

preconception he entertains concerning himself that he has had, if not the universal experience entire, at least the experience from which great poetry flows; and that he is to be compared to Walt Whitman. He speaks of "the Walts and the James's."

Like the Mystic warrior, the narrative poem *The Song of Life*, and the drama *Night* are built by means of rationalization about the person of the author. They reveal impulses of self-justification, and the necessity of calling a mediocre experience by loud and august names. In spite of the cosmic inferences of his themes, Oppenheim has not been able to make up his mind whether he is writing about a general or about a specific. He dodges nervously between "objectivity" and "subjectivity," willing to fix on neither. The characters of the narrative poem remain dolls prettily decorated, and move through Arthur Davies landscapes; the tale has neither the naïveté of fiction or the penetration of philosophy. The play introduces a priest who is no priest, a scientist not a scientist, and a poet who could never in all the world write a poem. *The Song of the Sea*, it is true, commences as a metaphor, and moves grandly for a few pages. Nevertheless, we are made aware very shortly that the author gets not enough satisfaction out of feeling life through a thing. He has, it seems, to mount the orator's rostrum in person and exhort, declare and save. The music was merely a pretext, a sort of overture to a modern Jung-analytic sermon.

Like content, like form. The surface of Oppenheim's work shows him possessed of no extraordinary sensitivity to the objects before him. The utterly living touch is out of his song. There are fresh informal perceptions on every page of Whitman; but Oppenheim's perceptions are always a little second hand. Sometimes he comes very close to capturing new sensations:

The sea, black in the winter cloud-light,
Swinging rough squares of sheeted water, laced with
white foam,
And spouting spume through the wind's mouth, and
slashing into blue about jutting rocks,
Hard, broken, like jostling steel out to the sky-
rim——"

and yet, one finds it difficult to feel the entire crispness, immediacy fully present. His poetic language smells of the lamp; he knows Whitman, Nietzsche and the Song of Songs not wisely but too well. And if music comes to him readily, the tone of his speech remains ever a little unmodulated and heavy and unrelieved. He requires, it seems, an orchestra of a hundred instruments to serenade his mistress, and the exaltation finally wearies one. The really lovely lyrics called *Songs out of Solitude*, with their comparative reticency and subtlety of mood, come like poultices "to heal the blows of sound."

These songs, and the other unlabored pieces, are islands in the sea; and something which looks like the mainland seems to have appeared in *Golden Bird*. The poet has finally got a glimmer of the unconscious wisdom of Siegfried; for Brünhilde is never to be awakened with exhortations or even with the most perfect exposition of the working of the psyche, and only with a kiss. In many of the poems of this final section of his completed work, Oppenheim has given his lyrical moments with a minimum of rationalization; he has sung in trust of his feelings, contented in singing; and kept his intellect fairly successfully from its

habitual usurpations. These love-poems have a new subtlety, tenderness and incisiveness. And yet, *Golden Bird* remains a promise more than a completely satisfactory performance; it is never poetry of the clearest water. The kerosene of the library lamp remains faintly sensible; and *The Great Mother* is a shameless rationalization, and Hebrews begins mightily and then dribbles into tawdry witicism. Hence, if these poems give one greater hope for Oppenheim's eventual freedom than one has dared for long to cherish, he has still to prove that he can root himself in the difficult coast land upon which he has at length set foot.

PAUL ROSENFELD.

Edna St. Vincent Millay

IN the first place, what a name! Except for Walther von der Vogelweide, was ever lyric poet so sung into being by the very syllables of baptism!—Unless Avis Linnell of Hyannis wrote poems to the Massachusetts clergyman who murdered her long since.

Frederick Pinney Earle and Mitchell Kennerley, who between them published in 1912 an anthology called *The Lyric Year*, noticed in the collection not only a singing name but a poem that sang with it, *Renascence*. Fully armed from the head of Jove, had sprung a new miracle. Where there had been nothing, no whisper of her, stood a whole poet. Few were aware, but how aware were those few! Millay became at once a name for them to conjure with, a wand, a touchstone. The faithful remained faithful; but for nearly ten years, and even after a book was issued in which *Renascence*, the title-poem, was combined with briefer sorceries, only an increasing few realized what had happened. Among most poets, as among most editors and critics, a Millay zealot encountered little more than faint agreement or sympathetic doubt; until in 1921 came *Second April*, a volume not so surprising as the first, and Edna St. Vincent Millay awoke on many mornings to find herself each morning more famous. And now *The Harp-Weaver* has won a Pulitzer Prize.

Prizes had gone to poems in *The Lyric Year*, but none of them to *Renascence*, except the prize of life. Though the poem was as good then as it is now, literary authorities were at first languid, tolerant; it won attention mainly as a good sustained effort by a girl in her teens. Perhaps, as we are told, it won the poet a patron who, with the best intentions, sent her to a girls' college. Perhaps it won her admirers who afterwards, with whatever intentions, attracted her to Greenwich Village. Perhaps, as in the British cases of A. E. Housman and Moira O'Neill, it won her appreciative laymen, inconspicuous and quiet but numerous, whose ground-swell has rippled finally with critics.

There have now been printed six Millay volumes. In the book, *Renascence*, I for one would gladly dispense with the two long, rather callow poems, *Interim* and *The Suicide*; and I am sorry that the admirable English edition called *Poems*, includes from *Second April*, *The Blue Flag in the Bog* (which, bravely intended, yet drags along lamely) and *Ode to Silence* (which is the sort of mouldy Elizabethan stuff still affected by many of the Georgians). *Renascence*, though long, is lyrical. These other four poems, beyond passages, are not. *Ode to Silence*, like the drama, *The Lamp and the Bell*, is written not in water, but on a college blackboard. And yet the play, unlike the poem,

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