



A Self-divided Poet: Form and Texture in the Verse of Thomas Hood

Rodney Stenning Edgecombe

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Whereas Thomas Hood has long been regarded as a minor comic poet, this book--the first to devote itself exclusively to his verse--provides a detailed analysis of two serious poems (Hero and Leander and The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies) so as to give a better sense of his range. Most commentators have pointed to the influence of Keats on such occasions, but close examination reveals an even greater debt to Elizabethan and Metaphysical poets, whose sometimes playful deployment of the conceit struck a chord in his sensibility. At the same time, the book gives Hood's comic genius its due, supplying detailed accounts of the deftness and panache of his light-hearted oeuvre. One chapter examines his excursion into the mock-heroic mode (Odes and Addresses to Great People), and another his reliance on that airiest of forms, the capriccio (Whims and Oddities). The study concludes with an extensive examination of Miss Kilmansegg and Her Precious Leg, showing how Hood was here able to inflect a jeu d'esprit with a fine Juvenalian passion.

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