



# Newsletter

Volume 10, March 2008

*The editor invites submissions of items relevant to Clare studies, including calls for papers, announcements of recent publications, details of upcoming events, and scholarly notes. Please send submissions to Andrew Hubbell: [hubbell@susqu.edu](mailto:hubbell@susqu.edu). The editor would like to thank all of the contributors to this issue.*

## Editor's Column

In this issue of the Newsletter, we offer a variety of news from and about the John Clare community. There is a review of the Clare panel at the 2007 MLA, an announcement of Professor Suzuki's Japanese translation of Clare's poetry, and a notice of the renewal of the Clare Association's affiliation with the MLA. We also have a review of a recording of Clare's poetry set to music, and the announcement of the publication of the second edition of David Powell's guide to first publications of Clare's poetry and a web resource for ecocritical pedagogy. We hope you enjoy this 10<sup>th</sup> volume of the JCSNA Newsletter.

## Proceedings of the John Clare Panel at the Chicago MLA, December 29, 2007.

*By Theresa Adams, Westminster College*

The John Clare Society of North America hosted a panel titled "John Clare and History," chaired by Theresa Adams. The first speaker, Sarah Weiger, is a graduate student in English at Cornell University. Her paper, "Shadows of Taste': Clare's 'Man of Taste' as Natural and

Literary Historian," examines the figure of the man of taste in Clare's poems and prose. Weiger argues that Clare revises contemporary formulations of the man of taste as naturalist and literary historian. While the literary historian displays taste by collecting literary extracts and the naturalist displays taste by collecting and labeling natural specimens according to the Linnaean classification, divorced from their original context, Clare's "man of taste" makes connections between nature and literary history. Weiger notes that for Clare, literary and natural history must always be grounded in a specific context: good poetry is true to nature, while the experience of specific natural objects recalls extracts from good poetry.

The second speaker, Kenneth Cervelli, is Assistant Professor of English at Austin Peay State University, and has recently published a book, *Dorothy Wordsworth's Ecology*. In his paper, "Clare, Dorothy Wordsworth, and the Arboreal," Cervelli points out that while critics such as Tim Fulford have profitably examined the political and cultural implications of William Wordsworth and John Clare's arboreal depictions, no one has yet considered Dorothy Wordsworth's arboreal interests, particularly in relation to John Clare, with whom she (surprisingly) has much in common. Cervelli's paper pays special attention to Dorothy Wordsworth and Clare's love of arboreal narrative (primarily—but not exclusively—as it emerges in their prose writings) in order to illustrate a mutual bond at the level of human ecology.

The final speaker, Theresa Adams, is Assistant Professor of English at Westminster College. Her paper, "John Clare and Popular Antiquarian History," argues that popular

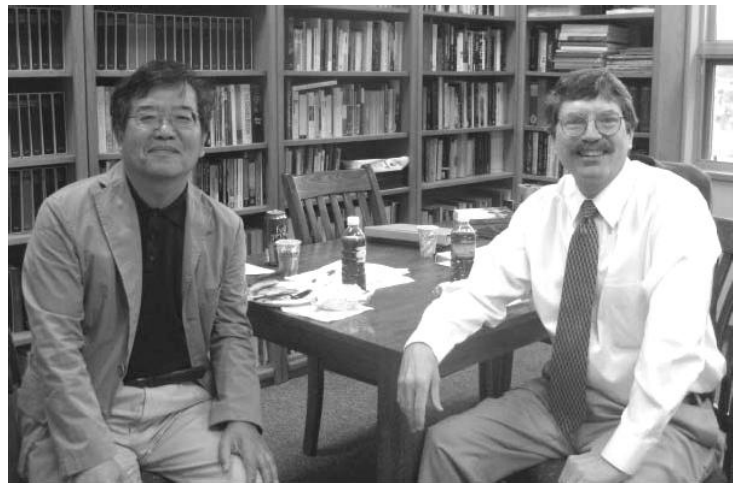
antiquarian histories, which collect and preserve the common people's ballads, dialect words, superstitions, customs, and sports, are a neglected but significant context for Clare's poems. Adams points out that in "The Village Minstrel," Clare challenged the popular antiquarian approach to rural leisure, which was text-based and concerned with tracing the origins and development of customs through the accumulation of fragmented pieces of evidence. Clare used fieldwork to collect customs, and focused on their significance for the common people. In so doing, he argues that customs should not be viewed as picturesque curiosities, but as popular culture and political acts.

The discussion that followed the papers focused on the intersections of their concerns, including the different kinds of collecting (of natural specimens, literary extracts, and popular customs) that preoccupied Clare; Clare's attitude toward the picturesque; the potential political uses of elegy and nostalgia in Clare's work; and the ways in which Clare projects and claims authority to speak on many kinds of histories: natural, personal, literary, communal, and national.

### **Professor Renichi Suzuki Crafts New Japanese Translation of Clare Poems**

Renichi Suzuki, a professor from Kumamoto University, is an internationally noted scholar of British Romantic literature. In 2004 he published a Japanese translation of the Everyman Edition of John Clare's poems. Professor Suzuki spent the 2006-07 academic year in residence at the University of Montana, teaching Japanese language courses and working on a new Japanese translation of John Clare's poems. For this second volume, he is working on a translation of Clare's longer narrative poems, including "Child Harold" and "Don Juan," which have not previously been translated into Japanese.

Professor Suzuki made good progress on this translation during his visit to Montana, where he developed his understanding of Clare's poetic language in consultation with Davidson Honors College Dean James McKusick. "It has been a fabulous collaboration," says McKusick, who serves as Executive Director of the John Clare Society of North America. "We have become good friends and learned a lot from each other by working together on this translation. You always discover new things in a poem through careful close reading. We are honored to have such a distinguished scholar as Professor Suzuki here at the University of Montana."



*Professor Renichi Suzuki, from Kumamoto University, Japan, and Dean James McKusick, from the University of Montana*

## John Clare Society of North America Renews Affiliation with MLA

*By James C. McKusick*

We are very pleased to report that the Modern Language Association (MLA) has approved the application of the John Clare Society of North America (JCSNA) for renewal of its status as an Affiliate Organization. The John Clare Society of North America has been affiliated with MLA since December 2000. This renewal of our affiliation will allow the Society to continue to organize one session per year at the MLA Convention.

As an MLA Affiliate Organization, the JCSNA stands together with such eminent organizations as the Wordsworth-Coleridge Association, the Keats-Shelley Association, the Byron Society, and other distinguished literary societies. Very few applicants have been approved for MLA affiliate organization status in recent years, and the renewal process entails a rigorous review of all aspects of the organization, so the renewal of our affiliate status accords a distinctive mark of national recognition for the quality of the annual MLA sessions that we have organized over the last fifteen years (starting in 1993). This renewal also recognizes the vital importance of John Clare's poetry and prose to the study of British Romanticism. Special thanks are due to our Program Coordinator, Scott McEathron, whose incisive and well-organized MLA sessions on John Clare have established the reputation of JCSNA as a vibrant professional organization. Thanks are also due to the many scholars from the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. who have presented their work at our MLA sessions. The geographic diversity of these sessions, their openness to distinct methodological approaches, and their inclusiveness of both younger and well-established scholars, have been hallmarks of our Society throughout its existence.

Scott McEathron describes the main goals of the MLA sessions: "The overriding goal of our Affiliate Organization sessions at the MLA has been to encourage the expansion of the community of scholars studying Clare. In our case this goal has been especially important since our organization is comparatively young, and we are interested in building for the future. To this end, we have pursued a two-pronged approach. The first has been to feature the work of younger scholars, including both graduate students and assistant professors. In order to make our panels accommodating to the work of these newer scholars, our Calls for Papers have initially been offered under broad and flexible rubrics (e.g. "New Perspectives on Clare and Nature," "Clare and Laboring-Class Poetics," "Twenty-First Century Clare"), with some sharpening taking place after paper proposals had been submitted. Further, we have later asked several of these presenters to return to the panel in later years in the role of chair. This strategy, we hope, is serving to bring beginning scholars more rapidly into the professional community.

"The second prong of our approach, one intended specifically to complement the first, has been periodically to bring in the most prominent Clare scholars (including, for example, Eric Robinson, Clare's most distinguished modern editor, and John Goodridge, editor of the *John Clare Society Journal*). Presenting new critical work of these leading scholars has been critical to the vitality of our organization. We look forward to seeing many of our JCSNA members at future John Clare Society sessions at the MLA Annual Convention!"

## Pop Culture Clare

A Review of Terence Deadman's 2005 recording, *Eight Song Settings from the Poems of John Clare*

By George V. Van Deventer

Considering all the poems of John Clare simply entitled "Song," it would not be unreasonable to imagine Clare counting meter in the songs of birds moving with the wind. I think we can use Martin Luther's comment to summarize Clare's orchestral mind: "What music expresses is eternal, immortal and ideal! It speaks of passion, love and of longing itself." Clare heard his poems set to music and in the last 142 years composers have continued to turn to Clare for inspiration for their work.

One of these composers is Terence Deadman of Hove. In January 2005 Deadman recorded "Eight Song Settings from the Poems of John Clare" as well as thirteen spoken poems read by three different readers. The complexity of Clare's poetry, its strength, lies not in romantic idealism but in nature as a fact before us -- "soothing tenderness to none denied." The music of Clare's ideas, the melody of his eye, can be sensed in the readings of Peter Moyse, Norma Weller and Rodney Lines. An artist labors to interpret a subject while at the same time struggling to gain insight into the material at hand. The artists on this CD sensitively run the line of Clare's concern that "arts strong impulse mars the truth of taste." Clare has introduced a disclaimer, a conundrum within his poetry. He wrote to be published -- to be read. (I am not aware of Clare reading to a general audience.) Once words are spoken or sung a curtain drops in shades that "mar the truth of taste." It is inevitable in making a poem or composing music that the artist, as Clare discloses, will "mar the truth of taste." This conflict of *just* being alive empowers the work of Clare. The artist creates a sense of empathy in the world we experience. Terence Deadman's music folds into Clare's poems as naturally as

"a-clock-a-clay. Waiting for the time o' day.//While the forest quakes surprise,/And the wild wind sobs and sighs," (For we in the U.S. "clock-a-clay" would be our "lady bug.")

I am familiar with Deadman's compositions, having sung them in concert in the States, most recently at a reading in September 2006 as well as in England in 2004. My initial attraction to Deadman's work was the emotional attachment I sensed in the relationship of the music to the lyrics. The lyricism, specifically "Adieu!" I found responsive to Clare's real and imaginative aspirations. Clare, as far as I know, never set eyes on the ocean. Time and place, here and there, the present coming to terms with the past in the hands of Deadman, reveals Clare at the heart of his being --

I left the little birds,  
And sweet lowing of the herds  
And couldn't find out words,  
Do you see,  
To say to them goodbye,  
Where the yellow cups do lie,  
So heaving a deep sigh,  
Took to sea.

Here we have the community-minded Clare -- "heaving a deep sigh," as he leaves all that is familiar. He "bade his love adieu -- On the road." I do not know specifically how to fathom Clare's deep sense of loneliness at a time when the past was being shoved aside for large personal gains. But for Clare he acquiesced, symbolically for the ocean -- the "sea." Deadman connects with the poet -- tender and sensitive, gentle, as the poem develops an uninvited separation of lovers -- past and present in a seamless "sea." Tenor Kevin Starns articulates "Adieu" off his breath as if he, Clare, and Deadman were one in a regret of parting.

"Eight Song Settings from the Poems of John Clare" and the thirteen well-read poems by three readers make this CD an ideal, condensed overview of Clare's "Shadow of Taste" -- "the melodies of mind//the sweets and essences of things." Listening to Bill Young sing "Little Trotty Wagtail" with his strong, smooth baritone, I thought, "Night Wind," with its turbulent,

evening storm, would be natural for the earthiness in his voice. On the other hand, Kevin Starns did not use his voice to its best ability when he went from head voice to chest voice to interpret the dynamic language of Clare's isolated cottagers in "Night Wind."

Peter Moyses's reading can put one in a protected place as he reads "Sudden Shower." My reaction may well be because I personally know Peter or that he reads one of my favorite poems, "The little things like you and I .. hurrying .. to shun the shower," beneath its ivy to keep us dry. Terence Deadman's compositions, along with the performances of Peter Moyses, Norma Weller, Rodney Lines, Starns and Young, and Nova Teasdale on the piano make this CD a collectable item for your poetry shelf – as well as an intimate, inside experience with John Clare's mind and thoughts.

CD is available from CLAUDIO RECORDS LTD U.K. N10 8PU

Terence Deadman, composer

Kevin Starns, tenor

Bill Young, bass

Nova Teasdale, piano

Spoken Verse:

Rodney Lines

Peter Moyses

Norma Weller

## Spotlight

News and Notes of Members

### New Online Publication

Bridget Keegan and James C. McKusick, eds., *Romanticism, Ecology, Pedagogy*. A Special Issue of the Romantic Pedagogy Commons (December 2006), available online at <http://www.rc.umd.edu/pedagogies/commons/ecology>

Focusing on the theory and practice of Green Romantic pedagogy, the essays in this volume offer instructors valuable suggestions concerning the choice of course texts and the development of effective ecocritical approaches to teaching them. Entitled "Learning to Love the Fens: An Introduction to Romanticism, Ecology, and Pedagogy," the editors' opening essay provides a useful overview of the collection as a whole, summarizing the pedagogical approaches considered by each of the volume's contributors. The Table of Contents includes Gary Harrison's "Romanticism, Nature, Ecology"; Toni Wein's "Romanticism and the Sense of Place"; Tilar Mazzeo's "Teaching Green Romanticism to Environmental Studies Majors"; Thomas Hothem's "Surveying the Literary Landscape: The Romantic Anthology as Environment"; Scott Hess's "Three 'Natures': Teaching Romantic Ecology in the Poetry of William Wordsworth, Dorothy Wordsworth, and John Clare"; Timothy Ziegenhagen's "John Clare's 'Domestic Tree': Freedom and Home in 'The Fallen Elm'"; William Stroup's "Reading the Field Marks of Poetry"; and Timothy Brownlow's "Only Connect."

Abstract by Kevin Hutchings and Charity Matthews, *Teaching & Learning Guide for Ecocriticism in British Romantic Studies* (2008), <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1741-4113.2008.00529.x>

**New Book Publication:****SECOND EDITION***First Publications of John Clare's Poems*

by David Powell

Research Papers on John Clare, number 1

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North America

A revised and augmented **second edition** of the definitive guide for researchers on John Clare, this 100-page book offers detailed bibliographic information on the first place of publication for every poem included in the complete *Oxford English Texts* edition of Clare's poetry (9 volumes, 1984-2003). In this volume, readers of John Clare can discover where each of his poems first appeared in print. The **second edition** is thoroughly revised and augmented on the basis of new research, with dozens of poems and places of first publication appearing here for the first time. Reflecting many years of scholarly research by a distinguished editor of Clare's poetry, this indispensable volume provides a comprehensive survey of Clare's poems published in books and periodicals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Every scholar of John Clare, especially those who are engaged in research concerning the reception history of Clare's poetry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, should obtain a copy of this essential work. Readers of John Clare's poetry will be fascinated to learn where each one of his poems was first published!

This spiral-bound paperback book lies flat for ease of reference. It is exclusively available from the John Clare Society of North America for just \$12.00 per copy. We will ship to any destination worldwide, and there is no extra charge for shipping, handling, or sales tax. Please consider ordering additional copies for friends, colleagues, students, and university libraries!

To order this book, please visit our website: **[www.johnclare.org](http://www.johnclare.org)** and click on the link to purchase John Clare books, postcards, and audiotapes.

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