

"Erudite and original, this study brings critical new insight to Hardy's poetry, with hope and joy as central themes."

—**Angelique Richardson**, Professor of English, University of Exeter, UK

What do the works of Thomas Hardy offer us apart from tragedy? This book intends to answer that question, providing a groundbreaking reading of Hardy's poetry that reveals a hitherto critically neglected optimism. In doing so it seeks to challenge the dominant view of Hardy's work as pessimistic. It aims to demonstrate that Hardy's poetry contains a surprising amount of hope and joy which, when examined critically, reveals to us a new and brighter view of his philosophy. Hardy's poetry is naturally more condensed than his fiction, and his poems function as individual thought acts in which personal moments are more pronounced and sustained. These thought acts enable him to emphasise moods that are not merely pessimistic but joyous and hopeful. Such optimistic examples are not anomalies. Rather, pleasures such as dancing, music, eating and celebration perform a significant counterbalancing function across Hardy's collection of over 900 poems. In fully acknowledging these important brighter aspects, we can see Hardy's complex poetry as balancing an acute and profound understanding of life's hardships with an equally significant awareness and celebration of its pleasures.

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