

Donne Well-Done

Albert C. Labriola

John R. Roberts, *John Donne: An Annotated Bibliography of Modern Criticism 1968-1978* (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1982), 434 pp., \$32.00.

This work is a continuation of John R. Roberts' earlier *John Donne: An Annotated Bibliography of Modern Criticism 1912-1967* (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1973). Like the earlier bibliography, the more recent one is indispensable to the research of students, scholars, and critics: it too identifies and fully annotates books, monographs, essays, and notes specifically written on Donne. Other works that discuss but do not focus on Donne are included, as well as editions of his poetry and prose that contain critical discussion. Excluded are book reviews, works that mention Donne briefly (such as literary histories, encyclopedias, and anthologies), and unpublished doctoral dissertations. Works are listed according to the date of publication; annotations are richly detailed, at times using direct quotation from items; and they are descriptive, not evaluative. Three indexes (author, subject, and works of Donne mentioned in the annotations) make this reference work responsive to the user's needs, curiosity, and questions.

Such a work invites comparison with its predecessor, especially to measure the rate of growth of Donne scholarship and criticism in more recent years. Significantly, the more recent bibliography, with a total of 1044 items for eleven years, contains only 236 fewer items than the earlier bibliography, which spans fifty-six years. To be sure, trends and patterns in the proliferating scholarship and criticism may be discerned, something that Roberts himself has admirably undertaken: "John Donne's Poetry: An Assessment of Modern Criticism" in *John Donne Journal*, 1 (1982), 55-

68. My comments, on the other hand, will demonstrate how effectively the bibliography meets the needs, satisfies the curiosity, and answers the questions of someone who teaches Donne and conducts research in related fields. From some annotations one discovers how occasional, if not systematic, reference to Donne in certain books for which he is not the focus provides the means whereby another author not usually associated with him can be more fully understood. Roberts' annotation of Raymond B. Waddington's *The Mind's Empire: Myth and Form in George Chapman's Narrative Poems* (1974) is a superb example. Or the annotation of Boyd M. Berry's *Process of Speech: Puritan Religious Writing and Paradise Lost* (1976) alerts us to an important comparative analysis of Donne and John Bunyan.

Numerous annotations call attention to works that suggest how the intellectual milieu in which Donne lived is subsumed in his writings. Examples include Alastair Fowler's *Triumphal Forms: Structural Patterns in Elizabethan Poetry* (1970), in which Donne is briefly discussed, or Frank J. Warnke's *Versions of Baroque: European Literature in the Seventeenth Century* (1972), which comments extensively on Donne. Other uses of the bibliography include, for example, tracing the development of a particular scholar's or critic's outlook over a period of time. Examples are Barbara K. Lewalski's essay, "Donne's Poetry of Compliment: The Speaker's Stance and the Topoi of Praise" (1971), which progresses toward her *Donne's Anniversaries and the Poetry of Praise: The Creation of a Symbolic Mode* (1973); or Stanley E. Fish's "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics" (1970), which becomes an integral part of *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (1972). Or the sequential articles by Dennis Flynn appear to be laying the groundwork for a psychological biography of Donne.

Because of the fullness and accuracy of the annotations, one is readily and reliably directed to major areas of research on Donne: theological, philosophical, alchemical, medical, artistic backgrounds to his work; prosodic, rhetorical, and stylistic studies; the meditative, emblematic, and other traditions that influenced his outlook; earlier authors, like Petrarch, with whom Donne is compared and contrasted; or genres, such as lyric, sonnet, elegy, and others, that he ingeniously adapted or transformed. And one is especially gratified to observe the rich outpouring of scholarship and criticism (145 items) at the 400th anniversary (1972) of Donne's birth.

Enhancing the overall excellence of the bibliography is its physical appearance: durable binding, a handsome format, and dark and readable print. Both Roberts and the University of Missouri Press merit acclaim for a job wisely and well-done.

Duquesne University