Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch Study Guide

Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch by Henry Miller

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch by Henry Miller examines the famous writer's struggle to live and write in the Pacific coast paradise, examining how inhabitants strive for peace in an enclave separate from postwar materialism and pandemonium, seekers come and go, and fans upset his equilibrium.

To writer Henry Miller in the mid-1950s, Big Sur, CA, is a place for seeking inner enlightenment, but acclimatizing to it is difficult for urban dwellers like him. Miller pictures a strong but dispersed population that balances letting others live in peace with true helpfulness in words and deeds. He sees in Hieronymus Bosch's most famous triptych a spirit-filled world in which all existence is equally precious. Big Sur shows him that one can perceive paradise by opening enough windows.

"Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri," offers fifteen sketches of how people react to this Paradise. These sketches introduce a diverse collection of characters, who involve Miller in a variety of situations that help elucidate his views on life and art in the tense post-World War II era. These include visitors arriving with preconceived notions, locals who see UFOs, hear phantom music, and do bizarre things, and children and the many ways in which parents and schools raise them. His own efforts as a single parent are a poignant comedy of errors.

Miller describes being overtaken by a watercolor mania and his constant economic troubles, which friends and fans always alleviate just in the nick of time. He writes at length about Jean Wharton, a misunderstood and maligned healer, and painter Ephraim Doner, a true image of the Creator. Fan mail is both a burden and a joy. Bosch's painting moves him to contemplate the necessity of "Genuine Love" and looking to "Making a New Fabric" for society. He dedicates a long section to Conrad Moricand, an annoying astrologer whom he befriends in Paris before the war is a special case and deals with as a house guest in 1947 before having to set him free.

The Epilogue reexamines some of the earlier themes, particularly fan mail and the need to concentrate on living in peace and solitude wherever one is. Miller asserts that this is fully possible and blesses the life that he has found in Big Sur.

Part 1, The Oranges of the Millennium

Part 1, The Oranges of the Millennium Summary and Analysis

Almost 100 artists of all sorts, a dozen of whom are truly talented, come through Big Sur in Henry Miller's twelve years there, escaping the present and living in peace. Miller finds infatuated fans a constant nuisance. Disillusioned young professional males who become influential artists on the fringes of a vicious society are proof that the system is breaking down. In sparsely-populated Big Sur, neighbors know both how to let one alone and how to lend a hand.

The oranges in Hieronymus Bosch's The Millennium, and indeed all of the animals and plants in it share a magic "super-reality" (pg. 23), shared by Big Sur, a virtual paradise. One must find new ways of looking at things to see paradise undiminished by creation's flaws. No one who has left Big Sur finds what s/he wants elsewhere. People fail to recognize that life is a dream. Every place and thing has a unique ambiance and is in constant change. Awake, one can sometimes see a goodness that makes one content to die. Living and dying are one.

Big Sur seems an ideal place to work, but visitors are frequent. They bring gifts and news of the outside world, which allows Miller to "stay put and watch the world go round" (pg. 30.) Fledgling writers seek advice, but writing is a Calvary. Miller wants them to see, as he has, that all has been said and done and one only adds "Amen!" Few city dwellers can stand solitude, but communities built on simplification and detachment are inevitable is this destructive world. Big Sur is well connected to the world, filled with specialists in many fields, and everyone is talented, capable, resourceful, and self-sufficient. One must come with capable hands, a strong heart, and a sense of humor, and expect no modern amenities.

Part 2, Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri, Chapters 1-3

Part 2, Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri, Chapters 1-3 Summary and Analysis

In "The Cult of Sex and Anarchy," Miller tells how visitors, both intelligent and boring, interrupt his work. The include a Dutch woman who upbraids him for clearing the septic tank instead of writing and a would-be writer, Ralph, who wants to join the cult of sex and anarchy, which Miller assures him does not exist. Other interesting readers include a tourist who spends hours looking through Miller's watercolors and Harvey, a gifted story teller and expert in literature who suffers writer's block. Writers must get started and create an appreciative audience. People need art as much as they ignore it.

In Chapter 2, Miller sketches various members of "The Anderson Creek Gang," the colony of transient artists at Big Sur. Emil White's shack on the highway is its center. Because tourists assume it is a café, the Whites make some money serving coffee and sandwiches. Gerhart Muench gives outdoor piano concerts to ward off poverty. A few talented authors battle with writer's block and Miller advises them simply to write and form an appreciative audience. These include Lynda Sargent, Norman Mini, Jake Kenney, Eric Barker, Henry O'Neill, Rog Rogaway, and Gilbert Neiman. Most cannot find publishers and support themselves by other means. Neiman swears that he hears mysterious music coming from Miller's cabin rather than from his own head. Many residents see UFOs for a brief period. Several are amazing chess players, able to trounce Miller.

In Chapter 3, "The Chama Serial," follows the nightly stories that Miller tells his children about a beautiful girl, Chama. The real Chama is the daughter of Merle Armitage who visits and charms the children. Miller invents adventures in New York City for the girl, which he tells only when his children behave at dinner. Miller works in many of the locales in New York that he had loathed while working there as well as the Zoo and Aquarium where he had hung out. When he runs out of material, he sends Chama to New Mexico via Denver and brings in exciting Western motifs. Chama's father being an impresario allows them to travel the world, including Africa to meet wonderful Zulus and the vast animal kingdom. When Paul Rink begins a yearlong yarn about a superman-like character named Inch Connecticut, Miller serial fades in luster. Miller concludes that kids do not like realistic murder stories, preferring codes of honor.

Part 2, Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri, Chapters 4-6

Part 2, Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri, Chapters 4-6 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 4, "The Water Color Mania," focuses on Miller's painting. Since 1929 he has produced 2,000 watercolors, most of which he gives away. The mania begins in Brooklyn when he and O'Reagan see reproductions of Turner works. Miller never studies drawing and feels untalented, but enjoys himself. He prefers the work of children and the insane to painting masters. His favorite is seven-year-old Tasha Doner. He copies the postcards that fans send from around the world and learns from looking at other painters' work. He is unsure if studying Nature helps and is never content with painting what he sees, but always adds trademark flaws. So-called Primitives let viewers embrace what they see. Dawn and sunset are magic hours when the light is true and fall and winter are best for revelation and bringing back childhood memories.

Miller often returns from walks brimming with ideas that must be jotted down. The need to instruct himself to see anew comes over Miller in waves. He finds it maddening not to be able to capture light adequately. From Jack Morgenrath, Miller learns much about painting, particularly about having fun. Miller enjoys the pigments' names and mailing books in failed paintings that seem to recipients as priceless gifts. Muench practicing Ravel inspires Miller to paint music. Good framing can improve bad painting.

Chapter 5, "The Look of Wonder," pictures life at the sulfur baths, where Miller restores himself from visitors and routine work. He regularly meets there octogenarian Oden Wharton, after whom Ed and Betty Ames keep watch. Their son, Butch, has suffered much from the correction of physical defects but is a miniature Ramakrishna, thankful for everything. Butch makes Miller think about how the world would be better off run by children and how unhappy most American children are. He quotes a long passage from Keyserling's Travel Diary about the perfection of Japanese women and how Western women fail to imitate them.

When Miller arrives in Big Sur in 1944 there are few children. Today, the country school is full, each child being an individual. "Little Mike" Hougland is a Miller favorite, gentle, silent, and thankful for everything, probably a result of the torments he has endured having birth defects corrected. Mike makes Miller think about how American children in general are dissatisfied with everything. Miller's son, Tony, tires of toys easily. The Lopez children, invent games with what they can find in their life of poverty. While opposed to Catholic piety, Miller is glad that the Lopezes bring to Big Sur an icon of love and devotion. He contrasts two wealthy families, first that of an anonymous doctor and his wife who overindulge their their many children and let them run the house. Like the Lopez children, they still prefer to invent their own toys. The Fassetts operate the

upscale Nepenthe Restaurant and let their five children run wild without thought of discipline. Evenings, the children perform folk dances for guests.

Recalling that his mother had always called him a good boy, Miller wonders if he is. He sees in the relationship between his son and Pookie Morgenrath the idolization with which he had regarded boyhood friend Eddie Carney, a victim of poison gas in World War I. He recalls how Jack Lawton's mother had stood out among the mothers as invariably loving. Jack had not had to go to work until he wanted to. Miller has included in his books all of the wrong alleys he has gone through. Starting work brings ten years of terrible enslavement, ending 30 years ago when he becomes a writer. He has known saints and dregs of humanity and does not know to which he is more indebted. If he could have but one companion in a life of chaos, Miller would pick a selfless, Christlike Mexican peon whose name he cannot recall, who one day weeds his garden. The man will die as poor as he came to the U.S., and not even be buried in the Monterey plot that some smart aleck has sold him. Pookie has the peon's eyes.

Chapter 6, "A Fortune in Francs," deals with Miller's financial difficulties in and after World War II. The promise of 1,000 francs a month to keep writing on Corfu dies in 1940 when Paris falls. At Anderson Creek he pays $5 a month for his shack and lives off the generosity of friends. One day publisher Maurice Girodias writes about $40,000 in back royalties that Miller can come and claim or Girodias will try to get to him incrementally. Miller panics at the thought of sudden wealth, considers that it might be a hoax. Before Miller can write, the franc is devalued and Girodias loses money on horses. When money is at its tightest, Jean Wharton offers her house.

Miller receives a "message" while trying to nap. He asks wife Eve to jot down keywords, but whole pages flow from him. This also happens while writing Plexus, and then for years he can only write in spurts. Earlier, dry spells occur while writing Tropic of Capricorn, until the Voice begins dictating and ignores his calls to take a break. Miller balks at writing down "The Land of Fuck," knowing what trouble it will bring. He laughs that judges believe he writes to make money.

Part 2, Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri, Chapters 7-9

Part 2, Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri, Chapters 7-9 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 7, "Problems Large and Small," Miller resumes telling about his neighbor and benefactor who is trying to find herself. She and Miller both focus on the present and he senses that she has the power of healing. Her Blueprint for Living crystallizes her thought, which makes her more controversial and easier to ridicule. Wharton becomes a mentor, comforter, and healer to the oppressed, but her insistence that she is just an instrument of healing alienates people. Miller urges her not to rush in where angels fear to tread. Her life becomes hectic, erratic, and consuming as people refuse to be saved. This reminds Miller of how, since 1914 the U.S. has tried to fix the world's problems but has itself deteriorated. It is a young, diplomatically clumsy nation, armed to the teeth but usually non-menacing as it seeks to enjoy its large piece of the pie. Americans worship abundance and tells others that they do not know how to live.

Big Sur proves that people can live in harmony with God, Nature, and one another, but even as an observant writer, Miller is sometimes surprised by revelations of household tragedies too great to describe, even by Tolstoy, whose domestic life is a sad joke. Spouses do their best but fail and break up. Wharton has spent much time and effort helping people see positives in negatives, but most people live myopically. Things are different under normal vision. All is in flux; the created is creative. One can always see the world with new eyes. One always lives both where one is and where one wants to be. Big Sur's people are like all others. Their main problem is getting along with themselves, and this causes great melodrama. The place feels naked and vulnerable, fitting for Greek tragedies. Residents do not live by the standards or at the pace of the outside world, but feel its effects, filtered. There are none of the usual ways to cope when things go bad, as when Miller's wife disappears with the kids and he has no means of communications. He sits, trying to think, and prays.

Chapter 8, "Fan Mail," begins with Miller describing his archives at the UCLA Library. When bored, he visits, sifts out checks and promising reading material. British correspondents are the most vapid, with the exception of poet Lawrence Durrell and the elderly but ever enthusiastic John Cowper Powys. Return addresses forewarn Miller of writers whose pet themes, particularly theological and philosophical, are dull. He gets detailed letters on bladder care from a man in an asylum, but most of his nuts are just eccentrics whining about fate and are hilarious to read. Fans send vast amounts of gifts including paperwork, artwork, clothing, food and drink, and exotic children's items. People offer to find anything he needs. One man does research for him. Jews and Blacks are America's only truly selfless givers. Miller's brother-in-law in Jerusalem, Lilik Schatz, writes about troubles with the Arabs and hopes for peace worldwide.

A Basque girl visits, freezing and starving, to ask Miller's views on Nietzsche's peace and disarmament. They feed her and put her up at White's, whence she heads to Duck Creek, MT, and writes for Miller's help in Washington, DC. This reminds Miller of government officials in 1940 seeking autographs in his banned books for—a story he recants before thinking about tattered copies he receives, some annotated, stolen from private libraries and whorehouses in the most remote places, showing that his books have gone to all of the places that he has wanted to go.

Chapter 9, "Suave qui Peut!" opens with Miller borrowing the Dianetics concept of "clearing," whereby one's needs are met precisely when needed. In his forties he sees the angelic and demonic wedded in humans, which helps understand magic. An Intelligence directs the universe, and one collaborates with it by no longer trying to run the show. People resort to faith healers only when normal medicine fails. Folklore refuses to recognize sin, guilt, disease, and death. Expensive physicians offer no guarantee against worse afflictions and some patients become "walking cadavers" (pg. 167.) Medicine has oriented away from surgery toward dispensing pills.

Miller meets at the sulfur baths people who ignore their problems and are healthy. Once one decides to be happy as is, nothing can prevent living in full measure. Modern youths are too preoccupied with convenience to change the world. A brilliant young French-Canadian ponders his role in life, quoting Joseph Delteil and Chesterton on Dickens, who sees life as both laughable and livable. Great writers often depict sublime fools. In Dedlteil's Jesus II, Old Adam tells panicky Jesus that evil is a state of the soul, not an act. The book is hilarious and relentless, but full of reverence for life. The French-Canadian needs "laughter unending" (pg. 172.)

Part 2, Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri, Chapters 10-12

Part 2, Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri, Chapters 10-12 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 10, "Bringing Up Father, begins with the thorny question of teaching children to behave. By example is impossible for harassed parents and teachers. Jesus would have spoken differently had he had children. Miller's favorite bootblack in Monterey is also a Baptists preacher, who sees making children in one's own image through education a sin against Nature. When Miller's children ask difficult questions, he thinks about Rev. Greenwall and admits that he does not know the answer. There is an infinite gap between knowledge and truth, and schools are an expedient for dispensing knowledge and discipline. Miller recalls being disciplined—thrashed—only once, by his reluctant father at his mother's request. As a father, Miller does not beat the children enough to suit folks in Big Sur. He repents instantly after doing so but feels no guilt. Threats of future blows are worse than blows themselves. Normal children are natural hell-raisers. Well-behaved children rarely grow into exceptional adults. The Western home is a battlefield.

Since writing is but a pastime, Miller is always at hand and serves as arbiter even when there is no need. By contrast, his wife does everything by the book and shields him from the children's antics while he is writing. Eventually, the marriage breaks up and Miller tries to be both father and mother. Walter Winslow is the living in the studio above and offers to help. The children prove too much for the two men. Miller spends pages detailing their frustrating antics before agreeing with Winslow that he is keeping them only to get even with his ex-wife. Miller is relieved and heartbroken when they leave and tears himself apart emotionally for his failure. He refrains from interfering in their new lives and forces himself to return to writing, although he is a weeping and crumpled sack.

Chapter 11, "Testimonial in Ut-Mineur," returns to Ephraim Doner, who paints Miller's portrait as he is coming out of his depression. Doner is the true image of the Creator, concerned for everyone and everything. He has had a hard but happy life as an artist, always doing the utmost because that is the only thing to do. Born and raised in Vilna, the grandson of a famous rabbi, Doner reads in many languages. Whenever he and Miller get together, they talk about France, where they meet once in 1931/2. A New York furrier, Doner had gone to Villefranche and fallen in love with the place, left the vacation cruise, and wandered around southern Europe. He raises money by sketching portraits. After one more year in the fur business, he goes to Paris to be an artist, teaching himself to paint in 4-5 years, and the settles on the peninsula, where he is one of the best. Doner does chores that would drive most artists mad, attracts crazy people, and

vets those he allows to go on to Miller's place. Whenever he has money, Doner is a giver and knows how to borrow when he does not.

Both Doners are indulgent of children. Rosa teaches how to handle them, while Doner paints in his studio 20 yards away. Daughter Tasha has been spoiled since falling out of a second-story window as a small child, but is not a monster her parents believe in the victory of love. The Doners have the spirit of the American pioneers, and like all Jews, are so generous, energetic, just, compassionate that the Gentiles imitate them.

Chapter 12, "The Part of Fortune," opens with Miller expounding on "Thy will be done" and beginning to see patterns in life. While in the Villa Seurat in 1934, he begins recording his dreams and sees with new eyes what he desires. His Greek adventure, rediscovery of America, and settling in Big Sur are all good fortune. He finds what he needs, including a web of books.

To survive, Miller regularly sends out appeals to friends and often receives money from people not on the list. The wealthiest do not reply. One day Miller receives two trunks left in the war and forgotten. A moving man has taken the trouble to track him down. One appeal yields a check for $250 from a stranger, Harry Koverr, to be match monthly for a year. The donor tracks him down and turns out to be a rich man fallen on bad times and wanting to be a writer. Koverr later asks Miller to repay, which he does in installments and writes about getting nothing from his rich friends.

Miller tracks down an old friend from Paris, Eugene Pachutinsky, who on a fluke profits from a real estate deal and reserves two rooms in his new estate for the Millers. Miller has friends searching for two titles for him. They are Sir Godfrey Higgins' The Thirteen Crucified Saviours and Oscar Vladislas de Lubicz Milosz's The Keys to the Apocalypse. Miller meets Milosz's cousin and learns that the title is a page and a half long—and never gets to see it. Miller receives letters from Ethiopia and Cairo, recommending that he read Restif de la Bretonne. The massive works seem not to resemble Miller's writing.

Twice Miller engages in a wide-ranging discussion with strangers, first with Prof. Herbert West of Dartmouth and his friend, a Major, and the second time with the mystery writer Lawrence Lipton, who provides research on the Essene cult in which he is interested and a copy of a new article on the Dead Sea Scrolls by Edmund Wilson which another correspondent has just mentioned. Miller contemplates the relationship between coincidence, happenstance, and predestination, concluding that what matters is the use one makes of good or bad fortune. One can put oneself into rhythm with higher laws of the universe. Miller's life has been full of such miracles.

Most people dodge issues that do not fit their preconceived logic. "Why?" is the forbidden question, which brings on the afflictions of Job. The only thing that one knows with certainty is that s/he will die, and that is hard to accept. Happenings can seem natural or freakish, depending on whether one needs an explanation for everything. Miller concludes with a quotation from Mikhail Naimy's Kahlil Gibran: A Biography on the impossibility of fully describing another's life. To do so would be to tell the story of all things.

Part 2, Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri, Chapters 13-15

Part 2, Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri, Chapters 13-15 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 13, "The Task of Genuine Love," Miller talks how in his own life is realized Jean Wharton's maxim that genuine needs are always met. "It" knows what "We" do not. One must go through life learning what no one teaches and touching the sublime by doing the ridiculous. One must dissolve problems through detachment. Neither good nor bad respects persons. Fanatics utter profound "second-hand truths" (pg. 230) and sound ridiculous demonstrating them through trivia. Scientists do not speak of miracles. People will do anything for money, even piously chopping off heads in the French Revolution.

If Jesus were to come back to earth, he would more likely sell vacuums than send others off to die in war. In agony on the cross, Jesus cries out that he is forsaken, but later many doctrines, crusades, and inquisitions in Jesus' name. What if people behead him when he next returns, and his gushing blood rebukes the fools, because he, mankind, and the world are indestructible? When one can state how s/he would order the world if s/he were the Creator, what she or he desires that she or he does not possess, say something truly astonishing, and determined the needs of all creatures, the Order is dissolved. When patience fails, there is always Eternity.

Returning to The Millennium of Hieronymus Bosch, particularly the electrifying last plate, "The Cave of Pythagoras" and the phrase, "the task of genuine love," Miller contemplates how little U.N. debates on ending fighting accomplish. Monkeys picking one another's fleas accomplish more than diplomacy. Better to bring together three men of good will to discuss genuine love, to bring forth tender wild flowers in profusion.

Chapter 14, "A Day at the Baths," sketches Slade's Springs, a place of solitude when Miller is lucky, but more often, it is full of talkative fools, many suffering grotesque diseases. Some days delightful hermaphroditic artists gather to primp and talk idly. Globetrotters are a delight. One day Miller meets a blubbery maharajah from Poona, India. The veritable Mr. Know-It-All claims to speak many languages but fails to understand simple phrases and to have traveled widely. He wants to commission Miller to write about Asia without describing, insists a la Bahai that one is lost unless one knows the Creator, and lectures about Saudi oil.

Finally, in Chapter 15, "Making a New Fabric," Miller agrees that unless one knows where one is going, any road leads there. Americans enjoy the highest standard of living but spend more on fighting microbes than curing serious diseases and take pills, rather than avoiding excess, the media, installment buying, card playing, investing, mortgaging, vaccinations, antagonizing others, working at hated job, worrying about

elections, and doing more than is required. America has gone from a hardy pioneer stage through eliminating the Indians, freeing the slaves, fighting wars, and has reached the point of forcing its values on others, here and throughout the universe. Howard Welch typifies the lone-American type, filled with the spirit of the wilderness. Hudson Kimbell carries self-sufficiency to the extreme, Jack Morgenrath is more practical, and Warren Leopold prefers subsistence farming over architecture. Egyptian Mohmed Ali Sarwat wants to b Miller's valet to survive in materialistic America. Jesus owns nothing and has no wants and yogis still need no modern amenities. Krishnamurti says that world problems will be solved when individuals find inner peace and desire to help others.

Those dedicated to the arts and/or negligent about society's rigid norms do not fit in. Bob Nash tells the Guggenheim Foundation that he wants to comprehend the universe and works at it without the award. Jesus gets no grants; imagine him with an honorary doctorate. Simplifying one's life should be easy but is not. The common purpose, effort, and spirit needed to create community are missing even in Big Sur. Those described in this chapter have more community spirit than folks who talk about community—and are creating a new, viable fabric for society.

American tourists speak of poverty abroad while overlooking the social price of U.S. comforts. Ailments, accidents, and excesses cause more deaths than do wars. People live longer on meager pensions, doing nothing and dying miserably. Miller quotes Dr. Leo L. Spears on the purpose and design of the human body, particularly the functions of growth and repair. People should be able to live almost indefinitely, but most lives are wasted. Few Americans enjoy their jobs; even many well-educated are drudges. Elected officials are bunglers, millionaires crave more, the middle classes are empty, union workers have it good but are robbed on every side, and the non-unionized live like rats. Meanwhile, America rejects the social evils that are practiced in its midst. Gangsters are gaining in prestige and stand out among undifferentiated professionals. Top prostitutes are less vulgar than clients' wives but are too expensive for the rank-and-file. Miller knows that no one will take this any more seriously than statistics on people locked up in jails and asylums, which are facts that are hidden from the young.

Part 3, Paradise Lost, pgs. 275-309

Part 3, Paradise Lost, pgs. 275-309 Summary and Analysis

The third part focuses on Conrad Moricand an impoverished, fatalistic astrologer for whom Miller is made financially responsible from Paris in 1936-39 by Anaïs Nin and who destroys the quality of Big Sur as a house guest for three months in 1947. Both are Capricorns, but of different decans, and a few years apart in age. Theoretically, they should get along, but their personalities are opposite. Moricand is living in the modest Hotel Modial and has lost his fortune. Nin, who has been supporting him, needs to cut him loose, and Miller, short of funds, does his best to fatten him up. Miller talks his friends into commissioning horoscopes from Moricand and eventually invents customers, for whom he pays. Moricand appears to have a sixth sense for interpreting charts and every gathering turns into an entertaining analysis of guests' types.

Moricand always arranges his few belongings with precision, wherever he lives. Despite his poverty, he insists on fine clothing, perfume, and stationary. Miller has to slip him money covertly and avoid admiring any of his possession, lest Moricand insist that he take it. Moricand often lectures Miller on how the laws of the universe determine one's fate even more than the planets. He maintains that faith has been denied him and laments the cruelty of his parents and teachers. One day, Moricand gives Miller a precious copy of Balzac's Seraphita. On their last evening together in Paris in 1939, Moricand is morose at dinner.

Miller assumes that Moricand is dead until 1947, when a letter comes saying that he is living in Switzerland, on a miserable pension, under terrible conditions. Lacking enough money to help sufficiently, Miller over his wife Janina's objections invites him to Big Sur, to do whatever he wants for the rest of his life. The reunion is tearful and Moricand soon has his tiny studio arranged to his taste. He feels like he is in Paradise and in gratitude presents Miller a clock that he claims has been in the family for generations. Janina is surprisingly impressed by Moricand's charm and elegance. Soon, however, Moricand is making demands and milking Miller dry. He finds American meals and tobacco inadequate and requires stationary of a specific size and quality. When Miller requests common sense, Moricand is crestfallen. He stays to himself except for meals, during which he dominates the conversation. Because Moricand does not like English, Miller must translate for Janina. Moricand is an enchanting speaker on any subject. An amalgam of types, he is above all a Gloomy Gus—even in photographs from his youth. The past in which he lives is but a morgue or museum.

Part 3, Paradise Lost, pgs. 309-349

Part 3, Paradise Lost, pgs. 309-349 Summary and Analysis

A week into his stay, Moricand shows Miller his scabby legs and, over Miller's objections, obtains codeine by mail from Switzerland. The itching grows worse and spreads. Moricand takes for granted that Miller's friends do him favors. He fails to teach Val French, because he has no use for English or children and finds Val and all American children undisciplined. Many evenings Moricand and Janina Miller discuss domestic problems while Miller sits sullenly. Moricand proves a good referee between the battling spouses. Long monologues evoke the world of French artists before World War I. He detests the Republic and seems to have had prior lives in ancient Alexandria and Persia. Evil is an absolute realty for him.

Miller begins a long monologue about astrology, in which he has only a poetic interest. Asking what astrology has done to help Moricand's itching, Miller admits to being a gullible and optimistic American who believes in miracles and sees his own shortcomings. Whereas astrology deals in potentialities, Miller desires actualities like God and humanity. The intellect gets people in trouble. Astrology is valid but not all-encompassing, whereas the universe is beyond comprehension.

Moricand interrupts to declare life, without exception, a Calvary and suffering to give character and strength. Miller finds this woeful and defeatist and asks about free choice. Moricand holds that one does not "choose the unchooseable" (pg. 323) and insists that people act according to character. Miller looks beyond life as problem to poetry beyond proof. The sum of all philosophies brings not totality but confusion. Intellect is ego-based. Truth comes only by surrender. The more one learns, the less one knows. Humans are neither as little or as much as they are taught to think.

Astrology like schizophrenia, Miller declares, has its origins in humans' loss of wholeness. Although fragmented, one can choose to free oneself from self-imposed unfreedom and take back the powers that one has assigned to God. Freedom implies choice. What one needs is certitude that there is always just one true way. Anyone can have peace and joy. To see differences is to make differences. Why does astrology limit itself to certain planets? Why must everything be obscure? Humans must accept that they are not the center of the universe and let "It" work out however it does. To deal with others, one must cut through all of the strata, fears, prejudices, injuries, and humiliations. Most of the world's woes stem from modifiable human behavior. Everyone must accept that s/he is part of a single Body and live simply and wisely, scrapping the past to live in peace and joy.

Moricand grows despondent when stormy weather arrives. He seals up his room so tight that Miller fears he will suffocate. As Moricand's itching continues, they summon a psychiatrist/physician who says that it is psychosomatic and advises that Miller get rid of

this overgrown spoiled child. A week later, a French-speaking friend, Gilbert, visits but soon wants to throw Moricand off a cliff. Lilik befriends Moricand and advises that Miller look at Moricand's portfolio of erotic drawings. Leon Shamroy brings fine food, drink, and cigars, and Moricand partakes heartily while preparing to analyze him. Shamroy takes offense, but changes when taken to see the drawings. Moricand insists that he buy the lot or nothing—at an enormous price. Shamroy thinks the Moricand is crazy for not letting him show them and get double the price.

Moricand details his wartime experience, first in the French Foreign Legion, then working for Radio-Paris, somehow working working for the Gestapo, and finally fleeing to Switzerland carrying two heavy valises, destitute and suffering from lice and scurvy. Armies are battling all around him, advancing, killing, and raping to the bitter end. Miller laughs hysterically after learning that Moricand has expended such energy on his books, diaries, and papers. Moricand takes offense. Miller no longer feels sorry for him but begins dreaming this gory nightmare.

When the Millers dig a garden, Moricand helps briefly. Later, surprisingly, he waltzes with Janina and sings. He is more pitiable happy than sad. Moricand's best day comes when he meets Jaime de Angulo, a fiery Spanish recluse who shares the same privileged background as Moricand, The two have grown into polar opposites but are both obsessed with evil. They get so wrapped up in talking about the past that they fail to get drunk.

Part 3, Paradise Lost, pgs. 349-385

Part 3, Paradise Lost, pgs. 349-385 Summary and Analysis

Moricand surprises Miller by saying that it is inhuman to care for someone and require him to do nothing. He misses city life and wants to move to San Francisco. He considers asking Jean Wharton to cure his itch, but fears religion. Miller assures him that Wharton will see right through him. She is thoroughly religious but has no religious views. She acts on her beliefs. This is too simple for Moricand; he wants her to radiate physical powers. Miller says only that the results of meeting Wharton depend on whether he truly wants to be healed. Miller spends the beautiful day enjoying nature and resolving never again to try to solves another's problems.

Miller begins to itch day and night while fighting with a wife whom everyone considers ideal. Janina wants a divorce and custody of Val, given Miller's past. He tries to convince himself of the goodness of God and to look through the negative to the positive. He knows that his first word to Janina will set her off but, fortunately, Wharton is there, draining the fight from her. Wharton has agreed to work with Moricand, speaking God's language together, for God can penetrate the thickest wall. That evening, Wharton floats, radiantly, into Miller's garden with a lantern and book. She seems transfigured.

Moricand, by contrast, rants about her wanting him to read Mary Baker Eddy and telling him to heal himself. She later explains that she had not wanted to convert him but to get his mind off himself. The discussion leads to Miller reading Key to the Scriptures without prejudiced and finding Eddy fully human but transformed. Moricand is despondent. When he gets angry at Val, the final break occurs. Moricand tells a winding tale about Paris that ends with him buying the services of a young girl. Miller's hair stands on end. After days of driving rain, Moricand has to get out, but the roads are washed out. Miller sends word to Lilik, who drives up, moving enormous, washed-out boulders. After a sleepless night, Moricand hails Lilik as a saint. Because his testicles have swollen horribly, they must carry Moricand to the car. They are fine by the time they reach Monterey and County Hospital in Salinas. Lilik and Miller figure that it is nervousness.

The hospital seems cheery but there is the usual paperwork. The doctor runs through the normal physical examination before studying the sores, for which he begins allergy testing that will extend over several days. He cannot stay in the hospital. Miller puts him up in the Hotel Serra in Monterey and arranges for Ellwood Graham to run him to the hospital daily. Miller is greatly relieved to be rid of Moricand, who, he hears, moves to San Francisco and is trying to get back to Paris. Miller sends him his remaining belongings and some money to tide him over. Moricand goes through it quickly, his tastes being grander than Miller's recommendations.

The Swiss Consulate informs Moricand that he may not work and comes after Miller, who is legally responsible for him. Miller's friend Raoul Bertrand several times books passage by sea and air for Moricand but each time he fails to show up. Varda sets him up with a countess who collects occultist, but Moricand rejects her. When Moricand demands a deposit of $1,000 in his Paris account, Miller writes that he is returning the priceless pendule for which pawnbrokers offer $50 and does not care if he kills himself. Moricand sends a series of panicky, twisted letters, which Miller stops reading. Lilik says that he plans to ruin Miller's reputation.

Miller hears no more until the magazine in 1954 reports his demise in the Paris hospice that his parents had founded. It offers nothing about how he survives in the U.S. before he is deported in 1949 and little about his six weeks in Brittany with editor Théophile Briant, his last and only friend who, unable to endure him returns him to the Hotel Modial. He dies after a visit from an old lady friend.

Epilogue

Epilogue Summary and Analysis

The Epilogue opens by describing three-day-a-week mail service by Jake. After things are lugged home, Miller's wife opens letters, pushes reviews under his nose, and reads items aloud. Packages follow, followed by unannounced visitors who stay for dinner, followed by early bedtime. Next day, answering a few items he finds research interrupted by neighbors needing help and household chores, including buckets of diapers to wash in the sulfur baths, six miles round-trip. Trudging home in the rain, Miller gets wonderful writing ideas, which he tries desperately to memorize for later. Another mail day arrives before finishes with the last. Working at night is impossible. Early mornings are taken up by walks, breakfast, and playing with the baby. If the weather is too nice, Miller paints instead of writing. He believes that he will die at a typewriter, but yearns to chuck everything and just live. He thinks then of all of the people who write to him, of unfinished books, of places he has never seen. He calculates how much time he may still have and how long he will have sufficient energy.

Emil White has helped Miller survive in Big Sur, including answering his fan mail. The Epilogue is originally a pamphlet to send to fans to explain why Miller cannot answer mail. He is not a business, will not hire a secretary, and wants to simplify his life. He appreciates feedback and gifts, but asks that fans show appreciation by buying his books. He believes that young writers must learn by personal experience and lacks both the energy and knowledge to evaluate manuscripts. One must learn to overcome problems, serve life, and be sustained by this. When all else fails, pray.

Miller is addicted to writing letters, so his only hope is to curtail incoming mail. A single letter can unbalance an entire day. He needs to answer immediately and fully. He accepts that others also lack time and absolves them in advance for not writing. Some return the courtesy. Miller has come to believe that his work of creation is paramount and he should not waste time in correspondence. Art is a healing process, both for the artist who empties him/herself and for the reader, who must examine his/her own resources and work to be saved. Miller believes that he can send powerful radiations to individuals around the globe and sometimes gets responses. This should be the norm.

Arriving at Big Sur, Miller had expected to find peace and be able to work in its healing ambiance. The invading city folk change things. Miller tries to picture the region in 500 years, built up, cultivated, populated, and fully-serviced. It could be a paradise, just as it is now but a different one. Having tasted peace and solitude, Miller blesses all creation

Characters

Henry Miller

The author of Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch, written in Big Sur, CA, Henry Miller is also the dominant figure in the narrative, talking about his striving to simplify his life and talking about many of the local folk who have embraced the healing ambiance and discovered how to live in peace, solitude, and community.

Miller alludes to and in some cases describes in some detail his happy childhood in Brooklyn, NY, his frustrating work life in New York City, his life in France until the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, and his happy sojourn in Greece until the Nazis arrive there in early 1940. Reluctantly he returns to the United States, from which he had intended to be a permanent expatriate, and finally after sojourns in New York and the Los Angeles area, settles in Big Sur, which he finds to be Paradise.

Miller writes significant titles before settling there in June 1942, but mentions and discusses only a few. Tropic of Capricorn and Tropic of Cancer are both considered obscene and are banned in the U.S., but the French edition is gaining a worldwide reputation and he is inundated with fan mail and gifts to help him survive. He mentions several times working on The Air-Conditioned Nightmare and a trilogy, The Rosy Crucifixion of the three works Sexus, Plexus, and Nexus about his life before leaving for Europe. Several times he mentions The Books in My Life as he muses about literary influences. Miller is also a watercolorist and paints compulsively whenever the mood overtakes him. He writes out of a sense of responsibility and struggles to keep correspondents happy. He sees no way to help new writers other than to recommend that they write, write, write, and gain life experience.

Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch is filled with remarks about postwar U.S. society as vicious and warmongering and sets up renegade artists seeking the good life as signs of its breakdown. Americans are obsessed with being healthy and successful but suffer from the excessive costs. They idealize their materialism and affluence and are poised to impose it not only on the rest of the world but also on the universe. They have little use for the artistic or the spiritual. Miller does not consider himself religious, rejects ritualism, but believes that a power that he sometimes calls God but more often the great "It" knows better than the individual what the individual needs and when.

Miller marries a number of times and generally avoids mentioning his wives' names in the book. He has two children by his third wife, with whom he fights, and raises them with his fourth, who he claims saves him. He makes no excuses for himself as a husband or as a fallen human being, for that matter. He spoils daughter Val and is amazed by the wide variety of ways in which parents cope. He sees evil in Old World approaches to discipline and believes in the ultimate triumph of love.

The Doners

One of Henry Miller's literary friends, Ephraim Doner, affectionately addressed as Maître Ephraim, is a fine painter, chess player, and a man with both feet on the ground. Oddly, he follows a UFO for miles from his home, but his wife, Rosa, and daughter, Tasha, are with him and corroborate the story. Both Doners are indulgent of children. Rosa instructs mothers and teachers in how to handle children. Tasha has been a bit spoiled since falling out of a second-story window as a small child. Tasha is not a monster because of her parents' belief in the victory of love. They garden her like a plant, and the love flows back freely to them. Tasha is a marvelous, fast-working crayon artist, to Miller's mind better than Picasso or Paul Klee. Her work inspires him to paint something Cézanne-like, but he always fails.

To Miller, Doner is the true image of the Creator, showing genuine concern for everyone and everything. Doner adds to every deliberate act he makes a touch of God. He has had a hard life but also a happy one, which are reflected in thousands of stories, all variations on the theme of the artist choosing the vocation and then becoming one. Doner answers Miller's questions about painting and anything else with riddles that always include God. Doner's superb self-portrait captures a fleeting glimpse of an unknown self, listening humorously to the mystery of the universe. Doner's boisterous spirit roars from the canvas, thanks to the cigarette shown clinging to his lip. His work shows ecstatic Chassidic elements.

Born and raised in Vilna in Russian-controlled Lithuania, the grandson of a famous rabbi, Doner reads omnivorously in many languages, including everything written by Blaise Cendrars. Whenever Miller and Doner get together, they talk about France, where they meet once in 1931/2 and which they remember as the best of times. A New York furrier, Doner had gone to Villefranche and fallen in love with the place, left the vacation cruise, and wandered around southern Europe. He had raised money by sketching portraits. After one more year in the fur business, he goes to Paris to be an artist, teaching himself to paint in four to five years, and the settles on the peninsula, where he is one of the best.

Doner does everyday chores that would drive most artists mad, attracts crazy people, and vets those he allows to go on to Miller's place. Whenever he has money, Doner is a giver and knows how to borrow when he has nothing. The Doners have the spirit of the American pioneers. Reverence makes him always ready to go the second mile. Like all Jews, he is generous, energetic, just, compassionate. Gentiles imitate his way of life.

Conrad Moricand

Henry Miller's house guest for three months in 1947, Moricand is a fatalist, somber, didactic, opinionated, stubborn, and self-centered. He has the smell of death about him. First introduced to Miller in 1936 in Paris, France, by Anaïs Nin. Moricand is more an occultist than a scholarly astrologer. Tall and well-built, with a strong, charming feminine streak, he has resigned himself to a regimented life that is oriented to the past.

Moricand tries to be impartial, just, and loyal but by nature is treacherous, a trait that Miller at first tries to ignore. Moricand is not acquainted with Miller's works but knows his birth date and quickly produces his horoscope, correcting his hour of birth. Both are Capricorns, but of different decans, and a few years apart in age. Moricand knows little English but speaks French like a poet and finds Miller an excellent audience. Their personalities are opposite, which stimulates Moricand.

At the time that they first meet, Moricand is living in the modest Hotel Modial and has just lost his fortune. Nin has been supporting him but needs to cut him loose. Like the biblical Job, Moricand is afflicted in every way but, maddeningly, must keep face. He claims to be too trusting and to bear ill towards no one. Moricand always arranges his few belongings with precision, wherever he lives. Despite his poverty, he insists on fine clothing, perfume, and stationary. Miller has to slip him money covertly in order not to offend him and avoid admiring any of his possessions, lest Moricand insist that he take it. Miller talks his friends into commissioning horoscopes from Moricand and eventually invents customers, for whom he pays. Moricand appears to have a sixth sense for interpreting charts, and every gathering turns into an entertaining and—once—spot-on analysis of guests' types.

Moricand could have been a brilliant writer but is interested only in astrological research. He often lectures Miller on the laws of the universe, which determine one's fate even more than the planets, has an answer for everything, and maintains that faith has been denied him. He uses this to clip his own wings. He laments the cruelty of his parents and teachers. One day, Moricand gives Miller a precious copy of Balzac's Seraphita., which puts Miller in his debt—a debt that Moricand calls in after the war. On their last evening together in Paris in 1939, Moricand is morose at dinner.

Miller assumes that Moricand is dead until 1947, when a letter comes via an Italian princess. He is living in Vevey, Switzerland, on a miserable pension in terrible conditions. Lacking enough money to help Moricand adequately, Miller invites him to live with his family in Big Sur, CA. Miller's wife is sure that he will regret it, but he insists, because of the Seraphita—and because that is what one does for a pauper. Moricand snaps at the idea of being cared for and allowed to do whatever he wants for the rest of his life. The reunion is tearful and Moricand soon has his tiny studio arranged to his liking. He feels like he is in Paradise and in gratitude presents Miller a clock that he claims has been in the family for generations. Miller's wife is surprisingly impressed by Moricand's charm and elegance.

Soon, however, Moricand begins making demands and begins milking Miller dry. He finds American meals and tobacco inadequate. He requires stationary of a specific size and quality. When Miller requests common sense, Moricand is crestfallen. He stays to himself except for meals, during which he dominates the conversation, wasting Miller's work time. Moricand is an enchanting speaker on any subject. An amalgam of types, he is above all a Gloomy Gus, even in photographs from his youth. The past to him is but a morgue or museum. Late in his stay they discover that he makes fine erotic drawings, but wants to sell the lot at a high price or nothing.

Soon Moricand announces that Big Sur is a paradise lost. He suffers terrible itches that nothing can relieve, worries about drafts in the winter, and needs to feel the pavement of a city under his feet. Miller takes him to Monterey and Salinas for treatment of his itching and sets him up in San Francisco, where Moricand lives beyond his means. He misses several sea and air reservations to Europe that Miller arranges and demands $1,000 be deposited in his bank account before he will leave. When Miller cuts off communications, Moricand threatens to ruin his reputation in Europe and complains to the Swiss Consulate about Miller reneging on his promise to support him. The consultate investigates and sides with Miller.

Miller hears no more until the magazine in 1954 reports his demise in the Paris hospice that his parents had founded. It offers nothing about how he survives in the U.S. before he is deported in 1949 and little about his six weeks in Brittany with editor Théophile Briant, his last and only friend who, unable to endure him returns him to the Hotel Modial. He dies after a visit from an old lady friend.

Jean Wharton (1887-1954)

Henry Miller's great benefactor at his time of greatest need, Wharton in Feb. 1947 gives him the house that she has had built for herself on Partington Ridge, saying that he can pay her when good fortune strikes—and predicts that it will. Royalty money comes from Paris and Miller owns the house and three acres outright.

Wharton is one of the first people that Miller meets in Big Sur and he is instantly drawn to her warm and flashing eyes. She is already part of the coming Age of Aquarius. People say that she is a Christian Scientist, which is to say odd. She is indeed trying to find herself, having broken with the past and moving too fast for friends to adjust. She is able to speak candidly with Miller, for reasons he does not understand, except that both focus on the present. She is at first merely a helpful neighbor. Only later do her spiritual leanings emerge,but without pressure.

Miller sense that Wharton has the power of healing, which makes him feel at one with the world. She writes Blueprint for Living,;which crystallizes her thought and makes her all the more controversial and easier to ridicule. There are vast differences between her and Mary Baker Eddy. Like all innovators, Wharton suffers, particularly being a woman, as she becomes a mentor, comforter, and healer to the oppressed. She sees that people are spiritually lazy, preferring a remote god to the abundant life within.

Wharton wants people to see that she is just an instrument of healing, but this alienates them. Miller urges on her greater detachment, lest she be exploited or seem hovering. Overly compassionate, she rushes in to help where angels fear to tread. This works only when one is one with the Father. Wharton always looks serene outwardly while working hard to discipline herself inwardly to do as her inner promptings say. It is consuming. Her life becomes hectic and erratic. Wharton repeatedly states in many ways that genuine needs will always be met.

When desperate Conrad Moricand promises to do anything that Wharton asks to cure his itch, Miller assures him that Wharton will see right through him. She is thoroughly religious but has no religious views. She acts on her beliefs. To distract him from himself rather than to convert him, Wharton asks him to read passages in Eddy's Key To The Scriptures. Moricand flees, cursing Wharton as a fraud. Miller the night before had seen her in his garden, transfigured in light.

Emil White

Miller dedicates this book to Emil White, calling him "one of the few friends who has never failed me." In the Epilogue, Miller acknowledges him as his "secretary, chief butler, private body-guard and big shoo-fly" (pg. 394), who has nearly broken his back lugging wood and coal for him and has answered voluminous fan mail until, at Miller's instigation, he takes up painting and becomes engrossed.

The author of Big Sur Guide, which attracts swarms of tourists to the region, White arrives at Anderson Creek, CA, in 1944 from the Yukon Territory. He builds a little cart for Henry Miller to haul mail and groceries home from town and for himself—and his constant flow of visitors—a small, gloomy, filthy shack on the highway, hidden by a wild hedge. Because travelers take the place for a café anyway, White sells coffee and sandwiches. He also lets writer Walter Winslow work there.

White is Miller's only friend in the beginning and lives three miles away. At Miller's request, White takes in several needy people. First, he accepts a rude, young, would-be writer, Ralph, who shows up on Miller's doorstep, but soon cannot stand his spoiled-brat behavior. White also takes in an unnamed young Basque woman for a week and does not accept her offer of sex as payment. A well-known pianist in Europe, White sometimes gives roadside concerts for passing motorists on an old clavichord to raise funds.

Walter Winslow

The author of the best-selling If a Man Be Mad, Winslow writes at top speed of up to 15-30 pages a day from morning until sundown in a shack built by Emil White along the roadside. He does a lot of rewriting and consolidation, often working on several books at once. Winslow drinks no alcohol while finishing a title, but consumes much coffee and cigarettes.

Winslow's forte is people. A tramp with the heart of a saint, he often gets in trouble while helping others. At the time that Miller's marriage to Janina breaks up over how to discipline the two children, Winslow returns from Topeka, KS, and moves into the upstairs studio. He has been commissioned to write The Menninger Story. Miller hires a nanny, Ivy, who lasts 12 hours before declaring them impossible, so Winslow steps in to help. He is soon performing the lion's share of the childcare, while counselling the distraught Miller on patience and courage.

During trips to town for supplies, Winslow and Ivy become lovers and she moves into his unlivable studio for the winter, never helping out except to polish the stove. Winslow and Miller split childcare, but the task takes both of their full-time efforts. The children refuse to eat Winslow's gourmet cooking. Normally calm and patient, Winslow loses his temper one day when the children find his Achilles heel and resembles a psychopath. Seeing him that way is humiliating for Miller. Later, Winslow tells Miller to decide if he wants the kids for their own good or to get even with his wife. Winslow will not abandon Miller but believes that he is licked and in denial. Miller wires for the wife to fetch them.

Eric Barker

A good and humble English poet who supports himself as caretaker of a large cattle ranch at nasty Little Sur River, Barker never pushes himself, but writes only when inspiration comes. Not the type to see things, Barker describes six UFOs that hasten out to sea.

The Bates Family

Ed and Betty Eames look after retired octogenarian Oden Wharton, meaning that they wait patiently for him to die. Henry Miller enjoys talking with their seven-year-old son, Butch, who is overcoming multiple birth defects and seems angelic. Anything Butch receives is to him precious and when he cannot keep up with rough children, he rejoices in Nature. Butch never asks for anything, unless it has been promised to him, and then he makes one sorry for forgetting. Miller procrastinates delivering his own son Tony's broken-down tricycle and feels wretched. Miller expects Butch to be an ecstatic being if the Army does not get him.

Raoul Bertrand

A rare individual who always creates the right ambiance, Bertrand exemplifies the French way of life at Big Sur, CA, and resuscitates in Henry Miller the music first implanted during his ten years spent in France. He introduces Monsieur de Carmoy of the Office d'Echanges, Paris, who promises to get Miller his overdue royalties. Bertrand also brings over a French journalist who offers to track down old friends, the Pachoutinsky boys.

Eddie Carney

A boyhood friend of Henry Miller in Brooklyn, NY, Carney is three years older than he and is so idolized that Miller would do anything for him, including lying, stealing, or murdering. Long afterwards, Miller learns from Carney's older sister that he serves in World War I, is disabled by poison gas, and, recently dies. She sends photographs of Carney in uniform, looking resigned and forsaken, that make Miller wonder how "they" could have done this to a demigod. Carney shows the senselessness of war.

Blaise Cendrars

A prolific French-language Swiss author in the period immediately after World War II, Cendrars is often the subject of Henry Millers' conversations with literary friends. Cendrars loses his left hand, beloved sons, and library to the Nazis and lives in poverty. Ephraim Doners is one of the few people who read everything that Cendrars writes.

Charles-Albert Cingria

Henry Miller's acquaintance, Cingria seems to be a jolly and talkative person when they meet at New Year's Eve, even while Cingria is going through one of the worst periods of his life. Miller learns this from a memorial issue of La Nouveau Revue Française, sent to him by friend Gerald Robitaille. Reading about his remarkable life and precious writings, Miller is inspired to write about life at Big Sur.

Judson Crews

A shaggy-bearded native of Waco, TX, Crews is a latter-day prophet who lives in Big Sur on peanut butter and wild mustard, and shuns smoking and drinking.

Jaime de Angulo

A fiery Spanish recluse in the mountains near Big Sur, de Angulo is unpredictable while drinking. He visits Henry Miller expressly to meet Miller's ornery house guest, Conrad Moricand. They share the same Little Lord Fauntleroy background, but have become polar opposites, except in their obsession with evil and opposition to Christianity. De Angulo's paganism is of the primitive type. Despite outward appearances, de Angulo is a man of learning and taste and the two men get so wrapped up in conversation about the past that they fail to get drunk. De Angulo is a great mimic as he tells the story of his life, including two marriages and accidentally killing his favorite son. Moricand is fascinated to hear about de Angulo's researches into the diverse languages of North America.

The Fassett Family

Operators of Nepenthe Restaurant, a show place in Big Sur, CA, the Fassetts, Lolly and Bill, are busy most of the time and allow their five children simply to raise hell. They argue that it is children's role to have a good time. They have no concept of discipline. Evenings, the children entertain guests with folk dances before retiring to listen to classical music. Bill ponders how to secure the children's futures.

Rev. William Greenwell

The shabbily-dressed and tobacco-chewing bootblack in Monterey, CA, whose services Henry Miller always seeks, Greenwell is also a trustee of the Baptist church and an avid lecturer on the Bible. He dispenses wisdom as he shines shoes. He has four sons and a grandson, who does things his own way. The grandson opens Greenwell's eyes to the fact that everyone is unique and does things his or her own way. Threatening cannot change this and guiding young people is an art.

Harvey

Talented in many things, Harvey takes over Norman Mini's place in lonely Lucia, where he is not satisfied with speaking, but needs to write. Henry Miller suspects that he may have taught English literature and admires his well-crafted spoken stories. Harvey suffers intense writer's block, which Miller tries to cure by ordering him to write down why he cannot write. Harvey must forget about the authors that he knows so well and ignore all books and magazines. Weeks later, Harvey announces that it has worked and he promises to present a long manuscript. Instead, he returns East and resumes teaching. People like Harvey, although talented, aim too high.

Little Mike Houghland

A character from the age of four, Little Mike is one of Henry Miller's favorite children at Big Sur, CA. He is elfin, gentle, contained, and silent. He spends a week in the Miller house and is a pleasure, agreeing to everything, and able to dicker anything he wants. He is absorbed with common objects and can mend anything that breaks. He stands in sharp contrast with Miller's son, Tony.

Ivy

An attractive but emotionally disturbed mother of two, Ivy offers to care for Henry Miller's two children when his wife leaves him, in exchange for room and board. She quits after 12 hours because the children are impossible. During trips to town for supplies, Walter Winslow and Ivy become lovers and she moves into his unlivable studio for the winter, never helping out except to polish the stove. Considering her a traitor, Miller avoids Ivy.

Robinson Jeffers

A poet and student of the classics who lives in nearby Carmel, CA, Jeffers to Henry Miller's mind captures the Greek-tragic spirit of Bi Sur.

Jake Kenney

A writer with a great sense of humanity, Kenney is a sometimes visitor to Big Sur, CA. He is a Russian at heart and cannot find a publisher for his novel, The Falling Asleep, which runs counter to the American taste that resents laughing and weeping. He is also capable of working with his hands, which keeps him alive.

Harry Koverr (Haricot Vert)

This individual has two pseudonyms. Henry Miller's Swiss-born benefactor, Koverr as a fan replies to a fund-raising appeal with $250 a month for a year. One day Koverr visits to see how Miller is doing, and they become friends. The son of wealthy parents, Koverr has spent his fortune badly, is in a bad marriage, does not like his job, and has always wanted to write but been too timid; he wants to change places with Miller. After a few more checks and then a silence of more than a year, Koverr sends a pathetic request for repayment, which Miller makes in installments. Koverr writes that all of his friends had turned him down and Miller had been a slim hope. Koverr no longer wants to make money and is determined to write.

Jack Lawton

A boyhood friend of Henry Miller in the new Brooklyn, NY, neighborhood or the "street of early sorrows" (Part 2, Chapter 5, pg. 116), Lawton is a sophisticated youngster and introduces Miller to the facts of life, including the foibles of adults. Lawton's English mother always looks at him lovingly, unlike many friends' mothers.

Warren Leopold

An architect, builder, painter, and carpenter, Lawton lives with his wife and four well-behaved children in Big Sur, CA. He loathes his profession because it caters to clients' unaesthetic whims. He builds a house that he likes, lives there a while, and then sells it to someone who likes it. When one of his children requires expensive medical care, he accepts regular commissions. He is generous towards Henry Miller and never even considers working as a carpenter to improve his standard of living. He wanders the coast looking for a half-acre. Finding it, gratis, he clears and plants it and builds a cabin, but is turned out by his neighbors as not belonging. The man who gives him the land turns out not to own it.

The Lopez Family

Henry Miller's ideal of a family, the Lopezes hail from Mexico and embody the virtues that Americans most undervalue and greedily exploit: gentleness, humility, and love. They have three children and work hard, taking neighbors' children into their crowded

hut, where many for the first time see a picture of the Madonna and hear Roman Catholic prayers. The twin boys are active, resourceful rascals but have a chivalrous nature. Little Rosita a a little mother since learning to walk. The father is a gardener, too poor to give them toys but thankful for their health. Wife Rosa keeps house without modern appliances. The children are content with whatever they have, building miniature cities with imagination and junk.

The Miller Wives

Henry Miller marries five times. Four wives are mentioned in this book. He generally refers simply to his wife, so the chronology he provides at the front of the text is valuable in determining who is who.

Beatrice Sylvas Wickens Miller is barely mentioned, beyond the fact that they marry in 1917. Second wife June Edith Smith Miller spends several months in Paris with him in 1928-29 before he returns to Europe alone and remains until 1940. June introduces Miller to the painting of George Grosz, which helps create his passion for producing watercolors.

Third wife Janina Martha Lepska Miller is thirty years younger than he when they marry in Denver, CO, in 1944. She has born a daughter Valentine (Val) by the time Conrad Moricand becomes a house guest in 1947 and is pregnant with son Tony. Miller suggests that she is moody and that everything he says or does makes her angry. He admits that it is hard to see the image of God in her. Neighbors, however, consider her an ideal, long-suffering wife. She softens instantly in the presence of Jean Wharton. Janina warns Miller against taking in the morose astrologer but comes to appreciate Moricand's continental charm. She agrees with him that Miller spoils Val with too much attention and that Val needs discipline. Moricand becomes an effective mediator in the household, allowing the spouses to examine calmly issues over which they normally fight. Miller admits to Moricand that he and Janina do not get along, but Socrates had had the same problem. Eventually, however, Janina declares war and insists that he cannot with his reputation take custody of Val. When he cannot cope with the children, Janina returns to claim them and take them to Los Angeles, CA, leaving him profoundly depressed.

Fourth wife Eve McClure Miller earns the rare honor of being praised by name. Miller declares that without her, he would be a "dead duck" (Part 2, Chapter 8, pg. 156). They are married at the time he writes this memoir and live with his children Val and Tony on Partington Ridge. When Miller gets messages while taking naps, he orders Eve to write down keywords. Miller first connects with Eve's brother Lilik Schatz while making a silk-screen book together. After Lilik returns to Jerusalem, Miller marries Eve.

Valentine (Val) and Tony Miller

Henry Miller's children with Janina, born in 1946 and 1948, respectively, Val and Tony live with Miller and fourth wife Eva after the divorce. Val takes pleasure in interrupting

adult conversations and Tony is a ruffian with a short attention span. To get the children to behave at dinner, Miller tells them serial stories about the adventures of a girl named Charma in New York City. They prompt him with how the last episode ends and ask probing questions. When the children ask difficult questions, Miller tells them honestly that he does not know the answer and suggests that finding an answer oneself is better than being handed a pat one. Janina believes that he spoils them.

When the marriage breaks up over different approaches to discipline, Miller becomes father and mother, with help from author Walker Winslow. The children love the adults to perform comedian Red Skelton's drunk act (Skelton having visited and performed it once in person). Dinner is always traumatic because the children are picky eaters and Walker is a gourmet cook. Pleading a buffoonery do no good. After dinner they demand stories and refuse to brush their teeth. When the children finally find Winslow's Achilles heel, he snaps and later asks Miller to decide whether he is keeping the children for their own good or to get even with his wife. Miller wires her to fetch them. He is relieved and heartbroken to see them leave.

The children eventually come back to live with Miller and his next wife, Eve. Tony on a walk declares that he will never go to war, even if he has to cut off a finger. Miller always puts Val before everything and everyone. He asks house guest Conrad Moricand to teach her French, but she never learns more than simple greetings. Moricand cannot understand Miller's preoccupation with his (then) only child, the apple of his eye. He teaches her her first song, "Yankee Doodle," while on a long walk in the forest.

Norman Mini

Expelled from West Point, Mini finishes a fine novel that remains unpublished when he moves to Big Sur, CA. Henry Miller feels that he has the makings of a great writer. Miller first meets Mini in San Francisco and sees him as the victim of deep humiliations and a failed military strategist battling through life. Miller can listen to him indefinitely. Mini lives with his wife and child in poverty, while maintaining a fine wine cellar, in lonely Lucia, determined to finish a nightmarish novel, which might have been entitled The Unspeakable Horror of this Man-made Universe. Mini regularly seeks Miller's moral injunctions without letting him read the text or even providing a clear outline. He seeks insights into the writing process, which Miller says he approaches too laboriously. Mini doubts himself. Miller tells him to write, write, and write. Unable to find a publisher, Mini leaves to become a night janitor at the University of California at Berkeley, writes by day, and audits classes that he could teach. He makes an art of everything he does.

The Morgenraths

A skilled artist working in all media, Jack Morgenrath lives on Livermore Ledge in Big Sur, CA. He can fix anything and owns a car and a truck only in order to hire himself out. Otherwise, he would do without. Born a Jew in the sadistic Polish Corridor and transplanted to the Brooklyn ghetto, Jack frees himself of all ambition but to live the

good life, without fuss. He answers Henry Miller's questions about painting slowly and comprehensively. He is a tolerant, flexible, wise, gracious Fundamentalist/Absolutist, living in "a state of eternity" (Part 2, Chapter 4, pg. 98.) He is maddeningly clairvoyant. Every lesson about art floors Miller and makes him contemplate how art permeates Asian life. Creator and all creatures are revered.

The Morgenrath son, Helmut, nicknamed Pookie, regards three-year-younger Tony Miller as a god but only infrequently is able to see him. Tough Tony is uncharacteristically gentle with Pookie. Whenever he sees an adult, Pookie momentarily freezes into a Fra Angelico expression.

Gerhart Muench

A Dresden, Germany-born pianist, composer, and musical scholar, Muench is, in Henry Miller's opinion, the greatest genius of all the artists living in Big Sur, CA, at his time. They often discuss the prolific author Blaise Cendrars. Muench's playing Ravel's Scarbo inspires Miller to paint music without pause or reflection. Their tempos match, with Miller producing a half-dozen scary pictures.

Gilbert Neiman

A writer and one of Henry Miller's bosom friends, Neiman surrounds himself with music wherever he lives, particularly while writing. He lives with his wife and daughter in Jean Varda's big house, 100 yards from Miller's shack. A poor sleeper, he is certain that he hears recordings of composer Edgard Varèse coming from there and investigates. When Neiman tears apart Miller's cabin looking for a radio, Miller takes him to the creek and convinces him that it is playing Beethoven's Fifth.

Neiman's novel There's a Tyrant in Every Country, about Mexico, is published during his days at Big Sur. He then begins work on The Underworld. When drunk, Neiman's speech is like his walk, meandering wildly but always coming back to the starting point. He is always on the alert for message from Mama Kali.

Neiman is an eternal student who has translated classics from French, Spanish, and Italian. He begins his career in Colorado or Kansas as a child actor and in Big Sur disclaims while sobering. Whenever Neiman talks about nobility, he talks about Mexican Indians, among whom he had lived and wished to remain forever.

Anaïs Nin

Henry Miller's benefactor and mistress in Paris between the World Wars, Nin introduces him to Conrad Moricand in the fall of 1936. Nin had been supporting Moricand since the loss of his fortune and needs discretely to cut him loose. She knows that Miller is unable financially to take over but figures that he will take it as a moral duty and find a way.

Hugh O'Neill

A grimly quiet poet who lives for several years at Anderson Creek, CA, O'Neill of necessity learns to be a carpenter, plumber, and mason. He supports his family by farming, fishing, and hunting, paints, mends his own clothes - and yet remains purposefully poor. He rejects the workaday world. He can talk about books like a professional lecturer and, being Irish, always has a new twist to his stories. He bears no hatred from his experiences as a prisoner of war, promises to write a great war novel some day, but never does. Instead, he produces pieces that fail to captivate readers the way his oral stories do and he is happy to idle away his time.

Eugene Pachutinsky

Along with brothers Anatole, and Leon, Eugene Pachutinsky is Henry Miller's friend during his ten-year sojourn in Paris. After the war, Miller places an ad in a Paris newspaper to learn his friends' fate. Eugene responds: he has survived and is waiting for a government pension. On a fluke he arranges the purchase of a large school house in Rocquecor, which he remodels and sets aside two rooms for Miller and his wife.

Ralph

A would-be writer whose surname is withheld, Ralph dresses year-round in overcoat and gloves. He shows up at Henry Miller's cabin, midsummer, looking to join the "cult of sex and anarchy" (Part 2, Chapter 1, pg. 45.. Miller assures him that the newspapers have it wrong and sends him to Emil White, where Ralph takes up residence until Emil cannot stand him any longer. Ralph is a typical spoiled brat; his father writes from the Midwest to thank Miller and describe what a trial it has been getting Ralph to live a normal life. Ralph burns clothing once he takes a dislike to the donor. Miller finds Ralph freezing and starving in Monterey but refuses to take the nuisance in. He learns that Ralph is arrested for vagrancy and shipped home to his father.

Paul Rink

A near neighbor of Henry Miller in Big Sur, CA, Rink is a jack-of-all trades whose novel has been rejected by 25 publishers, although he rewrites it many times to fit publishers' specific whims, a practice that Miller considers foolish and hopeless. Miller admires Rink's ability to narrate daily installments about a character named Inch Connecticut for over a year. It inspires Miller to tel his own children a nightly story about a little girl named Chama, based on the beautiful daughter of Merle Armitage.

Rog Rogaway

A prolific painter, Rogaway lives on a small disability pension in an abandoned schoolhouse near Krenkel Corners. He paints 2-3 canvases a day and when he runs out, reuses the older ones. His work has a musical quality. He avoids his wife and two children by painting in an outhouse-like structure that he slaps together a few hundred yards from the schoolhouse and decorates with artifacts collected while in the Navy. Evenings, Rogaway relaxes with wine, music, and dancing. Longing for a warmer climate, he tries Mexico, Majorca, southern France, Portugal, and Taos after leaving Big Sur.

Harrydick and Lilian Bos Ross

Henry Miller's closest neighbors in Big Sur, CA, Harrydick a wide array of practical knowledge as well as great heavenly wisdom. He is forever collecting gorgeous specimens in the woods and admiring every aspect of their form, function, origin, etc. Wife Lillian's book, The Stranger, convinces him to put down roots there. It also draws large numbers of tourists to the artists' colony.

Emil Schlennock

A commercial artist and college art teacher, Schlennock has the greatest influence on Henry Miller's painting. In 1929 he encourages, guides, and inspires him, envying Miller's ability to be "wild and loose" (Part 2, Chapter 4, pg. 89) without technical constraints. Schlennock shares albums of the masters with Miller and helps him study the plates in detail.

Mohamed Ali Sarwat

A young Egyptian who works under Henry Miller in New York's Cosmococcic Telegraph Company in 1924, Sarwat writes Miller about how America has dashed his hopes. He is no better able to support himself in capitalistic Washington, DC, than in materialistic New York and his patience runs out. Unable return to Egypt a failure and having unshakable faith in Miller, Sarwat begs to become Miller's valet.

Lilik Schatz

The brother of Henry Miller's fourth wife Eve, Schatz lives several years in Krenkel Corners, CA. While living in Berkeley, CA, he convinces Miller to collaborate on a silkscreen book, Into the Night, which never sells. In 1947, Schatz does Miller a favor by picking up Conrad Moricand at the San Francisco airport, feeding and lodging him, and eventually driving him to Big Sur to take up residence with the Millers. Schatz tries to befriend Moricand and reveals to Miller that Moricand makes rather good erotic

drawings. When Moricand moves out, Schatz again provides transportation and serves as an intermediary.

Schatz knows a dozen languages and is able by empathy and energy to communicate in many more. He has a hard time after returning home to Jerusalem, but his letters never betray this. They are upbeat, clearly evoking where he is. He misspells in every language. There are troubles with the Arabs, but Schatz will not stay home. He cites the many trouble spots where civilized nations run proxy wars but listens above the din for the dove of peace.

Lynda Sergeant

A resident of Big Sur, CA, living in the log cabin around which the famous Nepenthe Restaurant is later built, Sergeant arranges for Henry Miller to live in Keith Evan's Partington Ridge Cabin while he is in the military. Sergeant suffers from ergophobia, working for years on a manuscript that is, unfortunately, destroyed by fire. She shows Miller many stories and novelettes with characters from New England, where she grows up, but set in Big Sur. She writes richly about bloodcurdling themes, not sparing her readers' emotions. Her writing reminds Miller of the South African Isak Dinesen. Sergeant holds that the Santa Lucia mountain range is hermaphroditic where they are feminine in form and contour, but masculine in strength and vitality.

Leon Shamroy

The head camera man at Fox Films, Shamroy visits Henry Miller at Big Sur, CA, bringing the usual fine food, drink, and Cuban cigars. He takes an instant dislike to Miller's annoying house guest Conrad Moricand, who partakes heartily of his gifts while preparing to analyze him astrologically. Shamroy is raucous and profane. When taken to see Moricand's erotic drawings, Shamroy agrees to buy a few, but Moricand insists that he buy the lot or nothing. Shamroy thinks the Moricand is crazy not to let him show the drawings around and get double the price.

Jean Varda

A resident of Monterey, CA, Varda introduces Henry Miller to Lynda Sergeant in Big Sur, with whom he stays until Keith Evan's Partington Ridge cabin becomes available. Miller declares Varda one of the true geniuses of Big Sur, but numbers him in an earlier generation. Varda leaves Big Sur for a time, but reappears late in the book, living and painting on a houseboat in Sausalito and advising Miller on how to rid himself of responsibility for Conrad Moricand. Varda arranges to pawn Moricand off on an aging San Francisco countess who collects occult people, Moricand rejects her.

Howard Welch

Henry Miller's neighbor in Big Sur, CA, Welch is a plain, handsome energetic, well-meaning fellow from Missouri, a real American. He arrives four years ago, wanting only to grow his own food and do whatever jobs fall his way. He minds his own business but is quick to lend a hand. He lends spice to the community, is slow-speaking, quick-witted, poetical and musical but untrained, idealistic, sincere, original, and unassuming. He follows no party line in anything but knows how life should be lived in evil times. He compromises when needed and adapts to neighbors' ways, but not necessarily their views. He laughs at himself.

Oden Wharton

An octogenarian who leaves a $100,000 a year job at age 45 to do absolutely nothing, Wharton frequents the sulfur baths in Big Sur, CA, where Henry Miller recuperates from receiving visitors and performing routine tasks. Wharton has gotten rid of his fortune and is cared for my friends, particularly Ed and Betty Eames. Wharton keeps busy talking, reading, and strolling to and from the baths.

Objects/Places

Big Sur Region, CA

Extending south from the Little Sur River or Malpaso Creek as far as Lucia and eastward from the Pacific coast to the Salinas Vallet, Big Sur provides the backdrop for most of this book. It has a unique climate and character, marking the separation of northern and southern California. November through February are the most invigorating months.

Originally the habitat of Essleen Indians, it is conquered by the Spaniards headquartered in Monterey around 1770. Discovered by mountain men in the 1870s, Big Sur remains virtually unknown until 1937, when the Carmel-San Simeon Highway is built. Before that, Jack London and George Stirling had visited on horseback.

In Feb. 1947 Henry Miller arrives and, influenced by Lillian Bos Ross' book, The Stranger, grows determined to put down roots. His perch is located about 1,000 feet above sea level up treacherous slopes, which helps keep it unspoiled. Miller declares it the face of the earth as God intended it to be. Given this attitude, it seems odd that he enjoys dumping his garbage down the cliffs into the Pacific.

Following publication of Emil White's Big Sur Guide, tourists swarm the region, which Miller fears will dwindle into legend in another decade and evolve into a suburb of Monterey. The little school is nearly at capacity and the local women are fecund. The people are talented, capable, resourceful, and self-sufficient. Big Sur is not a place for spiritual pilgrimage like Mecca, Lourdes, and Lhasa, or a Klondike where incurable idealists can grow suddenly rich. It is however as instructive as Thoreau's Walden for those willing to look inward and perceive paradise everywhere.

Anderson Creek, CA

The part of Big Sur, CA, where Henry Miller lives with his wife Janine and daughter Valentine in 1946-47, Anderson Creek is an old convict shack located on the edge of a cliff. The shack has a toilet, radio, and phonograph. Anderson Creek is the subject of Elizabeth Smart's volume of poetry, By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept, telling of blood feuds, suicides, and supernatural events that take place in Jean Varda's day. By 1944, when Emil White arrives from the Yukon, the convict shacks are gone and peace prevails. By the end of World War II, long-haired artists arrive and broken romances resume. Poet Hugh O'Neill also lives there for several years. Because of the artists, Anderson Creek is where everything unusual is said to begin, including the flying saucer that Walker Winslow wakes Miller up to see it. Others also describe the same phenomenon. Resident Paul Rink invents a serial story for the children that he drags out for over a year.

Beverly Glen

Beverly Glen is the area near Hollywood, CA, where Henry Miller first lives after returning to the United States, before settling in Big Sur, June 1942-Feb. 1944. In Beverly Glen Miller gives his one important show of watercolor paintings in the "green house" with John Dudley.

Corfu, Greece

Henry Miller's home after Paris, France, from June 1939 until the Nazi invasion forces him to return to the United States in early 1940, Corfu is introduced to him by author Lawrence Durrell. It is the first time in his life that he feels alone, preparing him for life in Big Sur, CA, where it feels the same, despite the fact that he has neighbors.

Lucia, CA

Part of Big Sur, CA, Lucia is a lonely place filled with poison ivy, flies, and rattlesnakes. It is home to novelist Norman Mini until he leaves and is succeeded as cook and handyman by an excellent musician, artist, and storyteller Harvey, whose downfall is longing to be a writer.

The Millennium of Hieronymus Bosch

A coffee table book by Wilhelm Fränge, The Millennium of Hieronymus Bosch analyses the great painter's most famous triptych, also known as The Garden of Earthly Delights. Henry Miller is impressed by the spiritual nature of the oranges depicted in the painting, finding it far superior to renditions by Cézanne and Van Gogh. All of the animals and plants depicted in the triptych share a magic "super-reality" (pg. 23) and the whole has an enchanting, terrifying unity. Miller discusses in particular the electrifying last plate, "The Cave of Pythagoras," and the phrase, "the task of genuine love." He chides televised debates at the U.N., wishing that three men of good could be brought together to discuss genuine love. As in the painting, tender wild flowers would grow in profusion.

Monterey, CA

The city nearest the Big Sur Region of California, Monterey figures in a few anecdotes in this book. An annoying would-be author who believes there is a cult of sex and anarchy in Big Sur moves on to Monterey, where Henry Miller finds him freezing and starving. He feeds him but will not take him in. Authorities arrest Ralph for vagrancy and ship him home to the Midwest. Conrad Moricand is put up in a hotel in Monterey after driving Miller crazy in his home. Miller gets a friend to drive Moricand back and forth to County Hospital in nearby Salinas. Moricand ends up in San Francisco, about which no detail is given.

Paris, France

Henry Miller's home for several months in 1928-29 with second wife, June Edith Smith Miller, and again, alone, from 1930 through the start of World War II, Paris (particularly the Villa Seurat section) provides an atmosphere in which his artistry thrives. He produces his famous Tropics novels there. Initially he lives off the generosity of friends, including his lover, Anaïs Nin. Miller alludes often and fondly in this book to this lifestyle.

In 1934, Miller begins recording his dreams and suddenly sees with new eyes what he desires. Nin introduces him to the gloomy, destitute astrologer Conrad Moricand, who avoids the enchanting life of the bohemians on the verge of World War II. Miller often takes morning constitutionals on the outskirts of Paris and sits in the Place de Rungis to watch life go by. He often suffers hangovers, which make the scenes more vivid. After breakfast, he writes, his brain afire. He thinks in French and writes in English about the faraway places and friends of his youth and favorite authors.

Partington Ridge

The site of Keith Evan's cabin in Big Sur, CA, where Henry Miller lives from May 1944 until Jan. 1946 and again from Feb. 1947 onwards. It is located 14 miles south of the Big Sur Post Office and 40 from the city of Monterey. The first cabin has no electricity, butane tanks, or refrigeration, and mail service is only three days a week. The Millers move to Anderson Creek, three miles away, when owner Keith Evans returns to civilian life, but return in Feb. 1947 to a fine house that Jean Wharton has built for herself. Towards the end of the year Conrad Moricand moves in for three nerve-wracking months.

Slade's Springs, CA

An outdoor sulfur spring bath in the Big Sur region of California, the springs are six miles from where Henry Miller settles in 1947. They are the end of whatever community exists in the sparsely-populated area. To Miller the springs are the equivalent of the English club, the millionaire's yacht, and the muezzin's minaret.

University of California at Los Angeles Library

The Special Collections Division of the UCLA Library houses Henry Miller's correspondence and all sorts of materials sent to him by fans. He begins turning them over shortly after settling in Big Sur, CA. Previously, he destroys large volumes of the craziest letters in New York and Paris, when giving little thought to posterity.

Williamsburg, Brooklyn, NY

The squalid neighborhood in which Henry Miller enjoys a glorious childhood, Williamsburg figures little in this book, but contrasts sharply with the grandeur of Big Sur, CA. Miller remembers it as his first paradise, particularly the friends, many of whom have ended up in prison. He wonders if his children will have such fond memories and be able to picture their childhood surroundings as fondly as he does.

Themes

American Society

Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch deals primarily with Henry Miller's life in California following his return from Europe as his places of refuge, Paris and Corfu, are overtaken by the Nazis. He makes clear that he had left the United States before the war disgruntled and determined never to return but has little choice. He recalls a young Egyptian who had worked for him in that earlier period who had come to the land of plenty and found that he could not survive its crass materialism. Miller seems to commiserate, but never says why he flees abroad. Returning, Miller finds no peace until he visits Big Sur and immediately wants to put down roots there.

Postwar Americans boast of the highest standard of living in the world and are poised to impose it on the rest of the impoverished and backward world. This is part and parcel with the Manifest Destiny that wipes out the Natives and turns America from isolationism into defender of international justice. Bristling with weapons and idealism, particularly the new doomsday devices, the U.S. is caught in an unexpected and uncomfortable role.

Ailments, accidents, and excesses cause even more deaths than do wars. Americans live longer on meager pensions, doing nothing and dying miserably. People follow every health fad, ignoring the obvious truth that one must simply avoid excesses and simplify their lives. Few Americans enjoy their jobs. Elected officials are bunglers, millionaires crave more, the middle classes are empty, union workers have it good but are robbed on every side, and the non-unionized live like rats. Meanwhile, America rejects the social evils that are practiced in its midst. The arts and spirituality, which should offer relief and escape, are shunned. Miller concludes that each individual must realize on her or his own that accepting what the laws of the universe decree and offer as opportunity is the only solution.

Writing

In Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch, Henry Miller describes the writer's craft and burden. Several times he also describes his mania for painting watercolors, which shares many of the same characteristics. He expects to die at his typewriter. He is often asked for advice by novice writers but feels, despite his years of successful publishing, unqualified to do more than encourage them to write, write, write, and to acquire personal experience of life. Even fine storytellers living at Big Sur fail in their attempts to put ideas down on paper and wander off to other pursuits. He describes several instances of talented writers being unable to attract a publisher. Those who pander by rewriting to fit publishers' demands are misguided, he believes. One must write until a title is enthusiastically received and then offer earlier works. Editors often

change their minds and publishers hire new editors. An author must determine his or her audience and work to develop it.

Miller is often seized by a muse that dictates whole paragraphs to him and races to type the results. His Tropic of Capricorn and Tropic of Cancer, both considered obscene and at the time of the writing of this book still banned in the U.S. are partly dictated to him. He argues with his muse against including some of the parts that he knows will cause problems with the censors, but has to obey. When napping inspirations come, he dictates key words to his wife to jot down for later development. This often comes to him while taking walks in the forest. Never having paper and pencil at hand, he struggles to memorize as he hurries home. The mundane routines of life often keep him from writing.

The chief culprit is fan mail. Miller appreciates his fans but decides that he cannot divert time from writing to deal with the letters. The Epilogue to this book is originally written as an apology for ceasing to respond to letters. He asks recipients to understand and show their appreciation of his writings by buying his books. Miller writes out of a sense of obligation to his readers and to himself, not to die with vital thoughts unexpressed. He is amused when a rich Indian wants to hire him to travel through Asia and write up his observations without describing anything. Big Sur, he finds, inspires awe-filled description.

Child Rearing

Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch contains many of Henry Miller's observations on Child Rearing and Education. He believes that the world would be better off if run by children and and sees most American children as unhappy and dissatisfied. He contrasts the impoverished Lopez children with those of two wealthy families who are overindulged and allowed to run amok. Rich parents care only about getting their children into prosperous professions. He describes how Rosa Doner teaches parents and teachers how to handle children and spoils gifted daughter Tasha after she falls out of a second-story window as a small child. She does not turn into a monster because her parents believe in the victory of love. Normal children, Miller believes, are natural hell-raisers and well-behaved children rarely grow into exceptional adults.

Most people see child rearing as a process of making them behave, but most parents and teachers are too harassed to use the only viable method of teaching by example. Miller's favorite bootblack, also a Baptist preacher, sees making children in one's own image through education a sin against Nature. When Miller's children ask difficult questions, he thinks about Greenwall and admits that he does not know the answer. There is an infinite gap between knowledge and truth, and schools are an expedient for dispensing knowledge and discipline. Miller recalls being disciplined and thrashed only once, by his reluctant father at his mother's request. As a father, Miller does not beat the children enough to suit folks in Big Sur. He repents instantly after doing so but feels no guilt. Threats of future blows are worse than blows themselves.

Miller and his wife disagree on child rearing. He arbitrates the children's disputes and dotes particularly on daughter Val. By contrast, Janina does everything by the book. Eventually, the marriage breaks up and Miller tries to be both father and mother. Friend Walter Winslow is the living in the studio above and offers to help, but the children prove too much for the two men. Miller and Winslow end up fighting about Miller's surrendering to them in everything, including what they are willing to eat and their refusal to brush their teeth. In the end, Miller agrees that he is keeping them only to get back at Janina and turns them over to her. Wisely he refrains from interfering in their new lives and forces himself to return to writing. After he remarries and regains custody, he has little to say about child rearing.

Style

Perspective

Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch is a 1956 memoir of Henry Miller's early years living and working at Big Sur, CA, which he describes as a paradise. Miller had by 1956 established himself internationally both as a major author (novels and essays) and as an amateur watercolorist.

Miller draws on his New York upbringing and years of exile in Paris, where he writes his novels Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn, both of which are still banned for obscenity in the United States when he returns in 1940, but concentrates on the artist colony at Big Sur. By 1956, Miller is a hero in the growing counterculture and is supported, to his amazement, by fans worldwide as he continues writing pieces that challenge prevailing societal views but pay little and irregularly. He also produces large numbers of watercolors when the muse is upon him. Visitors flow constantly through his doorway.

Miller writes for a general and albeit cultured audience, sharing his generally optimistic views on life in Big Sur. He opens by commenting on the more luscious than life oranges in Hieronymus Bosch's famous painting of Paradise and illustrates why he finds himself able in a decadent world to find the abiding peace of God among talented and generous neighbors living in oneness with the natural world. He writes about ups and downs, joys and frustrations, with an honest and humor that convince the reader to persevere and to cultivate the ability to commiserate with others and liver generously. The sex and obscenity for which Miller is infamous in his day plays a minor role, frustrating readers who expect it because of his name.

Tone

Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch is, for the most part, written in the second-person, with Henry Miller making observations and offering advice directly and intimately to the reader. He assumes that the reader is rather well-read, introducing later blocks of text in French, for which he offers no translation and names from throughout history, philosophy, and religion, both Eastern and Western. Again, he rarely helps the reader figure out why they are important if it is not self-evident to them.

Writing in the period that his most famous novels are still banned in the United States as obscene but smuggled in and hugely successful overseas. The U.S. and other great powers, having fought bloody wars such as World Wars I and II and Korean War for most of the century are talking about disarmament but not disarming and some have the weapons of mass destruction that could end human existence, Miller is cynical and searching. He declares himself and other characters non-Christian, but quotes the Bible frequently. He talks nebulously about a God-like figure and puts Jesus on a level with

various Asian teachers. He demands that everyone must find truth for and inside themselves. He insists that this is possible, although he is still on the quest. He is a curmudgeonly optimist whose optimism shines out among the pessimists who surround him. He covers none of his own warts, nor those of people big and small whom he describes. He is absolutely subjective throughout but charmingly convincing. Even for a pessimist, it is rather easy to agree with his conclusion: one should and can live in peace and solitude anywhere.

Structure

Henry Miller's Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch consists of a brief preface and introductions that are both chronological and topographical to orient the reader to the time frame of the story and the look and feel of the unique region, and a note, "In the Beginning," which clarifies that no one has ever owned Big Sur. Following this come three parts of text, and an Epilogue

Part 1, "The Oranges of the Millennium," sketches what makes Big Sur a place of seeking inner enlightenment, like Thoreau's Walden. Such utopias as part of the American tradition, but acclimatizing to it is difficult for urban dwellers. Those who fail to thrive must look within for the reason. Miller pictures a strong but dispersed population that balances letting others live in peace with true helpfulness in words and deeds. He writes mostly in the abstract, preparing the reader to appreciate the specific examples that he gives in Part 2. His references to Bosch's most famous triptych are obtuse without referring to illustrations of it, but create an appreciation for a spirit-filled world in which all existence is equally precious .Big Sur is a unique paradise, but for modern people appreciating paradise, with or without God is a challenge. Part 1 asserts that one can perceive paradise by opening enough windows, which he proceeds to do in Part 2.

Part 2, "Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri," consisting of fifteen numbered chapters, constitutes the bulk of the work. On the last page, Miller assigns descriptive titles to the chapters: 1) "The Cult of Sex and Anarchy," 2) "The Anderson Creek Gang," 3) "The Chama Serial," 4) "The Water Color Mania," 5) "The Look of Wonder (Pookie and Butch)," 6) "A Fortune in Francs," 7) "Problems Large and Small (Jean Wharton)," 8) "Fan Mail," 9) "Suave qui Peut!," 10) "Bringing Up Father, 11) "Testimonial in Ut-Mineur," 12) "The Part of Fortune," 13) "The Task of Genuine Love," 14) "A Day at the Baths," and 15) "Making a New Fabric."

The stories introduce a plethora of characters, involving Miller in a variety of situations that help elucidate his views on life and art in the tense post-World War II era. Some of the stories are interrelated but there is a great deal of jumping about in time. Miller has a maddening habit of referring to his wife, without indicating which of them he has in mind at any given point. While dealing with real people, places, and events, Miller writes as a novelist.

Part 3, "Paradise Lost," focuses on Conrad Moricand (1887-1954), an annoying astrologer whom Miller befriends in Paris before World War II, sponsors to come to

America and live with him in Big Sur in 1947, and has to abandon to his own fortunes when he proves impossible to live with. The narrative

The Epilogue, which in the preface Miller explains can be read first or last, he explains to readers why he can no longer answer fan mail. It is originally written in 1946 and intended for publication as a pamphlet entitled This Is My Answer. He shortens and revises it for inclusion in this tome. It is more valuable as a summation than as an introduction, for it draws on material from other chapters particularly Part 2, Chapters 4 and 8, and is too abrupt to lead the reader inside. As a follow-up, it is easy to agree with his belief that one should live in peace and solitude anywhere.

Quotes

"The windows of the soul are infinite, we are told. And it is through the eyes of the soul that paradise is visioned. If there are flaws in your paradise, open more windows!" (Part 1, The Oranges of the Millennium, pg. 25.)

"Big Sur is not a Mecca, a Lourdes, or even a Lhasa. Nor is it a Klondike for the incurable idealist. If you are an artist and think to muscle in here, it would be wise to first find a patron, because the artist cannot live off the artist, and here every other individual, seemingly, is an artist of one sort or another. Even the plumbers" (Part 1, The Oranges of the Millennium, pg. 37.)

"On sober thought, my advice to Harvey (and to all who find themselves in Harvey's boots) stuck me as being sound and sensible. If you can't give the is-ness of a thing give the not-ness of it! The main thing is to hook up, get the wheels turning, sound off. When your breaks jam, try going in reverse. It often works" (Part 2, Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri, Chapter 1, pg. 56.)

"What a pity that ours is not a society which permits a man to squander his days and rewards him—with a crust of bread and a thimbleful of whiskey—for keeping his tail clear of trouble and ennui" (Part 2, Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri, Chapter 2, pg. 67.)

"It was while Gerhart was going over and over the 'Scarbo' that I suddenly lost all control of myself and began to paint music. It was like a thousand tractors going up and down my spine at high speed, the way Gerhart's playing affected me. The faster the rhythm, the more thunderous and oinous the music, the better my brushes flew over the paper" (Part 2, Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri, Chapter 4, pg. 100-101.)

"Every morning on entering my little studio I had first to quell the surge of anger, disgust and loathing which the daily drama inevitably aroused. Quieting myself as best I could, reproving and admonishing myself aloud, I would sit before the marchine—and strike the tuning fork. Bang! Like a sack of coal it would spill out. I could keep up for three or four hours at a stretch, interrupted only the the arrival of the mailman" (Part 2, Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri, Chapter 6, pg. 127.)

"Some write only of Jesus, Buddha, Socrates and Pythagoras. You might suppose the latter breed to be stimulating minds. On the contrary, they are the dullest, the windiest,the dryest of all. Genuine 'gaseous vertebrates.' They are only surpassed in dullness by the nimble wits who are always ready to relay the latest joke overheard at the office or in a public toilet" (Part 2, Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri, Chapter 8, pg. 150-151.)

"The gulf between knowledge and truth is infinite. Parents talk a lot about truth but seldom bother to deal in it. It's much simpler to dispense ready-made knowledge. More expedient too, for truth demands patience, endless, endless patience. The happiest

expedient of all is to bundle kis off to school just as soon as they can stand the strain" (Part 2, Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri, Chapter 10, pg. 176.)

"In this universe of ours there is room for all, perhaps even need for all. The sun does not inquire about rank and status before shedding its warmth; the cyclone levels the godly and the ungodly; the government takes your tax money even though it be tainted. Nor is the atom bomb a respecter of persons. Perhaps tha's why the righteous are squirming so!" (Part 2, Peace and Solitude: a Potpourri, Chapter 13, pg. 230.)

"Sometimes he looked Egyptian, sometimes Mongolian, sometimes Iroquois or Mohican, sometimes Chaldean, sometimes Etruscan. Often very definite figures out of the past leaped to mind, figures he either seemed to incarnate momentarily or figures he had affinities with. To wit: Montezuma, Herod, Nebuchadnezzar, Ptolemy, Balthasar, Justinian, Solon. Revelatory names, in a way" (Part 3, Paradise Lost, pgs. 306-307.)

"The more of God he recognizes in himself the freer he becomes. And the freer he becomes the fewer decisions he has to make, the less choice is presented to him. Freedom is a misnomer. Certitude is more like it. Unerringness. Because truthfully there is always only one way to act in any situation, not two, not three" (Part 3, Paradise Lost, pg. 323-324.)

"Out yonder they may curse, revile and torture one another, defile all the human instincts, make a shambles of creation (if it were in their power) but here, no, here it is unthinkable, here there is abiding peace, the peace of God, and the serene security created by a handful of good neighbors living at one with the creature world, with noble, ancient trees, scrub and sagebrush, wild lilac and lovely lupin, with poppies and buzzards, eagles and humming birds, gophers and rattlesnakes, and sea and sky unending" (Epilogue, pg. 404.)

Topics for Discussion

What are Henry Miller's views on child rearing? How do you rate his own efforts? What would you recommend that he do differently?

How does Henry Miller enable Conrad Moricand's dysfunctions?

How is astrology treated in this book? What is Henry Miller's bottom-line view of horoscopes?

How are Christianity and Judaism treated in this book? Does he show a preference for one or the other? What good and evil does he see in each?

How are the religions and philosophies of Asia treated in this book? Do they offer more or less hope than Western systems?

How is the threat of nuclear holocaust treated in the book? What does it reveal about the human condition?

Does Henry Miller hold much hope for the future of American society? What are its positive and negative features? Where does he see it heading? Discuss at least three major aspects.