

Kocmanová, Jessie

[Victorian poetry. Autumn/winter 1982, vol. 20, no. 3-4, An issue devoted to the works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti]

Brno studies in English. 1983, vol. 15, iss. 1, pp. 165-166

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/104013>

Access Date: 19. 02. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

Clearly such a posthumous volume must show unevenness of execution, but in this case the editorial care of Kathleen Tillitson has reduced inconsistencies to a minimum. What we may perhaps as theoreticians of literature most regret is the lack of time granted to Geoffrey Tillitson to formulate more specifically the brilliant perceptions regarding certain long-term problems of literature: the relationship between drama and the novel; the significance and nature of style and form and a language related to life; the problem of veracity. All the chapters abound in mature opinions on these and other matters. Professor Tillitson did not live to sum them up comprehensively in relation to his theme: the loss is ours.

Of minor matters I would merely mention a factual mistake which seems to have crept in on p. 194 regarding the "country house in the north of England" which is Mr Rochester's seat. In fact, if we follow the movement shuttling North and South and North again from Mrs Reed's house to Lowood to Thornfield Hall to the mountainous country where Jane finds refuge with the Rivers family, and then back South to Thornfield, it is clear that the Hall, in spite of its rather "Northern" sounding name, is in fact considerably to the South. From Whitcross, Jane has a journey of 36 hours South to Thornfield to scenery "whose green hedges and large fields, and low pastoral hills (how mild of feature and verdant of hue compared with the stern North-Midland moors of Morton" (*Jane Eyre*, Ch. XXXVI), is clearly meant, as in Gaskell, to define the contrast, so real at the time, between North and South. The remarkable thing is that over such a wide range of material such inexactitudes should be so rare.

This is a book to return to again and again, not least because it sends us back to the great creative masterpieces themselves with renewed appreciation.

Jessie Kocmanová

Victorian Poetry: An Issue Devoted to the Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Vol. 20, nos. 3, 4, Autumn/Winter, 1982. West Virginia University. Guest Editor: William E. Fredeman.

After the special Morris double volume of *Victorian Poetry* (13, nos. 3, 4, Fall/Winter, 1975) there now comes a second double volume devoted to Rossetti, in commemoration of the centenary of his death, April 9, 1882. The distinguished scholar and outstanding bibliographer of the Pre-Raphaelites, Prof. William E. Fredeman of the University of British Columbia, has acted as Guest Editor in both cases. As Prof. Fredeman points out in Preface, over the 54 years since the centenary of Rossetti's birth (1928), Rossetti studies have been transformed; from the prevalent concentration on the supposedly "sensational" life-story, a more scholarly approach has prevailed, as adequate material has progressively become available. In spite of the great increase in biographical and critical studies, the present volume is the first set of collected essays dealing exclusively with Rossetti, for twenty years. There can be no doubt that the volume itself represents a landmark in Rossetti studies, being at the same time, on an all-over evaluation - and thanks to Prof. Fredeman's effective division into three parts, consideration of Rossetti as Poet, of Rossetti as Artist, and the establishment of reliable biographical and textual data - an essential tool for all Victorian scholars, and certainly in some of the essays an inspiration to new interpretations of the development of later 19th-century and 20th-century English poetry.

Given such a range of themes it is difficult and perhaps invidious to select individual studies for praise, but apart from the impact of the volume as a whole, with its freshness of scholarly approach and staggering wealth of beautifully presented illustrations, which alone would make the volume a valuable possession for any scholarly library, I have personally found most illuminating the study by Pauline Fletcher, "Rossetti, Hardy and the 'Hour which might have been'", illustrating the continuity of tradition from Rossetti to Hardy, with its bypassing of Eliot, and Dianne Sachko Macleod's fascinating examination of "Rossetti's Two Ligeias: Their Relationships to Visual Art, Music, and Poetry", throwing new light on the too-often neglected Pre-Raphaelite interest in music, and on Rossetti's little-known libretto plot-outline, "The Doom of the Sirens". Had this latter been completed and staged, infers Macleod, "it would have combined the arts of poetry, painting and music on a grand scale and been a veritable Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*". Striking, too,

is Gail Lynn Goldberg's "D. G. Rossetti's 'Revising Hand': His Illustrations for Christina Rossetti's Poems." Of the excellence of Prof. Fredeman's own contributions, "A Rossetti Gallery", a conducted tour, we may say, of twenty hitherto unpublished drawings, and "A Shadow of Dante: Rossetti in the Final Years", being extracts from W. M. Rossetti's Unpublished Diaries, there is no need to speak. My only complaint or rather suggestion in relation to the latter study is that it would have facilitated a close following of the argument if the Notes could have been printed in *petit* immediately after the entry they concern.

The excellence of the Rossetti issue of *Victorian Poetry* makes us avid for Prof. Fredeman's work in progress, the edition of the complete letters of D. G. Rossetti.

Jessie Kocmanová

John R. Roberts. **John Donne: An Annotated Bibliography of Modern Criticism, 1968—1979.** University of Columbia Press, Columbia and London, 1982, pp. 434.

This work is a continuation of the author's *John Donne: An Annotated Bibliography of Modern Criticism, 1912—1967* (Columbia, 1973) and the primary purpose is to supply an aid to research. In his Preface the author points out that in contradiction to T. S. Eliot's prophecy of 1931 that the revived interest in Donne would probably recede, having reached its peak, there are "no signs of diminishing interest in his prose and poetry" (p. 1). The method of Professor Roberts's work is excellent, intended to enable the scholar to "judge for himself whether a particular book or essay will be useful for his purpose". There is also an excellent system of three detailed indexes. A striking feature of the work is the very wide geographical net Prof. Roberts had spread for his items, and this — along with the admirable method of the summaries and the clarity of presentation — makes this further volume essential for scholars concerned with 17th-century English literature.

As Professor Roberts's first volume of Donne Bibliography is not available to us I have no means of knowing whether it included mention of the very distinguished and comparatively recent Czech translation of Selections from Donne's poetry, *Extáze (Ecstasy)* by Eva Žantovská, with a perceptive concluding essay by Zdeněk Vančura (Mladá Fronta, Prague, 1967). By date of publication it just escapes the present volume but in view of its outstanding qualities and since Prof. Roberts quotes no other Czech translator, I venture to draw attention to it here.

Jessie Kocmanová