



## Henry Miller (Reaktion Books - Critical Lives)

*David Stephen Calonne*

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As an author, Henry Miller (1891–1980) was infamous for his explicit descriptions of sex, and many of his novels, from *The Tropic of Cancer* to *Black Spring*, were banned in the United States on grounds of obscenity. But his books—frequently smuggled into his native country—became a major influence on the Beat Generation of American writers and would eventually lead to a groundbreaking series of obscenity trials that would change American laws on pornography in literary works. In this new critical biography, David Stephen Calonne goes beyond Miller's notoriety to take an innovative look at the way in which the author's writings and lifestyle were influenced by his spiritual quests.

Charting Miller's cultivation of his esoteric ideas from boyhood and adolescence to later in his career, Calonne examines how Miller remained deeply engaged with a variety of philosophies, from astrology and Gnosticism to Eastern thinkers. Calonne describes not only the effects this had on Miller's work, but also to his complex and volatile life—his marriages and love affairs with Beatrice Wickens, June Mansfield, and Anaïs Nin; his years in Paris; and the journey to Greece that resulted in the travelogue *The Colossus of Maroussi*, the book Miller considered to be his greatest work. After discussing Miller's final residences in Big Sur and the Pacific Palisades in California, Calonne considers the author's involvement in the arts, love of painting and music, and friendships with a number of classical musicians. Miller, Calonne reveals, was a quirky, charismatic man of genius who continues to influence popular culture today.

Highlighting many areas of the author's life that have previously been neglected, *Henry Miller* takes a fascinating revisionary approach to the work of one of American's most controversial and iconic writers.

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