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Review Essay: John B. Gleason, *John Colet*

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John B. Gleason, *John Colet*, University of California Press, 1989, 416 pp., \$50.00.

This is a biography of John Colet (1467?–1519), the Dean of St. Paul's, the founder of St. Paul's School, and the so-called "Oxford Reformer"—a man whose reputation is, says John B. Gleason, "the longest-running myth in English renaissance studies" (267). Linked with Erasmus and More by Fredric Seebohm in *The Oxford Reformers* (1867), Colet was reputed to be the senior founder of humanistic reform in England. Gleason shows that this reputation may be undeserved, since Colet was a Cambridge man, a conservative exegete, and an enemy of the classics in the classroom.

It would be difficult to accept this change in a reputation that was current even in the sixteenth century were it not for the meticulous scholarship of Gleason, who has distilled a lifetime of learning into this book. A professor of literature, Gleason employs the tools of the critic, the historian, the translator, and the paleographer to tell of Colet's life, analyze his thought, collate the surviving copies of Colet's works, and provide a dual language edition of Colet's *De sacramentis*. As a result we see Colet as a man deeply religious and desirous of reform, but as one who sat in judgment on Lollards and was disappointed by the inclusion of non-Christian texts in Erasmus's *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum*.

On one level this book is a work of historiography, teaching the reader the ways Colet's name has been invoked by various reformers. On another level it informs the reader about Colet's family, early education, and professional life, insofar as Gleason can reconstruct them. Much of what we know of Colet comes from a polemical "life" written by Erasmus after Colet's death. Gleason carefully attempts to remove the polemicism and reassemble what facts are left.

It is in the close critical reading of texts that Gleason truly shines. By scrupulously analyzing the writings of Colet and others he teaches us about Colet's "world of thought." The resulting image is that of a scholar who verged on denying Christ's humanity and depended solely on the Holy Spirit to interpret scripture. Colet believed that those who read pagan books—the classics—to understand God or anything else were, in St. Paul's words, "sacrificing to demons" (226–27). Colet's educational innovations, therefore, were limited to administrative arrangements. He did not introduce a humanist curriculum.

Another pleasant feature of this book is Gleason's skillful translation of Colet's Latin into flowing English, making this translation of *De sacramentis* as readable as it is dependable.

After being debunked as a hero for liberal reformers, Colet in Gleason's book becomes a late medieval man. Anyone interested in late medieval theology, education or humanism, or in the historiography of the early Reformation will find it profitable to read this fine book.

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Silvia Ruffo Fiore, *Niccolò Machiavelli: An Annotated Bibliography of Modern Criticism and Scholarship*, Greenwood Press, 1990, 824 pp., \$89.50.

Silvia Ruffo Fiore's *Niccolò Machiavelli: An Annotated Bibliography of Modern Criticism and Scholarship* is truly a tour de force. She has accomplished what many of us have long wished for but haven't had the ambition, patience, or skill to do ourselves: a fully annotated bibliography spanning more than fifty years of Machiavelli scholarship. All Machiavellists will benefit from this monumental compilation, which supplements Achille Norsa's unannotated *Il principio della forza nel pensiero politico di Niccolò Machiavelli* (Milan, 1936) and replaces Franco Fido's inadequate *Machiavelli* (Palermo, 1965). A research grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and support from the University of South Florida, where Fiore has taught since 1969, enabled her to launch this ambitious project.

What makes Fiore's bibliography so invaluable is its comprehensive coverage of books, monographs, articles, anthologies, editions of Machiavelli's writings, and even reviews. Theses and dissertations are also listed but not annotated unless they do not appear in *Dissertation Abstracts*. The bibliography is organized chronologically by years from 1935 to 1988 and alphabetically by author within each year. All entries carry an identifying number followed by complete bibliographic data. Books list both publisher and place of publication as well as bibliography, index, and number of pages. Following this bibliographic material is a detailed description of the book's contents, varying in length according to the book's size and complexity. Articles are listed with the full name of the journal, the volume number, and the length. Articles, too, are annotated and include information about documentation and notes. The language of items not written in English is indicated at the end of the annotation. Reviews are placed immediately following the book being reviewed.