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Preface

Edna Millay's poetry has established her as one of the great lyric poets of the Twenties. The red-haired girl from Maine was an ardent suffragist, whose poems on feminism have brought about a revolution in human culture vis-a-vis woman's place in society.

The present study examines her poems in the dual perspectives of romanticism, and poetic renaissance of the twenties. Chapter I deals with the literary climate of the twentieth century renaissance in America. In 1912 America was swept by a poetic renaissance. The New Poets or the Experimentalists revolted against Victorianism. They voiced their opinion through The Lyric Year and Poetry: A Magazine of Verse.

I have thrown light on Millay's Renascence and traced step by step the spiritual development in Millay. In this chapter I have endeavoured to interpret Millay's Renascence in the light of Wordsworth's poetic philosophy. Her Renascence has its roots in English Romanticism, Transcendentalism, and their common source—Platonism.
In Chapter II, I have interpreted Millay's poetry in the light of romanticism. I have endeavoured to examine critically *A Few Figs From Thistles* and *Second April*. A dominant theme in *A Few Figs From Thistles* is feminism. Millay's New Woman asserts her independence—independently as well as physically.

The second theme in *A Few Figs From Thistles* and *Second April* is the transience and impermanence of love. The third theme in this volume is manifested in a revolt against tradition. Millay stresses the value of imagination, like the romantics who held imagination to be that vital creative faculty which moulded the raw materials of poetic inspiration into a finished poem. *A Few Figs From Thistles* are pieces of satire seasoned with irony in between the lines. I have interpreted Millay's poems to show how feminist ethics conflict with the traditional views. The cult of beauty in Millay, like in Keats, strikes the funereal note of its transitoriness.

Then, I have attempted to show how Millay treats the theme of death. Death shears love, beauty and joy of their charm and causes disillusionment. But her strong romantic assertion of the immortality of the soul is uttered in a transcendent vein. The spirit is the essential "self"
which the mongrel Death cannot snatch away.

In Chapter III, I have dealt with the romantic tradition in the sonnets and ballads of The Harp-Weaver and Other Poems, and The Duck in the Snow. Sonnet and ballad forms are discussed in this chapter, and Millay's indebtedness to the Elizabethans and the Romantics is brought out. I have made a brief mention of the dramatic sensa in the sonnets. Then follows a critical study of Nancy Boyd's Distressing Dialogues, and The King's Henchman, and their contribution to her lyrics as satire and poetic drama respectively.

I have dealt extensively with sonnet form in Millay. She employs the sonnet to her best advantage and makes changes in the Shakespearean and Petrarchan sonnets to suit her own needs.

In Chapter IV, I have given a detailed analysis of the sonnet sequence in Fatal Interview, and given an evaluation of its poetic and psychological merits. This is a love-epic in which all the stages of love from its inception to its culmination and eventually resignation have been dealt with in a masterly vivid manner. Millay praises beauty, challenges time, and sings about the joy of rapturous fulfilment with a greater poignancy than in her earlier sonnets. Then, I have compared and contrasted the poetry of Millay and Sara Teasdale.
One cannot overlook the Keatsian influence in the sonnet-sequence of \textit{Fatal Interview}. Keats' \textit{Endymion} can be interpreted as his romance with his poetic inspiration. Similarly, Edna Millay in \textit{Fatal Interview} seeks to ascend to that spiritual love through carnal love. This paradox is evident in the interpretations of \textit{Endymion} as pure eroticism or sexual fantasy and Keats' quest for imaginative vision of immortal beauty.

Chapter V, deals with the romantic attitude in the poetic themes of Millay. In this chapter I have touched upon nature in the nineteenth century British and American poetry and nature and the twentieth century American poetry up to World War II. A detailed analysis has been made of the theme of nature in Edna Millay's poetry. In this chapter, I have compared Edna Millay's poetry with Wordsworth and Emerson. I have sampled \textit{Renaissance}, which is her major work for critical analysis on her attitude towards nature. The poem begins with a physical ecstasy for nature and ends on a mystical apprehension of nature. Millay has intrinsically, a pantheistic vision of nature.

In Chapter VI, I have thrown light on the theme of love in Millay's poetry. First, I have dealt with love and the lyrical tradition of the Elizabethan poetry. Then the
romantic lyric, and the love theme in the nineteenth century British and American poetry is briefly discussed.

In the last part of the chapter I have traced the development of love in Edna Milly's poetry. Milly's approach towards love was highly individualistic and she was an exponent of unique views on love. There was no sentimental languor for the loss of love, and the woes of unrequited love. Milly understood the necessity of physical love for a spiritual union which led to the sublimation of love.

In Chapter VII, I have dealt with the survival of Romanticism in the popular taste of the twenties. I have thrown light on the popular appeal of Milly's poetry due, partly to its romantic revolt, and Greenwich Village bohemianism. Then I have pointed out thin sentimentalism in her response to the European and International problems of the late thirties.

Edna Milly's poetry voices the best in the fast-fading romantic tradition, and recaptures with a sharp awareness the new poetic trends of the twentieth century renaissance in American poetry, but her poetry is predominantly romantic in spirit and form.

I have followed in presentation the style recommended by MLA Style Sheet (Second edition)