Chapter Five:

The Case of Clare

> Clare is, in fact, the very type of a lyric poet.
>
> (Day Lewis 111)

This chapter deals with the criticism of the poetry of John Clare (1793-1864) which emerged after his "rediscovery" in the late nineteenth century. I argue that Clare's life and work are considered by a tradition of Clare criticism, which has continued all the way through the twentieth century in a more or less unchanged form, as exemplary, insofar as they can be summed up in certain of Clare's later poems, in which this criticism can find all the hall-marks of the True Lyric. However Clare's later lyrics are not typical of his work and in the first part of the chapter I must go behind lyric history to discursive history, just as I did in chapter three when I investigated eighteenth century lyric poetry. Next comes my account of the strategies and distortions that the Clare tradition uses in constructing its Clare. Finally I concentrate on the of question of Enclosure in Clare criticism. It is my contention that critics use the fact of Enclosure as a transhistorical guarantee of Clare's exemplary lyric subjectivity. However I diagnose this emphasis on Enclosure as a counterpart to, and deconstruction of, the poetic enclosure that critics practise on Clare. For it will be evident by now that although I am dealing in this thesis with the lyric mainly in literary criticism, I believe that a "post-lyric" criticism would be able to extend its investigations of the poetics of modernity beyond literary criticism—and I believe that, for example, a lyric subjectivity is the necessary precondition for the construction and maintenance of modernity's "carceral" regime of surveillance and control, of which Clare is only one victim amongst many.

Clare versus the Clare Myth

Karsten Engelberg's annotated bibliography *The Making of the Shelley Myth* illustrates the process by which the complex personality and work of Shelley were

simplified into that of Shelley the lyrist. Engelberg finds that this process was largely complete by 1860, when he ends his bibliography, but claims that the Myth still has a major role in determining modern views of Shelley: "Modern critics think of the Shelley Myth in terms of impassioned and inaccurate assessments such as Arnold's" (ix).

In the last chapter we saw the emergence of an explicitly lyrical poetry mid-century and the emergence also of a criticism and history to go with it. One aspect of this is how the poetry of previous centuries, and of earlier in the century, is handled. For example, consonant with the establishment of the "Lyric Shelley" is his representation in anthologies. William Allingham has nine of Shelley's lyric poems in his *Nightingale Valley* (Engelberg 392), in Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* (1861 version) there are 22, including "Music, when soft voices die" as the last poem.

Similarly, I believe, we can describe a "Clare Myth", surrounding the life and writings of John Clare. This myth, of course, was not as early in forming as the Shelley myth, as Clare did not die until after the mid-century, nor is it as famous. Here we will find that Clare, becomes in a way a sort of second Shelley, a writer of a very few, but widely-anthologised lyric poems, poems which are hardly typical of his work. Thus the second part of this section on Clare will concentrate on the what I call the "Clare tradition", one which begins with the rediscovery of Clare around the end of the century. One of the earliest Clare-pioneers was, significantly enough, Arthur Symons. The tradition continues through the twentieth century, and we will find, as well as the many Clare-specialists, several familiar names amongst the critics, such as Edmund Blunden, Robert Graves and Geoffrey Grigson. This tradition was still alive in its most exaggerated form in academic and popular criticism until at least the early 1980s—a fact which underlines the embeddedness of lyrical criticism in our culture.

But it will be necessary to explain briefly what I believe the influence of lyric poetics on Clare actually was, for just as Shelley was indeed a writer of lyrics and influenced by Romantic lyric poetics, despite the exaggeration and hypostatisation of this by critics, so Clare did indeed write lyrics. But when and why he did this is an interesting question and one that I will examine to show some of the complexity that the impact of lyric Romanticism had, as opposed to the simplistic versions of it in later lyric criticism.

A good place to start doing this is with John Barrell's *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840*. Briefly Barrell's thesis is this: in the eighteenth century land-

scape painting, following on from the practice of Claude and Poussin, arranged a landscape very strictly in terms of vantage-point, significant features and their disposition and lighting. This practice affected landscape poetry too, and Barrell discusses Thomson as an example. Later in the century the ideas of the Picturesque came to rival those of the strict Classical school, with an emphasis on rugged details and non-classical arrangement of features. Both these traditions were influential among a class of agricultural improvers, surveyors and agricultural writers who were the principal movers behind the enclosure movement of the late eighteenth century—for them the bare, extensive open-fields of the pre-enclosure landscape of England were too featureless and insufficiently constructed to be a Classical landscape, nor were they wild and picturesque enough for the Picturesque taste; in short they were anomalous for any understanding of landscape.

Clare on the other hand, a native of one such open-field parish, Helpston in Northamptonshire[1], began writing poetry at about the time that his parish was being enclosed.[2] In his early poetry Clare's attempts to record the vanishing pre-enclosure world are hampered by his reliance on eighteenth-century descriptive techniques (110-115). Nor was the Picturesque of any help as Helpston was, and still is, a very unpicturesque place. As Clare's poetic skill increased in the 1820s he evolved a "local" poetics, a system in which description, unhampered by eighteenth-century tropes, is used for a precise delineation of natural phenomena, whose haecceity is strongly of and for Helpston (124-28). A third phase in Clare's poetry began in 1832 when he moved with his family to the nearby village of Northborough; here the same concentration on the unique thisness of objects in the natural world obtained in his poetry, but purged of any local feeling or purchase (174-80). The final phase of Clare's poetry, to which Barrell devotes only two pages (180-81), is the mainly lyrical poetry of Clare's madness, written from 1837 onwards.

Although Barrell's work provides a useful introduction to Clare's poetry there remain a number of problems with his account. In particular his preference for the second phase of Clare's poetry, the "local" one, seems to be very much a product of his view of authorial intention, endeavour and subsequent success or failure in that endeavour. Barrell prefers the "local" phase of Clare's poetry because he can say of a product of it: "the language of this poem is much more Clare's own" (154).

Another aspect of the book that seems problematic to me is the convenient and biographically-based distinction between the first three phases of Clare's poetry. I

have outlined Barrell's argument because his description of the various discourses within Clare's poetry will prove of subsequent use to me, but I believe that here he is over-simplifying a none-too-tidy situation.[3] To put it in a nutshell, Clare was never at home, even in Barrell's local phase of 1820-1832. This is not a Romantic argument which ends by laying down that every Artist is an alien in his own country and a professional Embodiment-of-Contradictions, but a "post-colonial" argument against the authentic status of the indigene. Clare was interpellated into the role of Authentic Peasant with his entry into the world of literacy and his publisher's marketing-strategy. Clare's pre-enclosure (both literal and figurative) existence was different, but that difference cannot be celebrated within the Enlightenment paradigm that he, and we, are located in. This thesis' main thrust is to clear away one particular Romantic false-escape from the paradigm in favour of an unillusioned investigation of that paradigm.

There are two further points I should like to make with regard to Clare's earlier poetry, to introduce it further before turning to more lyric accounts. The first is the enormous volume of Clare's output.[4] The Oxford University Press has recently begun publishing various instalments of what will ultimately become *The Collected Poems of John Clare*. The first installment, *The Later Poems of John Clare 1837-1864*, consists of two volumes of 1113 pages in all. *The Early Poems of John Clare 1804-1822* is of similar bulk; together with the intervening volume, which has yet to be published, *The Collected Poems* will run to over 3000 pages, probably the largest output of any English poet.[5] This prolificity alternately exhilarates and frightens critics of the tradition; on the one hand they can celebrate the endless resources of the text, which can always be deployed and redeployed against criticism of Clare: on the other hand its lack of intensity, its lack of sententiousness, is a worry to many of them. For the moment I should simply like to note that this enormous output can be read as a metonymic, and non-transcendental, expression of Clare's desire to encompass the pre-enclosure countryside, the huge, featureless and apparently empty open-fields of his youth.

The second point I should like to make follows on from the first. One of the fascinating features of Clare's output is that this description of the world of the pre-enclosed landscape and the features of it is often couched in terms that are strongly reminiscent of the emerging discourses of science. And this for me is one of the interesting features of Clare's writing, firstly for the way that a "literary" can anticipate what is the prime discourse of the modern world, and secondly for how critics react to this feature. The poems where this process is at work are most often the

poems of Barrell's third phase, though unlike him I cannot find any examples where this process is consistently at work throughout a whole poem. This mode of description is, however, much in evidence in the sonnets of the *Midsummer Cushion* MS where it is most amusing to see the prime poetic form for fullness and richness, emptied of such a burden and turned into "an apparently endless series of verse paragraphs of captured country moments" (Tibbles *Life and Poetry* 131). It is this type of description which most repels critics who complain of the lack of human interest in it.

An example of what I have described as the "scientific" element in Clare's poetry is the sonnet "Hedge Sparrow"[6]:

> The tame hedge sparrow in its russet dress
> Is half robin for its gentle ways
> & the bird loving dame can do no less
> Then throw it out a crumble on cold days
> In early march it into gardens strays
> & in the snug clipt box tree green & round
> It makes a nest of moss & hair & lays
> When een the snow is lurking on the ground
> Its eggs in number five of greenish blue
> Bright beautiful & glossy shining shells
> Much like the firetails but of brighter hue
> Yet in her garden home much danger dwells
> Where skulking cat with mischief in its breast
> Catches their young before they leave the nest
>
> (*Midsummer Cushion* 420)

Here, although Clare inserts the description of the hedge-sparrow into anecdotal frame, consisting of one figure of kindness (the "bird loving dame") and one of cruelty (the cat), lines 5 to 11 could easily, allowing for the necessary changes to word-order, diction and expression necessitated by the poetic form and metre, have come from a contemporary piece of natural history writing. Margaret Grainger, who has edited Clare's natural history prose writings, in her introduction to that work acknowledges this feature of Clare's writing when she locates him, not in the company of the lyric greats, but within the contemporary field of natural history writing (xlv). Nor were Clare's writings in this mode of only contemporary significance, in the early twentieth century the great British botanist George Claridge Druce in his *Flora of Northamptonshire* cited Clare's poetry[7] (at this time little of his prose had been published) 135 times, of which 28 records were firsts for the county.[8]

At about the same time as "Hedge Sparrow" was written Charles Lyell, in the Introduction to the third volume of his *Principles of Geology*, was setting out the prin-

ciples of scientific enquiry that underlay his "uniformitarian" ideas of the formation of the earth's surface (Gould 134-37):

> ["Earlier inquirers"] imagined themselves sufficiently acquainted with the mutations now in progress in the animate and inanimate world, to entitle them at once to affirm, whether the solution of certain problems in geology could ever be derived from the observations of the actual economy of nature, and having decided they could not, they felt themselves at liberty to indulge their imaginations, in giving *what might be*, rather than inquiring *what is*, in other words, they employed themselves in conjecturing what might have been the course of nature at a remote period, rather than in the investigation of what was the course of nature in their own times. (2)

And it seems that the scheme that Lyell is outlining, a heuristic exploration of a natural world not previouslyideologically determined, and to be constituted by the study of the particularities of objects within the world, is the same that is going on at times in Clare's poetry—where we might note the repetition of description in the poems, coupled with the vast size of the output are a similar reflex to the scientific repetition of observations and the gathering of masses of experimental data. Although, I have noted the "scientific" discourse in Clare's poetry is usually accompanied by, or enclosed within, other modes of writing, as in the poem "Hedge Sparrow", occasionally we come across a poem that is almost entirely composed of such detached observation, as in the poem "Tis martinmass from rig to rig":

> Tis martinmass from rig to rig
> Ploughed fields & meadow lands are blea
> In hedge & field each restless twig
> Is dancing on the naked tree
> Flags in the dykes are bleached & brown
> Docks by its sides are dry & dead
> All but the ivy bows are brown
> Upon each leaning dotterels head
>
> Crimsoned with awes the awthorns bend
> Oer meadow dykes & rising floods
> The wild geese seek the reedy fen
> & dark the storm comes oer the woods
> The crowds of lapwings load the air
> With buzes of a thousand wings
> There flocks of starnels too repair
> When morning oer the valley springs
>
> (*Later Poems* 103)[9]

When we come to consider the later poetry of Clare in detail, again in contrast to the official view of his poetry, we find that here too there is a greater variety of of different types of poems. There are, famously, a very few, intense lyrics and poems—of which the most famous is "I am" (*Later Poems* 396), a poem very appropriate to the concerns of later critics—which express an almost Blakean poetic transcendence.[10] There are more poems of natural observation such as this fragment:

> The Elm tree's heavy foliage meets the eye
> Propt in dark masses on the evening sky
> The lighter ash but half obstructs the view
> Leaving grey openings where the light looks through
>
> (*Later Poems* 1090)

And there is a period when Clare begins to paraphrase many of the more wrathful parts of the Bible (*Later Poems* 105-58). However the bulk of the later poems comprises an interminable series of songs, usually love-songs, and usually in one or other of a very few generic patterns, the Scottish Song, the invitation, and so forth. Edward Strickland begins an article on John Clare's later poetry by noting the preference of critics for these poems over the earlier ones; he then outlines their context[11]:

> As pitiful as the representation of John Clare in the major anthologies is, the image of the poet has been further distorted by their emphasis on his mad-poems, the most fascinating, but neither the best nor the most representative, of his works. Eric Robinson's and David Powell's recent *Later Poems of John Clare* is invaluable ... for its clarification of the context of the visionary works. The edition established, against the sentimentalism of many critical observations, that Clare suffered a serious decline in poetic power with the onset of madness, particularly after the mid-1840s. It also makes clear the anomalous nature of the famous visionary lyrics, which appear in a radically different light grouped together on a few pages of an anthology rather than surrounded by eleven hundred pages of Clare's later verse, much of which ... is (or in the case of songs without accompanying melodies, appears to be) doggerel. (141)

Strickland's own diagnosis of Clare's later poetry is a belated attack of the Sublime, which had been largely absent from his earlier work.[12] For what it is worth my own feeling is that Clare's later poetry, *especially* the doggerel, *was* an assertion of (poetic) identity—long after he could have expected anyone to take any notice of his poetry Clare continued, obsessively, to write poetry; the irony is that he wrote it in such quantity, to such generic patterns and on such a stereotyped range of subjects that subsequent critics have been unable to claim it for Clare and have been reduced to celebrating the least typical poems of the later period of Clare's career.

The Lyric Clare

I shall now examine that sort of criticism which celebrates the lyric Clare, "the absolute poet" (Grigson "Poems and Fragments" 170), the "universal poet" (E.Storey 18), singer of "notes of unequalled lyric purity" (Heath-Stubbs 124), who at times "attains to the true lyric" (Noel 81).

The first feature of this criticism that I should like to discuss is the way it handles the fragmentary nature of the manuscripts and texts that make up Clare's life and

works. Contrary to what one might expect the criticism demonstrates that the incomplete nature of Clare's poetry and biography is not ignored, but is put to use to maintain the traditional distinction between the poetry and the life and to add value to the poetry by suggesting a rich plenitude contained in it. And we will find that Clare's late lyrics function as a guarantee of this richness.

An examination of Margaret Grainger's *A Descriptive Catalogue of the John Clare Collection in Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery* reveals a list of 148 separate manuscript books, manuscripts, letters and documents relating to Clare (categories A-G, 1-22). These mix the materials for a life both theoretically and literally with over 2,700 poems that constitute the bulk, though not the whole of Clare's output. However we find that the life begins to functions as part of a dialectic, where the lyric is the synthesis. Early in the Introduction to his biography of Clare Edward Storey writes: "the texts of Clare's writings have always presented a problem and until there is a definitive edition of the whole will continue to do so" (13). He later writes:

> There are still many questions about his life that are unanswerable. The poems are the safest guide to understanding his personality and even they are full of contradictions. Yet the contradictions make the man... (16)

If the life, which is riddled with unsatisfactory absences, cannot help us towards the true Clare, then we must proceed to the poems. These are even more unsatisfactory because, as in the life, "the final essence" of Clare can still escape us into the gaps and interstices of the (incomplete) text. Thus Mark Storey writes, in the Introduction to his *John Clare: the Critical Heritage*: "Biographies of Clare abound, but nobody has given a coherent critical account of the poetry in all its detail and abundance" (1), though elsewhere he seems to have the argument the other way round:

> No attempt has been made to present a rounded picture of Clare the man, in all his diversity (for that is, primarily, the province of biography) but rather to see the man in terms of his poetry, which is, after all, what he asked of posterity. (*Introduction* vii)

But this gap is what enables "Clare the man" to exist as a figure at all in the tradition. The half-unpublished, unsatisfactory state of the text becomes a feature that helps to suggest a rich plenitude which exists in the Great Unpublished, or in the Great Unknown (Howard 7, Todd 1). To suggest this is a common move in the criticism as, for example, when Arthur Symons talks about "the real text" of Clare (*Poems* 24) or when Mark Storey deplores the way in which Clare has become an "anthology poet" (*Introduction* 2). A more extreme view still is that of Clare's poems

concealing the True Essence of Clare: "The texts and meanings of Clare's poems may be analysed and argued over, but the spirit of the man is there for all who seek, to find and respect" (E.Storey 298); the Tibbles, after beginning calmly enough, "... the best of his poetry is still not sufficiently well-known", end in apocalypse: "All that is essential for a considered estimate is at long last before Clare's public" (*Life and Poetry*, ix & x).

This reading of richness into absence or scarcity, the normal conditions of textuality, as an unexpressed plenitude beyond, is an important one for understanding the tradition of criticism, for in the biography, the life is intertwined with the poetry, but ultimately the poetry is preferred, not because it is more decidable, but because it is less. Theoretical expressions of this are easy to come by when looking at editions and accounts of Clare and it seems to be one that is universal and unashamed. Geoffrey Grigson writes that Clare is "a poet whose 'finest poetry' was not (as in Mr Blunden's claim) 'that which grew from the incidents and secrecy of wild life'—unless that wild life was Clare's own, the life of Clare's heart" (*Madness* 13). The Tibbles conclude their biography with this: "If the character of the man does not shine through his early and late poems and his prose, even through his insanity, we may look for it elsewhere in vain ..." (*Life* 402). Edward Storey writes (twice): "he knew that the discovery of self had to be earned" (76, 233).

The argument here seems to be, roughly, Clare's was the Romantic split personality ("His genius was of the sort that inevitably doomed him to spiritual solitude" (Heath-Stubbs 120)); this produced the poetry, but at great cost to the poet: we are fortunate to benefit from Clare's misfortune. Thus the Tibbles: "Clare bought with his madness his 'freedom', his 'liberty', to state ... a few elemental truths" (407). Arthur Symons is more hard-line:

> Yet the strange thing is that what killed him as a human mind exalted him as a poetic consciousness, and that verse written in the asylum is of a rarer and finer quality than any of the verse he wrote while he was at liberty and at home. (17)

And Clare critics seem extraordinarily keen to stress the advantages to us of Clare's madness; K.John, for example, in a review of John Tibble's *Poems of John Clare* alleges that until the asylum period he was "never ... half mad enough" (334). Cecil Day-Lewis writes: "It is sad that the lyric impulse could not be fully realised until he himself was confined in Northampton Asylum" (116) and Agnes Rothery has a similar thought: "when Clare's broken and prematurely aged body was incarcerated, his

lyrical facility was simultaneously liberated" (162). This desire to incarcerate Clare to extract from him "lyrics of penetrating simplicity which neither requires nor permits of analysis" (Jack 137) so that they can become "treasures of quite singular value" (Noel 81) is one which, I shall argue in the next section, the tradition carries out when it performs a poetic enclosure on Clare's works.

The "living Clare" ("He is more alive now than ever..." (E.Storey 298)) has of course a textual basis, but this is only the first of many vital paradoxes by which this figure is sustained. An anonymous, agnostic reviewer in the *TLS* asks: "is it Clare's destiny or Clare's poetry we find so touching, or both in one?"; but Robert Graves thinks that he can risk saying "'I know Clare, I know him well'" (61). Critics take comfort from the fact that Clare himself wrote, in his "Child Harold" [sic], "My life hath been one love—no blot it out/ My life hath been one chain of contradictions" (*Later Poems* 45), but it is important to realise that the paradoxes traced within Clare's works are carefully selected and deployed. Blunden and Porter give a candid view of this process:

> The life of John Clare, offering as it does so much opportunity for sensational contrast ... became ... a favourite with quillmen. Even his serious biographers have made excessive use of light and darkness, poetry and poverty, genius and stupidity ... " (9).

Of these contrasts the most important in the repertoire of later criticism is that of Clare's madness—how the Clare of their writings can survive a mental illness and maintain the integrity of his personality (Grigson *Madness* 23). In the Introduction to his *Selected Poems of John Clare* Grigson bestows much thought, and some excruciating prose, on this point:

> An increasing series of deprivations threatened Clare's mind, indeed unbalanced him from the delicate thread of his life, but increased his self-knowledge and made him look more and more for meanings in that nature, in which, like Hölderlin, and so many artists of his spiritual type, he found a constant which he did not discover, after the happiness of childhood, in the society of men. (13)

But this is a difficult thing to claim as Clare's life bristles with anecdotes of his delusions that he was someone else, even such fatal ones as the following, which threatens the vital and proprietary connection between the author and his words: whilst at Northampton Asylum Clare was met by a well-wisher, who, however, took him to task for claiming lines by Byron and Shakespeare as his own. "It's all the same," Clare replied, "I'm John Clare now, I was Byron and Shakespeare formerly. At different times you know I'm different persons—that is, the same person with different names" (quoted in Grigson *Madness* 43). J.F.Nisbet, who had been the su-

perintendent of the Northampton County Asylum for some time while Clare was there, wrote of Clare in his book of 1891, *The Insanity of Genius*: "He seemed to assimilate everything that he read or heard ..." (Quoted in Tibbles *Life*, 174). A possible way out for critics in this situation might have been to invoke Keats' idea of "Negative Capability"; however, the threat to Clare's unique personality posed by his empathic feelings towards nature, as in Edmund Gosse's famous description of him as "a camera, not a mind" (M.Storey *Critical Heritage* 375), seems to have caused critics to fear making this move. For it is indeed the hall-mark of this criticism to insist on the superiority of the later poems over the earlier and to express misgivings over the lack of intensity of the earlier poems. Edmund Blunden for example:"His conception of a universal singing leaves many of his individual poems insufficiently wrought up" (*Madrigals* xiv). Cecil Day-Lewis has the argument succinctly:

> I said that Clare is the very type of the lyric poet. The most compelling passages in his longer poems are lyrical; the most memorable of the shorter are almost all lyrics ... We may regret it that [sic] Clare spent so much of his earlier years in long descriptive and narrative poems, and did not more often tap the pure lyric source within him. (115-16)

However, and this is where we can most easily see the connection between this tradition of Clare criticism and the lyric interests we have been discussing elsewhere in this thesis, there is an attraction for critics in the later poetry of Clare which outweighs the dangers of such anecdotes as those I have been quoting concerning the nature of his madness. Besides gratifying their innate predisposition towards the figure of romantically-mad poet-as-prophet, here, as nowhere else in Clare's poetry, critics find the sort of intensity of utterance that they can greet as true poetry (Murry "Poetry" 10). The Tibbles are typical of this in their comments; they note: "Our estimate of a poet is often based finally on no more than a handful of his best poems", and "what does emerge is a unity among the best of the of the [asylum] poems" (*Life and Poetry* 189, 154). They also read into the asylum poems Clare's complicity with their expectations: "Long ago he had aimed at more compression" and stress a very important point, that one of the desirable characteristics of this "handful" of poems is their shortness: "All his long descriptive pieces have this fault, they might end anywhere else than where they do. His shorter pieces end as if by instinct in the right places" (154; see also Murry"Poetry" 11). The series of poems selected to form the core of the asylum poetry begins with "The Flitting" and proceeds through the lyrics contained in "Child Harold" to the rather famous handful of late, short lyrics such as "I am", "An Invite to Eternity" and "Song ("Love lives beyond...")" (Grigson *Madness* 26-27, Blunden and Porter 45).

It is very noticeable that this period in Clare's career attracts more attention than any other; so that Mark Storey is right to say of Arthur Symons' 1908 selection: "it is possible to see the swing towards the preference for the asylum poetry ... to see the asylum verse as a culmination of all that preceded it" (*Introduction* 2), a remark which could apply to so much of the tradition of Clare-criticism. There is, for example, a collection entitled *The Poems of John Clare's Madness* (edited by Geoffrey Grigson in 1949) and another entitled *The Later Poems of John Clare* (edited by Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield in 1964). There are, however, among the other editions and selections, no corresponding volumes dedicated to "The Poems of John Clare's Sanity" (the title of an article by Ian Jack (Brownlow 1)). The eminently reasonable explanation for the preference is usually Clare's progress in his poetry, from the earlier, naïve poetry of the countryside to the goal of his later, asylum verse; compare Blunden and Porter:

> The poetry of John Clare, originally simple descriptions of the country and countrymen, or ungainly imitations of the poetic tradition as he knew it through Allan Ramsay, Burns, and the popular writers of the eighteenth century, developed into a capacity for exact and complete nature-poetry and for self-expression. (44)

However we should recognise the implicit hierarchy which is always present in such praise; for critics in this tradition the earlier work of Clare is always of less interest than the later lyric poems, and only worth preserving for the adumbrations of the later poetry contained in it:

> His finest work in his contemporary volumes of verse ... is contained in sonnets and other brief pieces conveying (like Bewick's tail-pieces) momentary impressions of nature with startling power. Of these crystallisations Clare is prodigal ... (Blunden *Athenaeum* article 298).

I should like to go on to look in more detail at the search for verbal intensity in Clare, which pushes criticism towards the later poetry. For critics have been extremely eager not to repeat the mistake of the doctor who admitted Clare to Northampton Asylum in 1841 with the famous note that Clare's madness had developed "after years addicted to poetical prosing" (Grainger *Catalogue* vi). This criticism is a common one and was given its most memorable expression by Edmund Gosse, who as well as condemning Clare's work *en masse* as the production of "a camera, not a mind", in another review wrote: "His poetry is like honey and water ... but the brew is desperately thin .... It is clean and delicate, but tiresomely monotonous and, above all, the spirit is diluted" (Quoted in M.Storey *Critical Heritage* 344). His poems were, we surmise, regarded by Gosse as so impersonal as not to leave behind any trace

that could be resurrected into a living force behind, or in, the poem. This attitude is shared by John Speirs in a review of John Tibble's *Poems of John Clare*. Speirs, writing in *Scrutiny* and therefore, no doubt, reading for intensity, fails both parts of Clare's career:

> There is certainly here a quantity of genuine stuff, but a stuff that is all of the same sort, so that the ultimate effect of it in such bulk is to emphasise its own sameness.... Certain of the Asylum poems have been seen as something different, marking a final phase, and have even been regarded as Clare's finest work ... but only the fact that they are nearer to what the nineteenth century had learnt to think poetry ought to be like could have blinded readers to their unsatisfactoriness in comparison with Clare's characteristic work, which remains essentially eighteenth century in quality. (84-85)[13]

The critics who have come to Clare's defence point out that in the early poems there is no deficiency of human sympathy and a refreshing lack of moralising intent (Tibbles *Life and Poetry* 40). The earlier poems are saved, therefore, in small numbers and in a pendant relation to the later poems, the true body of Clare's poetry, where the world of his earlier poems, lost always and already, is refined away into transcendence, and critics can celebrate Clare's lines: "I snatched the sun's eternal ray,— / And wrote till earth was but a name" (as does Murry "Case" 24).

Clare's distressing prolificity and strange habits of composition have often been deplored by critics (eg E.Storey 21, Blunden and Porter 44); and interestingly enough Clare's first biographer, Martin, thought much the same of Clare's writing habits:

> There was at this time an impression on Clare's mind [sic] that his verses were the product of intuition; and that the songs came floating from his lips and pen as music from the throat of birds. So he held his orthodoxy more orthodox than that of the schools. (134)

The suggestion that Clare is too prolific implies that there is some essence in his poetry, which is in limited supply and risks, in the dispersed economy of Clare's writings, being spread about too thinly for the soul of his poetry still to be recoverable, as in Gosse's criticisms. This is a further help towards explaining the bias in favour of the intense lyrics of the asylum years. The Anne Tibble passage quoted above leads us towards another interesting consideration—her remarks about Clare's working practices perhaps conceal a concern that they run the risk of blurring the identity, the integrity of each poem. If Clare can write six drafts of one poem, all slightly or substantially different, where is the unique singleness of the poem chosen as the copy-text? I am reminded of the mock-sermon in Clare's "Don Juan" which includes the very apposite question "But to our text again—and, pray, where is it?" (*Later Poems* 97).

Thus this criticism's expectations of uniqueness and singularity necessitate a search for a few works embodying all the intensity of Clare's poetry; these then are monumentalised as celebrations of transcendence. What we find in fact with much of Clare's earlier poetry, and indeed much of his later poetry is, as I have argued, that it is a dispersed and extended series of over-lapping and not-wholly-distinct texts, of poetry and prose.[14] In this output there is a concern with a process of insistent repetition of descriptive details, which is more basic to it than any lyric, monumentalising impulse.[15] This explanation of mine is in contrast to the standard view of the tradition,which has Clare dispersing his powers in repetition, and regretting that "one of his common weaknesses was repetition" (E.Storey 18). Another common trope is that concerning the possibility of influence on Clare; for example the Tibbles, who see Clare's poetry "receding from what might be tainted with artificiality of any kind" (*Life and Poetry* 185-86). In her book *Schiller to Derrida: Idealism in Aesthetics* Juliet Sychrava describes the way in which Wordsworth and Clare have been read by critics as the Sentimental and the Naïve poets, respectively, of Nature in the early nineteenth century. This would seem to be a useful understanding of one particular reading of Clare: Wordsworth's imagination has traditionally been seen as transforming (embodying the power of creative nature, "natura naturans") whilst the Clare of the earlier poems has been criticised for the simple description of the nature in front of him ("Natura naturata"), as, for example by J.Middleton Murry at one point ("Poetry" 8-9). On the other hand some of Clare's champions have always rejected the charge, by recourse to his later work, as for example Edward Storey: "this is Clare back on familiar ground but with a difference. He is no longer the messenger bringing news from the field, he is the message" (211).

In keeping with its interest in the self-sufficiency of Clare's poetry the critical tradition evinces great distress at Clare's indebtedness to eighteenth-century descriptive poetry, or indeed to any other writing. Arthur Symons wrote in 1908: "It cannot be said that in Clare's very earliest work we have an utterance which literary influences have not modified"(18). But, as we can see from Clare's letters or the catalogue of Clare's library preserved in the Northampton Public Library (Powell 23-4), Clare was saturated with the poetry of the eighteenth century and the descriptive tradition in particular and could hardly fail to have been influenced by it, even if much of his work was in reaction against it. As Clare wrote in a letter to Drury of 1820: "I must have poetry to read otherwise I cannot rhyme" (Quoted in M.Storey *Critical*

Heritage, 54 & 34). And this simple admission is, I think, quite enough to torpedo a great deal of the Romantic mythology surrounding him.

Enclosure in Clare-Criticism

I hope that the previous section has outlined clearly the strategic oppositions and Romantic leanings of the tradition of Clare criticism, as also its fetishistic emphasis on the intensity and self-identity of the lyric. I hope it has also hinted at my own view of Clare as a far more complex and hybrid figure than this tradition allows, as also, to an extent the victim of it. In this section I intend to investigate how the fact of enclosure in Clare's biography and work is treated by the tradition of Clare-criticism.

I would argue that Enclosure is not the Fall from some sort of pre-enclosure grace, which it is usually figured as in the criticism, but that enclosure is an historical event at the beginnings of modernity, which was part of the establishment of a written and documented, proprietorial paradigm. The tradition of Clare criticism is a well-meaning attempt to rescue Clare from history, but like the schemes for the relief of the rural poor of, for example, Cobbett and Young[16], it has firstly a proprietorial impulse, to distribute to each his or her personal allotment, and secondly an anxiety as to whether the individual will live up to his or her potential, will fulfil those things expected of him/her, and this anxiety can find vent in a number of ways, including a "scientific" interest in regulation, surveillance and control, or a Cobbettian moral concern that the subjects of the scheme are being true to themselves. Hence the fussy patronage of Clare that this criticism demonstrates nearly everywhere. However this criticism owes nothing to the pre-enclosure, open-field system that it hankers after, indeed it is predicated on enclosure, literal and figurative.

Geoffrey Grigson, for example, in the Introduction to his *Selected Poems of John Clare*, finds little trouble in counting enclosure amongst the series of "deprivations" that Clare suffered during his life (14). These deprivations, which also include "the happiness of childhood" and "love and freedom", are the conditions that allow Clare's poetry to be born from the Romantic split psyche that was his:

> His ideas, out of the interaction of suffering and delight, of life, love, freedom, creative joy and eternity, ripened on the withered tree of his mind round about 1844, at Northampton.... On the one side he had dismal dreams of Hell.... On the other, eternity obsessed him as desirable and as the attainment of victory over the world. (15)

In contrast to this view an article by Bob Heyes in a recent issue of the *John Clare Society Journal* describes much more exactly Clare's status as a witness to and a writer about enclosure as a complex historical contingency, rather than as a matter of poetic transcendence:

> It is one of the paradoxes of Clare's life that the disappearance of the old village community, a loss which he felt so deeply, provided him with his opportunity. For all his regard for the old ways Clare embodied many of the values of the new age. He lived at a critical moment when the traditional culture of the village was dying and the new working-class culture based in the town had not yet developed to take its place. Clare's writing was a complex creation, growing out of the old village culture but incorporating new social and cultural influences. His consciousness of the impact of enclosures, his awareness of the great changes that he was living through, may even have acted as a stimulus to Clare to preserve in verse and prose the remnants of the older culture ... (18).

In the Tibbles' *Life and Poetry of John Clare* enclosure is treated surprisingly warily, perhaps because the authors are reluctant to make too many vast claims for it, perhaps also because they are fearful of allowing an historical process too much influence in the determination of Clare's work. Although their first two chapters are entitled, respectively: "Childhood in a Pre-Enclosure Village, 1793-1809" and "Cataclysm, 1809-1819", enclosure itself gets only three paragraphs, but these are notable for more confusion and contradiction than is found in the whole of the rest of the book. Firstly they deprecate the common practice of equating pre-enclosure society with ideal social equality, but then figure enclosure as one part of a timeless dialectic struggle:

> Even if, long before the social hierarchy of the Middle Ages, some of the very earliest agricultural communities *were* made up of roughly equal free men, could Freedom and Locke's 'natural' equality ever have been known to us expect by their opposites, domination and slavery? Certainly down the English centuries one hears the first of the key-words so stubbornly upheld by Clare grow resonant, accumulating echoes. (25)[17]

Next, after agreeing that pre-enclosure agriculture was often "wasteful of time and energy" and "unscientific", they deplore the injustices meted out and end by invoking History to explain enclosure, but figure this as a "powerful drama" beyond the control of anyone:

> If only the far-sighted, the industrious and the progressive, could have filled, as Locke advised, no more than their pitcher with the water of the spring! But both rich and poor, whom H.J.Massingham[18] so rightly called 'natural allies', were swept along at this time in a powerful drama greater than themselves. (15-16)

Finally they describe enclosure as a timeless exemplum of "how the world wags":

> The Helpston Enclosure Act of 1820, typical of its kind, betrays to any modern disinterested scrutiny that the Commissioners saw themselves paid; the larger landowners and the Church did not suffer. Those who could make a claim were not without redress even if it was not always to their liking as to commonable rights [sic]. But those who could not afford, or did not know how, to write a claim, naturally stood to lose any recompense that was going. The practical, energetic, and shrewd, *as ever*, did not fare badly: the thriftless, the illiterate, or the peace-loving rustic who detested the haggle of voices, often received less than his clearest dues. (26, my italics)

In other places in the Tibbles' book enclosure is a less obtrusive, but still deconstructive, presence[19]; just as in the passage just quoted "as ever" was the phrase that unravelled the argument, so here the phrase "at first" switches the argument abruptly from an essentialist to a relativist one:

> [in Clare's work] there is the closely and lovingly depicted community of pindar, hayward, shepherd and harvester, gooseherd and cow-tender, 'Gossips and Grannies'. Gleaners and nutters, herb-gatherers, woodcutters, mole-catcher, village doctress, and cress-gatherer, all are there.... There are the happy pictures of a teeming nature that progress could never plunder of her beauty. And there are bitter verses ... of the tree-stripped land which enclosure evidently produced at first, and of freedom lost.... (42).

If the Tibbles' argument is one concerned with Clare's unique vision ("besides transmuting the anguish of his personal predicament, he was stating what he felt as a universal dilemma" (190)), to which argument enclosure is a threat more than an adjunct, rather than an historical one which incorporates enclosure, yet there are accounts which contrive to have it both ways. Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield, for example, in their *Selected Poetry and Prose of John Clare*, have a section in the Introduction which lists many of the social changes consequent upon enclosure which are recorded or which figure in Clare's work (xv-xvi). But this is then followed by what we might describe as an "Edenic" reading of enclosure in the poetry of Clare:

> If the countryside about Helpston was not only the map of Clare's boyhood but also part of a rural landscape cruelly altered by enclosure, *it was something even more significant*. Helpston was Clare's paradise, his Garden of Eden. This observation is no literary conceit but plain truth.... In the landscape of Eden before the Fall, Clare's boyhood love, Mary Joyce, is present—she is Eve to Clare's Adam. Unless we recognise this is the conscious pattern of imagery in Clare's poetry, we are bound to miss a great deal of his point. Everything in his boyhood environment assumes a new character, a vividness far beyond accurate natural history, a deeper identity because it is part of what Clare calls 'Loves register'. (xvi- xvii, my italics)

But although Robinson and Summerfield describe what is in truth the mythopoeic scheme of many of Clare's later poems there are problems for this sort of reading,

problems which arise from Clare's own text. In many Victorian returns-to-childhood critics have read a fear of, or disgust with, sexuality—and Eden is, even more, the place where the Fall has not yet happened. Clare's work of the early asylum years shows a strong disgust at sexuality in many passages, notably the long poem "Don Juan", and although none of the later poems is as explicit on this theme as "Don Juan" Clare often seems to be writing of sexual guilt: "I long for scenes, where man hath never trod/ A place where woman never smiled or wept" ("I am", *Later Poems* 397) and elsewhere the guilt is often imputed to the Female: "I loved, but woman fell away;/ I hid me, from her famed fame" ("A Vision", *Later Poems* 297). This perhaps is the explanation as to why so many of the later love-poems are written from a point of view of anticipated meeting with a woman or of first love, with consummation only in prospect. Edenicist readings of Clare are certainly possible, but none has yet taken into account the considerations I have just outlined, or other, less than sympathetic aspects of the later poems (Strickland 156-57). And as to the attempt to drag enclosures into the scheme of this Eden, the critic might as well abandon any historical specificity at once, as does Edward Storey (298), rather than twist the facts to accommodate his/her reading of Clare's mythic rendering of them.

Perhaps it would be helpful if, at this point, I set out my view of enclosures point by point in a table against the Clare-tradition's view of Clare:

The Clare-Tradition:	**View Put Forward Here:**
1. Enclosure the Fall	1. Enclosure one of the events at the beginning of modernity
2. Enclosure a single, evil event	2. Enclosure a complex process within the formation of modern discourses
3. Enclosure destructive of organic society, whose passing is to be lamented	3. Enclosure the end of one particular way of life and the beginning of another, in which we are still living. End of previous society cannot be deplored without the admission that we are living within the successor-paradigm
4. Enclosure allows Clare to speak from Romantic split psyche	4. Enclosure allows him various contingent and hybrid speaking-positions
5. Clare combatted Enclosure with lyric intensity and vision	5. Clare combatted it in a number of ways, metonymically in the extent and mixed nature of his writings

Which I hope will make the distinctions between these two views of Clare quite clear.[20]

It will be apparent by now that pun on "enclosure" is too apposite to resist, and I am not going waste it. My view is that just as Clare was dispossessed of the traditional landscape and lifeways of Helpston by enclosure, the critics of the lyric-Clare tradition perform the analogous enclosure by this poetic enclosure, the insistence that Clare be restricted to the Romantic paradigm he only sporadically inhabited. John Deacon notes that if Clare had not shown an interest in developing his poetry in the world of polite literature, he would have remained an anonymous folk-poet (77). But the penetration of the rural world by "literature", in its widest sense, had already had its influence. Clare's work then remains hybrid in nature, it embodies and describes in various ways the pre-enclosure world of Helpston, but at the same time it is written for and in the mode(s) of the world of polite literature, and that it is written at all proves this.

Clare himself becomes, in his lifetime, an object of scrutinyand interest. His publisher Taylor, his friends and many critics are concerned that he should develop and fulfil his talents, as the anonymous reviewer of the *New Monthly Magazine* enjoins:

> Our readers will, doubtless, now be anxious to learn what are the present prospects of this interesting young man, whose character and habits, we have reason to believe, both from what is stated in the introduction to his poems, and what we have ascertained from other sources, are as irreproachable as his talents are extraordinary. The success of his poems will, inevitably, render him dissatisfied with the situation of a daily labourer, earning "9 shillings a week", and "working for anyone who will employ him"; nor is it altogether to be wished that he should be suffered to remain in an occupation to which he must necessarily acquire an utter aversion, and for which his pursuits have obviously rendered him unfit. (330)

However, it is still possible, in the early nineteenth century, for Clare virtually to disappear from view, when, in the late 1820s, his prospects of continued publication declining and many of his friends dead or out of contact, he languished in poor health and worse poverty in Helpston. And it is entirely possible that he could have gone mad, or starved to death, in peace and neglect. But a rescue mission was mounted and Clare, who had shown some talent as a farmer, was presented with a cottage and a small-holding in the nearby village of Northborough. This provision for him and his family was made in the same spirit as the calls by Cobbett, Young and others at the time for the establishment of a class of independent small-holders, and should not be confused with a putative return to the commons—it is very much

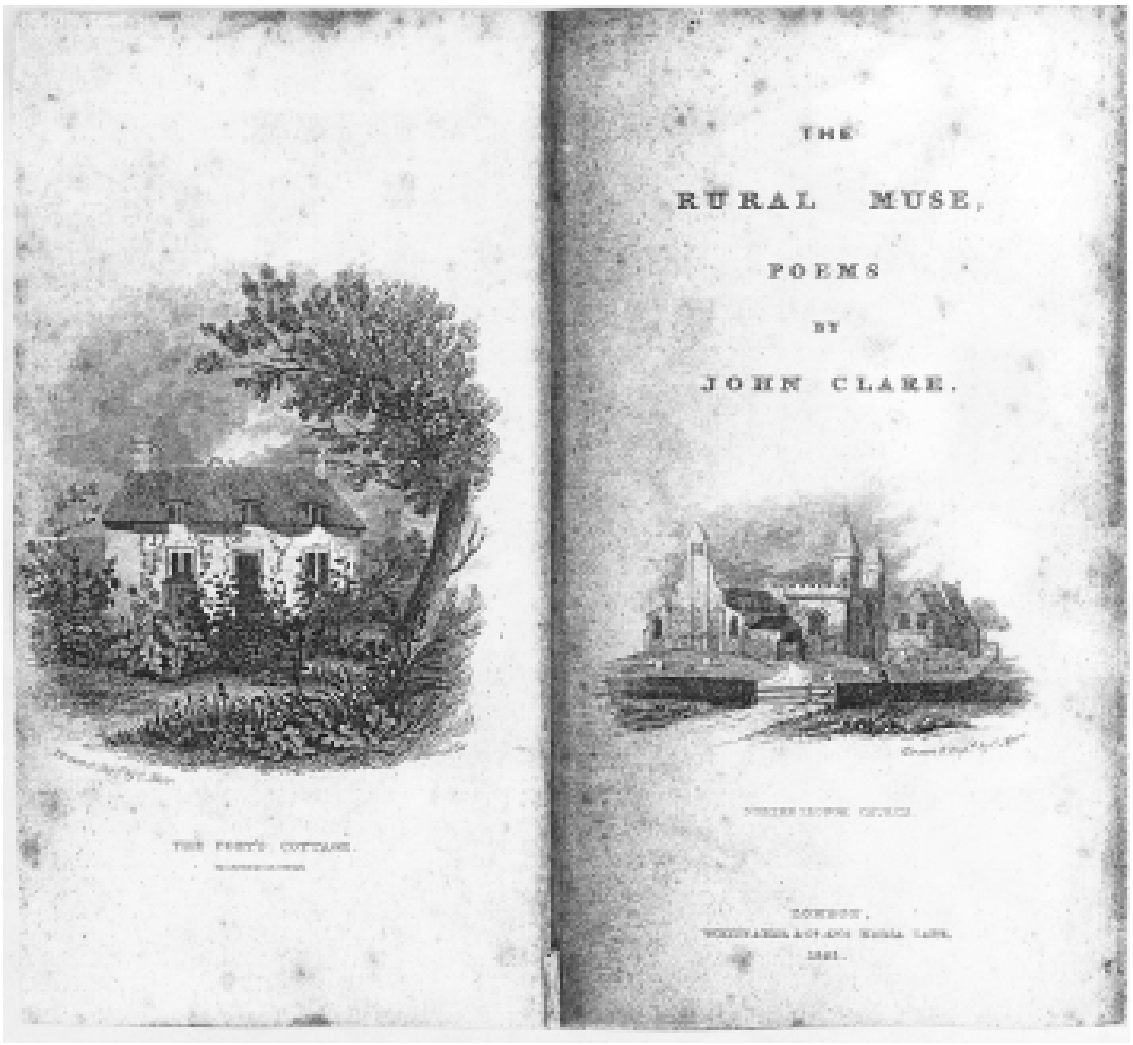

Figure 3: Title-page of *The Rural Muse*

a post-enclosure, and therefore modern development.[21] Here it was, under the genial eye of his patron, Lord Milton, that Clare failed definitely and unequivocally as a farmer, went mad in good earnest and was removed to an asylum[22]; Roden Noel wrote, no doubt unironically: "His last hope was to get a little farm of his own" (83). In this period Clare's last poetry collection of his life-time, *The Rural Muse*, was published—of all his volumes this is the most butchered by its editor—and its frontispiece is a useful illustration of the world that Clare was now living in and the two roles allotted him; the verso engraving depicts "The Poet's Cottage", and symbolises the role of the independent peasant, the recto depicts the ruined and Romantic grandeur of Northborough's abandoned church, symbolising the ruined hopes of the Romantic artist (see **figure three**).[23]

It should also be clear, I hope, that the subsequent tradition of Clare-criticism falls into this very paradigm. Its concern with poetic intensity is all of a piece with its concern for Clare, that his words should be his own, that his poetic genius should rise to its own level and embody its full potential, by determined critical appraisal and re-appraisal if necessary. The historical argument in which Clare is inserted is similarly all of a piece with the concern for intensity and proprietorial rights—whilst lamenting enclosures, critics perform their own (poetic) enclosure on Clare. At the same time they refuse to acknowledge that Clare is only present to them, in the way he is present, as a consequence of enclosure, their own enclosure of him, and the historical process which established the modern categories of ownership and property.

A reviewer of Frederick Martin's *Life* in *The Spectator* in 1865 noted that "Clare's life leaves behind it one almost unrelieved impression of sadness" (668), but the question remains, what is the basis of this sadness? It could be the circumstances of Clare's life, but the tradition of Clare-criticism frequently makes Clare into an exemplum, the exclusivity and sentimentality of which process shows at every hole and crack in the argument, as here, in a passage from Cherry's *Life and Remains*:

> Unhappily there is too good reason to believe that the privations to which Clare and his household were subject cannot be looked upon as exceptional in the class of society to which both husband and wife belonged, although they naturally acquire a deeper shade of sadness from the prospect of competency and comfort which Clare's gifts seemed to promise. (130)

It is often said that to describe a writer in terms of the discourses within his or her writings is to reduce a human being to a discourse. But this is to ignore the violence, literal or figurative, with which the attribution of the unique status of exemplary humanity to a person or persons is often accompanied. The view of Clare that I have outlined is, I hope, an indication of what a "post-lyrical" criticism of Clare might look like. It would certainly not ignore the very real influences of Romantic lyricism on him; on the other hand it would have to investigate and discount the distortions of lyrical criticism, with its dialectic and monumentalising impulse. In the same way the account I have given of the nineteenth century has a double thrust: firstly to uncover the previously elided lyric influence on the poetry and poetics of the period, and secondly to give a more reasoned account of its development, one purged of lyrical historicising. Bearing in mind the persistence of the Clare tradition in this century I now turn to the poetry and poetics of twentieth century.

Notes:

[1] Helpston and the surrounding parishes were in a small, anomalous administrative area known as The Soke of Peterborough. In Clare's day it was joined to Northamptonshire and formed the north-east corner of that county. Subsequently it was joined to Huntingdonshire and formed the northern most part of *that* county. Finally, in the Local Government
reorganisation of 1974, Cambridgeshire absorbed Huntingdonshire and The Soke of Peterborough is now the north-west part of *that* county.

[2] The parliamentary Bill for the enclosure of Helpston was passed in 1809; the process of enclosure was mainly complete by the mid 1810s.

[3] By contrast the distinction between the first three of Barrell's phases and the asylum-poetry is obvious and striking.

[4] Barrell was relying on the volumes that appeared in Clare's lifetime, together with eight volumes of selections and one MS (235-36): these fail to give an impression of the sheer bulk of Clare's work.

[5] One of the reasons for this enormous output is the ease with which Clare composed and the fact that when he did revise the revision often turned out to be a new poem or version of a prose passage, rather than a revision, as noted, not without overtones of disapproval, by his biographer, Anne Tibble:

> The greatest editorial problem arises from Clare's method of making three, four, five and sometimes six drafts of a poem. He seems to have done this from memory, with variant words and phrases; it is often difficult to know which draft he intended for the final one. In his autobiographical fragments there are sometimes two versions of the same incident, again probably jotted down from memory, but each is different from the other, difficult to combine. (*Life* xv)

[6] Note that the title fails to include either a definite or indefinite article, because, as I shall go on to explain, scientific discourse is the description of objects precisely without either article, specific yet not tied down to the one specimen.

[7] Druce originally wrote the section on Clare, which was later incorporated into *The Flora of Northamptonshire* in 1912 (Estermann 113-14). It is worth remembering, then, that he would only have had a limited selection of Clare's poetry, and little of his prose, in which to find material.

[8] I should explain that a county flora is a list of all the plants found in a county, together with notes on distribution and records of locations. For a record to be useful the date is not important (except for establishing priority amongst the records), as flowers in Britain bloom at much the same time each year, regardless of the weather, but the two things which are essential are a more or less precise location (to within a few hundred yards) and a definite identification.

[9] Rig = ridge, blea = bleak, dotterels = pollard willows, awes = haws, starnel = starling.

[10] There is no evidence that Clare knew any of Blake's poetry, therefore the similarity will be one of a like reaction to similar circumstances from a poet located in a similar cultural milieu.

[11] My argument is that the critics of the Clare-tradition have preferred the later, intense poems and lyrics and celebrated these—not that they necessarily knew the true context of these poems. However it does appear that knowledge of the nature of Clare's later poetry was common long before the OUP's edition; for example Geoffrey Grigson, writing in 1949, contrasts the intense lyrics (*Madness* 26-27) with the "ready made ... hurdy-gurdy music of Byron in his *Occasional Poems* or the trotty movement of the Scottish song-writer" (38).

[12] This makes sense if we remember Barrell's argument that the conventions of the Picturesque were little use to Clare in his earlier poetry—the Sublime was a lineal descendant of the Picturesque.

[13] Presumably by "quality" Speirs means "absolute quality" rather than "generic propriety".

[14] One view of this is:

> What the reader cannot appreciate, if he has not looked at Clare's manuscripts for himself, is the immense difficulties that every editor of Clare encounters: the sheer bulk of the material ... the apparent disorder of Clare's creative processes which produced notes, poems, letters, and anagrams all mixed together in a furious welter. (Robinson and Summerfield *Later Poems* 1)

[15] I am often lead to wonder whether in fact Clare is not one of the best examples of the survival of the "pre-modern", the radically silent, threatening, yet liberating Other, not over-determined by any discursive apparatus, within modernity, whose existence or non-existence so haunts all of Foucault's works.

[16] Works by these two writers in which their respective schemes are set out are: Cobbett's *Cottage Economy* and *Political Works* (*passim*) and Young's two pamphlets *The Question of Scarcity Plainly Stated and Remedies Considered, with Observations on Permanent Measures to Keep Wheat at a More Regular Price* (1800) and *An Inquiry into the Propriety of Applying Wastes to the Better Maintenance and Support of the Poor* (1801).

[17] Which "key-words" it was that Clare upheld are not specified.

[18] An English writer of the early twentieth-century who advocated a rural, egalitarian society.

[19] I should say that the various guises that Enclosure assumes in the Tibbles' text, however little to the authors' purposes they may be, are all from the repertoire of Romantic historicism.

[20] I am indebted in my view, as will be clear, to Raymond William's account of Clare in *The Country and the City* (132-141).

[21] Both Cobbett and Young had come to much the same conclusions as regards this project, despite being opposed politically. Both were born outside traditional "open-field" areas, and neither showed any signs in their writings that they understood the open-field system.

[22] It is in this period that many of Clare's poems, perhaps as a reflex of the surveillance he was under, become "objective" and "scientific".

[23] It is the assumption of this chapter that Clare was a nineteenth-century Northamptonshire farm-labourer and poet, not a church, ruined or otherwise.