

For release:
Friday a.m., May 15, 1959

UMD News Service
May 12, 1959

DULUTH--Firms in Great Britain and Canada as well as the University of Minnesota Press today publish a new book by Joseph F. Duncan, UMD assistant professor of English.

Entitled "The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry," the volume traces from 1800 to the present the renewed interest of British and American critics and poets in popular 17th century metaphysical poets.

John Donne, George Herbert and other poets of the period are included in the book, being published officially today by Oxford University Press in Great Britain, Thomas Allen in Canada and the U of M Press.

It treats the criticism of metaphysical poetry from Coleridge through T. S. Eliot and other modern critics. It also deals with the metaphysical poetry of Browning, Emily Dickinson, W. B. Yeats, Eliot and many others.

The term metaphysical stems from frequent use by the 17th century writers of philosophical, scientific and other learned figures and allusions.

Today the term refers to the bold but logical metaphors and other stylistic characteristics of the 17th century metaphysical poets.

Professor Duncan first became interested in the subject as an undergraduate at the University of Louisville, when interest in John Donne was enjoying a 20th century revival.

"Like most of the critics of that time," recalls Professor Duncan, "I was fascinated by the power, realism and sincerity of Donne, whether in

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his passionate love lyrics or his devout hymns." He shared the current feeling that Donne was a "modern" three centuries ahead of his time.

"When I studied Donne and the 17th century more thoroughly as a graduate student at Columbia university, I began to see that successive generations of critics and poets had reinterpreted or, as a modern critic has said, 'kidnapped,' Donne to suit their own needs and ideas."

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Duncan's book analyzes the fascinating and complex personality of Donne himself and traces the dependence of recent critics and poets upon Donne and others of his time to develop "fresh ideas" and "new" poetic techniques.

The UMD professor's resources have included hundreds of critical essays and works by about 20 poets. The material was studied over a 12-year span of writing and research in Louisville, Ky., Seattle, Wash., New York and Duluth.

INTERMITTENTLY

In conducting research, Professor Duncan has received correspondence from T. S. Eliot, Dame Edith Sitwell and Sir Herbert Grierson, who edited a modern edition of Donne's poetry.

A former reporter for the Louisville Courier-Journal, Professor Duncan specializes in his teaching in 17th century English literature, Milton, and modern poetry and drama.

He is faculty adviser for the Humanist, student literary magazine, and a member of the UMD student publications board. Prior to coming to UMD in 1954, he taught two years at the University of Washington.