

Henry Miller, with us

I do not remember anything about Miller's coming to Majorca (who remembers that John Cage stayed in the island in 1930?). No photographs, no rotten interviews; that was the matter I read at that time almost by compulsion. In 1962 I was in the grips of the brutal machine of teaching. Instinctively, I knew the words by Rimbaud: "everything we are taught is false". The reading of Miller's books, translated into Spanish in South America, had to conciliate literature and life for us. ~~the~~ Instinct was teaching us anew; without knowing it we had Rimbaud's ambition in the writing of the author of Black Spring. It was the erotic ~~the~~ outburst of Tropic of Cancer, Tropic of Capricorn, Sexus, Plexus and Nexus. The Books in My Life was a coveted book, and the scarce number of copies that circulated were lent among a group of readers who feverishly looked for the titles recommended by Miller, too rare, on occasions, for the "huis clos" of our country. Some months ago, I bought the Cellini's autobiography, remembering Miller's experiences as a reader of that book. The "Open Letter to Surrealists" in The Cosmological Eye disturbed us. Later, some books by the writer from New York were published in Spain: The Colossus of Maroussi, translated by Ramón Gil Novales (Seix Barral, 1969), the play Just Wild about Harris, translated by Francisco Martín (Barral, 1970). But in 1966, we were able to read the catalan version of A Devil in Paradise, by Manuel de Pedrolo (Edicions 62). It was another revelation from that man who between living and writing establishes the erotic and the vision: a search of life.

It seems, however, that a man began to translate Miller's works into catalan, in spite of publishers' indifference. We must remember the American author is writing ~~the~~ since the 1930's. With extreme pulchritude and care, Jordi Arbones has given us Primavera negra, in 1970, and El temps dels assassins, in 1975, both published by Aymá. The catalan prose of the first one overwhelmed us by its fidelity to the acid, bitter, alive and nimble prose that characterizes Henry Miller. Arbones, in this second occasion, has translated one of the most tormented works by Miller, and <sup>written</sup> an enlightening prologue we missed in the other books translated into our language. El temps dels assassins, the last verse from the poem "Matí d'embriaguesa" in Rimbaud's Il.luminacions, does not lead us along transatlantic routes or trips; it does not tell us about bars and cold neon lights of New York. El temps dels assassins confronts us to two parallel lives in time: Rimbaud's and Miller's. Few times the graphomaniac Miller has penetrated as deeply into Rimbaud's vital importance.

In two parts, the books offers us the light of a powerful searchlight that pursues the movements of a man in a terrible crater: his own life and the fight for not living "en el passat, nodrits per pensaments morts, per credos morts, per cencies mortes". No; Miller does not want to entertain us with a new biography of the poet of Le bateau ivre. His text is a defense of poetry. The secret bond that unites men in an espiritual research through times and the earth. It is not a learned discussion about stores of works, nor the bureaucratic technocracy tending to decipher the poet's flame, but the crop of color beyond the known space. We know Rimbaud is just "l'home capaç d'alterar profundament el món". We find ourselves in front of the ~~the~~ core of poetry. A defense of poetry that I will not recommend with a Messianic tone: Miller's book is a discovery. As simple as a leaf of grass, the dilemma that closes Rimbaud's poetry extends the run of human destiny.

"El temps dels assassins": no other theme could be more precise to convey Rim-

baud's prophetic world. He is who "sejorna en l'esperit i la imaginació": the true poet within the boundaries of prophetic. Founding his study on Rimbaud's biography, Miller gives us what is the opposed to a biographic text. His is a field of ecstasy. If we observe his production, we shall find clear references: the essays on Cendrars or Giono have, for example, a confidential tone, but try eagerly to find the motive of artistic art, that is: life and poetry preside —as it is always the case in artful creators— the center of their interrogations. Both things are a question or they are nothing. On the way, let us cite an example of ours. Was it not this the destiny of Gabriel Ferrater's? (He is a catalan poet who commit suicide). In El temps dels assasins, contempt and violation of the mind take state, and the artist makes unfathomable plunges (Van Gogh, whom Miller talks with precision about, Gauguin...) Or an inner <sup>both</sup> voyage that leads him to the physical disappearance when the brightness of his attitude and work takes radical postures. Here is Ferrater's suicide.

Passion and lucidity are the filters that prepare the book we are commenting. A biography of the spirit, a hieroglyphical net of the steps Rimbaud gives, not only because of Abyssinian pain or the endless routes about Europe, but the other pan of the balance: the acceptance of the unique salvation: freedom. And this one, for him, is death. We think again of Ferrater. Miller only confirms he belongs also to that human race, but through a personal experience all the way around. At an age Rimbaud ends the cycle, Miller begins it. Few American writers understood surrealism as himself; and few have assumed a role as his against the establishment. Maybe Burroughs is a case of comparision. It is not by chance that the choosing of Rimbaud by Miller have served as a catalyser of a kind of expression for the visionary. Within El temps dels assasins will pass human tropics tightly bound to the erotic sense of his writing: both body and soul are the cornerstones to investigate what it is unknown. Like Lawrence, Nietzsche or Artaud, with the not unusual presence of Amiel's, Miller is a subversive progressist against morals; ~~and between~~ between what is sacred and profane his search belongs to the cosmos of a deep ascetic: the vital labyrinth that preceeds literature. Literature as a pale beam from a hidden light....