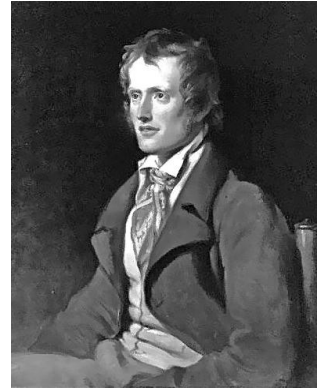


The John Clare Society of North America

Newsletter



Volume Thirteen, March 2012

From the Editor

By Stephanie Kuduk Weiner

This year's JCSNA *Newsletter* contains two "Musings," news from and about the John Clare community, including a review of the Clare panel at the 2011 MLA, and notices of recent work.

Over the coming year, please do send me your "musings" in whatever shape, citations of recent work, and accounts of events. I can be reached via Facebook and at sweiner@wesleyan.edu.

Musings

At the End of the Day

*Lines composed after reading later
poems of Clare and Wordsworth*

By Wendy Valleau

When heavy with the plod of aged tread
And laden weary burdened, worn with care,
What Fancy lights the poet's tired head?
How now the prophet vision once so fair?

What blithe cuckoo or happy wren is heard
In morning dews and shelt'ring huts of dawn?

Or is it late some darkling silent bird
In shadows lurk whence melody is gone?

The Farmer's Boy no longer rocks in glee
But maddened mourns the poet's lost sublime.
He frits nor hen nor redbreast from its lea,
But crippled tosses shipwrecked out of time.

Yet one whose bearing is an Eminence,
Whose soul has glimpsed the heights of heaven's
ken,
With sober thought and scrutiny of sense
Proclaims the Child's nurture of the Man.

Though Poet sight grows dim and vision fails
Still festive bliss of Earth all grief relieves
Through light undimmed by suffering and travail
And glory trailed from heaven's home heart's ease.



Wendy Valleau teaches Latin and Ancient Greek.
A mother of six, she graduated in Classics from
Yale in 2009 and is a newly minted fan of
English poetry and prose.



Musings

Verbs & Pairs in "The Thrushes Nest":

*Approaching line seven, "How true
she warped the moss to form her nest"*

By Kate Thorpe

In writing my own poems, I am fascinated by infinitive verbs, lured by the potential of being outside of time while moving towards something, on the verge of conjugation. Verbs in John Clare's poems are frequently active, yet such action seems strangely, similarly, complicated to access.

In "The Thrushes Nest," the observation of nest making becomes an exercise in connecting. All sorts of things (materials, time, space, descriptors) are paired together in distinct units: through the ampersand ("wood & clay", "thick & spreading", "bye & bye", "warped... / & modelled"), similes ("Glad as that sunshine & the laughing sky"), and even the preposition "to" ("morn to morn" and "Sing hymns to sunrise").

Each line also seems autonomous: exact iambic pentameter until the final line makes each sound like a beginning, as if a new exercise in poetry making. Forming one single sentence, with no endstops, these lines are woven together by grammar; it is nearly impossible, upon once beginning, to get one's bearings, to fully leave and reenter the poem, even as we feel the poet's separation from the process of making (as the thrush's "intruding guest" [5]).

Observation for poet and reader paradoxically becomes a form of making, weaving a poem from and within the world.

The only infinitive verb, "to form," in line seven seems surprising as an implied beginning or foothold into making (the "in order to" unspoken as we slip towards the thrush's own logic). In this poem where action and materials

are already woven together, the infinitive space seems anachronistic, and yet is held by active verbs: "she warped...& modeled" on either side of it; an ampersand. A new space opening and closing again.



Kate Thorpe is a poet and a teacher of critical and creative writing. She holds an MFA in poetry from the Iowa Writers Workshop and was a Fulbright Fellow in Germany. Her poems have appeared in journals such as *American Letters & Commentary*, *Volt*, *WSQ*, and *Court Green*.



The Cottage in Helpston

Source: <http://www.clarecottage.org>, Roger Rowe
With assistance from Cambridge Botanic Gardens, the gardens and grounds at Clare Cottage have been redesigned and populated with the flora and fauna Clare was so fond of and documented within his works. During 2012 the Cottage will be showcasing a Clare themed garden at RHS Chelsea in London. This garden will be designed by gold medal award-winning garden designer Adam Frost and will then be transplanted directly from the RHS Chelsea show to the Cottage.

This year's Clare Festival will occur July 13-15.

If you wish to be kept informed of future events at the Cottage, email events@clarecottage.org.

New Program Chair Appointed

By James McKusick

Samantha Harvey has been appointed as Program Chair for the John Clare Society of North America. She will organize the John Clare panel at the next Modern Language Association Convention in Boston, January 3-6, 2013.

Dr. Samantha Harvey joined the faculty of the Department of English at Boise State University in 2010. She received her Ph.D. from Cambridge University in English Literature and her B.A. in English and the Study of Religion from Harvard University. Dr. Harvey's teaching and research interests include nineteenth century British poetry and prose, transatlantic Romanticism, and literature and the environment. She edited volume three of *Coleridge's Responses: On Nature and Vision* (Continuum, 2008) and her latest project is a monograph on Coleridge and Emerson.

The Program Chair position was previously held by Scott McEathron, of Southern Illinois University, who successfully organized annual sessions on John Clare at the Modern Language Association Convention for over a decade. All of us in the John Clare Society of North America are grateful to Dr. McEathron for his outstanding record of service in this role!

Call for Papers: "John Clare: Nature and the Self." Papers addressing any aspect of Clare's poetry and prose, especially regarding his representation of the human and nonhuman worlds. Submit one-page abstract by 15 March 2012 to Samantha Harvey at samanthaharvey@boisestate.edu



Dr. Samantha Harvey, Boise State University

Recent Academic Writings

Adam Bewell, "John Clare and the Ghosts of Natures Past," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 65.4 (March 2011): 548-78.

Mina Gorji, *John Clare and the Place of Poetry* (Liverpool University Press, 2009).

Sarah Houghton-Walker, "John Clare's Gypsies," *Romani Studies* 19.2 (Dec. 2009): 125-45.

Richard Mabey, "From the Barley Bird: Notes on the Suffolk Nightingale," *Brick* 86 (Winter 2011): 24-31.

Erica McAlpine, "Keeping Nature at Bay: John Clare's Poetry of Wonder," *Studies in Romanticism* 50.1 (Spring 2011): 79-104.



Proceedings of the John Clare Panel at the Seattle MLA, January 7, 2012

By Nathalie Wolfram, Yale University

This year's session "John Clare: Writing, Identity, and Culture," was chaired by Matthew Russell (University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee) and included papers by Russell, Toby Benis (St. Louis University) and Tim Fulford (Nottingham Trent University).

In "Meditating Loss: John Clare and Poetic Form," Toby Benis explored John Clare's fascination with nests and the creatures who make them. As structural devices within Clare's sonnets, nests manifest binary tensions such as greatness and little things, openness and confinement, tradition and innovation, and past and present. By calling attention to their eclectic and often esoteric materials, she argues, Clare uses nests to evoke a particular kind of romantic genius: unlike Keats's well wrought urn that Cleanth Brooks so revered as the stable poetic artifact, she suggests, the nest offers a model of cultural sedimentation that constantly changes and renews itself.

In "Decompositions: Decay and Forgetting in Charlotte Smith and John Clare," Matthew Russell examined how images of autumnal decay evoke history and historical erasure. Russell argued that both poets' writings are profoundly marked by personal trauma: Clare his bouts of depression and madness, and Smith her deeply unhappy marriage. For Smith, forgetting is impossible, and the poet's perpetual task is of memorial reconstruction; for Clare, decay in the natural world anthropomorphically represents the fading away of memory. In both cases, images of decay suggest a continuous loss of self.

In "Lodging in the Wilderness: Cowper and Clare in Retreat," Tim Fulford presented Clare's Northampton manuscript notebook #19 as a means for understanding the poet's self-fashioning during his time at the asylum there.

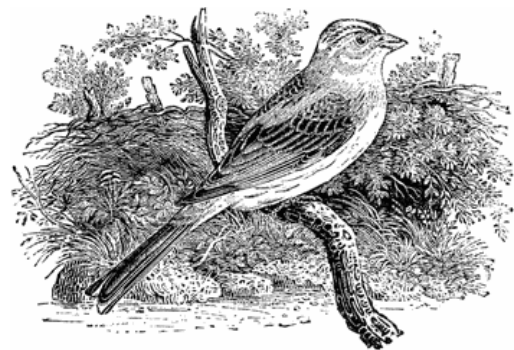
Fulford argued that, within the Northampton notebooks, Clare positions himself as a poet by "revisiting" the words of earlier poets, including Cowper, Burns, Coleridge, and Byron, as well as the prophet of the Book of Revelation. While visitors to the asylum and later readers of his notebooks have assumed that Clare was delusional in assuming these other voices, Fulford suggests that in fact such claims constituted Clare's assertion of his poetic identity. The notebooks that Clare filled during his time at the asylum thus served as spaces of innovation and experimentation that Fulford argues deserve serious critical attention.

Accordingly, he suggests, facsimile or digital publication of the notebooks would allow Clare scholars to understand his poetry more fully in the context of these previously neglected manuscripts.

During the question-and-answer period, Eric Robinson, editor-in-chief of the Oxford edition of Clare's poetry, raised the logistical challenges of publishing the notebooks: what would such an edition look like, and who would edit it? In the discussion that followed, panelists and audience members addressed these editorial questions that will shape how Clare's writings are read and studied in the future.



Nathalie Wolfram is a Ph.D. candidate in English at Yale University. Her essays on theater and fiction will soon appear in *The Eighteenth-Century* and *Theater and Ghosts*, ed. Mary Lockhurst.



Revised Clare Reference Book
Second Edition of the Scholarly Research Guide

SECOND EDITION

First Publications of John Clare's Poems

by David Powell

Research Papers on John Clare, number 1

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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 (USD) 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 and click on the link to purchase John Clare books, postcards, and audiotapes.

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