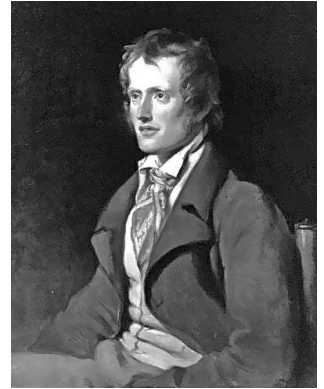


The John Clare Society of North America

Newsletter

Volume Fifteen, March 2014



From the Editor

This year's *Newsletter* contains lots of interesting news and some great poems. Please send me your "musings," citations, and accounts of events. I'd be very glad to hear from you. —
Stephanie Kuduk Weiner, Wesleyan University

Musings *By Colin Small*

A Prayer

I see a rope pull every head,
As taut as steel, as true as surgery,
So constant that we would not know
But if some cruel eternal
Scissor reached out to cut its catch.
I thank benevolent old chance
That we all are not so able:
Put dead into our daily burger
Eyes doomed between a ketchup stain
And speckled mica; that these stones
Are not knocked free to roll away,
Seeing all, but with none to tell.



Colin Small is a writer living in Bushwick,
Brooklyn. He is currently working on a novel.

Musings

By Alek Barkats

A Vision

I failed to chase my starry dream,
I mocked the world's mundane routine,
I sunk my soul in conscious stream
Afraid to break my sheltered scene.

I watched my disappointment grow,
I let my idle hands stand by,
I sat and thought with naught to show,
I felt no joy, nor could I cry.

I bit the sun until my teeth
Were stained with nature's blessed flame,
I cursed the earth with fervent speech
Until my name was burned the same.

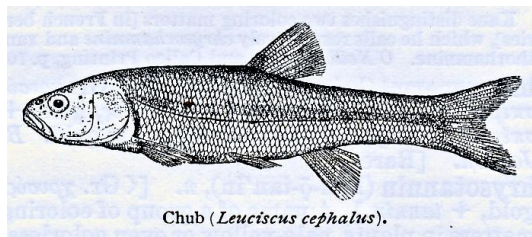
I hope to learn, despite my doubt,
Through forced, ill-natured grace and grin,
To cast my inner spirit out
And reel my outward silence in.

My poem is a response to Clare's "A Vision," in which he claims he "wrote till earth was but a name." The natural world, the *physical* "earth," is nearly at one with the world of imagination, the *word* "earth." Clare attempts to create a world that exists entirely on its own, where the language of

poetry is independent from the language of perception. At the same time, Clare strives toward a unification of image and object. He thus conceives of two separate worlds, and simultaneously beholds their collision. The most significant paradox, however, is that Clare keeps reaching for his contradictory dreams, despite knowing that neither one will ever be realized – the reason his poem remains “a vision.”



Alek Barkats is a second grade teacher in Washington, D.C. He is a writer of poetry and fiction whose works can be found in *High-Coupe Magazine* and *48Hour Magazine*.



Chub (*Leuciscus cephalus*).

Musings
By Barton Sutter

Bessy: The Lost Twin

When Clare was born,
He met the world before his healthy sister.
He was frail, but *she* soon died. He missed her
(Babies, too, will mourn,
Though lacking words),
His absent womb-and-cradle mate.
She'd *be* what he'd appreciate,
The hidden nests of birds
And flowers frail,
Whatever sprang most quietly from earth.
And so she lived, his birthright lost at birth,
Unconscious holy grail.
Lost from the start,
What poetry he'd make of her,
The ghostly, endless ache of her
He carried in his heart.

Mary Joyce

John met his girlfriend Mary Joyce at school,
A local farmer's daughter, quiet lass.
Together, they lay murmuring in grass
And lingered as the day grew dim and cool,
But, fearing how he might be thought a fool
Because she stood a cut above his class
And strong affection might be seen as crass,
Love turned to mist, ethereal and cruel.

He noticed how the flowers looked at her
And felt he was a belfry; bells kept bonging.
He'd dedicate, in secret, all his books to her
And guard his randiness from ever wronging
Her. Was Mary somehow Bessy? Heartsick for her,
He grew to love, not Mary, but his longing.

To Mary, the Flame:
A Lost Poem from the Asylum

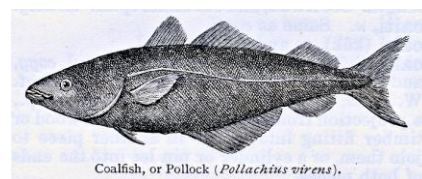
They say you caught on fire, burned
To death, my dear.
They say you died.
If it were true, sure, I'd have learned
Firsthand from you;
I knew they lied.

No dress of yours could catch a flame
The way my tender
Heart will start
At softest mention of your name
Which lights me, Mary,
In my dark.

Your smile was the lamp that came
Long years ago.
It burns the same.



Barton Sutter has written seven books, most recently *The Reindeer Camps and Other Poems* (BOA Editions, 2012). His sonnets about Clare appear there and in the *Bare Root Review*. He lives in Duluth, Minnesota.



Coalfish, or Pollock (*Pollachius virens*).

Recent Academic Writings (and a few poems, too)

Alex Alec-Smith, "Report from the Salerooms," *The Byron Journal* 41.1 (2013): 85-86.

Kerri Andrews, "At the Yeoman's House/At Helpston: Meetings with John Clare/John Glare: A Poet for All Seasons," *John Clare Society Journal* 32 (2013): 85-87.

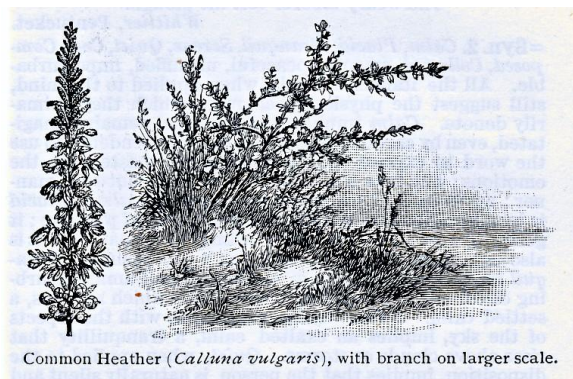
Juliette Atkinson, *Victorian Biography Reconsidered: A Study of Nineteenth-century 'Hidden' Lives* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2010).

Gerard Carruthers and Pauline Mackay, "Re-Reading James Currie: Robert Burns's First Editor," *John Clare Society Journal* 32 (2013): 73-84.

Martyn Crucefix, "Eluding the Awkward Squad: The Absence of Punctuation in John Clare's Sonnet 'Field Thoughts,'" *PN Review* 39.2 (Nov.-Dec. 2012): 56-58.

David Fletcher, "Government Boundary Mapping Policy and the Knowledge Apparatus of the British State, 1841-1889," *Journal of Policy History* 25.4 (2013): 512-37.

Tim Fulford, "Personating Poets on the Page: John Clare in his Asylum Notebooks," *John Clare Society Journal* 32 (2013): 27-48.

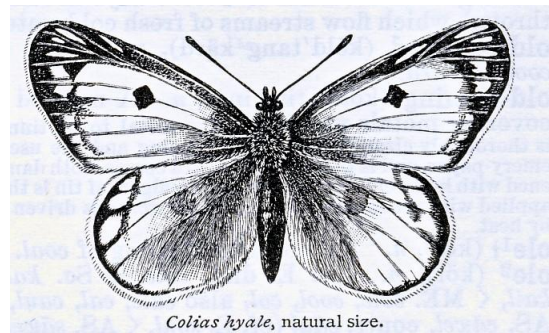


John Goodridge, "Sociable or Solitary? John Clare, Robert Bloomfield, Community and Isolation," in *Class and the Canon: Constructing*

Labouring-Class Poetry and Poetics, 1750-1900, ed. Kirstie Blair and Mina Gorji (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 55-76.

---. *John Clare and Community* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013).

Mina Gorji, "John Clare and the Triumph of Little Things," in *Class and the Canon: Constructing Labouring-Class Poetry and Poetics, 1750-1900*, ed. Kirstie Blair and Mina Gorji (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 77-94



Henry Hart, "Poetry as Gift," *Sewanee Review* 122.1 (Winter 2014): 55-74.

Scott Hess, *William Wordsworth and the Ecology of Authorship: The Roots of Environmentalism in Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Univ. of Virginia Press, 2012).

Brenda Hillman, "Two Summer Aubades, After John Clare," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 19.2 (Spring/Summer 2011): 23-24.

Mary Jacobus, *Romantic Things: A Tree, A Rock, A Cloud* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2012).

Ian D. Kane, "Sir Walter Scott and John Clare: An Unpublished Letter," *Studies in Scottish Literature* 39.1 (2013): 231-36.

Theresa M. Kelley, *Clandestine Marriage: Botany and Romantic Culture* (John Hopkins Univ. Press, 2012).

Simon Kövesi, "Interview with David Morley: The Gypsy and the Poet," *John Clare Society Journal* 32 (2013): 49-72.

Scott McEathron, "John Clare, William Hilton, and the National Portrait Gallery," *John Clare Society Journal* 32 (2013): 5-26.

Mukoma Wa Ngugi, *Chirality and the Politics of Authorized and Unauthorized English in the Works of John Clare and Amos Tutuola* (PhD Dissertation, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison, 2013).

Eric Robinson, "John Clare: Games, Pastimes, Sports and Customs," *Wordsworth Circle* 44.1 (Winter 2013): 56-60.

Adam White, "Identity in Place: Lord Byron, John Clare and Lyric Poetry," *The Byron Journal* 40.2 (2012): 115-27.

---. "The Love Songs and Love Lyrics of Robert Burns and John Clare," *Scottish Literary Review* 5.2 (Autumn/Winter 2013): 61-80.



Notices

By James C. McKusick

Stephanie Kuduk Weiner, *Clare's Lyric: John Clare and Three Modern Poets* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2014).

I am delighted to devote this second "notice" to newsletter editor Stephanie Kuduk Weiner's fascinating and lively new book, which brings fresh theoretical sophistication and interpretive scope to Clare scholarship. The book examines both Clare's lyric poems and works by three twentieth-century writers who turned Clare at

pivotal moments in their own creative growth. Weiner argues that, looking to Clare, these poets crafted a distinctive mode of lyric—"Clare's lyric"—that grounds its truth claims in mimetic accuracy.

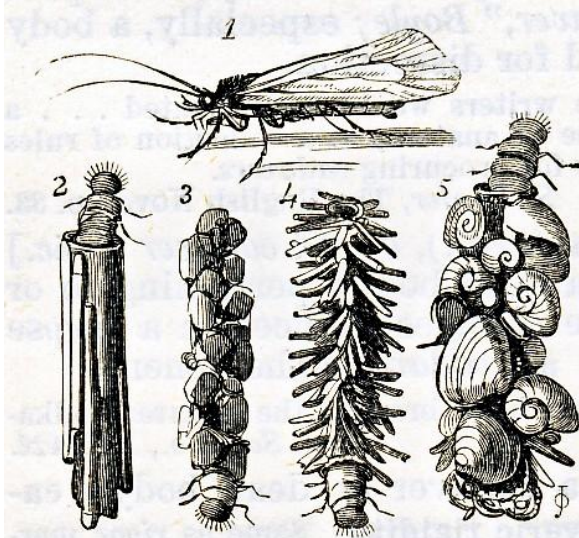
Through her attentive textual analysis, Weiner shows how for poets working in Clare's tradition (she is interested especially in Arthur Symons, Edmund Blunden, and John Ashbery), accurate representation involves not only the substance of representation but, equally important, its form. Mimesis involves not only words that name objects and create images pointing to a shared reality, but also patterns of sound, the syntactic organization of lines, and the shapes of whole poems and collections of poems. Her beautiful and attentive readings show how language and form can refer to the world, word by word, line by line, and poem by poem.



Weiner's book connects Clare's writing to the modern Anglo-American poetic tradition, and it shows how studying Clare brings us closer to understanding enduring questions about how literature represents reality. It represents a significant contribution to scholarship about the poet to whom our community is devoted.



James C. McKusick is Professor of English and Dean of the Davidson Honors College at the University of Montana. His numerous works include *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (Palgrave, 2000, 2010).



Caddis-fly and Worms.

1. Caddis-fly. 2. Larva in case formed of straw or dry grass-stalks. 3. In case formed of small stones. 4. In case formed of grass-roots. 5. In case formed of shells.

**Proceedings of the John Clare Panel
at the 2014 MLA Convention
By Emma Trehane**

This year's theme was 'John Clare: The Voices of Nature.' Rochelle Johnson (The College of Idaho) presided over the well-attended event. The three panelists gave a delightful range of views on how nature articulates and is articulated in Clare's works.

Bridget Keegan (Creighton University), in her paper 'Speaking for the Trees: Margaret Cavendish, John Clare, and Voicing Nature', examined the possible influence of the 17th century poet Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, in Clare's verse. Keegan makes the important point that evidence is still required to show that he actually read Cavendish's poems. On the other hand, she makes a strong case for the fact that there are similarities in the ways both poets allow the plants and animals of their imaginings to speak in protest at the injustices suffered by human exploitation.

When considering the sounds and voices of the rural landscape in the poem *The Sabbath Bells*, Paul Chirico (University of Cambridge) spoke of Clare's physical and mythologized landscapes as sites of a lively and energetic aural culture. In his paper 'Clare's Air: Sound in Motion' Chirico examined the interplay of 'the sounds of birds, bells, labour, personified voices and supernatural instruments' in Clare's verse, and the shapes and forms of sounds of the air as they underwent the process of poetic transfiguration. Clare's anxieties as a poet, Chirico suggests, are often present in his experience of sound, where nature occupies both time and space.

Eric Robinson (University of Massachusetts) followed with an entertaining presentation on Clare's natural history writings in his paper 'John Clare: the Unusual but Challenging Natural Historian'. Robinson emphasized Clare's ongoing learning about natural history, from ornithology, botany, and aquatics to archeology. Clare draws on a knowledge of the English poetic tradition to inform us of the beauties of his natural landscape, Robinson said, noting that many examples of his poetic lucidity appear in his prose writings. Robinson urged further reading in Clare's natural history writings as well as treading the fields and paths that inspired Clare's works.

A lively discussion followed. The next Modern Language Association convention will be held in Vancouver, Canada, January 8th-11th. 2015.



Emma Trehane is currently working on an electronic edition of the letters of John Clare and his circles, as well as a monograph about Eliza Louisa Emerson's life and works, including her literary, mercantile and social connections with the Coleridge family and their friends.

John Clare Society of North America Renews Affiliation with MLA

By James C. McKusick

We are pleased to report that the MLA has approved the application of the John Clare Society of North America (JCSNA) for renewal of its status as an Allied Organization. The society has been affiliated with MLA since December 2000, and was last renewed in 2007. This renewal of our affiliation will allow us to continue to organize one session per year at the MLA Convention for another seven years.

As an MLA Allied Organization, the JCSNA stands together with such eminent organizations as the Wordsworth-Coleridge Association, the Keats-Shelley Association, and the Byron Society. Very few applicants have been approved for MLA allied organization status in recent years, and the renewal process entails a rigorous review of all aspects of the organization, so the renewal of our allied 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. This renewal also recognizes the vital importance of John Clare's poetry and prose. Special thanks are due to our Program Coordinators, Scott McEathron (who served from 1997 to 2012) and Samantha Harvey (currently serving in that role), whose incisive and well-organized MLA sessions on John Clare have sustained the reputation of JCSNA as a vibrant professional organization. Thanks are also due to the many scholars from the U.S., Canada, U.K., and the Sultanate of Oman, who have presented their work at our MLA sessions. The geographic diversity of these sessions, their openness to distinct methodological approaches, and their inclusion of both younger and well-established scholars, have been hallmarks of our Society throughout its existence.

Our renewal application describes the main goals of the MLA sessions organized by the JCSNA: "The overriding goal of our Allied Organization panels at the MLA has been to encourage the

expansion of the community of scholars studying Clare. 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, through an open call for papers. Further, we have later asked several of these scholars to return to the panel in future years in the role of presider. This strategy, we hope, is serving to bring beginning scholars more rapidly into the professional community. The second prong, one intended specifically to complement the first, has been periodically to bring in the most prominent Clare scholars. Presenting new critical work of these leading scholars has been critical to the vitality of our organization.



"The yearly arrangement of panels has been the responsibility of the JCSNA Program Chair. The JCSNA has regularly solicited papers through an electronic call for papers on the MLA website, and this annual call for papers is also posted on the JCSNA website and circulated electronically to our members. All proposals have been peer-reviewed by senior scholars in the field of Romantic Studies. The Program Chair has consistently striven for the diversity of methodology and rank delineated above, and we have done so with the understanding that the continued growth of Clare studies rests on the cultivation of younger scholars. Indeed, the Executive Committee of the JCSNA has long recognized that our viability as an organization depends on our continuing ability to encourage new scholarship and new participants. Our annual session at the MLA is, of course, one of our most public venues. We consider it a matter of principle

that our MLA panels both showcase the most important new Clare scholarship and demonstrate our commitment to welcoming new scholars to the field of Clare Studies. Looking at the aggregate achievement of our panels over the last seven years, we are pleased with the results and look forward to continuing this mission in the future.”

We look forward to seeing many of our JCSNA members at future John Clare Society sessions at the MLA Annual Convention!

Call for Information
By Art Homer



Scaled Quail (*Callipepla squamata*).

I am collecting material on John Clare’s influence in North America for presentation at the 2014 sesquicentennial John Clare Festival in Helpston. I’m

beginning with poems from the collection *Journey from Essex: Poems for John Clare* (Graywolf Press, 1981) which has poems addressed to Clare by Theodore Roethke and John Ashbery, as well as Mark Halperin, Sandra McPherson, Marvin Bell, Jon Anderson, William Logan and two by John Clare ('I Am' and 'I Feel I Am'). I am particularly interested in material relevant to a non-academic audience on:

- Canadian poets influenced by John Clare;
- Research showing Clare’s influence upon the environmental movement(s) in North America; and
- How songs collected by Clare became part of the musical heritage of North America.

If you have information on any of these topics, or on other aspects of Clare’s influence in North

America, please contact ahomer@unomaha.edu or 402-554-2771.



Since 1982 Art Homer has taught poetry and nonfiction at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, where he was named a Regents Professor in 1995. His most recent poetry collection, *Blind Uncle Night*, was published by WordTech Press in 2012.

Revised Clare Reference Book

Second Edition of the Scholarly Research Guide

By David Powell (1925-2012)

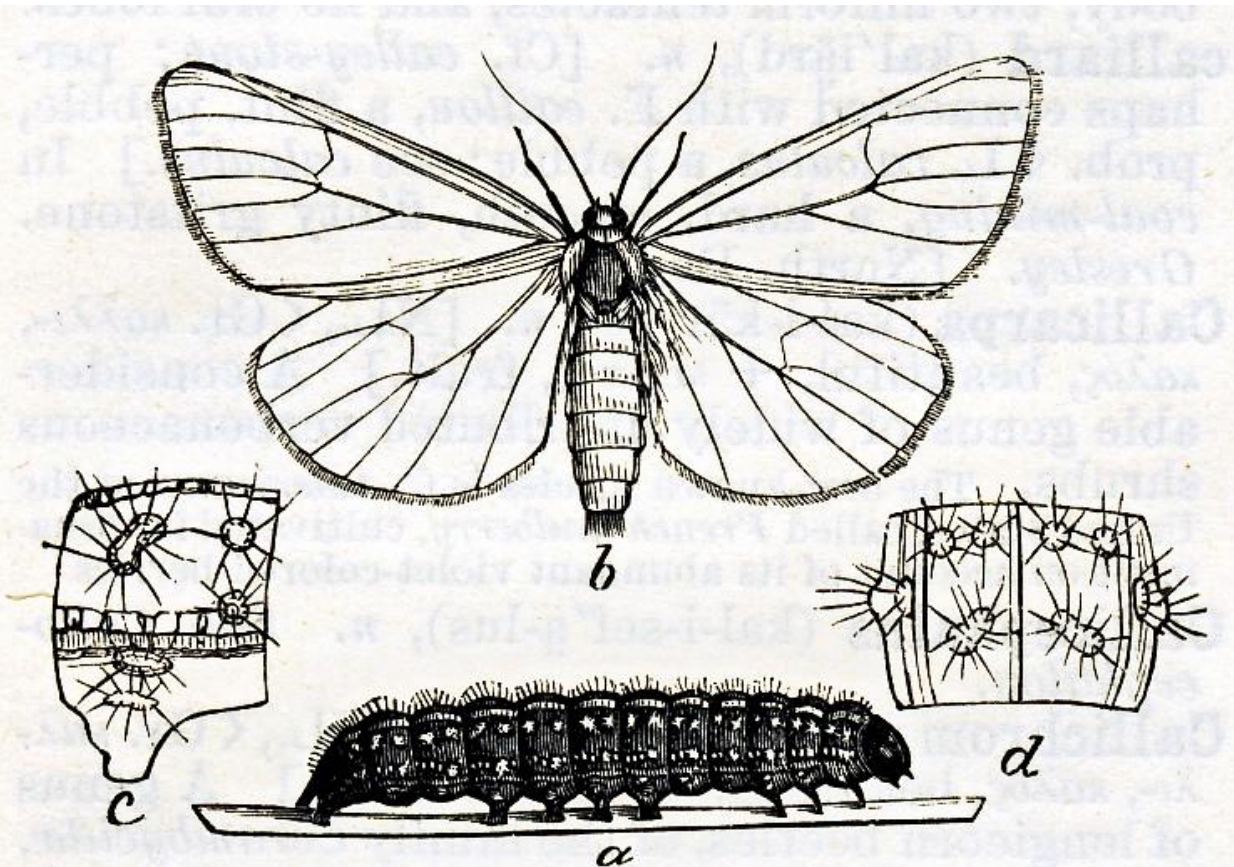
SECOND EDITION

First Publications of John Clare’s Poems
by David Powell

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.

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.



Blue-spangled Peach-worm (*Callimorpha fulvicosta*).
a, larva; *b*, imago or moth; *c*, one segment of larva, enlarged, side view; *d*, same, top view. (Moth and larva natural size.)



The John Clare Society of North America