

PAPERBOUNDS

THE LIFE OF RICHARD WAGNER. By Ernest Newman. Cambridge, 1976. 4 vols. 2,573 pp. total. \$8.95 each, \$29.95 set

The Bayreuth centennial has prompted a surge of Wagneriana. Among new books and reissues is this first paperback printing of Newman's massive work, which is avuncular and quarrelsome (he rebuts other biographers, Wagner's critics, and critics of his own earlier editions of the *Life*). Newman forgives the unpleasant genius who composed *Tristan and Isolde* for his anti-Semitism, his constant begging for money he never intended to repay, everything, but scolds Wagner while describing all in minute detail: Vol. 1, birth to 1848; Vol. 2, 1848-60, banishment from Germany, marriage to Minna; Vol. 3, 1859 (sic)-1866, spectacular failure of *Tannhäuser* in Paris, meeting with his patron, the "mad" King Ludwig II of Bavaria; Vol. 4, 1866-83, marriage to Cosima Liszt, the *Ring*, the building of Bayreuth, Wagner's relationship with Nietzsche, death.

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF GEORGE OPPEN. New Directions reprint, 1976. 256 pp. \$3.75

Though not nearly as well known as his fellow Objectivist, William Carlos Williams, George Oppen has been published regularly since 1932 (six books), won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1969, and was nominated last year for the National Book Award. Strong, taut, direct, and loving (of daughter, of wife, of streets, houses, of Daedalus as remembered by that "old potterer" his father), Oppen almost always succeeds in doing what he says a poet must do:

"not come to feel that he has a thousand threads in his hands," [but] "somehow see the one thing; / This is the level of art / There are other levels / But there is no other level of art."

AUTO WORK AND ITS DISCONTENTS. Edited by B. J. Widick. Johns Hopkins, 1976. 112 pp. \$2.95 (cloth, \$8)

This collection of essays by scholars possessing years of experience in auto plants and union bargaining blows sky-high a number of deeply entrenched journalistic and academic beliefs about the attitudes of industrial workers toward their jobs. "Alienation" as a personality characteristic, the researchers find, is no greater among production workers—whether or not on the assembly line—than among plant managers or the owners of the means of production.

KATHE KOLLWITZ: WOMAN AND ARTIST. By Martha Kearns. Feminist Press, 1976. 237 pp. \$5.50

This biography of German graphics artist and sculptress Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945) is written from what artist Kearns calls a "contemporary female perspective." A major theme is the importance of women as inspiration in Kollwitz's life and dominant subjects in her work. Thirty-three illustrative black-and-white plates show her lifelong identification with the German working class, whose women, says Kearns, are "heroic in the epic of everyday." The author also chronicles the evolution of Kollwitz's political thinking and its influence on her work, much of which was destroyed by the Nazis.