, more alert, more alive, more full of knowledge, more hope in them than, say, the adult even the learned adult, you know, like a professor, do you see. He, I have less in common with him, less talk, less to say to him, than I have with a boy of 17 or 18 who happens to read me.

Q Why do you think this is? Do you think that the -

A Because the old -- by the time a man gets to be a professor - ha - 35 -- he's already half dead, do you see, (laughter) and he's stuck in his profession and stymied, do you know? Caught in a trap. Whereas the young or open, they don't know where they're going yet, and they're curious about everything, and enthusiastic, and their eyes are not blinded, blindfolded, you know, hah, yes.

Q Do you think then that the reader today is more receptive to your books or do you think that the younger readers have always been receptive in this, than legally that your books have not been accepted?

A Oh, there's never been any question about that, that the legal thing is a completely false thing, do you see, and deprive people who -- I would have been read by millions of people had it not been for the censorship.

Q (Yes.)

A I know I have millions of readers in America. Do you see?

Q Of course you have.

A And yet, until recently I was hardly known, you might say.

Q Because the books had to be smuggled in?

A Yes, yes.

Q And weren't available on the open shelf.

A And then known for the wrong reasons, don't you know?

Q Yes. A - mm. Well, I'm interested to learn something about whether when you're traveling, as you have been in Europe, you write on a regular schedule, or whether you travel, absorb, then come home and write.

A That's right. When I travel I have an empty head. I can't do anything, except sponge in things, do you see? Absorb, as you say. No, I can't -- I have -- if I settle down for a while in a place, say

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- I know I will be three weeks or a month, then I might do some short writing, not a book, do you see, but I've written many things while traveling, largely prefaces for other books, you know, or some little thing for a paper, you know, but I would never be engaged on a long work while traveling.
- Q Would you write something like your delightful stories, "Nights of Love and Laughter," while you're traveling?
- A No -- do you see, I think those were all selected from books, those the -- I think so. I don't think I wrote anything like, aa, those things while traveling, none at all, no. I remember wrote, writing one thing I told Tom here. "My Life As An Echo". I wrote that in a hurry, in a few hours, in Berlin in a hotel room because I had a cablegram, I had to do something for my Italian publisher. He was just bringing the "Tropics", the two "Tropics" out in Italian, and it's a very delicate situation. The authorities are against it, and he was hoping I could give him something that he could give to the papers and magazines, you know. So, I wrote this thing, (laughter) "My Life As An Echo", which is a steal from a Yiddish writer who, by the way never, I don't think he ever wrote the book. He's credited with it, but I'm dubious if it ever existed.
- Q Who was that?
- A I, I forget his name, at the moment. Yeah, Moishe Nadir, like nadir, you know, the lowest point. (Q. Yes.) a Moishe, pseudonym it was. I think he's dead now, but I had a good friend who had told me all about it, and the whole thing intrigued me. It's a funny story about him acting the part of an echo in some hotel (laughter) for the tourists, do you see? They'd go to a certain place, and it was said that if you went there you'd get the echo, and it was him always echoing back. (laughter)
- Q Well, now, you do have a new book coming out soon, don't you?
- A Yes, the New Directions book, "Stand Still Like The Hummingbird," which is a collection of things, mostly things that have not appeared in book form, ever, only in magazines, do you see.
- Q And when will we expect that?
- A That's the end of this month.
- Q The end of this month.
- A Mhum. Yes.
- Q Well, a, do you have a favorite book? Most authors do, and sometimes the particular book that an author will choose isn't the favorite book of the public.
- A Mm, I have many favorite books.
- Q Do you really?
- A Many.
- Q Which ones?
- A Well, to name, I'll name just one tonight, because I got it for Tom today, he didn't seem to know it. "Siddhartha," by Hermann Hesse. You know his name, don't you? Hesse.
- Q Yes. Yes.
- A Hesse, "Siddhartha". It's one of my very, very beloved books. I think there's a great, great message in it. You see, I think it's a -- it's a very slim volume. It's in the form of a story, and yet this is to my mind the essence of Zen Buddhism without ever mentioning the word, do you see. It's about a, a Siddhartha, an enlightened one, like a Buddha, and then the real Buddha also comes into the picture, and for me, the other Buddha, the called Siddhartha, is better than the real Buddha. This is an extraordinary book, written in the early 1920's, I believe, and only brought out in English recently, through New Directions.
- Q And you yourself are interested in them.
- A Yes, very much.
- Q I was thinking, Mr. Miller, of one of your own books.
- A Yes.
- Q Are, are you -- (a, oh, ah) do you have a favorite (A. Yes, I do). or do you have many favorites in your own selection?
- A There I have -- I have one partic -- the one I like the best of all, and I'd like to be remembered by, of all them is a, "The Colossus of Maroussi", my book on Greece.
- Q And do you think, that this is one that has been a favorite with the public?
- A I know that, I know it has. Yes, I know that, very well. There are two books of mine, only two, that I know of, about which there seems to be unanimous approval, and acceptance. All the others are, aa, provocative, they are divided in opinions, you know.
- A Yes.
- Q But "The Colossus of Maroussi," chiefly, and then a tiny little book called "The Smile At The Foot Of The Ladder". No one ever has a word against those books, do you see? They like them, they love them. I think.
- Q And isn't it strange that probably the books that you will be remembered for, are the controversial books?
- A That's right. Yes, yes, although who knows? Who knows? (Q. Yes.) One never knows.
- Q In the long run, and this is what is important to you, I imagine.
- A Mm, yes. Well, I tell ya, it isn't important, because once I'm dead, what do I care?
- Q You don't care?
- A No, what do I care? I don't care what people think either now, or afterwards, really. I'm just telling you this as a fact, you asked me did I know or did I believe. This I know. But what I, what people should or will do doesn't interest me, really, no.

Q Is the important thing to you the writing of the book, (A. Yes.) the communication, or don't you really care what the reader thinks or what he's inspired to do because of the book?

A No, it's for me, I, it's for my own sake, my own pleasure, do you see. And whatever happens, well, that's interesting, but it isn't why I do anything. But how can I tell? How can anyone say he's doing this for this and that reason, or he hopes to accomplish this? It's a gamble. Nobody knows the effect of anything that he does upon the world. Do you see what I mean? (Q. Well, this -) Wouldn't you think, for instance, that Jesus, who came to save the world, don't you see, would have had a profound effect, that we would all be Christians? Where are there any Christians? Are there any?

Q Only those who profess Christianity.

A That's what I mean. But is there anyone like Jesus, who followed in his footsteps? St. Francis is probably the nearest one, hah - St. Francis. In fact I love him much more than Jesus, do you see. Yes. But that's it. One or two, hah, you know, or three or four, no Buddha's are there, no. (A. Unfortunately, not.) You see no Socrates. Yes. These men struggled, didn't they, to make the world aware of their thoughts, and their ideas, and their principles, and so on. And what is the end result? The opposite, it seems to me. The opposite, everything turns into a parody, a caricature, do you see?

Q Then the truly creative spirit, you feel, doesn't care? About -- (Q. You can only talk about your own.) I can only talk about myself. Yes, really, I wouldn't set up to say what creative minds have in mind, do you see. (laughter)

Q Well, I understand that you do have a book which didn't sell but which has provided quite a bit of fun in your life.

A Yes.

Q A book that you and Alf Perle's published.

A A book we published together? Or do you refer to a magazine?

Q About New York. It has New York in the title.

A Oh, yes. It's called "aller Retour New York."

Q Well, now, that that, intrigues me. What does "aller Retour New York" mean?

A Well, it means, it should be aller, accurately. It should be "aller a Retour," which, when you ask for a ticket, both ways, going and coming.

Q Oh, going and coming, New York.

A Yes. And it's in the form of letters, do you see. My letters to him. Yes.

Q Well.

A That's a, that's what that is, that was --

Q What happened to this book?

A Well, that book has been printed in English.

Let's see, did it, did it, was it printed by the Olympia Press? (T.M. Well, no.) It was printed privately in Chicago (Note: New York - T.M.) by Ben Abrams, (Note: Abramson - T.M.) a book seller, and he didn't give his name as publisher, he put something else down. He was afraid the book might be censorable. It had first come out in English. Yes. It first came out in English in Paris because I had made my trips to New York twice, during my ten year stay in Paris. I made two brief trips to New York, and this -- the first occurred maybe after four or five years in Paris, the whole of America, New York especially, was like a foreign world to me. I had already become so thoroughly imbued with the French spirit and way of living, don't you know, that my own country seemed very bizarre to me. I saw it with new eyes, and it looked bad, very terrible to me.

Q I can well imagine. (laughter)

A Yes. This is rather a cruel book, in a way. It's exaggerated. It isn't a true picture of America, it was primarily of New York City, I think.

Q But it was true at that time, it was the way that you saw.

A It's the way I saw it. Of course, in a sense, all my books are this way. They're all entirely personal, subjective, biased and prejudiced, do you see. I don't profess ever to be saying what's true or what is, you know, only what I see, what I feel.

Q The way that you perceive.

A Yes, yes. ahah. That's my truth. (laughter)

Q Well, Mr. Miller, when you judge the books of other people, now you recently judged a contest in Mallorca, and I understand that you're going to Edinburgh next fall to judge another contest, and are in great demand there as a judge. What are you looking for in the work of other people?

A Mm. That's very difficult to answer. That's very difficult. I think that rather than the -- than the book, I do, I judge the man. You know, this is the one difference. I said it the other night, to someone, between Europe and America as regards literature, I think, how we feel about literature. That in Europe it's the man, the writer who is accepted. And once he's accepted, he's accepted, he remains so. I mean he remains a part of the body of literature, and he's always highly considered. Whereas here we can drop a man over-night. We take a book of his, and it's a great sensation. Tomorrow if he happens to write one that the public doesn't care for, he can be forgotten, or annihilated, do you see. There isn't this loyalty to the man, the writer, I don't think.

Q Reputations rise and fall on the individual work.

A Yes, I think so. I think so. Well, now, as to how do I judge a book, once again because it pleases me, don't you know? I don't -- same with paintings. I don't pretend to know the value of them, but I certainly know the effect that they have upon me. And it's from that that I judge,

do you see?

Q Yes.

A I don't know what others may think, and I don't know where it belongs in the scale of values, but I will say it's a great book, if it happens -- you know, if I happen to feel that way about it. Frankly, I think that all criticism boils down to this, to your feeling about it, an emotional thing, rather than a rational thing, do you know?

Q Yes. That's why you can't sit down and add up numbers and make them come out to a hundred.

A No. No. ha, ha -

Q It's a feeling that you have about a certain product. (A. Yes, yes, yes.) But do you agree with other judges in this respect? Is it always easy for you and the other judges to see (A. Oh, oh.) -- this man should be awarded the prize? (A. No, no, it isn't.)

A Naturally -- well, I haven't had much experience, you see. Mallorca, fortunately I was in bed, (laughter) I was taken with the chills and fever, and I was spared this whole discussion. I was only there the first day when they discussed several French authors and Italian, and my choice was the English -- or the Welshman, rather, whom I do think is one of the greatest living spirits today. A man whose name should be on everybody's lips, as, just as Picasso's is, or Einstein. John Couper Pourys. Do you know that name?

Q No, I don't.

Q You don't.

Q No.

A There you are, you see, very few people know of him. He's got quite a range of books. He must have about 15 books, at least to his credit, some of them quite huge, and particularly -- let us, there are two books of his that I consider, what, without equal almost. One is his "Autobiography", to my mind greater than any autobiography that I have read, and that goes way back to St. Augustine, you know, when I think of autobiographies, and the second is "A Glastonbury Romance."

Q Now are these books available here?

A Yes. I think that they were, the "Autobiography" was published by Simon & Schuster, and has been republished by New Directions recently. Maybe in a paperback. (Q. I'll watch for that.) I heartily recommend it. The other, I'm not so sure; it would exist in the English editions -- England, he has a publisher there. All his books are current in this English edition. Yes.

Q Well, did did, the other judges agree with you about his --

A Oh, not at all, no, because nobody knew him in the first place, hardly any, only one French woman knew him, and made a wonderful, eloquent speech for him, and I had sent from, down from my bedroom a little note about him, do you see. But I knew it was hopeless, but then how could I -- they asked me who is the man -- I think that was my man. They want somebody contemporary. He's a he's a man, you see in his nineties. Yes. Yes.

(W. I. L.) He years in America, bringing culture to America, as he flipantly would say.

Q Which part of America did he --

A All over. He's been in every town, village and hamlet in America in those 30 years. Did nothing but travel around. And he would lecture for absurd sums. I used to listen to him for ten cents at the Labor Temple in New York.

Q And I suppose that he wrote quite a bit about America in his autobiography.

A Yes. In the Autobiography he has a wonderful account. And he loved America, I must say that, yes.

Q Well, what author was chosen at Mallorca.

A Oh, a German, a young German, fairly unknown, called Ewe, e w e, I think. I don't know if that's how you pronounce it, Johnson. And, God, I even forget the title of his book, that he (laughter) You see, I hadn't, I hadn't read it.

Q You hadn't read it?

A No. It hadn't been out, it isn't out in English even, it had to be read in German, you see. An other Italian girl won the prize. There were two prizes, you see. One that the publishers judged, in manuscript; and then the authors judged only published works, and it had to be within a three-year period, the last three years. Well, that's very difficult.

Q That is very limiting and confining, isn't it?

A Yes, sure. The man I had thought as a second choice was Saul Bellow. I loved that "Henderson The Rain King."

Q Oh, yes, of course --

A I loved that book.

Q We like to claim him as a Minnesotan because he has taught here, he's worked here, I've interviewed him. (Q. Indeed.)

A I didn't realize that. Is that so? Yes. I see. Well he would have been second choice. Yes.

Q Well, we're very happy to learn that.

#### SIDE II

Well, what young American authors besides Saul Bellow do you admire? Now, (A. Yes.) we should probably say then since you consider that as in Europe you should judge by the man, rather than the individual work.

A Yes, yes. I don't have any that I think of offhand. I have been fascinated by Kerouac, I must say. Very uneven writer, perhaps and I don't think he has yet shown his full possibilities, Kerouac.

Q He's too young. He hasn't --)

A But he has a great gift, this great verbal gift like Thomas Wolfe had, you know, and a few others. Tremendous gift I think, but

to me rather undisciplined, uncontrolled, and so on, but I am fascinated by one book of his called "The Dharma Bums." I don't know if you know that, do you?

Q No, I am not familiar --

A Yes. That's a beauty, in my mind, and is, and has more -- better grip on his subject too, than the other books, less loose, and, you know, it's more contained. Wonderful subject, wonderful theme he's got, wonderful characters in it, and I love his writing there. Wonderful writing. Yes.

Q It seems to me, Mr. Miller, that in writing, as probably in composing, that the maturity of the man is something that a, is, is all, that you mentioned Kerouac. He can keep maturing -- he has the possibilities, the potentialities. He can probably at 90 write.

A Yes.

Q -- more beautifully than at any other time of his life, if he lives to be 90.

A Yes, but he doesn't have to wait that long. You know. (laughter) (A. Yes.)

Q No, I don't mean that you can't produce earlier, but I think that it's one thing where they they will not say a man is too old, he's reached his prime, (A. Yes.) and he can no longer produce because --

A Well sometimes -- excuse me for interrupting you -- I think that when one has this gift as I call it, that it's a handicap. Do you see, the facility overcomes or is at odds and mitigates against the good writing. (Q. Mhm.) You know, it just flows out too easily, therefore there isn't enough struggle. I think there has to be a great element of struggle, always. I think when one is a bad writer to begin with it's much better than if one is a good one immediately. Do you see?

Q Yes, you feel that you have that struggle yourself?

A Oh yeah, I think I did, I think so many had and I think even a man like Picasso, and so you might say, aa, people may deny that. I don't think he was -- I can see in his early work how very derivative he was, how much he was influenced by other men, how imitative he was. I don't give two cents for a lot of his early things, do you see. Umm, and I think it's been that way with most men. You can see the seeds. Well, we all -- none of us start -- none of us are originals, by the way.

Q No.

A Do you see, we all derive, we all stem, we all have had our what shall I say -- our gods, our idols, whom we modeled ourselves upon, do you know? Now, mine I've always mentioned Dostoevsky was my great passion, surely, but actually, from the standpoint of writing, the way of writing, the style, and so on, hardly anyone knows that it was Knut Hamsun who was my -- the man I was trying to model myself upon. Knut Hamsun. Do you know his name?

Q No, I don't.

A The Norwegian, who won Nobel prize, lived to be 90 also, who was -- don't you know? He wrote "Pan", he wrote "Hunger", he wrote "Mystery," he's written a whole what --

thirty books, I suppose. Novels and novel-ettes.

Q I've never read any -

A No, really, really?

Q Now, when did you discover him?

A Very early, in my early twenties I would think. In that period, in the 1920's, the publisher in America called Knopf published wonderful translations of all foreign authors, many foreign authors, the best he could get, and Hamsun was one of them, do you see. Yes.

Q And he's the one you feel had most influence on you as a writer.

A From the sheer writing standpoint, do you see. From other standpoints, Dostoevsky was the god, the real one, you know, the all, mm, but to write like Hamsun is what I wanted. That style -- I even studied it, paragraph by -- line by line, to find out where is the secret of this? -- of course you never can, there's no way of taking an author apart and discovering how it is he does it, and so on, the magic there is a secret thing, do you know?

Q Once again, it's that something that you feel.

A Yes, yes.

Q The person feels as he reads it and some other author just doesn't have it.

A That's why I also think, you know, I don't know whether its relevant what I say right now, but I also think it's a very great waste of time to go through a course of how to write, do you see. I don't think anyone can teach anyone how to write, anything about it at all. Do you see what I mean?



Q Do you -- you don't even feel that you could give advice to young writers?

A Yes, you can give advice but how, will they follow it? Can they follow it? Does anyone follow advice anyhow, don't you see? Advice is always wasted, in my opinion. It's no use giving advice.

Q Should they follow it -- advice?

A No. (Q. They shouldn't.) I don't think they should either. No.

Q I thought you'd say that. (laughter)

A No, I don't think so. The only thing one can do is follow himself, do you see; dig in, discover what he is, and who he is, and reveal himself. We're all interested in everyone because he's unique. Everyone, the humblest to the highest, do you know? They're all interesting, and the more they are themselves, the more interesting they are. People become uninteresting when they become like everyone else, which is what America does to everyone, try to make them like one another, do you know, like buttons in a button mold.

Q Do you think that all over the world people are emulating us, and that people are becoming more conformists?

A That's, yes, that's very true, although -- yes, I have reservations about that, that is to say they may follow us in matters of technique, you know, how to manufacture things, how to what, do all the things that go on in the world of activity, of business, and so on, but, in the way of life, the daily pattern of life, how they eat, how they regard woman, how they philosophize about life, there, I think, it's gonna take quite a while. You see what I mean? The imitation that they, that we see is - superficial, it's a surface thing, right. It's got largely to do with security and economy, you know. How to get along better. How to live better, in, in a material way, do you see. (Q. But --) Which, but that doesn't affect them profoundly, I don't -

Q They won't, they won't change inside?

A I don't think so, no. I don't think, for example, the Chinese, for all the radical changes they've made you know, by legislation, decree and so on, I don't think that that it's gonna be a great, profound change in their nature, in their thinking.

Q Though, I don't believe that you could really change centuries of Chinese thought and philosophy.

A No, no, no old peoples, no, no. Now the Israelites, of course, have made startling changes, it would seem don't you know?

Q Yes.

A And yet, in a sense, don't they more and more seem like the Jew of the old testament at their best, when they were at their heights, you know, a the a fighting, war-like a dominant a people who are agrarian, you know, who could do things with their hands and so on, than the Jew that we know through a the ghetto period, you know, the dispersion, do you see. (Q. They've gone back to their dreams.) In a way, that's right, they've recaptured the essence of themselves, you might say. Hah? Yes, I think so.

Q Well I noticed, Mr. Miller, that you were quoted as having said that a you felt that the old Chinese and Hindu cultures were closest to reality and that this is where we in America and also this was a world trend, where we fail today, that we were living in a world of illusion.

A Yes. Yes.

Q Now, we were just talking about China, do you think that the -- the new China --

you said you didn't think that the new China would have lost this completely, you said they concentrated on the fundamentals; now I wanted to ask you a question, what do you consider the fundamentals?

A Mm. I think the fundamentals probably would be, let's say, one's attitude toward the cosmos, how you relate to mm God, for lack of a better, you know -- (Q. I'm going to let you) call it whatever you wish, and that, well, the Chinese are not supposed to have bothered much about that, as Hindus have, for instance, isn't that so?

Q That's true.

A Yet, there is something marvelous about the -- how shall I say -- the aa philosophy of the Chinese. The greatest book in the world probably, in my opinion, is, one of the smallest books that's ever written, and that's that -- the "Tas-Teh King" by Lao Tse, isn't that so? (Q. Yes.) Condensed to, what, how many pages, 50, 60 pages? And what, what is greater, what has been more wonderful than that book. It seems to contain everything. Unfortunately, the Chinese didn't follow after him, do you know? They went rather the way of Confucius, let's say, and aa the other aa one, aa the ethical way, whereas his was of the Spirit. This is what I am talking about. It's the a -- the sense of whether life is a thing of Spirit. Spirit, Spiritual has a poorer cast when you use the adjective, but Spirit, everyone knows what it is. This is the essential thing, I think, the knowledge or the awareness of Spirit and its domination of all life, do you see. I think in America we are hardly even aware of it, do you see.

Q Well, don't you think that the first Americans, the Indians, had this sense of Spirit?

A Ah, yes, that's another thing. We forget them, we don't think of them as Americans. Here they are. You're right, of course, absolutely. I agree with you. Surely. That's why they're still so powerful. They may outlast us, I always say. Do you know?

Q There a man couldn't attain his manhood without knowing who he was (A. Yes.) and what he was (A. Yes.) and how he related to the --

A That's right. And there, that's there again that's a -- you see we have education, don't we? We have these great universities, can they ever give what those men received, the boys through their initiation, do you see? What they got from the elders? We aa, have no -- no counterpart to this in our life. In the whole educational life, the best you get is a what is called religion, and this religion, whichever it may be, you know, is a watered down thing, isn't it? hah? It hasn't much effect upon us, you know. No. And then too, (Q. No, because it's something that.) we don't relate whatever we adhere to, to activation, to living, to living it out, do you see what I mean?

Q Yes. It's something that's imposed upon us from the outside, it really doesn't have any relationship to us. We never, instead of having it come from within.

A Yes.

Q So that we relate.

A Yes. Yes. Yes. Right. I know.



Q This is a very sad thing. But what can we do about it? Now, I was a (A. Yes) little bit disappointed when I read a part, paragraph farther in the article about you and it said that there was hysteria in the world today and you said there's no way out of it, we simply have to live through it, and yet I felt -- I don't really believe if Henry Miller had thought about that, that that's what Henry Miller would have said.

A Yes. Well I'll tell you (Q. Because I don't think you feel that way.) myself, I personally don't feel this way, but this is the way I look upon the world. I consider myself a fortunate man in that I'm a happy man, that I've accepted the world and life, do you see, even the atom bomb and the total destruction if you like. Do you see what I mean? (Q. Yes.) But, other people, the most of the world, is concerned, and is worried, but is incapable of doing anything about it, do you see, they're very -- fear and anguish is what prevents them from doing anything. As soon as you give way to fear, I mean, do you see, you become the victim. It dominates you, you cannot do anything then, to overcome it. You're the slave then. You've got to be detached. You've got to get detached, do you see. Let's say indifferent, if you like, which is rather light, but there's something to this indifference. A certain kind of indifference is like an armour, a protection. It doesn't mean that you are not fundamentally concerned, that you're cut off, but you're not going to be disturbed about things that you -- (Q. You're not going to let everything.) and also you -- this is more important -- you must realize there are things that are beyond your powers to control. You can't rectify everything. We can't be gods each and every one of us, do you know what I mean? (Q. Yes.) It's not within our province. I often say, aa, wouldn't it be wonderful just to demonstrate things to people, let them be God for a day. I would like to see how they would govern the world. Do you see? (Q. Mhm.) Would it be any worse or any better? I think it would be worse than it is, in its chaotic -- seemingly chaotic condition. Do you know? (Q. Well then, really.) And that's what people are doing so often, I mean, especially (Q. Playing God.) in politics. Trying to play God. Yes.

Q Yes. We think that we know how other people should live (A. That's right, that's right.) all over the world, our way is the best way, and therefore we try to impose it -- only we don't call it imposing.

A I know, I know. We think we're educating them, let's say. Yes, I know. We pity them, we feel sorry huh that they do not see things as we see them.

Q Well, then, in a sense, one could call you an anarchist.

A That's exactly what I am. Have been all my life. Without belonging, you know, subscribing (Q. Without labelling with a capital a.) -- yes, yes. Right, right. That's right.

Q Because the minute that you join a group and say I am an anarchist, we are anarchists, then you destroy the whole idea --

A That's right, that's right. That's quite right. That's quite right. And the only democrats there are, are those who are what, outside the party (Q. Democrats with small

d's.) -- yes, right, right. I think a man like Thomas Jefferson was a wonderful one, though do you know? Even if it was a big D. hah. He was a real -- (Q. He was a marvelous.) yes. One of our great presidents, I think.

Q And if, if we could only go back to the concepts which Thomas Jefferson had, we we, are spending all of our time now looking for our reason for being. We, we say we've lost something but most people don't know what it is that we've lost, (A. Yes.) they didn't know what it was that we had in the first place. (A. Mhm, yes.) And unless we can find our direction how can we expect to give direction to other people?

A That's right. Yes. Yes. Yes. And I think that today if there were a Thomas Jefferson, he'd probably be in jail, instead of in the president's chair. (ha)

Q He probably would.

A You know, it sounds -- some of his things are so explosive and dynamic and vital and real, don't you know, it's a real shock today to hear any -- talk -- We don't hear such talk any more, do we? (Q. No, we don't.) We don't have such open minds either, do you know.

Q Oh, we have a few, we have Henry Miller. (laughter) Mr. Miller, do you find that writing is more difficult in different places, do you find that the write, the things that you produce vary according to where you write them? For instance are you more at home writing in Big Sur, which I should think would be a very inspiring, marvelous place to write, than you are writing in Europe, for instance, or in New York?

A No, I don't think the place matters. Let's put it this way -- the conditions matter, but let us say the serenity, the beauty of a place, that doesn't have much to do with it, because actually I'll, I'm living in a room when I write, and I'm not even looking at the landscape, though there's a window there; I turn the chair away so that I don't see this. It would interfere with my writing. Do you see? No, all I demand is a certain amount of peace, you might say, and solitude. Of course this is the hardest thing for me to find, always. I'm constantly besieged, intruded upon, you know, through visitors and by correspondence, and my tragedy almost is that I don't get time to write. I'm glad if I can find two or three hours a day for my work. That's all I need, by the way. I don't write five, six, seven hours a day. I feel I can do enough in two or three hours. And I don't believe in draining the reservoir, do you see? I believe in getting up from the typewriter, away from it, while I still have things to say. It's better than to completely exhaust (Q. To write your self out.) -- yes yes.

Q Do you find that you are more inspired by nature or by people? Do you find that you are more inspired when you're by yourself or do you find that there's a happy balance between --

A Well, one never knows -- I find I'm inspired by all manner of things. Nature is very wonder -- powerful, yes, but people too sometimes. The only thing is with people is that it exhausts me, do you see? It, I burn out in these wonderful relations with people,

- you know, where I will get inspired, but all burned out through the intercourse.
- Q It's an exhausting (A. Yes.) -- you're defeated afterwards.
- A I think I'm going to write volumes after I see a certain person or had a marvelous exchange with him -- but nothing comes --
- Q No, you pour all of your creative energy into that particular relationship.
- A Maybe later. That's right. Yes! That's right. Yes. What I find is a very simple thing that I always think if one leads a normal life, a happy life, well -- this sounds -- what is normal?
- Q Yes, what is normal, what is happy.
- A But I mean by that nothing too exciting. You eat your three meals, you go and walk or play ping pong, or whatever your hobby is, you lead a natural existence. You don't rely on any outside things to stimulate you, just from nice easy living it wells up in you, and if you do this every day, go to your desk, as I generally do, right after breakfast, and do all the writing I can in the morning, you see, I'm finished by noon, usually, everything takes care of itself. It becomes a habit, don't you see, you've cultivated a certain habit, a way of life -- Now that's -- I'm always talking about the way of it, this is my criticism of America, fundamentally, and of all human individuals, too. Find the way of life and you have the secret, you have the secret, to happiness and joy, serenity, and creativeness, do you see? If you can find your rhythm, your rhythm, don't you know?
- Q But how does each person find this for himself?
- A One can't answer that, because that's for each one to discover. Each one has a different -- (Q. That's the joy and the pain and the challenge.) Yes. Yes. This is one of the reasons, let's say, we are here on earth, is -- don't you know -- is to find out such things. I don't think what we do is so important, it's what we are, what we learn to be, do you know. Discover our own being, and live with it, and act in accordance with our own being. I think that's the important thing. It doesn't matter that you are not a Picasso or Rembrandt or Dostoevsky, do you see? One can have as rich a life without the expression in some medium, I think. I find people whom just, who are just in themselves a piece of art. Do you see?
- Q Do you find them all over the world, I imagine.
- A Well, yes, of course, and among humble people, yes, certainly.
- Q Isn't this why you probably enjoy going places, meeting people, doing things that other people perhaps look askance at, and say "what does he find in these kind of people."?
- A Yes, yes, yes. You're very right, because listen, I must add this -- you know I never have had inspiration from meeting the really big people. The big people don't really communicate or give you anything. They've given it in their works, do you see what I mean? But with ordinary or eccentrics or strange individuals whom you don't know, who are anonymous, you know, you suddenly stumble upon something interesting. You want to -- you get curious. When you come to know, meet Picasso, you've already known him through his work, isn't that right? What more can he add, you know, in talk or contact? It is so true, by the way, that if there's only one person who cares, it makes all the difference. He's the symbol for all, isn't it so?
- Q That's true.
- A Yes. I used to feel that way about the writing, too. If only one -- I have one reader, and he really reads me, and appreciates, that's enough almost, don't you know? But you need one. Haha.
- Q You need one -- well you have many more than one. Henry Miller, we could talk to you all night. (Q. We've talked probably too much, haven't we?) Will you come back sometime?
- A Yes, I expect to, because I like it here, I find, to my surprise. I enjoy being here. (Q. You found that.) I think on my way to Europe when I come again I'll stop off, yes.

Sketches of Mr. Miller are by Steve Bigler, a senior at the University of Minnesota who is majoring in art.

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