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Rainflowers Marilyn McMeen Miller

Veneta Nielsen

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obvious. What the final answer is, particularly as to the day man was placed on the earth, is not that obvious.

Every author and every man must be permitted his share of mistakes. When dealing with the wide spectrum of philosophically oriented items entertained in *God, Man and the Universe*, the chances for error and for difference of opinion are very great. Since only the Presiding High Priest of the Church has ultimate divine authority to interpret the word of the Lord and to pronounce Church doctrine and philosophy (a fact that Dr. Andrus would be among the first to admit), we could not hold *God, Man and the Universe* as the final word. However, it is this reviewer's estimate that if we could follow the counsel of Paul to "prove all things" we would probably find Dr. Andrus' percentage for accuracy is rather high. Unfortunately, some of the items in his discussion do not admit of "proof" at the present time for want of sufficient information.

All who are seriously interested in the restored gospel and the divinely appointed mission of Joseph Smith will want to examine Dr. Andrus' work. It is a book that cannot be ignored since it calls many things to our attention and offers a great many plausible, if not final, explanations. It will be the source of much thought and discussion.

MARILYN MCMEEN MILLER. *Rainflowers*. Provo, Utah: Art Publishers, 1969. 64 pp. \$2.50.

(Reviewed by Veneta Nielsen, professor of English at Utah State University. A poet herself, Professor Nielsen has published a poetry handbook, *To Find a Poem* (1967), and three monographs of poetry.)

Rainflowers, by Marilyn McMeen Miller, is an appropriately immaculate and sun-illuminated volume of fifty-four delicate lyrical verses and poems. It should be read as variations on a theme, without looking for Emily Dickinson's nerve-galvanizing, spine-rumbling visions, or for the perfect technique displayed in the work of Sara Teasdale, though it may evoke a memory or two of their personal courage and honesty in self-analysis and in the presentation of human relationships either too unsure or too subtle for easy criticism.

The title poem makes immediate appeals to the empathic reader by its skillful sprinkling of rain in the hair, which comes eventually to total baptism in deluge, and then regeneration in the final knowledge that love and wisdom are born in suffering.

After this poem those which follow seem to trace the vine-like theme of love which is secret, ephemeral, or tenuous in its attachments. To make this comment would be beside the point, unless the theme is responsible for the muted voice and over-careful management of poetic language in certain of the poems. "Rainflowers" is not a commonplace poem, nor are any without an appeal of one kind or another, though some seemed fragile.

For this reader, poems such as "From the Hills" do express the mature conflict of spirit out of which the truest speaking comes:

When I stand on the hill
And feel the empty space reverberating around me
Like a vast hollow tomb
Under the arches of a deep blue catacomb
I feel alone
Standing willowy under the frightening stars.

This passage is simple and direct and honest, and possibly no reader has a right to question that optimistic testimonial she adds, as if to reassure the family, instead of, as did Pascal, pressing the iron spikes into her flesh. The testimonial does not seem equal in quality or value, aesthetically, to the initial impulse of the poem, but that may be because it seems an afterthought.

In the poem "Who Are You?" Mrs. Miller catches a genuine poetic mystery, and there are no sentimental candles flickering around the tenderly held memory of "you." Although an "evanescent sun" is unimaginable to me and too easy as a figure anyway, this poem seems to me best of the collection, excepting the title poem only.

Who Are You?

If you are not
An Avatar
What is it then
That curls in your eyes
Beneath the evanescent sun

A thousand flames are not enough
Piling light into the shell of a walnut
To imitate these spheres
Hung from god strings.
Empty, I am measuring up
With yours:
What is it then
That parts company with men
And soars?

Most of the poems are consistently economical, unspoiled by exaggeration or bizarre strains, ambiguities, or by the subtle ironic hiatuses that betray egoism, or, worse, affectation. There is much that speaks to the objective reader as not too private. The readers for whom it is intended will enjoy it. But the test of a book will not be the reader's admiration but what it effectuates in the writer's growth, not merely in the art of poetry.