

## Miller's Lifelong Road to *The World of Lawrence*

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It was oddly coincidental that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* appeared in 1928, at the very moment Henry Miller (1891-1980) arrived in Europe for the first time, and that D.H.Lawrence (1885-1930) died in March 1930, several days after Henry's return to Paris. If a chance encounter had been realized, how would they have reacted to one another? Would they have experienced a strong spiritual bond? Or would they have been in general disagreement? Unfortunately such an encounter did not occur. At any rate, in Paris to which the literary center of the world had shifted from New York during the 1920's, Miller began to take the works of Lawrence very seriously both in the happy memory of the reading of *Women in Love* (1920) with his old friend, Emil Schnellock, and under his publisher's instruction to write something about Lawrence. Incidentally, in *Henry Miller, A Life* (1991), Robert Ferguson described Miller's interest in Lawrence in relation to other great writers in his New York days<sup>1</sup>:

He was spending much of this time in Emil Schnellock's company, either at his studio or on long rambling walks through Prospect

Park discussing their favourite writers. Schnellock was especially fond of D.H.Lawrence, *Women in Love* had, in 1922, just survived the efforts of Justice John Ford of the New York Supreme Court to ban it. Lawrence later came to mean a lot to Miller, and the atmosphere of rebellion, sex and fame associated with his writing impressed Henry even then; but the appreciation of Lawrence as a writer, thinker and prophet did not develop for another ten years....<sup>2</sup>

In this essay, I wish to examine how Miller was greatly influenced by Lawrence's dynamic creativity through his works and how he struggled to create a real book on Lawrence and how he then retreated from him.

First of all, in Paris, Jack Kahane of the Obelisk Press gave a piece of good advice to Miller who was then standing at the threshold of his writing career. Kahane was an Englishman who had emigrated from Manchester to Paris in the 1920's with the ambition of becoming a writer, but produced only a few pornographic novels under the pen-name Cecil Bar. Since 1930 his publishing activities as the founder of the Obelisk Press had become his main interest and his major source of income. Very pleased with the publications of Joyce's (1882-1941) *Haveth Childers Everywhere* (1930) and *Pomes Penyeach* (1927), he seemed to have the prospect of good sales of some contemporary writers. In the "Introduction" to *The World of Lawrence* (1980),

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1 At that time, the artist-heroes with whom Lawrence was mainly concerned were generally modern outsiders, such as Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-81), Knut Hamsun (1859-1952), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Johan Strindberg (1849-1912), Arthur Rimbaud (1854-91), Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), Élie Faure (1873-1937), Vincent van Gogh (1853-90), and Marcel Proust (1871-1922) and James Joyce (1882-1941) whose courage and linguistic artistry he greatly admired.

2 Robert Ferguson, *Henry Miller - A Life*, London, Hutchinson, 1991, p.71.

Kahane's status is discussed in details:

The genesis of *The World of Lawrence* dates back to Paris, 1932, when Jack Kahane of the Obelisk Press, who had recently agreed to publish *Tropic of Cancer*, suggested to Miller that it would be published politically if prior to the publication of such a shocking novel he was to appear on the literary scene as the author of a short critical study of Lawrence and Joyce. To be associated with these two established writers and to be known as a critic would give him status as a serious thinker – the kind of reputation which had helped Lawrence and Joyce to weather the censors. In addition, as Kahane saw it, it was only logical that Miller should write on Lawrence, since the Lawrencean influence on his ideas was so evident.

As one might expect, Miller's reactions were mixed. That Lawrence was significant in his own literary development was true; moreover, Lawrence had permeated his personal life as well. In the early 1920s, in New York, Lawrence had been the subject of many conversations between Miller and his good friend Emil Schnellock; in the mid-twenties, he had seen the Gudrun-Ursula relationship dramatized in the "lesbian" affairs of his wife, June. In Paris, in April 1931, he had met Walter Lowenfels, who was at the time working on his elegy for D.H.Lawrence. More recently and perhaps most significantly, it was, by way of their mutual interest in Lawrence that Miller had met Anaïs Nin, the woman who by now had become his muse, confidante, and patronesse.

Furthermore, stimulated by his conversations with Nin, whose *D.H.Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study* had just been published, and outraged by Mabel Dodge Luhan's *Lorenzo in Taos*. Miller had himself already determined to write something on Lawrence. Nor did he envision it as being a short or insubstantial piece. "As for

the Lawrence thing” he wrote to Nin in April 1932, “I am almost afraid to embark on it. I want to say so much that I am afraid that it will be too long to fit any magazine or newspaper.”

Under different circumstances, therefore, Miller would undoubtedly have welcomed Kahane’s suggestion....<sup>3</sup>

Before Miller agreed to go along with Kahane’s plan, he had already read *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928), but Miller’s letter to Schnellock on February 16, 1931 shows that he was very critical of the novel. Perhaps he might have bought the book or borrowed it from Richard Osborn, a bohemian in American Paris, with whom he shared a studio apartment from 1930 to March 1931. At Osborn’s flat, in relative peace, Miller began to touch on the world of Lawrence and was able to revise his own *Crazy Cock* (1991) at the same time:

....Have been up to the ears in Lawrence lately. Understand him better than ever. Yes, I know his limitations, Limitations! What’s that? We all are prone to limitations, eh, old poof? The worst thing about Lawrence, as I see it, is his use of the orthodox form. That was especially a great pity in the case of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. There he had hold of such a wonderful idea. And he marred it by using the old schema. All the stuff about the colliers, about the intellectual life of the parlor, about democracy and Communism, etc. Fiddlesticks! If he had just confined himself to warmhearted fucking all the way through, what a book it would have been. But when he describes the forest there, and the forester, when he opens up the whole heart of nature like a vein filled with

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3 Henry Miller, *The World of Lawrence – A Passionate Appreciation*, edited with an introduction and notes by Evelyn J.Hinz and John J.Teunissen, London, John Calder, 1985, pp.11-2.

blood....God, then you have the real Lawrence, the mystic, the son of Nature, the phallic worshipper, the dark flower and the Holy Ghost....<sup>4</sup>

At this stage Miller was reading *Lady Chatterley's Lover* with mixed feelings of admiration, spite and understanding. In the spring of 1931, with his status as a starving artist well established, he still kept a distance from this book because he boasted of his *Tropic of Cancer* (1934), and thought that it would be

“the book of the century” as “magnificent, overwhelming... beside which *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Ulysses* is [sic] lemonade.”<sup>5</sup>

Miller also reproached Lawrence for his usual hatred of the French writers whom he regarded as decadents rather than as men who loved to taste life and its earthy mysteries. Miller had intended to write a very short essay on Lawrence, but when his publisher asked him to create a sixty-page promotional pamphlet on the writer, he agreed to the proposal and set to work on it. What the publisher had in mind was a simple philosophical work with autobiographical narratives, and he even hoped it would come out before *Tropic of Cancer*.

Besides Kahane's suggestion, Miller's interest in Lawrence was encouraged by other friends: Michael Fraenkel, an independent thinker, and Walter Lowenfels, a communist sympathizer. Both were keen admirers of Lawrence and were espousing the archtypal theories of

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4 Henry Miller – *Letters to Emil*, edited by George Wicks, New York, A New Directions Book, 1989, p.72. (a letter on Feb. 16, 1931)

5 Henry Miller, *The World of Lawrence – A Passionate Appreciation*, edited with an introduction and notes by Evelyn J.Hinz and John J.Teunissen, London, John Calder, 1980, p.12.

Jung as an alternative to the dogma of Freud, but an encounter with Anaïs Nin (1903-77) contributed even more to his writing on the works of Lawrence. In early December 1931, the meeting was secretly arranged by their mutual friend, Richard Osborn, who was doing some legal work for Nin in relation with a publishing contract for her book on Lawrence. Nin had some personal reasons to be attracted to his works. She wanted to be rescued through an involvement in the novels of Lawrence from what she experienced as a living death, her disastrous marriage to a wealthy young banker, as well as to come to terms with an incestuous feeling toward her divorced father from her early years. She therefore wrote a short essay in passionate appreciation of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The publisher of the Paris edition of Lawrence's book had agreed to publish it. Thus, unfortunately, she was already well ahead of Miller in her devotion to Lawrence and psychoanalysis. After Miller had set to work on Lawrence, she sent him the following letter:

When you said about Dostoevsky: "It is a pity that we shall never have the opportunity again to read or see a man placed at the very core of mystery and and by his flashes not merely illuminating things for us, but showing us the depths, the immensity of the darkness...." I thought how much this meant to me, and that it was what I really felt about D.H.Lawrence, and that it was the darkness which attracted me... don't you think it *is* so about Lawrence? And another reason why I could not live with Dostoevsky alone, and had to find something else, is that in Lawrence the "darkness" was mostly sexual - and there is not quite enough sexuality in Dostoevsky. Implied, yes, suggested, shown by passion, proved by death - *mais la sexualité presque toujours dans l'ombre*, whereas it is that which Lawrence tried to bring out of the darkness. And you too - I love that about your work as much as I love life itself. I

use the word "sexual" in the sense which includes love - that is why when I talk about Casanova I didn't mean to compare at all his sexuality and your frank sensualism or sensual love. You had a right to say that if I could find a resemblance I didn't know men. The resemblance only occurred to me numerically speaking!<sup>6</sup>

This would-be daughter seeking a spiritual bondage to Lawrence, who measured people not by their wit or intelligence but by their blood and vitality, thought that Miller would be her savior. She felt that Miller would discover the part of herself which had remained undeveloped, which needed only to be picked up and guided. In a passage in her *Diary*, admitting to being fascinated by Miller, Nin wrote:

I listen to Henry like a child and he talks to me like a father....Henry's work has that effect on me.<sup>7</sup>

Nin's fascination with incest and psychoanalysis reinforced both the keen pro-Lawrence campaign mounted by Schnellock during his walks with Miller in Prospect Park and the advice of Kahane. Miller's own desire to immerse himself fundamentally in a sexual reality also attracted him to Lawrence. What's more, the interest in Lawrence of the desirable and talented Nin, would have also evoked a sense of literary rivalry in him. He certainly, then, would have wanted to show that he was indeed worthy of kinship with the great writer as was being suggested by his friends, old and new. At any rate, the writer to whom Henry came to demonstrate the greatest curiosity and who would become his favourite author in his Paris years was D.H.Lawrence.

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6 *A Literate Passion*, edited and with an introduction by Gunther Stuhlmann, London, A Harvest/HBJ Book, 1987, pp.11-2.

7 Anaïs Nin, *Henry and June*, Penguin Books, 1990, p.67.

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Miller was soon deeply involved in reading D.H.Lawrence, but he was no longer thinking only about the promotional pamphlet that Kahane had had in mind. He entered into the writing of the brochure full of pride and rivalry. Now, he could not accept the publisher's notion that he needed to borrow literary stature from Lawrence and Joyce, probably the greatest writers of his age, because he was not yet able to stand on his own literary reputation. To write on either of these two writers merely as advance publicity would put him in the shameful position of a follower. This simply wouldn't do. Instead, he decided the work was to be a large-scale confrontation with them which would serve to drive them, as models, from his consciousness. He was not going to limit himself only to exorcizing these two contemporaries either. He wrote to Nin in October 1932:

I want to say everything you omitted [from your study of Lawrence] and wished to say. I want to exhaust my ideas on these two men, and have done with them for all time. I don't care how much I write! ....The thing is growing enormous in conception - as I said, I want to rid myself once and for all of this incubus - of all the influences, gods, books, great names, etc. which throttled me before. I want to free myself by one Herculean effort, and in doing so give the finest counterpart to my creative books. Let them jeer, if they will, at the emotionalism or lack of form, etc. in the novels. This will give them a piece of solid meat to bite into - and I hope I give them lockjaw.<sup>8</sup>

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8 *Henry Miller - Letters to Anaïs Nin*, edited and with an introduction by Gunther Stuhlmann, London, Peter Owen, 1965, pp.93-4.



As Miller began working on the project he continued to write and live furiously. He also found time to read a great deal besides Lawrence. At this stage, he particularly devoured Proust, Hermann Keyserling (1880-1946) and Joyce, taking copious notes to form the basis of some of his future books and to fill out the current project. His friend, Alfred Perlès was awed by Miller's passion to read:

He was never content with writing only one book at a time. While drinking on *Black Spring* he collected material for a projected work on Lawrence *The World of Lawrence*. The notes he made on this book and the excerpts he copied, however, grew to such proportions that he got lost in the material as in a jungle. Sometimes I was staggered by the huge tomes he read and digested at record speed. He would pick up an enormous volume of Spengler or Otto Rank before breakfast and start reading on an empty stomach. He was a most conscientious reader too, never skipping a line; nearly every page of the quarto volumes he perused was copiously annotated with marginal notes, observations and comments.<sup>9</sup>

In November 1932, with mixed feelings of admiration, irritation, and sympathy, Nin recorded in her *Diary*:

Henry has buried himself in his work; he has no time for June. I fall back into my own work. Henry telephones me. Mails me the bulk of his work, and I try to follow his ideas, but what a tremendous arc he is making, D.H.Lawrence, Joyce, Faure, Dostoevsky, criticism, nudism, his creed, his attitude, Michael Fraen-

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<sup>9</sup> Alfred Perlès, *My Friend - Henry Miller*, with a preface by Henry Miller, London, Neville Spearman, 1955, p.105.

kel, Keyserling. He is asserting himself as a thinker; he is asserting his seriousness. He is tired of being considered a mere 'cunt painter,' and experimentalist, a revolutionary.<sup>10</sup>

The original plan Miller had thought out for the creation of the book was a four-part structure. Indeed, his first idea on writing the book was to destroy the idealistic world of Lawrence completely. He wrote to Schnellock on October 14, 1932:

The sin of Lawrence is his own idealism. He hated man in favour of some unknown and abstract being who will never be born....I do loathe it sometimes - but it's the world, Emil, and it isn't our fault, nor even our business to right it.<sup>11</sup>

Against Lawrence's extraordinary idealism Miller proposed to set out his own absolute acceptance of life as it is. He gave predominance to "life" over abstract ideas and to individuals over a rigid system of thought, but a strong desire to escape from the shadow of Lawrence's reputation soon brought him back to his own ideas and his usual habit of copying out various extracts from the books he was studying. He explained to Nin in October 1932:

Now, with these four divisions, five counting introduction, I can write largely and loosely....There may be overlapping in these rough divisions. But I think it will iron itself out. I go along....

The Brochure keeps expanding - I am drawing up a new plan - a

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10 *The Diary of Anaïs Nin, 1931-1934*, edited and an introduction by Gunther Stuhlmann, New York, The Swallow Press & Harcourt, 1966, p.143.

11 *Henry Miller - Letters to Emil*, edited by George Wickes, New York, A New Directions Book, 1989, p.106.

sort of outline of 10 major divisions. Getting a tremendous grip of it and it's deepening....

All these pages of notes are like the pages of the brain. I could go mad. But I'm sane as all hell. I feel like a seer. And a prophet - A scourge....

The notes pile up around me like weeds. I know I'm repeating myself a great deal, but I can't recall any more what I say and I'm afraid of losing a thought.<sup>12</sup>

This period of intense interest in absorbing a wide range of writings lasted for two years, but in May 1933, its focus suddenly shifted. Although, from November to March, Lawrence had, to a certain extent, become lost in the confusion of ideas and other writers with whom Miller was concerned, from May onward, he occupied the center of the stage. This happened because, in May, Miller's attitude toward Lawrence also changed profoundly. As an example, the tree-like diagram probably inspired by Miller's fondness for the image of Yggdrasil, the World Tree of Nordic mythology might also have been used for his most serious project at this time. In May, this continued to be his goal. In a letter to Richard Osborne, Miller explained that he was "knocking the shit out of Joyce." Miller had been somewhat appreciative of Joyce as late as March 1933, but his rigid concern with Lawrence gave a death blow to this appreciation. On March 29, 1933, he wrote to Nin:

I want more and more about Lawrence - the Murry book and Colin's book and even the Mabel Dodge Luhan one, if you still have it. I'm going to tackle him, while I'm at it, from *every* possible angle - want *all* the facts and interpretations possible. I may never

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12 *Henry Miller - Letters to Anaïs Nin*, edited and with an introduction by Gunther Stuhlmann, London, Peter Owen, 1965, pp.94-96.

refer to him again in my life. Must wash myself clean of him.<sup>13</sup>

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On May 7, 1933, he also wrote to Nin to confess his misunderstanding about D.H.Lawrence:

I feel I have said unkind, unjust things about Lawrence. He is far greater than I ever dreamt....He stands out like a rock. He bides his time. I was practically ignorant of Lawrence when I began this study. Now I appreciate him deeply....I feel humble and chastened. But I am more now than ever I was before.<sup>14</sup>

On April 11, 1933, He had written the following letter to Schnellock:

....For over six months now I have been immersed in "The World of Lawrence" (the precise title I have chosen for that portion of my brochure which is devoted to him). In that universe I have lost myself - and *found* myself....

As I was saying a moment ago, I am now immersed in Lawrence's world, and as soon as I finish with him I move on to Joyce and then to Proust. I have accumulated so much material, have made such gigantic plans, that God only knows when I shall come to the end....

Recently I have thought principally of one night in Prospect Park, when we had first renewed our friendship....

And how amazed I am also that we grasped so little then, we who were already mature, as men, and yet infants with respect to these

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13 *Henry Miller - Letters to Anaïs Nin*, edited and with an introduction by Gunther Stuhlmann, London, Peter Owen, 1965, pp.116-7.

14 *Ibid.*, p.118

things that Lawrence held so dearly. Some of this you will perceive when you get the completed manuscript. I have a feeling that I am plumbing him deeper than anyone has - and why should I not, since there is so much in common between us, even to the obscurity. But I have been terribly slow in maturing - that I see. And yet, I do not regret it altogether. The vast experiences in which I wallowed ought to mean a tremendous lot when this process of unloading, which has now commenced in a earnest, finally begins to be understood.<sup>15</sup>

What finally converted Miller to Lawrence was his reading of *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922), the essay called "The Crown" collected in *Reflections on The Death of a Porcupine* (1925) Nin had sent and *Apocalypse* (1931). It was particularly "The Crown" that made the most profound impact on Miller. It must be borne in mind that up until this time his knowledge of Lawrence had been limited to his major novels and to minor critical sources. Moreover, when he had written to Nin in April, 1932, his image of Lawrence in the brochure was that of

a little runt, a nasty devil, a dry, thoroughly English type. I despise his workingman's (no, it was bourgeois) attitude about things - scrubbing floors, cooking, laundering, etc. And his being alone crap! Not sensitiveness, but timidity, lack of guts, lack of humanity.<sup>16</sup>

However, when he wrote to Nin on May 7, 1933, he told her that in

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15 *Henry Miller - Letters to Emil*, edited by George Wickes, New York, A New Directions Book, 1989, pp.116-7.

16 *Henry Miller - Letter to Anaïs Nin*, edited and with an introduction by Gunther Stuhlmann, London, Peter Owen, 1965, p . 117.

“The Crown”, by contrast, he found a man, a profound thinker, and a visionary:

The essay called “The Crown” - about a hundred pages long - is far and away the best thing Lawrence ever wrote....It is prophetic and a judgement upon mankind....The language is matchless-remniscent of the best in the Bible. The thought is superior to any of Jesus' sayings, in my opinion. It is like a new Revelation. It is based on Spengler....And it goes beyond Spengler....The seed of all Lawrence's writing is here - and more than just seed. It is the mystic at his most mystical. I am in love with it.<sup>17</sup>

“The Crown,” in short, was the vital credo that Miller had been struggling to create in his own career for the past eight months. On the one hand he bitterly regretted that he had not read it earlier:

It might have saved me a lot of work. On the other hand, it was terribly good to win through to this and to find the answer to all the enigmas he presents most wonderfully treated.<sup>18</sup>

Possibly what is most interesting in Miller's re-evaluation of Lawrence, however, is his comment on Lawrence's relative youth when he wrote “The Crown” (1915):

It is criminal that everyone ignores this “Crown” essay. It has as much as Luther's manifesto. I am amazed that it was written at such an early age - 30 years ! It is profound, moving, beautiful. It

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17 *Henry Miller - Letters to Anaïs Nin*, edited and with an introduction by Gunther Stuhlmann, London, Peter Owen, 1965, p.117.

18 *Ibid.*, p.117.

is like a Testament for a coming age.<sup>19</sup>

Now Miller was going to make Lawrence his chief concern and to understand fully rather than interpret his works. He felt that he had fully grasped Lawrence's essential thought, that is, that he regarded Lawrence as the typification of the ideas which he had been developing on his own. Fortunately, however, this did not require that he should scrap all that he had written in the previous months. He spent almost as much time in examining carefully what he had written as he spent in creating his new ideas, for example, in writing marginal directions about the revision or the expansion of an idea and trying to determine how all sections were organized. During this time, Nin was a great helper. Her passionate participation in the task is clear from the many notes on the typescripts. Throughout the summer of 1933, Miller concentrated on "The World of Lawrence," with more enthusiasm than ever before. He wrote to Nin in September:

My head's bursting. Never made so many connections, synopses, elisions and syntheses in my life. And the end not yet! And, despite the note form, quite lucid, final, in statement. I have just worn down to a flame in the last two days. I can't go much further than this. It's like I reached the point of saturation - exhaustion of present potentialities. I'm amazed by it all myself. And now I see that I can really *complete* something, I started in the fullest way - something I have never heretofore done. Previously everything has been aborted by this or that - by *myself*, I suppose. Now - not even an earthquake could keep me from carrying out my plans.<sup>20</sup>

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19 *Henry Miller - Letters to Anaïs Nin*, edited and with an introduction by Gunther Stuhlmann, London, Peter Owen, 1965, p.118.

20 *Ibid.*, p.143.

What was driving him now was not merely his admiration for Lawrence but his identification with him.

Epoch-making days, I tell you. It's not Lawrence - it's myself I'm making a place for!<sup>21</sup>

In his study of Lawrence as a mode of his own self-expression, he adopted Lawrence's way of dealing with American writers as in *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923), and perhaps consciously so since it was in this same context that he would create the book. There was therefore no longer any antagonism between his theme and himself but only the question of the formation of the book. The thing was to coordinate the material he wanted to rescue and the new passages he had written with various purposes the book was being made to serve.

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This burst of enthusiasm, however, actually foreshadowed the death of the project. By October 1933, Miller's approval of Lawrence's struggles had become so synonymous with his own irritations that he could no longer see clearly or distance himself in any way from his material. The notes piled up around him like weeds. He could not find a path through the jungle of notes that had grown up around him. After having devoted the best part of the previous eight months or so to the study of Lawrence, Miller had become so involved in Lawrence's universe that he had lost all track of where Lawrence's ideas ended and his own began. He wrote Nin in February 1934 that, in an "act of heroism", he had destroyed it:

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21 *Henry Miller - Letters to Anaïs Nin*, edited and with an introduction by Gunther Stuhlmann, London, Peter Owen, 1965, p.144.



Today, by an act of heroism, I shattered the work of months. I am setting up a new cosmos. I have shed the brochure in order to write *the* book of the century. I have transferred the this to the that and back again. Everything lies on the floor. The shreds must be reintegrated. The shreds must make membrane, tissue, epidermis. But the idea is glowing inside, incarnate, a world shedding its skin. The idea has two parts – its soul and its exegesis. The idea is welded by death. Everything that cannot be integrated forms the 'Soul of Death'.<sup>22</sup>

Also in February 1934, he wrote to Schnellock about the death of the project.

My work on Lawrence has been *enormous!!!* Can't begin to tell you all. The book will speak for itself. I practically smashed it to pieces in order to get a more secure foundation. Now I have it – but it cost me a year of intense effort. And to say one does this for art, or for the world, is foolish. *I am the gainer*. I fought something out – to a conclusion. Not just tackling a problem, so as many *finished* writers do, but living through a thing, body and soul, till one almost dies of it. That is what I mean by *creative effort*. That is a surrender which yields a certain eternal sort of triumph – not paid for in fame or money or success. In two years I have learned much. I have established myself, for myself at least, as a real artist, one with the best. I mean it! I know my own worth now – the world will catch on slowly, maybe never – but I think it will. What I've got is vital and durable – in this rotten age or any age. I don't fear. I've won my battle – the rest is

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22 *Henry Miller – Letters to Anai's Nin*, edited and with an introduction by Gunther Stuhlmann, London, Peter Owen, 1965, p.155.

tinsel, whether it be recognition or ignominy. And this, you will see, makes of me, or designates me, as a profound optimist. If I die tomorrow it won't matter. *I won't die.*<sup>23</sup>

Then, as if the unhappiness caused by the difficulties of the Lawrence book were not enough, Kahane told Miller that he would delay the publication of *Tropic of Cancer*. It is difficult to determine exactly when Miller decided to abandon his "World of Lawrence." As Nin took a part of the manuscript to Rebecca West in April, 1934, he was apparently still thinking about the work at that time, and as late as 1941 he declared that after he finished his current project and the Lawrence book he had nothing more to write and would retire. In 1938, however, in the version of "The Universe of Death" which he published in *Max and the White Phagocytes (1938)*, he explained why he had given up his project. After emphasizing the significance of Lawrence's life force and his highly creative reaction to death, Miller continued to say:

The fact remains, nevertheless, that not even a Lawrence was able to exercise any visible influence upon the world. The times are stronger than the men who are thrown up. We are in a deadlock. We have a choice, but we are unable to make it. It was the realization of this which impelled me to end my long introduction to *The World of Lawrence*, of which this is the final section, with the title "The Universe of Death".<sup>24</sup>

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Miller also published some parts

23 *Henry Miller—Letters to Emil*, edited by George Wickes, New York, A New Directions, 1989, p.146.

24 Henry Miller, *The World of Lawrence—A Passionate Appreciation*, edited with an introduction and notes by Evelyn J. Hinz and John J. Teunissen, London, John Calder, 1980, p.22-3.

from "The World of Lawrence." The study as a whole, however, had not appeared until 1980, the version we can now read. In their "Introduction" to *The World of Lawrence*, Evelyn J. Hinz and John J. Teunissen explain Miller's decision to publish it:

....Nor was it without considerable thought and some hesitation that Miller finally decided to let it be published. For just as form was one of his major concerns when he was struggling with the work, so when we spoke with him about the book one of his first questions was how the study could be published when it had no concrete or final shape. As we were able to remind him, however, if he had not finished the book he had drawn up a table of contents and provided a synopsis which explained the focus of each chapter and the general direction that he wanted the book to take. Furthermore, we pointed out that one of his central theses throughout his study was that it is vitality not smoothness or consistency that is the mark of greatness, and of the former quality his work lacked nothing.

Since it was such a long time ago that he had written the book, Miller was also worried that the work might have the markings of juvenilia. But when we asked him to read what are now the opening paragraphs his initial response was "Did I write that?" and then, "That was written upstairs, don't you know" - his own very graphic way of explaining that when he was working on the book he had felt inspired, possessed, driven. In the final analysis, however, it was probably the period of anguish with which the book was associated in his mind that best explains why he had kept it out of sight for so long. "Never did I work so hard and so assiduously, only to end up in utter conclusion," he recalled in 1952, when he wrote a brief explanatory preface to "The Universe of Death" for *The Henry Miller Reader*.

How different *The World of Lawrence* would have been if Miller had in the 1930s been able to complete the work is impossible to say. It can be said, however, that what follows does measure up to what, in 1933, he described as the only fitting way to pay tribute to a man like Lawrence, a man who “*embraced everything.*” “The only way to do justice to a man like that, who gave so much, is to give *another* creation. Not *explain* him – but prove by writing about him that one has caught the flame he tried to pass on.”<sup>25</sup>

At any rate, Miller put the manuscript aside around page 800. In 1938 he definitely gave the project up, and in 1941 he informed Nin of his retirement as a writer after his completion of the Lawrence book. Indeed, Miller’s ambition in recreating the world of Lawrence seemed to be greater than his ability, and his continuing to undertake this huge plan without any necessary material seems to have been somewhat reckless and foolish. After all, his whole personality rejected the inner force which might have enabled him to continue to write the Lawrence book. In a sense, however, it is interesting to know that as he felt the material towering chaotically over him, he strongly defended *his* form:

“*my* form and not what the jackasses call form....any worthwhile artist, any man who is above the usual considerations of form.”<sup>26</sup>

To support this view, Miller briefly proposed inserting his Preface in the middle of the book. He admitted that this was a curious step, but allowable because he had not begun to understand his subject until this point. As a matter of fact, he tried to maintain a serious interest in it

25 Henry Miller, *The World of Lawrence – A Passionate Appreciation*, edited with an introduction and notes by Evelyn J. Hinz and John J. Teunissen, London, John Calder, 1980, p.23-4.

26 *Ibid.*, pp.16-7.

for the rest of his life through the usual trick of presenting his failure to finish it as a success. Perhaps it was careless of Kahane to have suggested the project, but more than that, Miller's willingness to take it would have reflected his fear at the time. Closer than he had ever before been to the real goal of publication of *Tropic of Cancer* and full status as a real writer, he was afraid that his dream might disappear if he did not accept his publisher's offer.

Incidentally, we can find two interesting critical footnotes in *Henry Miller – A Life* by Robert Ferguson:

The closest the script came to publication was in the spring of 1934, Nin took it with her to London to show Rebecca West (1892-1983), West thought it 'a completely silly book', but out of loyalty to Nin she showed it to several publishers whose refusal to take it on seemed to her to their credit. She was especially contemptuous of Henry's 'delusion that Lawrence had been neglected in England, but had been read and rewarded in America, which is not the case, as his sales were five times greater in England'. Her judgement might have had more force had she not once declared Anais Nin 'the only real genius I have ever met in my life'. And T.S.Eliot (1888-1965), in regretting the need to reject the material on behalf of Faber and Faber for commercial reasons, nevertheless considered the material 'interesting'. As a fair evaluation of the book might be Miller's own description of Lawrence's analysis of Whitman in his *Studies in Classic American Literature*, that it was 'a mixture of genius and twaddle'.<sup>27</sup>

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27 Robert Ferguson, *Henry Miller – A Life*, London, Hutchinson, 1991, p.222.