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**Adrian Grafe and Laurence Estanove, eds., Thomas Hardy,
Poet: New Perspectives**

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Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens

85 Printemps | 2017
Becoming Animal
COMPTES RENDUS

Adrian Grafe and Laurence Estanove, eds., *Thomas Hardy, Poet: New Perspectives*

Jefferson (NC): MacFarland, 2015, 224 p. + vii.
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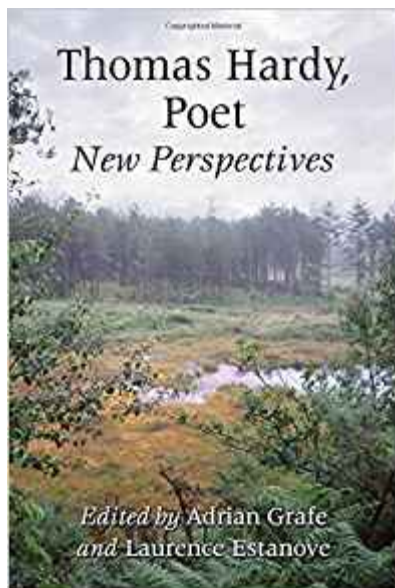
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Entrées d'index

Mots-clés : Hardy (Thomas), poésie

Keywords: Hardy (Thomas), poetry

Texte intégral



Afficher l'image

- 1 Hardy the poet, as distinguished from Hardy the novelist, is gaining more and more deserved attention, as witness this collection of chapters devoted to various aspects of his poetics. After a short introduction summarising the thirteen essays comprised here, Adrian Grafe and Laurence Estanove have divided the volume into four parts.
- 2 Part One, 'Landscape into Memory', starts with Adrian Tait's "'Thinking like a mountain"? Hardy's Poetic Vision of Environment'. Pondering on the place of Hardy in the ecocritical canon, Tait endeavours to assess how Hardy envisages the place of man in a godless universe where only an 'Immanent Will' rules. In 'Reclaiming English Bones: Corporeal Commemoration in Hardy's War Poems', Melanie East tries to make sense of Hardy's poetic response to war(s) by providing close readings of poems displaying the poet's ambivalent attitude about the imagined community of nationhood. Farhi Öz too, in "'Wild Wavering": Between Pastoral and Elegy', offers detailed analyses of poems—more specifically 'Domicilium', 'Where the Picnic Was', and 'Under the Waterfall'—so as to study to what extent the pastoral element may coexist with elegy (triggered by two complementary sources: the loss of one's place and the memory of it).
- 3 In Part Two ('Misalignments'), Chapter 4 ('Rhyming Events and the Pessimistic Muse') by Stephen Tardif starts with a discussion of *Jude the Obscure* in order to underline Hardy's use of theological allusions, offering another commentary of 'Domicilium', among other poems. Tardif's conclusion is that Hardy 'inherits lessons from lives he never lived' (70). Richard D. Beards, in 'The End Game: Thomas Hardy's Looking Glass', tackles five poems dealing with mirrors in order to explore Hardy's own version of the *vanitas* motif. Laurence Estanove's 'From Pessimism to Idealism: The Pressure of Paradox' studies Hardy's 'meliorist' perspective about life and the universe: she underlines the paradox of 'waiting in unhope' ('In Tenebris I') which she defines as 'an in-between position of wilful hope, of conscious deliberate dreaming—*despite* reality' (89). This chapter provides a transition towards Part Three, 'Specters of Doubt and Faith'.
- 4 In Chapter 7, 'Agnosticism and Freethinking: The Influence of Leslie Stephen', Ilaria Mallozzi tries to map Hardy's 'humanistic agnosticism' (112) as it developed among a galaxy of like-minded peers. Stéphanie Bernard, in 'The Shadow of God in *Poems of the Past and the Present*', describes how, in Hardy's poems, a sense of nostalgia about God manifests itself: God's ghostly presence is sometimes reminiscent of the way Emma's ghost is also evoked. 'Uncomfortably Numb: "In Tenebris"', by Adrian Grafe, focuses on the use of Biblical quotations in the three 'In Tenebris' poems.

- 5 Part Four, 'Poetic Craft and Accidentals', starts with Chapter 10, 'Messy Feelings, Tidy Forms: "Poems of 1912-13"' by Emily Taylor Merriman. Merriman studies sequences of poems displaying Hardy's ambivalent attitude towards his dead wife Emma, who emerges as Hardy's version of a 'Belle Dame sans Merci' (152). In 'Challenging Time: Philological and Lexicographical Landscape', Emilie Loriaux dedicates an in-depth analysis to two poems: 'The Last Signal' and 'Liddell and Scott'. In these poems she traces the influence of William Barnes, Robert Scott and Henry George Liddell. This allows her to put Hardy's 'love of language' (173) to the fore. The following chapter also deals with William Barnes. In 'Hardy's Crafting of Barnes', Heather Hawkins observes Hardy's practises as an editor of the poems of Barnes: faced with the problem of the linguistic hybridity of Barnes's dialect, Hardy manages to strike a balance between standardizing and preserving it. Finally, in 'Punctuating Voice and Space', Charles Lock pays attention to Hardy's idiosyncratic editorial habits within the print culture of his time. He takes into account various levels and situations: letter-writing as opposed to poem-layout, typography and punctuation. In doing so, he points out a number of interesting re-reading of some lines that have been modified by Hardy at certain editorial stages.
- 6 Heterogeneous as such a volume may be, as the title announces, in terms of perspectives, *Thomas Hardy, Poet: New Perspectives* gains in consistence by the number of echoes that can be heard from one chapter to another. The elegy is tackled in chapters 3 and 10, the notion of landscape in chapters 1 and 10 and the figure of William Barnes most notably in chapters 11 and 12 for instance. Hardy's pessimism, always a mooted point, is addressed by various authors. What also emerges is the value of some seminal works, such as the books by Dennis Taylor and Tom Paulin, to quote but a few. The volume, by giving ample room to close readings, allows the reader to situate Hardy among the tradition of English poetry, and among his contemporaries: not only among the poets (such as Robert Browning, Gerard M. Hopkins, and Ezra Pound, by way of emphasizing Hardy's liminal position between two poetic eras whose boundaries are not definite ones), but also among the intellectuals and the thinkers of his time. As a whole, drawing as it most of the time does on very recent critical approaches, *Thomas Hardy, Poet: New Perspectives* proves to be a very stimulating collection.

Pour citer cet article

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Paru dans *Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens*, 90 Automne | 2019

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