Études irlandaises

34.1 | 2009
Varia

Points West Catching the Light

Clíona Ní Ríordáin

Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesirlandaises/1561>
DOI: 10.4000/etudesirlandaises.1561
ISSN: 2259-8863

Publisher

Presses universitaires de Caen

Printed version

Date of publication: 30 June 2009
Number of pages: 179
ISBN: 978-2-7535-0935-1
ISSN: 0183-973X

Electronic reference

Clíona Ní Ríordáin, « *Points West Catching the Light* », *Études irlandaises* [Online], 34.1 | 2009, Online since 30 June 2011, connection on 21 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesirlandaises/1561> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesirlandaises.1561>

This text was automatically generated on 21 September 2020.

Études irlandaises est mise à disposition selon les termes de la Licence Creative Commons Attribution - Pas d'Utilisation Commerciale - Partage dans les Mêmes Conditions 4.0 International.

Points West Catching the Light

Clíona Ní Ríordáin

REFERENCES

Gerald Dawe, *Points West*, Oldcastle: The Gallery Press, 2008, ISBN 978-1-85235-446-6.

Gerald Dawe, *Catching the Light: Views and Interviews*, Cliffs of Moher, Salmon Poetry, 2008, ISBN 978-1-903392-90-4.

- 1 Critics are often fascinated by the relationship between a poet's poetic oeuvre and their prose writings. The publication, by Salmon Poetry, of a book of essays and interviews by Gerald Dawe alongside his latest poetry collection, issued by Gallery Press, allows one to verify the connections yet again. Gerald Dawe's prose writings are preceded by a quotation taken from WG Sebald's *Austerlitz*: "There is something illusionistic and illusory about the relationship of time and space as we experience it in travelling which is why whenever we come home from elsewhere we never feel quite sure if we have been really abroad'. Dawe's essays and interviews guide us through space and time. We journey through his childhood home in North Belfast, eavesdropping on the rhythms of his grandmother's soirées; we see the poète-en-devenir surrounded by the Penguins and anthologies that she used for elocution lessons. We become acquainted with Dawe's musical heroes (Van Morrison looms large) and he explains how "Ireland' initially represented traditional music for him and not "the poetry of any Group' (19). The volume also usefully reproduces interviews with Dawe that have been published elsewhere. The autobiographical essays and interviews are accompanied by a number of essays on poet avatars, Sassoon, Kerouac, Michael Hartnett. Overall the sense of life as a journey and the primacy of travel, both physical and intellectual, emerge as key preoccupations.
- 2 It is no surprise then when we check to see "how the poetry's going' that the same concerns swim up to meet us. "Points West', the title poem of the collection, has a quotation from Patrick Leigh Fermor as an epigraph (11), and the Peloponnese landscape serves as background for some of the poems. We travel near and far in the

collection, to unnamed islands and the banks of the Moy. However both home and elsewhere are rendered strange in these poems. The most mundane of domestic objects become *unheimlich*, from the line “My trousers draped over the bed/look very different this morning’ in the poem “Day in the Life’, to the meditation on the other kind of life that “takes over’ (24) in the rooms “left behind’ in the poem “The Pleasure Boats’. There is a daydreaming/nightmarish quality to many of the poems in this technically accomplished collection. The poet refuses to be anchored in the mundane and urges us as “Fellow travellers’ (46/7) to experience the phenomenon of the “disconnect’ where we fall “down a steep chasm,/between here and now” (48). Gerald Dawe, both in his poetry and prose, leads us *ailleurs* to unexpected places and, as readers, we are happy to follow him.