# SOME ASPECTS OF JOHN CLARE'S PASTORAL VISION AS REFLECTED IN *THE SHEPHERD'S CALENDAR*, SONNETS AND OTHER SELECTED POEMS

by

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This study has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

M.J. Pyott

# PREFACE

In this thesis it is proposed to examine the pastoral vision, symbolized by Eden, which permeates Clare's poetry, as it is reflected in The Shepherd's Calendar, the sonnets (certain of which will be analysed in detail) and a group of lyrics. This pastoral vision, while including time and space, transcends them in such a way that Eternity becomes an important concept in Clare's pastoral poems. The final chapter of this thesis will, therefore, concentrate on this aspect of Clare's pastoral vision, not by attempting to define Clare's understanding of Eternity, but by illustrating it in four of his lyrics.

Because of the lack of a full and reliable text of the complete works of John Clare and the inability of the present writer to establish for certain the chronological order of his poems,[1] there will be no attempt in this thesis to show a development in Clare's poetry. Nor will there be an attempt to evaluate in the light of Clare's "madness" those poems known to have been written while he was in a mental asylum - a non-literary study requiring knowledge associated with the discipline of psychology; and the present writer concurs in the opinion that "it is the continuity of Clare's life and ways of thought and feeling which claims one's attention, rather than the disruptions of insanity".[2]

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[1]Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield, co-editors of the most reliable texts of Clare's poetry to date, consider the only "fairly comprehensive selection of Clare's poetry" available to the reader, namely, the 1935 double volume selection of Clare's poems edited by J.W. Tibble, to be "inadequately annotated and very far from a definitive edition". (See Selected Poems and Prose of John Clare, ed. by Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield [London: Oxford University Press, 1967], p. xxxvi.)

[2]Ibid., p. xxxii.

The Text

According to a letter received on the 16th May, 1968 from Eric Robinson, co-editor with Geoffrey Summerfield of three of the most recent editions of John Clare's poetry, the edition of Clare's poetry which he is preparing for the Oxford English Texts series and which will probably be a definitive edition, has not yet been completed. Of the above three volumes compiled by the two editors, only one, The Later Poems of John Clare (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964), is textually satisfactory, giving evidence of an apparently thorough examination of all available manuscripts. In the remaining two volumes, namely, The Shepherd's Calendar (London: Oxford University Press, 1964) and Selected Poems and Prose of John Clare (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), the editors have followed the same principles as in the first volume, representing poems and prose from the original manuscripts unaltered save where they deem necessary, in which case full details of alterations are given. These editors have refrained from adding punctuation to Clare's largely unpunctuated original manuscripts. The practice of punctuating Clare's work for clarification can lead to distortion and restriction[1] of meaning, and

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[1]This applies particularly where introduction of punctuation prevents the meaning of a line flowing backwards as well as forwards, and so eliminates the intended ambiguity, e.g.:

(a) "The Wren" (Selected Poems and Prose of John Clare, ed. by Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield [London: Oxford University Press, 1967], p. 68 and The Poems of John Clare, ed. by J[ohn] W. Tibble [2 vols.; London: J.M. Dent & Sons Limited, 1935], II, 245).

In this poem Tibble places a question mark after the words, "In poets' rhymes" in line three, where it could as

renders unsatisfactory all editions of Clare's poetry available to the writer of this thesis other than those edited by Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield. These strictures apply even to the valuable work done on Clare by John Tibble and Anne Tibble, for instance, in their two volume edition of 1935. Much use has been made in this thesis of this collection because it contains many poems not included in the Robinson and Summerfield editions.

The following texts have been used throughout this study unless specifically otherwise stated:

a) John Clare, The Shepherd's Calendar, ed. by Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

b) Selected Poems and Prose of John Clare, ed. by Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

c) The Later Poems of John Clare, ed. by Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964).

d) The Poems of John Clare, ed. by J[ohn] W. Tibble (2 vols.; London: J.M. Dent & Sons Limited, 1935).

Hereinafter they will be referred to as:

a) Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar.

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well be placed at the end of line two, which would give a different meaning to the first five lines of the poem.

(b) "May" (Selected Poems and Prose, ed. by Robinson and Summerfield, p. 127), entitled "Home Pictures in May" in Poems, ed. by Tibble, I, 518.

By putting a full stop at the end of line ten of this poem, Tibble forces the phrase, "in the spring's blue light", to refer only to the kite, whereas, unpunctuated, it can extend equally to the sparrows. In the unpunctuated version of the poem the phrase links the two in a remarkable manner allowing for an interpretation in the spirit of Clare who saw good in all creatures and would be likely to make the spring's blue light shine over both the hunter and its potential prey.

b) Robinson, _Selected Poems and Prose_.

c) Robinson, _The Later Poems_.

d) Tibble, _Poems_.

In this thesis the present writer is aiming at a faithful transcription of the text as found in the volumes listed above. Attention will not, therefore, be drawn to Clare's numerous liberties with, or versions of, spelling, punctuation and grammar, unless ambiguity calls for some comment.

The line numbering used throughout this thesis for any of Clare's poems longer than two pages is calculated on the principle that each page of the text begins with line 1, except for the page where the poem begins, in which case line 1 is the line immediately after the title of the poem. This method has been chosen because none of the texts available to the present writer has line numbers.

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## CHAPTER I

## PRELIMINARIES

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(i) A study of the poetry and prose of John Clare reveals that the particular kind of pastoral vision underlying his poetry is to some extent a consequence of his very close relationship with the countryside into which he was born and in which he spent the first thirty-nine years of his life. Other important influences upon Clare's poetry are the Mary figure believed to have grown out of a Platonic love relationship with Mary Joyce; the ballad and folk-song tradition in which he was steeped mainly through his parents' and fellow countrymen's gifts in this direction; and his reading of other poets' works, particularly those of the eighteenth century.

This introduction to John Clare's life and poetry will be divided into four parts. The first section will be given to a short biography with slight emphasis laid upon the early formative years as these are the most relevant to this thesis. (This biographical account does not claim to be comprehensive.) At the expense of strict relevance, however, this biography will span the whole of Clare's life, and this for two main reasons: firstly, Clare's life and the changing conditions under which he worked are not generally known, and this knowledge is necessary in order to appreciate much about his poetry and the state in which it reaches the reader; and secondly, both the influences upon, and the writing of, his poetry continued uninterrupted (although modified) wherever he was, to the end of his years. Thus, his writings cannot, without distortion of the truth, be classed as poems or prose of a particular time or place. His pastoral vision, which does include time and place, transcends them in a way which, among other things, this thesis will attempt to define.

The three remaining sections of this chapter will be devoted to a brief account of three main aspects of Clare's life which are of greater relevance to this thesis than others. The first of these sections will be a short description of the countryside of Clare's early life, the change to it brought about by Enclosure and his reaction to that change, and a reference to the well-meant, although somewhat disastrous, removal of him from it; the second, an attempt to assess the little that is known about Mary Joyce and what is assumed about her in relation to Clare's Mary figure; and the third, a section in which reference is made, in general terms, to the influence of the ballad, folk-song, hymn and works of certain writers on John Clare's poetry.

(ii) The main sources relied upon for the following biography are John and Anne Tibble's two books, John Clare: A Life[1] and John Clare: His Life and Poetry;[2] and Frederick Martin's The Life of John Clare.[3] The first biography is a comprehensive, detailed, academic work, superseded in matters of detail by the second. The third work, first published in 1865, only a year after the poet's death, is by a journalist who writes to arouse public interest and thus makes use of the convention of dramatizing facts. This practice may not be acceptable to the academic; but the editors, who regard Martin's

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[1] J[ohn] W. Tibble and Anne Tibble, John Clare: A Life (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1932).

[2] John [W.] Tibble and Anne Tibble, John Clare: His Life and Poetry (Melbourne: William Heinemann Ltd., 1956).

[3] Frederick W. Martin, The Life of John Clare, ed. by Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield (2nd ed.; New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1964).

work as still "the freshest and most illuminating of the biographies",[1] claim that "the scenes and conversations can usually be documented from Clare's own words".[2]

John Clare was born on the 13th of July, 1793 in the small Northamptonshire village of Helpston[3] situated at the point where Fen and Midland country meet. Clare's father, Parker Clare, was the illegitimate child of the local clerk's daughter and a travelling Scottish schoolmaster, John Donald Parker. The child was given his mother's surname after his father's disappearance from Helpston on the birth of the baby. Parker Clare became a strong, well-built man renowned in his area as a fine wrestler and ballad-singer. His strength fitted him for the work of day-labouring at flail-threshing, a livelihood which brought in a meagre, though adequate, return of eight shillings a week, until he was stricken at a fairly early age with the occupational disease of the open-air farm labourer in the Fens, rheumatism. This calamity, together with a rise in the price of bread and a change in Clare's landlord which involved a rise in rent and the reduction of the detached cottage to two residences of two rooms each, put paid to John Clare's parents' ambitions to educate their son well.

Parker Clare married Anne Stimson, daughter of the 'town-shepherd' of the neighbouring Castor village. She was illiterate, but a good narrator of the many folk-tales known to her. A prudent and indulgent mother, she was warmly sympathetic towards her son, if not always understanding. (She found his later solitary habits as strange as did the villagers, and could not appreciate his

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[1]Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. xxxvi.

[2]Martin, The Life of John Clare, p. xvi.

[3]Spelt "Helpstone" in Clare's day. See Tibble & Tibble, Life and Poetry, p. 2.

pre-occupation with poetry, inadvertently destroying most of his early attempts at writing.) Since the only other survivor of Anne's four children was a daughter five years younger than John, he, her first child, the survivor of twins and weak in build and health, was treated with the special attention usually accorded an only child. Anne Clare, uneducated as she was and as superstitious as most of the simple countrymen of her day, was determined, together with her husband, that their son who showed obvious scholastic ability would be educated as far as their scrimping and saving would allow.

John Clare's early youth was, according to his accounts and his poetry, very happy. He played the traditional games with his earliest village companions, roaming and enjoying the countryside with them, fishing or rambling through the woods and fields, looking for birds' nests, "pooty"[1] shells and other prized gifts of nature. Later, his peculiarly intimate relationship with nature and the desire to write poetry, made solitude a necessity for him. His parents' poverty was a factor in his spending more time in the fields, close to the natural world, than a full-time schooling would have allowed. Since eight weeks' work paid for one month's schooling, it is remarkable that, "until Clare was eleven or twelve, never less than three months out of the year were 'luckily spared' for 'improvement'".[2]

An old woman in the village was the first teacher of a reluctant Clare. His second, Seaton, was the master of a school in the vestry of the Glinton church, two miles from Clare's home. It

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[1]The girdled snail-shell: Helix nemoralis.

[2]Tibble & Tibble, Life and Poetry, p. 14.

was at this school that Clare is said to have first met and loved his fellow pupil, Mary Joyce, the younger daughter of a Glinton farmer. Seaton's hopes of John's qualifying for an usher in a school could no longer be entertained once Clare's father became ill. Clare had to be taken away from day-school and Seaton's successor suggested night-school for him. James Merriman, Clare's teacher at night-school, continued to foster the love of reading that Seaton had instilled in the boy, allowing him the run of his small library. It was not until Clare was thirteen that he acquired a volume of his own. His first two books were, significantly, Watts's Hymns and Spiritual Songs and Thomson's Seasons. The latter inspired Clare to write what he afterwards called his first poem, "The Morning Walk". (He had written many verses before this poem, but they had been kept secret for fear of ridicule, and were later destroyed.) The Watts volume, together with Paradise Lost, the Bible and Pilgrim's Progress, were important influences in Clare's life, and this would, perhaps, lead one to expect Clare to have been a Christian. His family background was traditionally Church of England; he was to be plied with theological works by the Evangelical Lord Radstock; certain parts of the Bible, such as Genesis and St. John's Epistle, delighted him; and, after reading Thomas Erskine's Remarks on the Internal Evidence of Revealed Religion, he was to say that a reasoning Deist might "loose [sic] doubts sufficient to be half a Christian".[1] Yet this was as far as he would go. The Tibbles sum up Clare's religious position thus: "At most, his perception of earth's beauty convinced him, though even this only at times, of the 'sacred design of an AlmightyPower'."[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 127.

[2] Ibid.

When the prospect of Clare's becoming an usher in a school dimmed, various ideas for his employment away from farm labouring were mooted: that of becoming a shoemaker, a sign printer and stone cutter or lawyer's clerk. But all hope of such employment fell away, either through lack of funds for the premium required, or through the shy Clare's failure to impress his interviewer. Instead, Clare spent short periods at various tasks such as wheat-weeding, helping at haymaking and harvesting, and driving a plough at Woodcroft Castle. During a period as farm labourer Clare witnessed an accident in which a waggon loader was killed. This so profoundly affected him that his resultant fits were cured only after some years, a precursor, perhaps, of future mental disturbances.

As the scarcity of agricultural employment grew through the Enclosure Act's being put into practice, Clare was reduced, from time to time, to fuel-gathering. Nevertheless, these impermanent tasks provided Clare with the opportunity to stay close to the natural world which inspired him to write poetry and which he loved so well. This close relationship with nature was happily prolonged when, in about 1809, the sixteen year old Clare was hired for a year by Francis Gregory of the neighbouring "Blue Bell Inn". Clare's work involved tending a horse and two cows upon the heath as well as a weekly journey to adjacent Maxey, past a supposedly haunted spot; a journey that became a nightmare to the highly imaginative boy.

During this period of Clare's life he had but one prosperous although limited friendship, that with Tom Porter, a fellow rambler who had inherited a few books such as Sandys' Travels and Parkinson's Herbal, as well as others on Porter's special interest of gardening, all of which Clare enjoyed reading.

After the year with Gregory, Clare was next taken on for three years as apprentice gardener at Burghley House near Stamford town, four miles north of Helpston. But the head gardener turned out to be a harsh-tempered drunkard, and his staff took their cue from him in their drinking. After only three months Clare left, together with the kindly foreman, and the two found work for a further few months at heavy digging for a market gardener at Newark-on-Trent. A very brief period as a signed up recruit in the militia followed. Luckily Clare was "too short" and therefore not accepted. He returned home, aged eighteen, to find his father earning only five shillings a week at road-mending, and was forced to assume responsibility for the family of four. Again he was involved with the militia, this time being called up for a month's training, probably in both 1812 and 1813. In 1814 the Northamptonshire militia was disbanded. Employment became more and more difficult to find at this time, and the best Clare could do was to become a member of a "catchwork gang", setting fences and planting hedges. It was during this period of association with heavy drinkers that Clare says his "irregular habits" in this connection began. Other companions who influenced him at this time were the gipsies, whose customs he grew to know, and who taught this music-loving man to play the violin. By 1817 lack of employment forced Clare into another kind of work, that of lime-burning, for a Mr. Wilders of Castor. During his time as lime-burner, Clare met Patty Turner, and married her on the 16th March, 1820, two months before the birth of their first child. Patty, daughter of a farmer who had seen better days, could read but not write. However, she proved an economical and patient wife whom Clare grew to love as a Martha figure, although his contrasting, idealistic love for his Mary figure

persisted. At this time another momentous series of events in Clare's life took place. He at last allowed the bookseller, Henson, of Market Deeping, to read the poems he had carefully copied into the "blank book" he had purchased at the age of twenty-one from this interested man. A plan by Henson to print Clare's poems by subscription failed for lack of subscribers, but Edward Drury, who was the new Stamford librarian and a cousin of Clare's future publisher, John Taylor of London, happened to see Clare's work, paid Clare's debts of the time, and offered to print Clare's poems once they had been returned by Henson.

On the 16th January, 1820, Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery by John Clare, Northamptonshire peasant, was published by Taylor, Hessey and E. Drury. The work had been very well advertised, was praised for various reasons by the reviewers, and was an instant success, running into a fourth edition by the end of the year. Clare became famous overnight and the frustrated object of much idle curiosity from those who saw him as a peasant-poet phenomenon rather than a man whose poetic ability was to be judged by his poetry alone. Owing to mis-timing by a very busy John Taylor, Clare's second volume of poems, The Village Minstrel, published only on the 22nd September, 1821, after a long delay on the publisher's part, missed the popular vogue for country poets and the support of his previous admirers. Reviewers were more critical of this second work, though they recognised that it surpassed the expectations aroused by the first volume.

The volume was a comparative failure, and it was at this point that Clare's financial worries really began, the burden of which, it is thought by his biographers, was largely responsible for the mental illness which finally sent him to the asylum. After his

first success, Clare had been lionized in London where, as Taylor's guest, he had met such famous writers of the publishing house of Taylor and Hessey as Lamb, Hazlitt, Cary and J.H. Reynolds, the friend of Keats. Keats himself Clare missed meeting by a few hours. A subscription list had been started by Lord Radstock who piously moralised on Clare's ways but who was a loyal and helpful friend to Clare, and who introduced him to Mrs Emmerson, another such friend. The money was placed in trust to give Clare an income to release him from field-work for poetry; but the amount raised was not enough to enable Clare to feed a growing family and aging parents. He could not supplement his income through regular farm-labour and continue to write, and no farmer would hire a part-time worker on a permanent basis. In choosing to gain a living through writing, his business relations with his publishers, Taylor, Hessey and Drury, became therefore of paramount importance. With much wrangling, which Clare disliked intensely, matters were ultimately left solely in the hands of Taylor, who, while believing himself to be doing the best for Clare, yet treated him in a patronizing way, refusing to release funds when they were most needed, and so failing to relieve Clare of the extreme burden of poverty.

After Clare's return in 1822 from his second visit to London, which had been instigated by Mrs Emmerson, he continued writing at a great rate and returned to the usual pattern of uninterrupted, intense creativity followed by depression. By the end of May, 1823, he had prepared enough poems for a third volume, but was troubled by uncertainty as to the medium that would reflect his poetic voice most truly. He had suggested to Taylor that he should concentrate on poetry for children, but no reply from the publisher was forthcoming. By January 1823 he had completed a satire, <u>The Parish</u>, a

radical departure from the style and tone of his previous poems, and an experiment which he seems to have realized to be the wrong medium for his affirmative vision.

Clare's first son was born on the 5th January, 1823, and about this time he describes himself as having "a sort of apoplectic fit" which left his memory and other faculties impaired. Taylor advised him to travel to London to consult Dr. Darlow, a well-known physician. After a long delay, Clare took this advice and was in London by April, 1824, only to return home uncured on the 8th August of that year.

In May, 1827, after a three to four years' delay largely caused by Taylor, Clare's long poem, The Shepherd's Calendar, was published. It received only a few reviews and these regarded parts of the work as fine poetry, but thought it unlikely to appeal to the public. In the meanwhile, Clare had begun writing a Journal, an Autobiography, a series of critical essays and a series of Natural History Letters. By March, 1826, he had nearly finished his Life. While awaiting the publication of The Shepherd's Calendar Clare had begun to contribute to various Annuals of the time, such as the Literary Souvenir and the Amulet, but because he had difficulty in abstracting payment for his work this did not relieve his financial worries. He also supplied a number of songs to various composers, but with little financial reward.

In 1828 Clare made a fourth visit to London, this time with the main purpose of discussing his affairs with Taylor. One of the outcomes of the visit was a plan that Clare should buy back, at a reduced price, unsold copies of his three books, and try to 'peddle' them at home. He did not succeed in this. By the summer of 1829, with many unpublished manuscripts on his hands, Clare had returned

to field-work. In August that year, Taylor at last sent Clare the statement of accounts so desired by Clare. This showed a loss to Clare of £140, but the statement had not been sent as a demand for payment; rather was it to show that Taylor was not beholden to Clare at that time. But this was small comfort to Clare who realised that after ten years of labour at poetry he was in debt to that amount. Two years later, Clare became both physically and mentally ill, and by 1831 two years' rent was owing. In May, 1832, Clare, Patty and their six children were rescued from their immediate plight and moved to a cottage in Northborough, three miles from Helpston. This move to a larger home on a small-holding from which the capable Patty might wrest a living had been made possible through a subscription raised by the Emmersons. Yet Clare's illness persisted up to and beyond 1834. At that date he felt that if he could only get to London he would recover. But this was not possible.

In 1835 The Rural Muse was published, not by Taylor who had agreed to read the proofs, but by J. How. Less than half the manuscript copied and prepared by Clare himself had been used -- and his chosen title "Midsummer Cushion" had been changed. By the end of the year the first edition of this, Clare's fourth publication, had not been sold. About five reviewers praised the collection of poems, but the public did not buy the book. During this year Clare's mother died and his father came to live with the family of nine at Northborough.

In December, 1836, Taylor visited the forty-three year old poet who, in spite of the failure of The Rural Muse and of physical exhaustion, had continued to write poetry in preparation for another volume. He found that the poet had come to the stage where he could

not always control his mind or regulate his outbursts of anger. In 1837, Taylor put Clare under the care of one of England's most enlightened doctors of mental illness, Dr. Matthew Allen, at his "open" asylum at High Beech, on the south-west of Epping forest. Dr. Allen advocated exercise of both body and mind, and encouraged Clare to continue writing poetry. In 1841, a visitor to Clare at High Beech found him in the fields, hoeing, and wrote that the poet looked well, physically, and that the only sign of mental aberration had been Clare's introduction of the subject of prize-fighting. However, there is additional evidence that, as well as at times thinking himself to be a boxer, Clare often entertained other delusions such as that of having two wives (Mary and Patty), or of being Byron, Burns or some other famous figure, literary and otherwise. At this time, Clare asked for books and was sent a Byron which seems to have spurred him to write his own cantos of Don Juan and Child Harold, poems which, although in similar verse form to Byron's poems of the same names, are very different from them.

In July, 1841, Clare, who had long suffered from a feeling of imprisonment at High Beech in spite of the comparative freedom allowed patients, "escaped" and walked the eighty miles back to his home village of Northborough. This he did in three days, without money and with only a meal of bread and cheese and a drink of beer along the way. He was allowed to stay with Patty at their home for five months, until the 29th December, 1841, when he was certified as mad by two doctors and admitted to the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum. Again Clare was allowed a fair amount of freedom and used to spend much time sitting in the Northampton town church porch. In 1845 W.F. Knight became Clare's house steward. He, too, encouraged the poet to continue writing, and collected and transcribed all the

poems that Clare gave him. Up to 1850 there were nearly eight hundred and fifty poems of differing kinds and quality, ranging from jingles, sea- and drinking-songs, imitation love-songs and ha'penny ballads to some poems considered by many of his critics to be his best work. In February, 1850, Knight left the asylum. By 1854, unbeknown to Clare, there was a scheme in hand to publish all Knight had transcribed of Clare's poems, but this came to nothing. At that time, the poet was helping A.E. Baker with her provincial glossary of Northamptonshire Words and Phrases.

Clare retained his capacity for poetic unity and rhythmic originality for the first ten years of his time in the second asylum. After that, changes, such as the departure of Knight and, later, the arrival in 1854 of a new superintendent who decreased Clare's liberty in restricting him to the asylum grounds, contributed to a further clouding of Clare's mind. However, from time to time the cloud would lift, and in 1860 he wrote four poems which still reveal his capacity for lyricism and particularity. As he approached the age of seventy Clare's vision and his physical strength began to fail, and by 1873 he was unable to walk. He died on Friday, May the 24th, 1874, in his seventy-first year, having written his last poem, Birds Nests, in the early spring of that year.

(iii) The village of Helpston, where Clare was born in 1793 and in which he lived the first thirty-nine years of his life, is situated on the edge of the Lincolnshire Fens. In Clare's day the fens in this area were a flat, treeless meadowland, criss-crossed by dykes, and extending to the winding river Welland to the north-east of the town. Clare found this kind of country delightful with its reedy water-shallows frequented by birds, and its unbounded

moorland. But the countryside which he says made up his being consisted of the rolling hill country of woodland and heath to the south-west of Helpston, dropping towards the willow-banks of the river Nen; an area where field-corners were rich in the teeming life of nature so dear to Clare.

The parish of Helpston was a narrow, oblong shape with its length in a north-south direction. The terrain dropped from a fifty foot high undulation of limestone heath in the south-west, to the flat fenlands of the north-east. To add to the sense of uninterrupted space and distance characteristic of the fens, Helpston at Clare's birth, and until 1820, was farmed on the open-field system. That is, the cultivated fields, of which there were four, situated in an approximate circle around the cluster of farm houses, were farmed in a rotational method. This meant that each large field would be uniformly fallow or under a single crop at one time. Thus the cattle, at other times left to feed on the unenclosed common land and waste, could be let loose to feed on the stubble after harvest.

One learns much from John Barrell's close study of Helpston and its surroundings before and after 1820 (by which time the Act of Enclosure of 1809 concerning this village had been put into practice) and from Barrell's consideration of Clare's reaction to the change as found in the latter's poetry and prose.[1]

There seems to have been an ambivalent reaction from Clare to both the localism of Helpston life and his study of minute details of various aspects of his surroundings there; and to the unbounded

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[1]John Barrell, The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840 (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1972), pp. 98-124.

nature of the open-field system and the fenlands. The localism seems to have engendered in him the security of knowing intimately and in detail the woodland and rolling field areas; but at the same time, the restricted area and the smallness gave him a sense of being confined and cramped. The open spaces, on the other hand, imparted to him a sense of freedom, of release, of mystery; but again, this "unknown" immensity, when he was lost in it (as a small boy) or moved into it in search of work, gave him a sense of dislocation in which the sun seemed out of place and the other aspects of nature seemed not to "know" him.

Great changes occurred, not only to Clare's surroundings, but also to his reactions to those surroundings, when Enclosure came to Helpston. The "inclusive", circular nature of the roads gave way to a grid of roads linking the village, as never before, directly with the outside world, destroying its localism. Very many of the old places and landmarks, such as Swordy Well and Round Oak Pond, that had meant so much to Clare, disappeared or were drastically altered in appearance. The uniform nature of the fields was changed too, as fences and hedges, dividing land into small parcels, broke up the uninterrupted views, causing Clare to lose the sense of freedom they had given him in the past. These transformations gave Clare a sense of dislocation similar to that suffered when he travelled out of his unusually small area of experience and intimate knowledge.

In Clare's lament for those much loved landmarks which were changing or had disappeared, he has left posterity a unique expression of the reaction to Enclosure of people whose lives and work had caused them to be particularly close to their environment. He is the spokesman, as it were, for those who found effective

articulation difficult when transmitting their feelings and experiences.[1] An added value of these poems and prose passages for the historian lies in their accurate depiction of the alterations to the environment as the Act of Enclosure for Helpston was put into force. The number of times Clare is quoted by the Economic Historian, W.G. Hoskins, in his work, The Making of the English Landscape,[2] indicates the importance of Clare's writings to others besides the readers of poetry.

It is very important to stress, as Barrell is at pains to do,[3] that Clare seldom if ever regrets Enclosure because of what it may have done to make the poor poorer. By far the most important result of Enclosure for Clare is a sense of irreparable loss in terms of landscape and through this a sense of dislocation; a reaction which is repeated when Clare moves, in 1832, to a larger house at Northborough. This fen village was only four miles from Helpston, and yet it might as well have been a hundred miles away from his intimately known birth-place.

(iv) The Mary referred to many times in Clare's writings is usually assumed to be Mary Joyce by the critics available to the writer of this thesis.[4] As these critics do not give a verifiable

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[1] See Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p.169, "The Mores".

[2] W.G. Hoskins, The Making of the English Landscape (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955), p.138 (see Tibble, Poems, I, 156, ll. 35 & 36 from The Village Minstrel); p.149 (Ibid., I, 253, vv. 1 & 2 of "Song"); pp.149 & 150 (Ibid., I, 35, vv. 1 & 2 of Helpstone Green); p.151 (Ibid., I, 157, ll. 10-18 from The Village Minstrel); p.154 (Ibid., I, 160, ll. 28, 35 & 36 from The Village Minstrel); p.203 (The Prose of John Clare, ed. by J[ohn] W. Tibble & Anne Tibble [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951], p.151, Journal Entry for 4 June 1825.)

[3] Barrell, Landscape, Appendix, pp. 189-202.

[4] For a list of available critics see Bibliography.

basis for this identification, assessment of their assumption in this regard is difficult to make. However, there are, among others, three main areas into which one may look for proof of this identification (always remembering that the Mary figure in Clare's poetry cannot be identified with Mary Joyce, but may only be said to have arisen possibly and partly from Clare's meeting with the latter).[1]

Firstly, one would need to peruse the parish register of Glinton, the established home of Clare's Mary, in order to ascertain whether Mary Joyce (baptised there in 1797)[2] were the only Mary to fit in with the known facts. But such documents are unavailable to the present writer.

Secondly, reference to writers about Clare who lived during or just after his life-time might reveal a known connection between the two Marys. But the only such work available to the present writer, Frederick Martin's biography of Clare, published only a year after Clare's death, reveals no such connection. At most, Martin's first statement about Mary Joyce points to an assumption made by Clare's contemporaries about a figure who, to Clare "was nothing less than an angel, with no other name than that of Mary; though vulgar mortals called her Mary Joyce, holding her to be the daughter of a well-to-do farmer at Glinton".[3] It is interesting to note Martin's sensitivity to the fact that Clare's Mary figure should not be identified with a mortal. Later, however, Martin seems to slip into

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[1]See discussion of this problem below, pp. 88 & 89.

[2]Tibble & Tibble, John Clare: A Life, p. 454, note to Chapter XVIII.

[3]Martin, The Life of John Clare, p. 21.

making this identification, in the passage: "As for John Clare, he fretted long and deeply, and all his life thought of Mary Joyce as the symbol, ideal, and incarnation of love."[1]

Thirdly, a study of Clare's writings could show the poet to have pointed to a Mary with the surname, Joyce, as the person who gave rise to his frequent references to Mary. Again, the writings of Clare available to the present writer are limited.[2] However, this third area has been the most fruitful in providing proof that Clare did mention the name, Mary, together with the surname, Joyce, at least once in his poetry and once in a note book.[3] The following verse of a poem written by Clare probably in 1841, while he was at High Beech open asylum, is the poetic example referred to above:

> In Love's delight my steps were led,
> I sang of Beauty's choice;
> I saw her in the books I read, -
> All then was Mary Joyce....[4]

With the above exceptions, Clare generally refrained from pin-pointing his Mary as a human being with the surname, Joyce, in his writings both before and after his admission to High Beech asylum. This may indicate that, soon after his meeting her, Clare began to

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[1] Ibid., p. 22.

[2] See Bibliography ~~below, p.~~ for a list of these. It is also important to note that the Tibbles have printed only about half of Clare's known letters. See The Letters of John Clare, ed. by J[ohn] W. Tibble and Anne Tibble (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 15.

[3] Robinson, The Later Poems, p. 12. (Three letters are headed "To Mary Joyce" in Letters, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, pp.289 & 293. On the latter page, a query follows the heading of the first letter, and after the second letter heading it is noted that this letter was "addressed 'To Mary Clare - Glinton'." As no authority for the headings in this volume is given by the editors, these three headings cannot be taken as proof that Clare used the surname, Joyce, in connection with the letters.)

[4] Tibble & Tibble, John Clare: A Life, p. 390.

emphasize the reality of the _idea_ of Mary as against her bodily reality, while not divorcing these two aspects of her in his poems.

As Clare's mental unbalance increased, so his writings about Mary's presence with him or his laments at her absence seem to have increased, and his inability to accept the fact that the historical person, Mary Joyce, had died (unmarried) in 1838, adds to the impression that her physical presence in this world had, for a long time, not been necessary for her to remain "alive" for Clare. In fact, he was to write to his "dear Wife Mary"[1] from the asylum in 1841 after her death, a letter in which he plainly stated that he was married to both Mary and Patty.

In the only collection of letters available to the present writer, the final letter in which Mary is mentioned, a letter written to Dr. Allen in August, 1841, Clare seems to accept her death in an ambiguous way as he writes:

> where my poetical fancy is I cannot say for the people in the neighbourhood tell me that the one called Mary has been dead these eight years but I can be miserably happy in any situation & in any place... [2]

(v) Prompting towards song and poetry probably began very early in Clare's life for, like many countrymen of the period, both his father and mother knew a great many ballads and tales by heart. Before and during Clare's early life time there had been a sharp increase in the sale of cheap books, among which were broadsheets of the Percy Ballads, and many of Burns's poems. Clare's father knew over a hundred of these and used to sing or recite them, being

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[1] _Letters_, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 289.

[2] _Ibid._, p. 294.

in special demand at village celebrations. Other sources of influence in folk-literature for Clare were such local people as the old cow-woman on Helpston Heath.

Another early influence upon Clare's thought and poetic sensibility appears to have been the hymn. The Tibbles describe the hunger for reading of the young schoolboy Clare as having "small sustenance other than the Bible and Church Prayer Book of his parents' faith",[1] which was Church of England. The latter book may have included hymns, but there is no evidence for this. However, it is of great importance that one of the first two books Clare owned was a copy of Hymns and Spiritual Songs of Dr. Watts, considered to be one of the finest eighteenth century hymn writers. In addition to this, a list of the content of Clare's library in about 1814 includes a "Collection of Hymns",[2] and by 1825 he owned John Wesley's A Collection of Hymns.[3] Many of Clare's future works were to be ballads, songs and poems in one or other of the hymn-metres. In fact, we know that Clare made a collection of ballads,[4] composed a number of poems in "folk-song" style, and was very much drawn to another poet who wrote fine eighteenth century hymns, Cowper. If one accepts that an important element in the hymn (besides its particular kind of metre) is the tone of praise, then many of Clare's poems in hymn metres[5] can be said to have at times a hymn-like tone

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[1] Tibble & Tibble, Life and Poetry, p. 15.

[2] Ibid., p. 33.

[3] Public Libraries, Museums and Art Gallery Committee, Catalogue of the John Clare Collection in the Northampton Public Library (Northampton: Northampton Public Library, 1964), p. 33. (Hereinafter referred to as Clare Collection.)

[4] Tibble, Poems, II, 152-179.

[5] See Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 41 - [I've run the furlongs to thy door]; p. 83 - "Crows in Spring"; p. 157 - "Sabbath Bells"; p. 198 - "A Vision".

although not the overt direction of praise that is usual to hymns.

Clare used to say that his reading of "Pomfret's Poems" transported him, for the first time, into the realms of poetry; but probably Thomson's Seasons had a more profound influence upon Clare's future poetry.[1]

It is often implied, perhaps unwittingly at times, that Clare had very little reading in "great" literature as an influence on his work. The extent to which this error may mislead a reader interested in the background to Clare's poetic achievement can be gathered from the following facts about Clare's library.[2]

Apart from the considerable unknown reading that the eager and sensitive young Clare would surely have done in the libraries of his teachers to which he had access, one may assume that Clare's reading will have included the following books (among others) known to have been either in his possession or to have been borrowed, by about 1816: Paradise Lost, Robinson Crusoe, The Pilgrim's Progress, Chatterton's Verses on Resignation, Robert Bloomfield's Wild Flowers, Izaak Walton's The Compleat Angler, Samuel Wesley's Philosophy, L'Estrange's The Fables of AEsop, Tom Jones, and The Vicar of Wakefield.[3]

In his Journal, written between 1824 and 1825, Clare made a note of his reading. Some of the works mentioned by the Tibbles as "set down...in his Journal"[4] are: Byron's Don Juan; poems by

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[1]See below, pp. 79-88.

[2]For a detailed description of the books in Clare's library which were available at the poet's death, see Clare Collection, pp. 23-34.

[3]Tibble & Tibble, Life and Poetry, pp. 33 & 34.

[4]Ibid., p. 124. (See below, pp.78-80 for additional information on Clare's reaction to some of the eighteenth century poets.)

Wordsworth and especially "The White Doe of Rylstone" which Clare thought to contain "some of the sweetest poetry";[1] the poetry of Pope, of which The Essay on Man never palled for Clare; the odes of Collins and Gray together with the letters of the latter and of Burns; Milton's shorter poems, and S.T. Coleridge's sonnets which he found to "labour after excellence";[2] Lamb's "Essays of Elia"; Hazlett, whom Clare appreciated as one of the finest prose writers of the day; Johnson's Lives, which he criticized for its lauding of the tradition of Dryden and Pope at the expense of Spenser, Drayton and Suckling; Shakespeare, especially the Sonnets, Macbeth and Henry the Fifth, all of which he was wont to re-read; and, finally Chaucer, which, the Tibbles say, Clare "seems to have read with surprising ease and understanding".[3] Although Clare does not specifically mention Keats in his Journal, by 1820 he owned three books of the latter's poetry,[4] and it can be assumed that he had read deeply enough in Keats's works to feel free to give a word of criticism on them.[5] In the winter of 1824, Clare read Bishop Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, Ellis's Specimens of the Early English Poets, and Ritson's English Songs; after which he wrote a series of poems "in the manner of the Older Poets".[6]

Some books of interest amongst those listed as constituting Clare's library at his death are translations of famous works such

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[1] Prose, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 118.

[2] Ibid., p. 115.

[3] Tibble & Tibble, Life and Poetry, p. 125.

[4] Clare Collection, p. 29.

[5] Tibble & Tibble, Life and Poetry, p. 78.

[6] Ibid., p. 127 and Tibble, Poems, II, 181-210.

as H.F. Cary's translations of both Dante's Divine Comedy (1819) and Pindar's works (1833); Pope's translation of The Works of Homer (1794); and Philip Francis's translation of The Works of Horace (1815). Other books to be found in Clare's library are The Holy Koran (1826); Bacon's Essays (1815); John Dryden's Poetical Works (1798); the works of George Crabbe (1820); and the following works by Oliver Goldsmith: Essays (1799), The History of England (1823), and The Deserted Village amongst other poems (1826). The subjects that are well represented in Clare's library are poetry, natural history and religion.[1]

The temptation to think of Clare as an "instinctive" and unread poet is counteracted by knowledge of his reading cited above and of the books he owned and therefore probably read. His reading seems to point to a poet in search of his own voice through experiencing and learning much from the voices of other poets. In addition, Clare repeatedly articulated his poetic aims[2] which suggests a depth of thought below an apparently simple lyric surface.

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[1] Clare Collection, pp. 23-34. (In alphabetical order.) The date given after each work is the date of receipt taken from the book itself. (Ibid., p. 23.)

[2] See the number of pages referring to these in Tibble & Tibble, Life and Poetry, p. 210, under "John Clare - poetic aims".

## CHAPTER II

## CLARE'S PASTORAL VISION


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(i) Three twentieth century scholars whose publications on the pastoral appeared some twenty or thirty years apart seem to concur in what they have found to be the basic requirement for pastoral. In his work on the pastoral which appeared in 1906, Walter Greg suggests that "a constant element in the pastoral as known to literature is the recognition of a contrast, implicit or expressed, between pastoral life and some more complex type of civilization."[1] Nearly fifty years later Frank Kermode expresses a similar thought: "The first condition of pastoral poetry is that there should be a sharp difference between two ways of life, the rustic and the urban."[2] Writing at a time about midway between the two, William Empson, with his novel and thought-provoking insights into the range of pastoral, states that pastoral is a "process of putting the complex into the simple",[3] a definition which allows for the many variations of this genre.

Peter Marinelli, writing on pastoral in the "Critical Idiom" series, makes it clear that the term "refers both to form and to content",[4] the outer and inner form referred to in Wellek and Warren's discussion of literary genre.[5] This dichotomy is important in

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[1]Walter W. Greg, Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama (London: A.H. Bullen, 1906), p. 4.

[2]Frank Kermode, ed., English Pastoral Poetry from the Beginnings to Marvell (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1952), p. 14.

[3]William Empson, Some Versions of Pastoral (London: Chatto & Windus, 1950, first published 1935), p. 23.

[4]Peter V. Marinelli, Pastoral, The Critical Idiom, ed. by John D. Jump (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1971), p. 9.

[5]René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, Peregrine Books (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963, first published 1949), p. 231.

studying the poetry of Clare, whose view of life is certainly pastoral but whose poems do not, on the whole, resemble the formal type of Classical or Renaissance pastoral poem. A comment made by Clare on a certain kind of pastoral poem may illuminate this fact:

> Pastoral poems are full of nothing but the old thread bare epithets...these make up the creation of Pastoral and descriptive poesy and every thing else is reckond low and vulgar in fact they are too rustic for the fashionable or prevailing system of ryhme till some bold inovating genius rises with a real love for nature and then they will no doubt be considerd as great beautys which they really are[1]

Probably The Shepherd's Calendar is Clare's poem nearest to the Classical and Renaissance form of the genre; however, it departs widely from the pastoral form found in the idylls of Theocritus, the eclogues of Virgil and those which make up The Shepherd's Calendar of Spenser. While the title of Clare's poem probably derives from this poem by Spenser, an important difference between the two poems is that Clare's poem, in which the speaker is unnamed, is written from the poet-rustic point of view and not specifically from the shepherd's point of view as in Spenser's poem. Of the latter poem Greg writes, "The chief point of originality ... is the attempt at linking the separate eclogues into a connected series."[2] This Spenser does by using the division into months to give his work a complicated, balanced design in which the moods of the seasons are seen sometimes reflecting, sometimes in contrast to, those of the characters in the poem, thus heightening the total effect. Clare uses nature and her moods in quite a different way in his poem of

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[1]Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 66.

[2]Greg, Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama, p. 84.

the same name, the themes and material in the poem allowing for a more consistent paralleling of the moods in the eclogues with those of the seasons they represent.[1]

Marinelli's definition of the pastoral kind isolates this distinguishing feature: "The great characteristic of pastoral poetry is that it is written when an ideal or at least more innocent world is felt to be lost, but not so wholly as to destroy the memory of it or to make some imaginative intercourse between present reality and past perfection impossible".[2] In this definition he echoes Kermode and embraces all the most important elements that make up pastoral, some of which are nostalgia or "the backward glance", as Marinelli puts it, a concern with time, and ~~then~~ with a golden age and an Arcadian vision. The phrase, "a golden age", can include both the mythical Golden Age of Saturn and Astraea when Man lived in harmony with Nature (before the progressive decline through the Silver Age when perpetual Spring was replaced by the Seasons, and through the Bronze Age to the present Age of Iron), and the Judaeo-Christian form of the Golden Age as seen in Eden before the abrupt end came with the Fall of Adam. The Arcadian vision is the embodiment in words of the beauty and perfection of which the Golden Age and Eden are the symbols.

In analysing mankind's move towards complexities, both in the Classical sense and the Judaeo-Christian sense of the Fall,[3] Marinelli, while pointing out that pastoralism is not escapism,[4] elaborates on his definition of pastoralism by saying that "the

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[1]See discussion of The Shepherd's Calendar below, pp. 30-37.

[2]Marinelli, Pastoral, p. 9.

[3]Ibid., p. 10.

[4]Ibid., p. 11.

dominant idea of pastoral is a search for simplicity away from a complexity represented either by a specific location...from which the refuge is in a rural retreat to Arcadia; or from a specific period of individual human existence (adulthood), from which the refuge is in the visions of childhood".[1] It is understandable that this last refuge, the vision of childhood, has been an element of pastoral emphasized in more recent years for, with more widespread urban development, the memory of "Golden" country experiences has receded and its place has been taken by this closer memory of "perfection". Childhood is seen as an ideal state because, as Empson writes, "The child has not yet been put wrong by civilization, and all grown-ups have been",[2] and perhaps because, with Wordsworth, Coleridge and Clare, it is felt that the child "is in the right relation to Nature, not dividing what should be unified, that its intuitive judgement contains what poetry and philosophy must spend their time labouring to recover".[3] Finally, Marinelli encompasses pastoral old and new in his observation: "All pastoral is in search of the original splendour, but the different ways in which it conceives of that splendour are the ground of its fertility and its multiple variations."[4]

(ii) Clare's particular pastoral vision is a search for simplicity both in a location and in time, a search occasioned, in his case, not by a situation which divides city from country but by an act

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[1] Ibid., p. 11.

[2] Empson, Some Versions of Pastoral, p. 260.

[3] Ibid., p. 261.

[4] Marinelli, Pastoral, p. 11.

which took place during his childhood, that of Enclosure,[1] which changed the nature of his location and embued his pre-enclosure childhood with that heightened happiness associated with the Golden Age of pastoral.

Clare, paradoxically, both receives and creates his Arcadia. He experiences its perfection in the natural world that surrounds him. He creates it in his poetry; not as a specific place, which it was for Theocritus, nor as an imagined, idealistic region such as that of Virgil, but as the whole world of nature. In some of his poems, Arcadia is invaded by imperfections; in others the vision is of perfection. The Eden-like beauty of unspoiled nature which Clare celebrates, at times in hymn-like tones, may be marred in some poems by an invasion of "fallen" man, or by the results of Enclosure, changing Clare's song of praise and love into a lament, often of the most poignant kind. But, as often, Clare's poems dwell upon the harmony between nature and those whose work brings them close to the rhythms of the natural world, especially shepherds who, idealized in the Classical period and dwelt on as real figures in the Romantic, have been central to pastoral from the earliest appearance of the genre. In these latter poems of Clare one finds the realism associated with Wordsworth's presentation of his shepherds and rustic figures and Crabbe's concern for those who experience hardship in their direct dependence upon nature and her seasons, blended with the lyrical celebration of unspoilt nature associated with Eden and the classical Golden Age. Although the everlasting spring of

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[1]Marinelli significantly says that, during the Iron Age, "common possession of land is renounced in favour of measured boundaries". (Marinelli, Pastoral, p. 16.) For a discussion of the effects of Enclosure on Clare and his environment, see above, pp. 13-16.

the Golden Age and of Eden cannot be recaptured, this seems to be no loss for Clare who sees in each season a perfection belonging to that season, not a decline from the former ideal spring. This attitude to the seasons, together with an implication that despite all man may do to desecrate nature there will always be Eden-areas and Eden-memories for those who perceive, makes Clare's vision of Arcadia one with his experience of nature.

Clare's The Shepherd's Calendar, written fairly early in his life as a poet, and published in 1827, embodies the above characteristics, among others, without the word "Eden" or a direct reference to a golden age appearing in the poem. There are, however, poems written by Clare at widely differing stages of his life, where the word "Eden" does appear.[1] There is no evidence that the poet was consciously exploring Eden themes in The Shepherd's Calendar, but a study of this poem, in which they are implicit, should contribute much to an understanding of the pastoral vision which pervades Clare's work.

It is noticeable that Clare's poems, practically without exception, are of a pastoral nature; and probably any number of them would be richly rewarding in a close analysis in this respect. A few of his poems, such as "Pastoral Poesy"[2] may seem more explicitly

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[1]See, for example: Tibble, Poems, "Helpstone" (dated 1809), I, 6, l. 34; ibid., II, 86, "The Backward Spring", v. 5, l. 8, and ibid., II, 223, "The Yellow Wagtail's Nest", l. 32, (both in the 1824-1832 section); ibid., II, 259, "On Visiting a Favourite Place", l. 2, (in the 1832-1835 section); Robinson, The Later Poems, "Child Harold", p. 60, l. 2, (± 1851. See below, p. 89, n.2).

[2]Tibble, Poems, II, 49. See also poems headed: "A Pastoral", ibid., I, 244; "Pastoral Fancies", ibid., II, 15; "Pastoral Liberty", ibid., II, 305. It should be noted that, since Tibble does not give any authority for the headings of Clare's poems in his edition, it is not clear whether these are Clare's headings or his.

concerned with the pastoral than others, because of their overt reference to it; however, these are no more relevant to Clare's pastoral vision than many of his other poems, and less revealing of that vision than a poem such as The Shepherd's Calendar.

(iii) One of the first things one notices about The Shepherd's Calendar is that January has two sections, or eclogues, the one sub-titled "A Winters Day", immediately indicating the season, and yet confining it to an incomplete cycle, and the other, sub-titled "A Cottage Evening", giving a different perspective on the same season and month, and completing the twenty-four hour cycle. February, too, has a sub-title, "A Thaw", which gives the reader the necessary sense of progression which a study of another frozen winter month would not. The only other section to be sub-titled is December, with the addition of "Christmass". Not only does this create a balance with January's warmth, but in emphasizing the festal season the poet gives yet another view of winter, and ends on a note of conviviality which forms the tonal climax of this poem of celebration.

It is not surprising that Clare uses a variety of verse forms for the different months, for he is a poet whose verse moves in a rhythm overtly appropriate to his material, when his vision and material are largely identical.[1] Through this interpenetration the poet gives much more than an apt description of the natural world. While no metrical form in itself can be described as gay, sombre or

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[1]It seems that Clare aimed at this fusion of the "rhythm" or movement of his material with that of his verse. See John Clare: Selected Poems, ed. by J[ohn] W. Tibble & Anne Tibble, Everyman's Library (London: Dent, 1965), p. 332, "The Dark Days of Autumn", l. 4 - "I love to see yellow leaves fall in my song."

hurried, certain propensities may be discerned in certain measures, propensities to which a poet like Clare is obviously alert.

Both parts of January are written in a continuous measure, rhyming couplets of iambic tetrameter. Clare adapts the verse form differently in each part of January. May has the same verse form as January; and July and September differ from this metrically only in their division into passages of varying length which one hesitates to call stanzas.

The regularity of the pairs of rhymes, combined with the use of the tetrameter which is not as roomy and therefore usually not as weighty as the pentameter, enables Clare to give a sense of regal progression, unhurried and unencumbered, yet sprightly, well fitted to the invocation of May:

> Come queen of months in company
> Wi all thy merry minstrelsy [1]

It also allows for the bustling activity in January, Part II:

> The huswife busy night and day
> Cleareth the supper things away
> While jumping cat starts from her seat
> And streaking up on weary feet
> The dog wakes at the welcome tones
> That calls him up to pick the bones [2]

and the breathless excitement of the story-telling by the housewife that follows:

> And from her memory oft repeats
> Witches dread powers and fairey feats
> How one has oft been known to prance
> In cowcribs like a coach to france
> And rid on sheep trays from the fold
> A race horse speed to burton hold
> To join the midnight mysterys rout
> Where witches meet the year about
> And how when met wi unawares

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[1]Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, p. 46, ll. 1 & 2.

[2]Ibid., p. 11, ll. 23-28.

They instant turn to cats or hares
And race along wi hellish flight
Now here and there and out of sight [1]

Clare uses the heroic couplet for March, a month in which the unpredictable weather vacillates between winter wildness and spring calm as if the season were eddying into a pool; a contrast to the hopeful anticipation encouraged by the thaw in February. The first twelve lines of March are a good example of the greater capacity of the pentameter, allowing for the added weight of material in this season with its burden of continually changing weather:

March month of 'many weathers' wildly comes
In hail and snow and rain and threatning hums
And floods: while often at his cottage door
The shepherd stands to hear the distant roar
Loosd from the rushing mills and river locks
Wi thundering sound and over powering shocks
And headlong hurry thro the meadow brigs
Brushing the leaning sallows fingering twigs
In feathery foam and eddy hissing chase
Rolling a storm oertaken travellers pace
From bank to bank along the meadow leas
Spreading and shining like to little seas [2]

Clare uses pentameter, too, for June (another busy, event-packed month), for the harvest month of August which is divided into five sections, and for October which counterbalances March in its theme of sadness and indecision.

February anticipates the joyful lyrical quality of the verse in April. For this month Clare brings into play stanzas of eight iambic tetrameters rhyming ababcdcd, in which he reflects the lifting of the burden of hardship of winter, be it but a temporary respite:

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[1] Ibid., p. 13, ll. 27-30 & p. 14, ll. 1-8.

[2] Ibid., p. 29, ll. 1-12.

The snow is gone from cottage tops
The thatch moss glows in brighter green
And eves in quick succession drops
Where grinning icles once hath been
Pit patting wi a pleasant noise
In tubs set by the cottage door
And ducks and geese wi happy joys
Douse in the yard pond brimming oer [1]

April's verse form is lighter still in its lilting, song-like quality; a fitting vehicle for "The infant April" and the accompanying birdsong. The eclogue is written in common metre, associated with the ballad, the hymn and with song in general. The rhythm seems to encourage one to think of the dance, and the first line of April, "The infant april joins the spring", reinforces the impression, especially in the word "joins" to be followed in line five by "with timid step she ventures on".[2]

November is written in the Spenserian stanza, a verse form that allows the poem to proceed at a leisurely pace to match the sleepy, mist-muffled mood at the beginning of this month and its move towards winter:

Dull for a time the slumbering weather flings
Its murky prison round then winds wake loud
Wi sudden start the once still forest sings
Winters returning song ... [3]

In the final eclogue, December, the measure becomes gay iambic tetrameters grouped into eight lined stanzas as in April, with the similar result of reflecting the lifting of the load that winter hardships bring. This time, however, it is not a thaw that lightens the burden, but man's revelling. Nature's wintry accoutrements are taken into the home for this celebration, transforming them and yet somehow aligning man more fully with the rhythm of the season:

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[1] Ibid., p. 22, ll. 1-8. [2] Ibid., p. 38, ll. 1 & 5. (Italics mine.)

[3] Ibid., p. 119, ll. 12-15.

Each house is swept the day before
And windows stuck wi evergreens
The snow is beesomd from the door
And comfort crowns the cottage scenes
Gilt holly wi its thorny pricks
And yew and box wi berrys small
These deck the unusd candlesticks
And pictures hanging by the wall [1]

Just as the verse forms of the months not only contribute to the mood of the months, but are balanced one against another within the whole poem, so the material is most satisfyingly appropriate to each month and is drawn from the whole calendar in such a way that the rhythms of work and relaxation, of nature's and man's activities, are balanced with and against each other. At the same time, a vivid experience of the contemporary rural society is given in a manner that extends the cycle of the year, in the reader's mind, to include a life-time.

In the dividing of January into two sections, the outer world and the inner, as it were, the winter day out-of-doors and the evening within, one finds a pattern which is repeated throughout the poem and which creates a tension between nature and man. This tension is finally resolved in December, sub-titled "Christmass", a juxtaposition of two concepts which is a sign of the fusing in happy balance of two elements, namely, the natural cycle, and man. Man is both part of nature and yet in apparent opposition to it at times, and has to realise a harmony with it in order to experience joy through it.

Since the length of this chapter does not allow for a full analysis of each month, a single detailed study will follow, that of January, an eclogue which can be regarded as a miniature of the whole poem, since the major and minor themes of the whole and their

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[1] Ibid., p. 125, ll. 1-8.

images are reproduced, with variations, in each of its parts. Some of the themes and images apparent in January will be concentrated upon in those eclogues in which they receive the greater emphasis.

In the first part of January, sub-titled "A Winters Day", one is aware of the whole year in microcosm. This effect is obtained by the poet's subtle references to other seasons. The word "winnowing" is a reminder of Autumn and harvest time in the lines:

> And sees the snow in feathers pass
> Winnowing by the window glass

The natural rhythms of the year are recalled in

> ...old moores anual prophecys
> That many a theme for talk supplys

In the description of the tavern corner's guest:

> Dreaming oer troubles nearly ripe
> Yet not quite lost in profits way
> He'll turn to next years harvest day

the words "ripe" and "harvest" point towards autumn again, as do the lines on children skating

> As smooth and quick as shadows run
> When clouds in autumn pass the sun [1]

Looking less far ahead, the couplet:

> While in the fields the lonly plough
> Enjoys its frozen sabbath now

recalls that the immediate months to come will be spring, a time of ploughing and sowing. Four lines later the idle horses are thought of as "dreaming no doubt of summer sward", and summer is envisaged again in the description of "maidens fresh as summer roses". The thaw of February is anticipated in the lines referring to snow melting "as noontide frets its little thaw" and in those describing

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[1] Ibid., p. 1, ll. 3 & 4; p. 2, ll. 3 & 4; p. 2, ll. 14-16; p. 5, ll. 15 & 16.

"the ickles from the cottage eaves" as they "fret in the sun a partial thaw".[1]

The perspective becomes both backward- and forward-looking as the previous winter is referred to (and by association so are the seasons in between) in the lines on the robin:

> And perching on the window sill
> Where memory recolecting still
> Knows the last winters broken pane [2]

An important theme in Clare's poetry is that of the difference between man temporarily cut off from nature, and man in the closest contact with nature; man observing or imagining the scene outside, and man a part of the scene, confronting and dealing with those forces in nature which are antagonistic to him. In both positions there may be a sharing, by man and other creatures of nature, of experience which engenders loving perception, and this reciprocation is stressed throughout The Shepherd's Calendar.

In the opening lines of January, Part I, Clare depicts man temporarily divided from nature:

> Withering and keen the winter comes
> While comfort flyes to close shut rooms
> And sees the snow in feathers pass
> Winnowing by the window glass
> And unfelt tempests howl and beat
> Above his head in corner seat
> And musing oer the changing scene
> Farmers behind the tavern screen
> Sit - or wi elbow idly prest
> On hob reclines the corners guest
> Reading the news to mark again
> The bankrupt lists or price of grain
> Or old moores anual prophecys
> That many a theme for talk supplys

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[1] Ibid., p. 3, ll. 15 & 16; p. 3, l. 20; p. 7, l. 17; p. 5, l. 6; p. 7, l. 5; p. 7, l. 7.

[2] Ibid., p. 6, ll. 11-13.

Whose almanacks thumbd pages swarm
Wi frost and snow and many a storm
And wisdom gossipd from the stars [1]

He links man and comfort, in the second line, by making concrete the abstraction, and thus giving the quality human movements. The two elements of the phrase "close shut" in this line emphasize the separation of man within from the hardships of nature without. This separation is referred to again in the words "unfelt tempests" of line five, and in line eight where one reads that the farmers sit "behind the tavern screen". In lines ten to seventeen a guest is reading Old Moore's Almanack of which the "thumbd pages swarm / Wi frost and snow and many a storm". The real storm outside has been transmuted, for a time, into words; and the whole cosmos is reduced to the homely in the phrase "wisdom gossipd from the stars".

The scene beyond the snow-flecked window pane is brought into focus as "labour" is balanced against "comfort"; "labour" embracing all who face nature, accepting her harsh seasonal mood, and working as if journeying through to a comfortable interior, similar to that of the inn just depicted, but now with in the home: [2]

While labour still pursues his way
And braves the tempest as he may
The thresher first thro darkness deep
Awakes the mornings winter sleep
Scaring the owlet from her prey
Long before she dreams of day
That blinks above head on the snow
Watching the mice that squeaks below
And foddering boys sojourn again
By ryhme hung hedge and frozen plain
Blowing his fingers as he goes
To where the stock in bellowings hoarse

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[1] Ibid., p. 1, ll. 1-10 & p. 2, ll. 1-7.

[2] The discussion of Clare's sonnet, "Winter Fields" (below, pp. 128-142), is relevant to this aspect of The Shepherd's Calendar.

> Call for their meals in dreary close
> And print full many a hungry track
> Round circling hedge that guards the stack [1]

In this part of the poem the exterior scene is brought forward in such a way that, through a unity in time captured in the word "while" which modifies all that has gone before, and a sense of continuity in the word "still", the two apparently opposite states of being, man cut off from the full forces of nature and man confronting them, are shown as existing simultaneously. Yet within the overall unity and continuity there is a see-saw sway between the two positions of man -- indoors and out-of-doors -- each taking its turn to be predominant without excluding the other. In the "comfort" passage, man may be indoors but nature is his chief topic of conversation and the subject of his dreams and speculations. From this relaxed, meditative passage the verse movement quickens as the subject of labour's activity becomes central for a time. The "labour" passage is balanced as a whole against the opening passage on "comfort", in an expansion of the "contrast within unity" theme of the "comfort" passage. The above counterpointing within a balanced whole is repeated in January as a single lunar unit, where the interior scenes in January, Part II, are presented as a part of the whole month and yet set in contrast to Part I; and again in the annual cycle, ending in a peculiar blending of the outdoor and indoor as "Christmass" festivities come into play. If the two parts of January, "A Winters Day" and "A Cottage Evening", are seen as parts of a twenty-four hour cycle, then a day, a month and a year in this poem are all shown to have this balance between "labour"

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[1]Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, p. 2, ll. 19-30 & p. 3, ll. 1-4.

and "comfort", the exterior and interior scene.

In Clare's poetry man's activities in nature are constantly being paralleled to or set against those of the wild creatures, and, in this poem particularly, the homely domesticated animal world is seen to co-exist, contrastingly, with the wild -- another example of tension within the harmony of the whole. For example, in the passage quoted above, as soon as the exterior winter scene is concentrated upon, man is shown disturbing the natural daily rhythm of the owlet; later, schoolboys are represented "scaring the snipe from her retreat"[1] and frightening the moorhens. But a parallel is drawn between the skating boys speeding along with outspread arms, and the moorhen in flight, balancing the opposition. Immediately after the "dangerous" freedom of the mice, the owlet and various other birds comes the contrasting dependence upon man of the "safely" imprisoned, monotonously circling farm animals. Freedom is of great importance to Clare and is a theme emphasized in the poetry of his later years during his virtual physical imprisonment.[2]

With the appearance of the shepherd, harmony and full co-operation with nature occurs:

> The shepherd too in great coat wrapt
> And straw bands round his stockings lapt
> Wi plodding dog that sheltering steals
> To shun the wind behind his heels
> Takes rough and smooth the winter weather
> And paces thro the snow together

The last two key lines are emphasized by the feminine endings which extend them to echo the sense of persevering progression in each

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[1] Ibid., p. 5, l. 19.

[2] See, for example: Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 197, "Sonnet"; ibid., p. 198, "A Vision"; Tibble, Poems, II, 525, "The Sleep of Spring", vv. 4-6.

line. The word "together" gathers added weight from the implications in its rhyme-partner "weather", and this underlines the harmony between man and dog in their shared experience of hardship. This unity is thrown into relief by the next line where the fact that the word "lonly" is attached to the inanimate plough gives another dimension to the absence of living company:

> While in the fields the lonly plough
> Enjoys its frozen sabbath now

In personifying the plough, Clare is able to inject with irony the word "enjoys" with its double meaning of "experiences" and "actively relishes", and at the same time to charge with pathos the lines that follow, for neither plough nor horse has a choice:

> And horses too pass time away
> In leisures hungry holiday
> Rubbing and lunging round the yard
> Dreaming no doubt of summer sward [1]

Clare's habit of personification which becomes apparent from a study of even a single eclogue such as _January_ is in the neo-classical tradition. While it may be surprising that an untutored poet such as Clare should use abstractions to the extent that he does, this may be partly explained by his particular interest in the work of such eighteenth century poets as Thomson, Cowper, Collins, Gray and Pope.[2]

Clare does not confine his subtle personifications to abstract nouns, as is apparent in his handling of the inanimate plough. The first part of _January_ alone is filled with personifications so delicately achieved that to label them as such seems to distort what the poet has done. Just as Clare's natural material and his

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[1] Robinson, _The Shepherd's Calendar_, p. 3, ll. 9-14 (italics mine); p. 3, ll. 15 & 16; p. 3, ll. 17-20.

[2] See below, pp. 78-81.

Eden vision of the world often, in his most successful poems, become one, so his poetical powers may introduce into a natural scene an abstraction like "chance" below which takes over the scene through its extended personification without loss of realism, so that the abstraction is redefined poetically; and conversely, an abstract noun or inanimate object may as easily become concrete or animate. This will be apparent in the following examples from January, Part I, which show the added force and area of effectiveness that Clare's "personifications" give to words. Some of the results of personifying "comfort" and "labour" have already been mentioned.[1]

In the couplet:

> And old hens scratting all the day
> Seeks curnels chance may throw away

the personification of "chance" seems to show man as much at the mercy of an unpredictable force as the hens, thus unifying them in their common vulnerability. At the same time, in giving the force human actions, the poet creates a figure which embraces all who may chance to throw away "curnels". This ability to avoid limiting a quality or an action to any one person or creature is perhaps the most important property of the personification of fancy gazing at shapes of ice in a brook portrayed in the following lines:

> Where fancy often stoops to pore
> And turns again to wonder more

Similar characteristics are seen in:

> Again the robin waxes tame
> And ventures pitys crumbs to claim
> ..................................

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[1]See above, p. 37.

Where memory recolecting still
Knows the last winters broken pane

and in the reference to wood-pigeons "picking the green leaves want bestows".[1]

Other personifications are of periods of time, such as noontide, or night and day -- more conventional subjects for this treatment, but, observed in their context, they reflect a unique voice. One sees this in the subtle change of tone as snow is reduced to a homely detail in: "As noontide frets its little thaw". The cold night is seen as a labourer in the lines:

The ickles from the cottage eaves
Which cold nights freakish labour leaves

and the sun, night and day are all thought of as interacting in a particularly busy, human way:

The sun soon creepeth out of sight
Behind the woods - and running night
Makes haste to shut the days dull eye
And grizzles oer the chilly sky [2]

In these examples, where nature is charged with human attributes, one feels the poet has moved nearer to the ideal of man as a being in complete harmony with the universe.

As the day's cycle draws to a close, the sinking sun becomes the sign for a return to a specific instance of harmony with nature, that experienced by creatures disturbed during the day:

And thresher too sets by his flail
And leaves the mice at peace agen
................................
And owlets glad his toils are oer
Swoops by him as he shuts the door

The cycle is completed as "the shepherd seeks his cottage warm".

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[1]Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, p. 3, ll. 27 & 28; p. 5, ll. 25 & 26; p. 6, ll. 7, 8, 12 & 13; p. 7, l. 3.

[2]Ibid., p. 5, l. 6; p. 7, ll. 5 & 6; p. 7, ll. 11-14.

His dog in eagerness goes ahead,

> Then turns and looks him in the face
> And trotts before wi mending pace

The two, man and beast, form an example of co-operation, obedience and harmony. The balance between nature's creatures and man when all are in their proper place continues to be restored as the robin leaves the house to return to his domain and the shepherd and his dog return to theirs, the home.[1]

In the last nine lines we are told that the hedger

> Then sets him down to warm his hands
> And tell in labours happy way
> His story of the passing day
> While as the warm blaze cracks and gleams
> The supper reeks in savoury steams
> Or keetle simmers merrily
> And tinkling cups are set for tea
> Thus doth the winters dreary day
> From morn to evening wear away [2]

"Labour" is now within, enjoying a "comfort" of the same kind as that with which the poem opened, and which spreads a mood of contented achievement. But the person referred to here is not a shepherd. As in the sonnet, "Winter Fields",[3] which is a close parallel to part one of January, the shepherd is not the one to be found finally inside in comfort, away from the elements. This fact emphasizes the shepherd's constant interaction with the seasons in this poem which is The Shepherd's Calendar. In spite of the "warm blaze", the simmering kettle and the "tinkling cups" which are the forward pointers to the interior scene in January, Part II, the reader is quietly and simply reminded of the real nature of winter for men

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[1] Ibid., p. 7, ll. 20, 21, 23 & 24; p. 7, l. 25; p. 8, ll. 1 & 2; p. 8, ll. 7-12.

[2] Ibid., p. 9, ll. 2-10.

[3] See discussion of this poem below, pp. 128-142.

like shepherds in the final two lines which place January firmly within the season to which it belongs.

In January, Part I, the shepherd does not leave the outside winter world; in Part II, however, he does; for Clare's shepherd is a realistic figure (not one in an idealistic pastoral role) and comfort is as much an expected element of his day as the accepted hardships. In January, Part II, the shepherd is transported to the inner world across a break in time and eclogue, emphasizing the difference of the two spheres which may, nevertheless, be equally "enjoyed" by man. The change in the way the iambic tetrameter is used in Part II heightens the contrast between the two sections; the heavy dragging rhythm of the last two lines of January, Part I, differs greatly from that of the opening lines of January, Part II:

> The shutter closd the lamp alight
> The faggot chopt and blazing bright

which have a gay rhythmic lilt and are kinesthetic in their effect as they link up with the shepherd "dancing his childern on his knee". This mood continues as adjectives and nouns such as "glad", "leaping", "purring", "chorus" and "mirth" follow. Then, having placed the shepherd's faithful dog next to him, and the cat, cricket and caged redcap within too, the poet turns from the blazing fire to the fate of nature's creatures outside, and each one is seen "placed" in its safety:

> The ass frost drove from off the moors
> ....................................
> Litterd wi straw now dozes warm
> Neath the yard hovel from the storm
> The swine well fed and in the sty
> And fowl snug perchd in hovel nigh
> Wi head in feathers safe asleep
> Where fox find ne'er a hole to creep
> And geese that gabble in their dreams
> Of litterd corn and thawing streams
> The sparrow too their daily guest
> Is in the cottage eves at rest

> And robin small and smaller wren
> Are in their warm holes safe agen
> From falling snows that winnow bye
> The hovels where they nightly lye
> And ague winds that shake the tree
> Where other birds are forced to be [1]

The last four lines are a miniature of the portrayal in January, Part I, of the theme of the internal and external spheres contrasted. The word "winnowing" especially recalls the first four lines of Part I.

The contrasts between night and day, rest and activity, are reiterated ironically as the verse rhythm quickens to accommodate seemingly perpetual activity:

> The huswife busy night and day
> Cleareth the supper things away

Like the geese of the ice-freed pond "splashing... / Their fill ere it be froze again", she too is "not willing to loose time".[2] Even her stories, as they progress, seem to gather speed from excitement, and become more and more charged with "faerie".[3] Clare reveals his sensitive understanding of children in his description of their reactions to the fearful stories:

> While in the corner ill at ease
> Or crushing tween their fathers knees
> The childern silent all the while
> And een repressd the laugh or smile
> Quake wi the ague chills of fear
> And tremble while they love to hear
> Startling while they the tales recall
> At their own shadows on the wall [4]

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[1]~~Ibid.,~~ Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, p. 10, ll. 1 & 2; p. 10, l. 4; p. 11, l. 1 & ll. 7-22.

[2]Ibid., p. 11, ll. 23 & 24; p. 4, ll. 25 & 26; p. 12, l. 23.

[3]Clare's delicacy in portraying minute fairy life reminds the reader of Shakespeare's fairies in A Midsummer Night's Dream. See Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, pp. 14-18.

[4]Ibid., p. 17, ll. 3-10.

With nostalgia in the line, "O spirit of the days gone bye", the poet regrets the fleeing from him of "sweet childhoods fearful extacy".[1] The nostalgic element in the pastoral comes through strongly in this backward look. It does so again in a passage where the poet sees the same stories having the same fearful effect on listening children while he is beyond the stories' power to move.[2] The peculiar perceptions and reactions associated with the "golden age" of childhood do not change. In the observation, "For poesy hath its youth forgot",[3] the personification, "poesy", seems to take the place of the poet, and the realization of the consequent greater area of the loss, spread as it is to include all poetry, heightens the poignancy of the deprivation. There is perhaps implicit in the words the idea of age as opposed to the Medieval springtime or youth of literature.

It is reason, seen in Blakean terms as cold and winter-like in its ability to kill vulnerable, tender, early growth warmed into early bloom, that causes the loss:

> Till reason like a winters day
> Nipt childhoods visions all away

and although "memory may yet the themes repeat", yet "childhoods heart doth cease to beat".[4] A lost world may be re-captured artificially, but it will not be a childhood vision but the vision of experience, whose presence will create a tension of a kind associated with pastoral.

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[1] Ibid., p. 18, l. 5; p. 18, l. 6.

[2] Ibid., p. 18, ll. 25-30 & p. 19, ll. 1 & 2.

[3] Ibid., p. 18, l. 26.

[4] Ibid., p. 19, ll. 7 & 8; p. 19, l. 11; p. 19, l. 12.

In the final lines:

> Those truths are fled and left behind
> A real world and doubting mind [1]

the visions of the world of childhood are acknowledged as "truths" and as of far greater value than the visions of "reality" and the "doubting mind" associated with adults; a poignant reminder of Clare's "madness" of later years where, on the one hand, he was tacitly acknowledged by a person such as Knight as someone continuing to write fine poetry when in his world of truths, and on the other was condemned at times by people like Lord Radstock for his thoughts and actions in the "real world" in which he confessed to a "doubting mind". Compared with the lilt of the first two lines, these last lines are given weight by an opening spondee, and a lingering effect in the last line is gained by reading "real" as disyllabic and thus slightly laboured (or by an enforced long pause after "world" if "real" is to be one syllable). This pause emphasises the tone and meaning of unsureness in the line, and anticipates the unsureness and impermanence of the thaw in February.

In the above study of January concern has been to show that the Eden-like harmony between nature, her creatures and man is echoed in the prosody and development of the eclogue. The way in which the material is arranged and the mood and movement of verse changes in this diurnal cycle is similar to the pattern of the material and the form of verse in the annual seasonal cycle of nature and her creatures as found in the poem as a whole. The Eden vision, not without its tensions to be resolved and its two

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[1] Ibid., p. 21, ll. 13 & 14.

worlds (the ideal and the real) co-existing in balance, underlies not only The Shepherd's Calendar but Clare's poetry as a whole. Even where the loss of Eden perfection is lamented, it is upheld as the ideal to be desired.

At this point, it may be helpful to restate the fact that January contains the most important features of Clare's pastoral vision. These may be enumerated as follows in the paragraph below. But first it should be noted that Clare, a poet whose themes and material are often so nearly synonymous as to blur the distinction between the two, does not directly present the themes about to be mentioned, nor does his poem reveal a tightly knit pattern of images formally linked to the themes. The details in the poem, which may mislead one into believing they are in themselves thematically important, are primarily there as an integral part of Clare's realism.

The main theme is the unity of man and nature realised in shared experience. The unity is captured particularly in Clare's kind of personification and in the central figure of the shepherd. Related to this theme are two secondary themes, namely, love as an act of reciprocation for mutual good and the fulfilment of being of nature's children, including men, when they have found, and are acting in, their proper place. An image through which all three of these themes are made manifest is that of childhood, involving nostalgia for, and perhaps the recapture of, a perfect response associated with that time of life. A second image through which the main theme is explored is that of time, always an important consideration in pastoral. A third image of thematic importance is that of music representing the metaphorical harmony inherent in

nature,[1] encompassing song and dance which are also frequently part of the pastoral. While these images are a way in which the themes are presented, an important contributing factor to the felicity with which the themes and images are seen to be integrated into the poem as a whole, is a structural pattern recurring throughout the poem. This is the way the unity of all seasons is shown in each eclogue, whether through a recall in the details of one of the details of another, or through an anticipation based on memory and the knowledge of cyclical repetition.

There follow brief examinations of each of the eleven remaining eclogues, concentrating on the most prominent aspect of Clare's pastoral vision within the month under discussion. As the themes and images mentioned above appear in some way in each eclogue, no attempt will be made to enumerate these every time they appear.

The two-part January eclogue leads on to the eclogue for _February_, the month of an ephemeral thaw, in which the image of time is present in the emphasis on impermanence and mutability. The structure of the eclogue complements the image as the mild seasons are anticipated simultaneously with a harking back and final return to the harsh weather of winter. The verse form alone strongly anticipates the lyricism of _April_ while differing from the song and dance metre of that month. The building up and echoing of noises points forward to song, while increased energy and variety

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[1] See, for example: Tibble, _Poems_, II, 514, "Love of Nature", l. 4 - "There's life's own music in the swelling floods"; _ibid._, II, 39, "The Voice of Nature", especially l. 25 - "Yet I see melody in nature's laws"; _ibid._, II, 309, "The Music of Nature". See also below, pp. 54-59.

in movement precedes the dance. The mention of melting icicles "pit patting wi a pleasant noise" captures both sound and movement, and attention to sound is intensified as the workers join nature in her "refrain":

> The milkmaid singing leaves her bed
> ....................................
> While magpies chatter oer her head

"Ploughmen go whistling", "boy's shouts and whips are noising", and the shepherd, "chattering to a passing friend", is linked with the magpie. Movement seems to keep pace with sound as the dog "runs many a wild and random chase" and the jerkiness of the verse rhythm echoes the dog's movement in the line, "And off he starts and barks again".[1]

In this eclogue the movement of the verse flits like a butterfly from picture to picture of the thaw. In place of the sense of progression in January is a sense of impermanence and uncertainty, with children

> Building beside the sunny walls
> Their spring-play-huts of sticks or straw
> ..........................................
> And wondering in their search for play
> Why birds delay to build and sing [2]

This lack of logical progression is typical of the arbitrary leaps from scene to scene and subject to subject of the dream, a motif running throughout February.[3] In the penultimate stanza of the eclogue, the verb "dream" sums up the mood and tone of the month:

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[1] Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, p. 22, l. 5; p. 23, ll. 17 & 19; p. 23, l. 25; p. 23, l. 28; p. 24, l. 4; p. 24, l. 24; p. 25, l. 4.

[2] Ibid., p. 23, ll. 7, 8, 15 & 16.

[3] Ibid., p. 23, l. 9; p. 24, l. 6; p. 25, l. 19; p. 27, l. 8.

Thus nature of the spring will dream
While south winds thaw but soon again
Frost breaths upon the stiffening stream

As silence descends again on a frozen world, "the foddering boy forgets his song"[1] as he would a dream -- an echo seemingly of the dream-world atmosphere which often forms a part of the traditional pastoral.

The unsettled nature of the February thaw is intensified as "March month of 'many weathers' wildly comes". The shepherd (the chief pastoral figure of many ages), who in February's thaw is often seen

By warm banks oer his work to bend
Or oer a gate or stile to lean
Chattering to a passing friend

and who is finally seen in that eclogue as "croodling" and bending along "crouching to the whizzing storms",[2] is, in a sense, imprisoned at first by March's wild weather as he stands at his cottage door in order to hear the roar of the flood water in the distance. But a change in weather soon sees him out of doors with leisure to notice a daisy in the rain-wet grass.[3]

The third time the shepherd appears in this eclogue of oscillation is in a practical capacity; but he does, during his dutiful actions in protecting lambs from harm, fall prey to wild, impractical, imaginary fears generated in him by a badger's shriek.[4] He is a stable force amidst instability, yet not beyond being

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[1] Ibid., p. 27, ll. 25-27; p. 28, l. 9.

[2] Ibid., p. 29, l. 1; p. 24, ll. 2-4; p. 28, l. 12.

[3] Ibid., p. 29, ll. 3 & 4; p. 30, l. 8.

[4] Ibid., p. 35, ll. 15-30 & p. 36, ll. 1-7.

startled on his rounds at night by "the tale that superstition gives".[1]

In the song-like eclogue for April, the month is personified in Clare's particularly delicate way as a dancing child:

> The infant april joins the spring
> And views its watery skye
> As youngling linnet trys its wing
> And fears at first to flye
> With timid step she ventures on
> And hardly dares to smile
> The blossoms open one by one
> And sunny hours beguile

The skipping rhythm of the ballad metre as here used is associated with both dance and children's play, and the freshness and delicacy of tone is suited to the imagery of youth found throughout the eclogue. The extreme youthfulness of April is emphasised in the word "infant", and both immaturity and femininity are implied in "timid step". The uncertainty of the step and the "watery skye" under which it is taken recall the unpredictable weather in the final lines of March:

> And butterflys by eager hopes undone
> Glad as a child come out to greet the sun
> Lost neath the shadow of a sudden shower
> Nor left to see tomorrows april flower [2]

which in turn anticipates stanza one of April in which each flower opens separately yet in an harmonious rhythm.

From the beginning of the eclogue where April joins the Spring, as it were for a dance, harmony between nature and her creatures is paramount. In sympathy, as it were, with April's tentative "venturing on", the "youngling linnet trys its wing / And fears at first to flye"; and as a reflection of this unsure mood

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[1]Ibid., p. 36, l. 29.

[2]Ibid., p. 38, ll. 1-8; p. 37, ll. 23-26.

April "hardly dares to smile". The final word of the stanza, "beguile", captures the mood, tone and character of April, the "early child of spring",[1] as much as it does that of the spring blossoms, reflecting again the partnership and harmonious relationship between April and Spring, and between April and the flowers.

There is a fresh directness and naivety in the description of April and her progression from the timid step to the "bolder steps" in stanza two, and finally to her "wanton gambols" and her laughter as "she races with the hours" in stanza three. After her entrance with Spring, the poet is the first to greet her; then the shepherds in their perceptive relationship with nature are the first to discover this lovely child of spring through her flower sign, the cowslip.[2] The verse form seems to provide the "music" for April's dance which takes place in an atmosphere of harmony, so essential a part of the pastoral world before it is invaded by disruptive influences from outside. The harmonious relationships among nature's creatures are revealed in song:

> With thee all nature finds a voice
> And hums a waking song

in colour:

> And gosslings waddle oer the plain
> As yellow as its flowers

and in the Eden vision hinted at as the poet says of April that he wakes "with thy rising sun / And thy first glorys viewd" and sees the sun set "like to a lovley eve".[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 44, l. 26.

[2] Ibid., p. 39, l. 24; p. 40, ll. 1 & 2.

[3] Ibid., p. 42, ll. 19 & 20; p. 43, ll. 7 & 8; p. 44, ll. 17 & 18; p. 44, l. 22.

The gentle welcome to "the infant" April, which is voiced only after four stanzas is in keeping with the tentative tone of that month. The greeting of May is, by comparison, a boisterous shout as the eclogue opens with the resounding "Come" followed immediately by the title, "Queen of months". A retinue, as well as music, is suggested in the first lines of this eclogue, as one imagines the originators of the "merry minstrelsy" accompanying the Queen; and, by the twelfth line, the suggestion of music is affirmed in the words "For there is music in the noise". These words do more than imply melody; they link the May noises with the image of music as it reflects the metaphorical harmony inherent in nature.[1] This link is often overtly stated elsewhere in Clare's verse. In the poem, "Song's Eternity", the answer to "What is song's eternity?" is "Melodies of earth and sky, / Here they be", and again, "Bird and bee / Sing creation's music on".[2] In this poem creation's music is captured both by Clare's poem or song, and by the mimicked song of the bluecap. At times it is as if the bird-singer becomes the poet-singer:

> The little robin in the quiet glen
> Hidden from fame and all the strife of men
> Sings unto time a pastoral and gives
> A music that lives now and ever lives [3]

Indeed, for Clare, music or song is not only heard but also "felt and seen".[4] Thus he can write, "I hear rich music wheresoe'er I

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[1]The third image noted above, pp. 48 & 49.

[2]Tibble, Poems, II, 266, "Song's Eternity", v. 2, ll. 1, 3 & 4; ibid., v. 5, ll. 6 & 7.

[3]Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, "The Eternity of Nature", p. 110, ll. 33-36.

[4]Tibble, Poems, II, 268, Song's Eternity", v. 6, ll. 5 & 6, - "Songs I've heard and felt and seen / Everywhere".

<u>look</u>"[1] and "in these ancient spots mind ear and eye / Turn listeners".[2] There is, for him, as much music in the reproduction of movement (and sound) in "Grasshoppers go in many a thrumming spring"[3] as in the bird song which he reproduces mimetically rather than poetically in parts of "The Progress of Ryhme".[4] In fact, it is in the former poem rather than in the latter that the reader is most aware of metaphorical music and harmony; and this is perhaps a suitable moment at which to try to determine how Clare's poetry captures "the music of nature" through a close examination of the poem, "Grasshoppers", mentioned above.

> Grasshoppers go in many a thrumming spring
> And now to stalks of tasselled sour-grass cling,
> That shakes and swees awhile, but still keeps straight;
> While arching oxeye doubles with his weight.
> Next on the cat-tail grass with farther bound
> He springs, that bends until they touch the ground.

The first line has an irregularity of rhythm similar to that of the erratic jumping of a grasshopper. The trochaic first foot and the partial elision of "many a" reflect the jerkiness, hesitation and differing lengths of the insect's jump. The fairly strongly stressed second syllable of the trochaic first foot gives the impression of heaviness, kinesthetic in its effect when linked with the weight of the, at first, earth-bound grasshopper; added to this heaviness is the strongly stressed word "spring" at the end of the line, parallelling the abrupt, heavy landing of the insect.

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[1] Ibid., II, 40, "The Voice of Nature", l. 17. (Italics mine.)

[2] Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 99, "Shepherds Hut", ll. 24 & 25.

[3] Tibble, Poems, II, 330, "Grasshoppers", l. 1.

[4] Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, "The Progress of Ryhme", p. 122, l. 39 & p. 123, ll. 1-15.

The masculine rhymes combined with absence of enjambment throughout the poem firmly confine each line to one movement of a series of movements, giving the impression that the grasshopper comes to rest for a period at the end of every line. The sense of the rhyme pairs reinforces the "jump - rest" sequence: spring/cling; straight/weight; bound/ground.

The monosyllabic verb, "go", coming where it does, after the trisyllabic opening noun, "grasshoppers", simultaneously imparts the ideas of anticipation and release at the beginning of a race. After the release and the bounce of "many a", the words "thrumming spring" convey the impression of the grasshopper coming to a vibrating halt after his jump as a released metal spring would do.

In line two the poet subtly confines the vague, generalised, timeless continuum to the present with the words "And now" as if he were commenting on the race. In contrast to the rhythm of the first line which is irregular, the rhythm of the second is markedly regular, partly because, apart from the words "tassled sour-grass" the line is made up of words of a single syllable. The rhythm slows down on "sour-grass" which is nearly a spondee in weight of stress, and the impression is one of a grasshopper coming to a swaying rest. In the third line the rhythmical sway of the lightly tasselled grass continues to be reflected by the verse rhythm until the break in the line at "but" followed by the three evenly stressed words "still keep straight", a change of rhythm in keeping with the diminishing movement of the oscillating stalks as they straighten to an upright position. The fourth line seems to arch in shape and sound to match the arching oxeye described. The first and last words in the line repeat the "w" sound of "swees awhile", only now the swaying is not short and sharp as in lines one and two but one

long parabolic movement beautifully controlled by the continuous tense of "arching" followed by the emphatic disyllabic verb "doubles" which forms an apex in the middle of the line. From this high point the drop to the weighted end of the line seems to counter-balance the previous building up in "while arching oxeye" through the continuous sense of the present participle.

The first four lines cover a generalized mass jump of the insects and many grasshopper landings; the narrowing down in the second line to "And now" is taken further in line five, to a specific "next" jump of a single grasshopper. The whole cycle begins again as line five approximates to line one with an opening trochee -- but this time on a smaller scale, as the process which previously took four lines to capture is caught in two. The final touching of the ground which could refer to either grass or, by implication, grasshopper on grass, is an act similar to the touching of the tape at the end of a race begun with the word "go". Even the apparent mistake in the grammar of "they" strengthens the impression of a race run by many, yet won by the grasshopper singled out as "he" in line six.

The poem comes to an end on the word "ground" and yet is not grounded, for the ground is only touched, and all is poised for the next move. The poem remains open ended in its cyclical nature, and this reaching forward mirrors Clare's sense of the eternity of nature, where there will always be grasshoppers springing onto swaying grass.

Thus the words of the poem form a single cycle of movement while encompassing a similar cycle within the poem, together with many bursts of irregular and regular movement; and the tension in the poem comes from the sense of a race-like progression against

which are pulling all the jerky, apparently aimless, yet beautifully balanced movements within the whole. Harmony between words and movement presents the activity of the creatures of nature upon which Clare's attention, and that of the reader, is focused, and reflects the "music" inherent in the natural world.

In "The Progress of Ryhme" Clare speaks of his habit of reproducing nature's "music" in song:

> The bird and bee its chords would sound
> The air hummed melodys around
> I caught with eager ear the strain
> And sung the music oer again [1]

and this is what he does in "Grasshoppers" and in so many of his successful poems -- he sings "the music oer again". He does this in two ways. Firstly, in his poem he suggests imitation of a particular situation in nature through metrics and sound so that he is metaphorically singing the situation over again in his poem. Secondly, he creates a poem about the natural world; a poem in which the separate elements are organically and harmoniously related to one another within the whole poem, parallelling the similar harmonious and organic relationship which he apprehends between the separate beings within the natural world.

In The Shepherd's Calendar there is much of this poetic reproduction of nature's "music", especially, as already suggested in the opening remarks on May, in the sounds and movements in this eclogue.

> The restless cuckoo absent long
> And twittering swallows chimney song
> And hedge row crickets notes that run
> From every bank that fronts the sun
> And swathy bees about the grass

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[1] Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, "The Progress of Ryhme", p. 120, ll. 13-16.

> That stops wi every bloom they pass
> And every minute every hour
> Keep teazing woods that wear a flower
> And toil and childhoods humming joys
> For there is music in the noise[1]

Because of Clare's lack of punctuation, the above line, "For there is music in the noise", is able to embrace all noise and movement in the passage, from that of the cuckoo to "childhoods humming joys". It also reaches forward to the more specific children's noises of "calling ecchos in the porch" or their "jovial cry"[1] with all the "running", "racing", "jilting" and "leaping" that go with the noise. The sounds and actions echo the joys of the instant, the harmony perceptible at that point.

There follow more instances of May's minstrelsy. The driving boy, aware of May's beauty, "oft bursts loud in fits of song / And whistles as he reels along"; while the youth on his way to school is surrounded by the song and dance of May as "young lambs seem tempting him to play / Dancing and bleating in his way", and "the birds that sing on bush and tree / Seem chirping for his company" as he listens to "the weeders toiling song / Or short not[e] of the changing thrush".[3] Even the church clock hums for him.[4]

The weeders, too, echo the harmony

> Wi joke and tale and merry peals
> Of ancient tunes from happy tongues
> While linnets join their fitful songs

and the sound of the quail's cry "wet my foot" is in harmony with

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[1]Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, p. 46, ll. 3-12.

[2]Ibid., p. 47, l. 8; p. 47, l. 15.

[3]Ibid., p. 48, ll. 1 & 2; p. 48, ll. 15 & 16; p. 48, ll. 21 & 22; p. 48, ll. 28 & 29.

[4]Ibid., p. 49, l. 25.

the wet weather it foretells. The swain stops to listen to the "rails odd call"; the boy stops short to hear the strain of the nightingale's "ditty" which, then, with a "'sweet jug jug' he mocks again". Man's ear is attuned to the harmony of nature's calls. In fact, the poem rises to a peak where the metaphorical harmony between flower, bird and man is stated:

> All all are nestling in their joys
> The flowers and birds and pasture boys[1]

But Clare is aware of imperfection in this Eden. In this eclogue he narrows the loss to that of the glories of "Old may day" which had been in the past the focus of summer celebrations; and, since Enclosure epitomizes loss for Clare, Enclosure is linked with the present pale shadow of May Day:

> And where enclosure has its birth
> It spreads a mildew oer her mirth

Clare, then, in reminding the reader of the calm perfection and acceptance found in the opening lines of Gray's Elegy, forces him to note the full impact of the change in his reversal of the situation in Gray's poem:

> The herd no longer one by one
> Goes plodding on her morning way[2]

Yet with all man's ability to shatter harmony, the poet affirms that the harmony of the universe prevails in the answer to "Old may day where's thy glorys gone" which comes as a positive acclamation:

> Yet summer smiles upon thee still
> Wi natures sweet unalterd will [3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 53, ll. 18-20; p. 54, ll. 18-24; p. 58, ll. 14-16; p. 58, l. 24; p. 58, ll. 9 & 10.

[2]Ibid., p. 60, l. 27; p. 61, ll. 27 & 28; p. 61, l. 29 & p. 62, l. 1.

[3]Ibid., p. 60, l. 27; p. 62, ll. 4 & 5.

The celebration of May's queenly status which is found at the beginning of the eclogue is repeated in the final lines where the month of May, at the harmonious meeting point of spring and summer, is queen of both.

In June comes man's annual sharing in nature's bounty with haymaking and sheep-shearing, the second activity placing the shepherd once again in the central position of co-operation and harmony. As in the previous month, there is a lament; this time, in the last fourteen lines of the eclogue.[1] The poet regrets the break in unity and wholeness of relationship between two classes of human beings, the farmer and his labourer, in contrast with the sharing between man and nature, a state of affairs noticed and condemned by another writer of that period, William Cobbett, whom Clare thought to be "the most powerful prose writer of the day".[2]

July "wi last months closing scenes and dins / Her sultry beaming birth begins",[3] and these "scenes and dins" of the first harvesting, in the form of shearing and the subsequent customs that are kept, point forward to the theme dominant in the harvest months of July, August and September, that is, the unity of man and nature realised in shared experience.[4]

The opening ten lines of July are separated from the rest of the eclogue to enable the poet to place this month firmly at the

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[1]Ibid., p. 68, ll. 27-30 & p. 69, ll. 1-10.

[2]William Cobbett, Rural Rides, ed. by George Woodcock, The Penguin English Library (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967, first published 1830), pp. 78, 79, 227 & 228. See Prose, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, pp. 221 & 222.

[3]Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, p. 70, ll. 9 & 10.

[4]The main theme noted above, p. 48.

beginning of the second half of the year and to emphasize its position as the first of the harvest months. July personified gives birth to Autumn, just as, earlier, April personified leads the reader into Spring. Yet one is not allowed to forget that, new as this autumn may be, July is part of a cycle, as she "resumes her yearly place", and that she, equally, is a "daughter" of the "sultry days and dewy nights" of the previous month. Her "milking maiden face / Ruddy and tand yet sweet to view"[1] is in keeping with June sunshine but also reminds one of the exertions of labour to come, as the idea of ripening harvest and sunburnt crops is conjured up by the words "ruddy and tand".

In the section of the eclogue that follows, the idea of labouring humanity predominates and the poet's intimate knowledge of each task and its place in the whole harvest is apparent. The workers in their various fields of labour are seen co-operating with one another and with nature. The haymaker is followed by the maidens with their rakes, who are described in terms that make them seem one with nature; they are "wi light dress shaping to the wind", and their snow white bosoms charm "like lingering blossoms of the may". The shepherd shares in the harvest as he lets his flock into the stubble fields. The gipsy, too, comes in for a share of nature's unmerited, untended bounty as he gathers bulrushes from the stream "wi long pole and [a] reaping hook". The Scottish drovers, in rhythm with the timing of the seasons, move their beasts "lean wi the wants of mountain soil"[2] to fatten on the southern

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[1]Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, p. 70, l. 3; p. 70, l. 2; p. 70, ll. 4 & 5.

[2]Ibid., p. 71, l. 20; p. 70, l. 24; p. 75, l. 30; p. 77, l. 1.

pastures.

The poet then concentrates on the cycle of one July day at the height of which man, animal, bird and plant, linked in their common position as children of nature, wilt under the blazing sun which makes all one in burning suffering. But the setting sun, as well as the midday sun, governs nature's creatures who share the cool comfort of night.[1]

As the cool of evening descends, the co-operation of the workers continues, as in a relay in which the swain drops the ploughshares ready for the driving boys in the morning, the shepherd helps the maid with her faggots, and the maid draws water for the passing boy. Then Farmer Giles joins blacksmith, tailor and shepherd in slaking their thirst at the village inn, and he, the authority behind the harvesting, is identified with that part of the cosmos that governs the harvesters' movements, as he is described "wi face a very setting sun". This echoes the identification of July with the human situation through personification. The final two lines of the eclogue capture this harmony between man and nature:

> Thus evening deepning to a close
> Leaves toil and nature to repose [2]

In August the highest pitch of harvest activity is reached. In this eclogue the total involvement of all the villagers reflects the common dependence upon the harvest; but man must work in harmony with the seasonal changes or lose what nature gives. Thus

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[1] Ibid., p. 78, l. 22 ff; p. 87, ll. 25 & 26.

[2] Ibid., p. 91, ll. 3 - 8; p. 91, ll. 15 - 22; p. 91, ll. 23 - 28 & p. 92, l. 1; p. 93, ll. 7 - 30 & p. 94, ll. 1 & 2; p. 93, l. 12; p. 94, ll. 29 & 30.

the all-embracing demand for co-operation extends even to the child. Clare's treatment of the child's efforts at harvesting and the hardship involved[1] banishes any thought of a sentimental treatment of childhood, and also brings sharply into focus the very real hardships that harvesting entails.

Again, the rhythmic blending in harmony of the various harvesting tasks is apparent as the reapers go ahead followed by the gleaners; then come the shockers who follow the scythe wielders; "And singing rakers end the toils behind". Even here the shepherds are not left out of the activity, "but share the harvests labours with the rest".[2]

To place in perspective the intensity of harvesting in the heat of an August day, Clare describes a restful Sunday. The balance of work and rest is restored as the chiming bells "murmur a soothing lullaby to care" -- a personification of "care" which allows the word to embrace all careworn men. There is, as it were, a universal response to the bells; for the shepherd pauses to listen, the children mimic the sound with joy, the fields seem to respond in their freedom, and the insects, too, answer with livelier delight than usual. Even Solitude "apears to muse and listen to the song", a concept which blends the bells' song with that of the children and insects, uniting the varying responses in the sabbath release.[3]

The theme of the unity of man and nature realized in shared experience is continued in September as man gathers the remains of

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[1]Ibid., p. 96, ll. 11-30 & p. 97, ll. 1-16.

[2]Ibid., p. 98, ll. 3-8; p. 98, l. 26; p. 99, ll. 27 & 28.

[3]Ibid., p. 100, ll. 29 & 30; p. 101, ll. 1-12.

nature's gifts in the lines:

> All haunt the thronged fields still to share
> The harvests lingering bounty there [1]

and a balance seems to be maintained as the insects and birds take over the deserted village; the cricket, the butterfly, the bees and sparrows are dominant in man's terrain as man takes over theirs, the fields.[2]

In August the sabbath brings temporary rest from harvesting; in September a harvest supper gives the rustics an opportunity

> To crown the harvests happy close
> While rural mirth that there abides
> Laughs till she almost cracks her sides [3]

Clare's personification of "rural mirth", with its echo of Milton in the last line,[4] has an all-embracing effect similar to that of the sabbath bells.

The eclogue ends with a combination of poetic and natural song as the poet with humility sings of what he loves so well, but he feels he cannot compete with nature's divine music as

> ...hollow winds and tumbling floods
> And humming showers and moaning woods
> All startle into sudden strife
> And wake a mighty lay to life [5]

The last line is particularly resonant with ambivalent meaning in

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[1] Ibid., p. 105, ll. 1 & 2.

[2] Ibid., p. 104, ll. 1-10 & p. 105, ll. 1-12.

[3] Ibid., p. 109, ll. 8-10.

[4] Milton: Poetical Works, ed. by Douglas Bush (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 89, "L'Allegro", l. 32. This was one of Clare's favourite poems; see Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 9, and Prose, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 109, Journal entry for 27th Sept., 1824.

[5] Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, p. 110, l. 14; p.110, ll. 19 & 20; p. 110, ll. 15-18.

the words "wake" (meaning "awaken" but with such overtones of nouns as "the impression left by something having gone before", and also a "funeral celebration"), and "lay" which, as well as meaning a poem intended to be sung, may refer to the song of a bird; and the final line as a whole may be interpreted in two ways -- it may convey that the lay is awakened to life, or that the lay to life is awakened.

With October and the end of harvest comes freedom for both man and animal. The horse is free to wander through the denuded lands as are the cows, sheep and pigs, and the ducks and geese revel in their freedom from their prison, the yard. Nature's crops (acorns, "red awes", brown nuts and elder-berries) are freely given and freely taken by swine, squirrels, birds and men alike; and the gipsies, who gather nature's bounty as they move as freely and as haphazardly as the hedges grow along the lanes and as the brook meanders, regard justice (the curtailer of complete freedom) as a tyrant. The completion of harvest, which has given the farm animals freedom, has released the women to loiter freely as they gather berries.[1] All these beings mentioned are free because they are in the right relationship with nature at the time. As has been previously noted,[2] Clare values freedom highly and finds it in his love of the natural world, even when he is in the prison-like asylum. In this eclogue the post-harvest freedom, taken advantage of at the right time, that is, after the completion of the necessary work, is strongly linked with the theme of the fulfilment of being of nature's

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[1] _Ibid._, p. 111, ll. 1-10 & p. 112, ll. 1-30 & p. 113, ll. 1-21.

[2] See above, p. 39 and footnote 2 thereon.

children, including man, when they are found and are acting in their proper place.[1] At the beginning of October a veil is drawn over summer and its autumn fruits, in order to isolate this proper place, defining it more clearly, and sharpening the poet's focus upon those objects left to please his eye.[2]

The dream atmosphere, apparent in another month of transition, February,[3] is present again in this month of glimpses seen through a pall or by the weak rays of the misty sun.[4] These dream-like glimpses of the present, the past or the future are not confined to man, nor to the poet, for the squirrel "secret toils oer winter dreams" in a forward vision; nature "wears dreams of beauty" now, and the lone lad journeys "muttering oer his dreams of joy",[5] which suggests that his thought pictures embrace past, present and future.

At the beginning of the November eclogue, the natural sequence is changed, bringing to mind the image of time and its peculiar nature in the pastoral.[6] The particular stanza which the poet chooses for this eclogue, the Spenserian stanza, seems ideally suited to his purpose of capturing the timeless atmosphere or the unusual time reversals that appear to take place in this month.

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[1]The secondary theme noted above, p. 48.

[2]Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, p. 111, ll. 1-6.

[3]See above, pp. 50 & 51.

[4]Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, p. 111, l. 2; p. 113, l. 21.

[5]Ibid., p. 112, l. 19; p. 114, l. 4; p. 115, l. 15.

[6]The second image noted above, p. 48.

In the first line, "The village sleeps in mist from morn till noon", there is an unnatural reversal of sleeping time, which turns day into night. The placing of the word "noon" in an emphatic position at the end of the line, together with the facts that its rhyme partner is "moon" in line three, and that the often used phrase "from morn till night" sets up an expectation towards the word "night" rather than "noon", emphasizes the extension of nightly signals into the day. The "day-into-night" image is again extended when the sun is seen with a face

> Beamless and pale and round as if the moon
> When done the journey of its nightly race
> Had found him sleeping and supplyd his place

Then the shepherd, the epitome of man's harmonious relationship with nature, is placed within this confusion of time and made to react as if the days were nights, in his inability to see sky, bush or tree for days, and acting as he would to his unpenned flock at night, "whistling aloud by guess".[1]

Not only does man's behaviour change in these circumstances, but animal behaviour is equally out of character. The hare becomes unusually fearless and the untamed colt does not move away from passers by. Birds, too, behave oddly as the order of nature is upset. Crows refuse to fly away from persecuting youths, and the owlet's behaviour[2] is so unnatural that the results remind one of similar scenes in Macbeth.[3]

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[1]Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, p. 116, l. 1; p. 116, ll. 3-5; p. 116, l. 9.

[2]Ibid., p. 116, ll. 10 & 11, and p. 117, ll. 1-16.

[3]William Shakespeare, Macbeth, ed. by Kenneth Muir, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1953), II, iv, 6-13; a work with which Clare was well acquainted. See Prose, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 121, Journal entry for 10th Nov., 1824.

All this points to the paradoxical nature of time in the pastoral, for, in one sense, it is necessary, if Eden-like order and harmony is to prevail in the post-Eden world, that time should be cyclical and sequential, but, at the same time, the depiction of the pastoral ideal of unspoilt beauty or Eden-perfection often seems to require an attempt at capturing the harmony of all within view at that moment; in other words, an attempt at seeing and reproducing eternity in an instant, so that all time becomes a continuous present moment. Yet the paradox of Pastoral for some poets is that, although one is within the ideal pastoral world, there is no permanent escape for one there from the chaos of disordered time in the "world without". Thus the first stanza in November reflects time "out of joint" and the following two stanzas, the consequences of this. But the natural sequence of time and weather takes over from stanza four onwards as the usual November rains begin to fall; and although the young boy may wish it were summer time again[1] there is an acceptance of the irregular, unpredictable nature of the month so that at the end of this eclogue

> ...winter comes in earnest to fulfill
> Her yearly task at bleak novembers close
> And stops the plough and hides the field in snows
> When frost locks up the streams in chill delay
> And mellows on the hedge the purple sloes
> For little birds - ...

and there is a return of Eden-like leisure in the midst of harsh winter, as the path is laid in the words, "toil hath time for play",[2] for the entrance of December, the month of Christmas celebration.

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[1]Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, p. 118, l. 18.

[2]Ibid., p. 123, ll. 7-12; p. 123, l. 12.

All the themes and images of January are found again in December, but that of love as an act of reciprocation for mutual good (suggested by the subtitle, "Christmass") predominates.

> Christmass is come and every hearth
> Makes room to give him welcome now
> Een want will dry its tears in mirth
> And crown him wi a holly bough
> Tho tramping neath a winters sky
> Oer snow track paths and ryhmey stiles
> The huswife sets her spining bye
> And bids him welcome wi her smiles [1]

In the first two lines of the opening stanza, every home shares in the celebration of the festival, and the welcome is for all that is a part of, or for all who are taking a part in, this time of harmonious relationships.

The personification of "Christmass" is so delicately achieved that, without singling out any particular aspects of this season, the poet makes the term include almost all that Christmas means to most people; the spirit of Christmas, the season of Christmas, the figure of Father Christmas, -- all are implied as "every hearth" gives "him welcome now".[2] Not a vestige of sentimentality creeps in, for the word "now" confines this universal welcome to a specific time and a specific place; and Want's tears are not overlooked. Clare's lack of punctuation allows the word "now" to belong to line three as well as to line two, depending on whether one places an imaginary full stop before or after "now". A similar ambiguity exists as a result of the absence of a distinct antecedent to the final "him" of the stanza; through his particular ordering of items and his syntax the poet achieves a fusion of "Christmass" and "Want" as the housewife "bids him welcome"; so

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[1] Ibid., p. 124, ll. 1-8.

[2] Italics mine.

that "him", here, could refer to either Christmas or Want or to both. Thus the poet reveals the love involving a relationship for mutual good to be part of all and for all at this time.

The reader is reminded of the unity of all seasons as "neighbours resume their anual cheer", and the mistletoe berries are seen as "the shadow still of what hath been / Which fashion yearly fades away" as "winter meets the warmth of may". He is transported back or forward to summer as "the fire curls up a sunny charm", "the flowering ale is set to warm" and "mirth full of joy as summer bees" imparts pleasure.[1] Spring is recalled in verse fourteen of the eclogue and in the final "good bye" of the poem lies a reminder of the transitory yet repetitive nature of the seasons.

The main theme of The Shepherd's Calendar, the unity of man and nature realized in shared experience, comes to the fore as winter evergreens and ash logs are brought from outside to be a part of man's interior environment, so that in these objects both winter and labour are personified beside the cottage fire.[2]

Once again the shepherd appears as the implicit, ideal example of the unity of man and nature as, in stanza seven, he accepts the chance of kissing a maid under the mistletoe, a sanctioned custom associated with this, nature's winter "fruit".[3] The shepherd behaving as he does under the mistletoe is one example in a limited context of a secondary theme, the fulfilment of being of nature's children, including man, when they have found and are acting in

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[1]Ibid., p. 125, l. 9; p. 126, ll. 19 & 20; p. 127, l. 22; p. 127, l. 26; p. 127, l. 28; p. 128, l. 1.

[2]Ibid., p. 125, ll. 1-8 & 17-24; p. 125, ll. 25-28.

[3]Ibid., p. 126, ll. 13-20.

their proper place. He is no longer afraid to kiss because of the rightness of his conduct in that place.

The image of childhood which can be a manifestation of both the secondary theme just mentioned and the main theme of The Shepherd's Calendar is present in this final eclogue. This image, involving a looking back with regret, is found in three stanzas[1] which dwell on a childhood Christmas. But in the lines:

> Yet memory loves to turn her eye
> And talk such pleasures oer again [2]

acceptance predominates; there is no longing for the impossible which the word "live" in the place of "talk" would imply, but rather an enjoyment of a second pleasure arising from talking about the first.

The tone of acceptance in the eclogue modifies the nature of the image of time, another manifestation of the themes of The Shepherd's Calendar. Although cyclical time is suggested as "neighbours resume their *anual* cheer"[3] and the inevitable "good bye" appears at the end of the poem, yet the neighbours *resume* their cheer as if it had been left off only recently; the word "anual" does not confine the cheer to Christmas alone. The present moment is concentrated upon as Christmas is welcomed *now*; the shepherd is "now no more afraid",[4] and time's sanctions apply now. All activities in the eclogue seem to be taking place simultaneously, although in different places; and even the last "good bye" is drawn

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 128, ll. 21-28 & p. 129, ll. 1-16.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 129, ll. 15 & 16.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 125, l. 9. (Italics mine.)

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 126, l. 13.

into the present by the elderberry wine's being found on each supper table as part of the present Christmas bounty rather than as a reminder of the future farewell.[1]

A third image of thematic importance in The Shepherd's Calendar, that of music representing the metaphorical harmony in nature, runs through the stanza which begins with the poet's love of the actual sound of old customs which time has left untouched; for time is conceived as discarding anything out of harmony with the universe. But the poet fears that man's pride will eventually scorn simplicity[2] and that the poet's song may be the last refuge for old custom. At the moment, however, all is well, for there are still singers with the necessary simplicity to "imitate the angels song" and the tradition will be kept alive

> While childern tween their parents knees
> Sing scraps of carrols oer by heart

The village bells seem to take up the human and angelic song into their rhythm and sound, blending it with that of nature as

> ...mid the storm that dies and swells
> By fits - in humings softly steals
> The music of the village bells
> Ringing round their merry peals [3]

With the final "good bye" of the poem, one of the secondary themes of The Shepherd's Calendar, that of love as an act of reciprocation for mutual good, reappears, and is, as it were, carried on to infinity; for reciprocation demands a readiness to release what one has in order not only to give, but to make room

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[1] Ibid., p. 129, ll. 25-28 & p. 130, ll. 1-4.

[2] Ibid., p. 126, ll. 5-12.

[3] Ibid., p. 126, l. 23; p. 128, ll. 3 & 4; p. 126, ll. 25-28.

to receive. Thus the necessity for the seasonal cycle which, although immutable in its pattern, reflects the above theme in its constant change within that pattern. Clare's overt awareness of this may be seen in the following stanza written between 1844 and 1845:

> All nature has a feeling wood brooks fields
> Are life eternal - and in silence they
> Speak happiness - beyond the reach of books
> There's nothing mortal in them - their decay
> Is the green life of change to pass away
> And come again in blooms revifified
> Its birth was heaven eternal is its stay
> And with the sun and moon shall still abide
> Beneath their night and day and heaven wide [1]

In this study of The Shepherd's Calendar the shepherd figure[2] in particular reveals the nature of the pastoral vision which underlies Clare's poetry. The shepherd is not a symbolic or allegorical figure. He is not there to point to or to stand for anything other than himself in his relationship with nature. He is neither cast in the role of poet or lover to provide an "occasion for poetry"[3] as is common in the classical pastoral tradition, nor is he set apart from other men or given added grandeur as in the work of some Romantic poets; but is literally a keeper of sheep.[4] And it is in this position that he portrays or works towards the

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[1]Robinson, The Later Poems, p. 134, ll. 1-9.

[2]The importance of the shepherd figure in Clare's poetry as a whole may be further emphasized by the fact that, in the Robinson and Tibble texts used as the basic references in this thesis, there are thirty-six sonnets in which the shepherd or something strongly associated with him (such as his dog) is either referred to or implied; and in six of these sonnets the shepherd plays an important part.

[3]Marinelli, Pastoral, p. 4.

[4]Shepherds, besides being "desciples of the pasture sward" may also be "rude chronicles of ancient minstrelsy" (Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 99, "Shepherds Hut", ll. 19 & 20.), but this is not their primary function in Clare's poetry.

unity of man and nature so often celebrated in Clare's poetry.

Together with men, animals, birds, insects and plants, the shepherd is Clare's material. The unusual nature of Clare's vision and poetry lies in the fact that his material does not have to be translated into his vision as if these were two separate elements of his poetry; rather, in his successful poems, his material and vision are one. This is possible because of what Clare's vision is; namely, that man, perceptive and attuned to nature, may experience Eden or the Golden Age present in nature now. Clare repeatedly makes it possible through his poetry for the reader to experience this simplicity of Eden, often stating overtly his poetic aims. In "The Eternity of Nature" he first hints at the Eden image in:

> Leaves from eternity are simple things
> To the worlds gaze - whereto a spirit clings
> Sublime and lasting - ...

and again more strongly in his reference to the daisy that "loving Eve from eden followed ill",[1] bringing Eden's smile with her; then, after dwelling on the simplicity of both his and nature's poetry a few lines later in the following words: "when this simple ryhme / Shall be forgotten", and "little brooks that hum a simple lay / ... shall sing",[2] the poet declares his response to nature and his poetic goal in a passage that achieves that goal:

> And so I worship them in bushy spots
> And sing with them when all else notice not
> And feel the music of their mirth agree
> With that sooth quiet that bestirreth me
> And if I touch aright that quiet tone
> That soothing truth that shadows from their own

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[1] Ibid., "The Eternity of Nature", p. 109, ll. 1-3 & p. 110, l. 13.

[2] Ibid., p. 109, ll. 8 & 9, & p. 110, ll. 23 & 25.

Then many a year shall grow in after days
And still find hearts to read my quiet lays [1]

(The word "them" in the first line refers to the bumble bee, nightingale and robin.)[2]

As a brief summary of the main findings in this study of The Shepherd's Calendar one could say that the "music" of the poetry echoes the "music of nature" -- the metaphorical harmony both in nature as a whole and in the shape, position and movement of her creatures as part of that whole -- for the poet repeatedly does "touch aright that quiet tone / That soothing truth that shadows forth their own"; and one of the main reasons for this is Clare's ability to allow his verse to carry in its tone the shepherd's quiet acceptance of the varied moods of nature, with the consequent hardships, as part of the metaphorical harmony of the whole of the natural world.

In relating the themes and images present in Clare's most important pastoral poem, The Shepherd's Calendar, to those generally associated with the pastoral genre mentioned on the first two pages of this chapter, it is true to say that each of the themes and images followed through in this poem is an example of a "pastoral" way of viewing the world.

Clare's emphasis on the unity of the four seasons reflects the metaphorical harmony within the pastoral world; the theme of unity between man and nature realised in shared experience is an example of the latter harmony. The emergence of the shepherd as a central figure in Clare's poem is also characteristic of the pastoral genre. The metaphorical harmony in the pastoral world demands that the

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[1] Ibid., p. 111, ll. 2-9. [2] Ibid., p. 110, ll. 29, 30 & 33.

creatures of nature should be acting in their appropriate place within the pattern of nature, and this, too, is a theme in the poem. When images of music are invoked in this section, pastoral harmony is expressed mainly through the aural sense, but Clare extends the image of music in his poem kinesthetically to include the metaphorical music of movement.[1]

The contrast between two ways of life, the rural and the urban, which are both implicit or explicit in the pastoral world, is reflected in the image of childhood involving a nostalgic backward look from a "spoilt" (urban) state at a once "perfect" (rural) way of life; an image through the use of which there may be an attempt at recapturing the simplicity of the child's approach and response to the natural world. Pastoral contrast is also reflected in the particular paradox presented by the image of time as both essential for and inimical to harmony in a pastoral world.[2]

These two important topics, the metaphorical harmony and the contrast just described, are actually subsumed by the theme implicit in the previously mentioned themes, that of love as an act of reciprocation for mutual good; for reciprocation cannot take place where there is a single unit, and as soon as there are two or more entities the potential for disharmony through otherness or contrast exists. But love, the basis for the reciprocation, encompasses both harmony and contrast, counteracting their tendency to mutual exclusiveness, and making of them a paradoxical whole.

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[1]See above, pp. 55-58. [2]See above, pp. 67-69.

(iv) In order to place Clare's pastoral vision and the form of expression that it takes in better perspective, it is perhaps desirable at this point to look at a few aspects of his poetry in relation to those found in the poetry of an eighteenth century pastoral poet.

Clare repeatedly pays tribute to and expresses delight in the works of five eighteenth century poets in particular, those of Pope, Cowper, Collins, Gray and Thomson.[1] Of Pope he says in a letter to Holland, "Pope for Harmony of Numbers surpasses all I have ever seen",[2] and, in a fragment written after reading this poet's works, he shows no uncertainty as to its greatness.[3] Clare actually imitates Pope's poetry to illustrate a point in his poem, "Shadows of Taste", when he speaks of styles varying from Donne's "old homely gold"

> To Popes smooth rhymes that regularly play
> In musics stated periods all the way
> That starts and closes starts again and times
> Its tuning gamut true as minster chimes [4]

Clare's admiration for the poetry of Cowper is eloquently expressed in a lyric, "Cowper",[5] which celebrates Cowper's genius in much the same way that Cowper's hymns celebrate the Christian vision. The poem is in long metre and is a characteristic hymn

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[1]It should also be noted that Clare acknowledged the influence of Goldsmith's poetry on his writing. See Letters, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 118, and Tibble & Tibble, John Clare: A Life, pp. 120-121.

[2]Letters, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 25.

[3]Prose, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, pp. 222 & 223.

[4]Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, "Shadows of Taste", p. 114, ll. 21 & 23-26.

[5]Tibble, Poems, II, 423.

length of six stanzas. The final stanza especially echoes Cowper's hymn "On Opening a Place for Social Prayer",[1] reading as it does:

> And every place the poet trod
> And every place the poet sung
> Are like the Holy Land of God,
> In every mouth, on every tongue

In the second stanza of the poem "Cowper" the line, "He sang so musically true",[2] points to Cowper's lyricism which so easily matches hymn tunes. Again, Cowper's distinctive verse form found in his poem "To Mary"[3] is used by Clare for his very different poem, "My Mary".[4]

Clare pays a similar tribute to Collins in employing the same metres in "Autumn"[5] that Collins made use of in such a masterly way in "Ode to Evening".[6] Clare was well read in and loved Collins's Odes and regarded both this poet and Gray as "great favourites".[7]

But it seems that, of these five eighteenth century poets mentioned above, Clare's favourite was Thomson. In Frederick Martin's sensitive, though (according to the Tibbles), unhistorical, Life of John Clare, in the section headed "Travels in Search of a

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[1] Cowper: Poetry and Prose, selected by Brian Spiller (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968), p. 152.

[2] Tibble, Poems, II, 423, "Cowper", l. 6.

[3] Cowper: Poetry and Prose, selected by Spiller, p. 136.

[4] Tibble, Poems, I, 94.

[5] Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 134.

[6] The Poems of Gray and Collins, ed. by Austin Lane Poole (3rd ed., rev.; London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 273.

[7] Prose, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 103, Entry in the Journal for Sat. 25th Sept. 1824.

Book",[1] there is a sympathetically told and detailed story of Clare's acquisition of a copy of Thomson's Seasons. The main point of the story, Clare's joy in discovering the poem and his love of the work, is substantiated by Clare's own words in his letters, journal and autobiography. So important is Thomson and his poetry to Clare that in his autobiography he links Thomson's name with those of Milton and Shakespeare.[2] Later in the same work he writes of a friend who had "a natural simplicity of heart to read [nature's] language", and the three poets who come immediately to Clare's mind in this connection are Thomson, Cowper and Wordsworth.[3] Of this same friend he writes, "he felt as happy over these as we whiled away the impatience of a days bad fishing under a green willow or an old thorn as I did over Thomson Cowper & Walton which I often took in my pocket to read";[4] and Clare's acquaintance at least with Thomson's poems was close, for he writes, "I read Thomson's Seasons & Milton's Paradise Lost thro when I was a boy & they are the only books of poetry that I have regularly read thro...".[5] Thomson's Seasons is listed as one of Clare's favourite poems in a letter from him to Messrs. Taylor & Hessey, 1822.[6]

In his journal entry dated Saturday, 13 November, 1824, Clare writes of the Seasons:

> Lookd into Thomson's 'Winter' there is a freshness about it I think superior to the others tho rather of

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[1] Martin, The Life of John Clare, pp. 23-27.

[2] Prose, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 19.

[3] Ibid., p. 39.

[4] Ibid., p. 40.

[5] Ibid., p. 78.

[6] Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 9.

> a pompous cast how natural all his descriptions are nature was consulted in all of them the more I read them the more truth I discover the following are great favourites of mine & prove what I mean describing a hasty flood forcing through a narrow passage he says
>
> It boils & wheels & foams & thunders through
> Snatch'd in short eddies plays the wither'd leaf
> & on the flood the dancing feather floats [1]

It seems natural, in the light of this evidence of Clare's love of and close acquaintance with Thomson's Seasons, and with Winter in particular, that this should be the poem to examine (though necessarily only in part) for the purpose of placing Clare's most ambitious pastoral poem in perspective. Thomson's poem is often regarded as marking a transition from the more formal way of treating nature in a poem, prevalent in the early eighteenth century, to the realism associated with some of the Romantic poets. In both Thomson's Seasons and Clare's The Shepherd's Calendar the formal as well as the realistic ways of representing nature are present, the former way being more evident in Thomson's work, the latter in Clare's. This being so, it is possible to discuss certain passages of Winter with reference to parts of Clare's The Shepherd's Calendar in such a way as to reveal some of Clare's differences from and similarities to the eighteenth century poet's approach to, attitude towards, and way of writing about the pastoral subject -- while remaining constantly aware of both poets' use of "Romantic" realism.

The opening passage of Winter reveals, amongst other things, Thomson's attitude to his subject and material:

> See, Winter comes to rule the varied year,
> Sullen and sad, with all his rising train -
> Vapours, and clouds, and storms. Be these my theme;

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[1] Prose, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 122.

> These, that exalt the soul to solemn thought
> And heavenly musing. Welcome, kindred glooms! [1]

The first three lines give a foretaste of the "calm, wide survey"[2] of the works of nature which Thomson deemed inspiring. Winter is not confined more or less to his chronological place as one feels he is (with a few exceptions) in Clare's The Shepherd's Calendar. He is announced as coming "to rule the varied year". The great sweep of Thomson's poetry in lines two and three does "exalt the soul" and certainly gives a wide survey, not only of Winter's "rising train" but of the changes in mood that Thomson's subject brings about within the poet and reader. From the low level of "sullen and sad", a phrase whose meaning is arrested by the strong caesura that follows it, the tempo quickens in keeping with the "rising train", the tense of "rising" reflecting both the quickening tempo and the sense of continuous lifting of the burden of low cloud and empathetic depression which "sullen and sad" imply. It is as if one were taken up with the "vapours, and clouds, and storms" to survey, with Winter, the countryside over which he holds sway, and is consequently prepared for the soul's exaltation and the word "heavenly". The words, "sullen and sad", have prepared one for the paradoxical "welcome" extended to the "kindred glooms". The five lines are thus bound together in mutual dependence, with a calm control and extended vision behind them, a vision which begins with the command to "see" and ends with an acknowledgement that all men will know at times a gloom akin to that which the majestic, solemn scene evokes in the poet now.

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[1]The Complete Poetical Works of James Thomson, ed. by J. Logie Robertson, Oxford Edition (London: Henry Frowde: Oxford University Press, 1908), p. 185, Winter, ll. 1-5.

[2]Ibid., p. 241, l. 4.

In these five lines one is aware of the Augustan reflective poet's tendency to an ordered viewing of a scene from a height or from a vantage point.[1] The view is wide, both of the countryside and of the spirit of man; made wider because of this poet's ability to include readers in what he regards as a common experience, another Augustan quality. The finely balanced lines are in keeping with the controlled emotion presented and the emphasis given in each word. The blank verse contributes to the expansive, "unbound" nature of the poetic movement though the lines are mostly self contained. A rhyme scheme, such as that successfully employed in Clare's portrayals of the character inherent in each month and in the many vignettes within each month, might "obstruct the view" in Thomson's poem. Yet, despite such differences, both Clare and Thomson have the eighteenth century ability to personify abstractions in such a way as greatly to extend the personified noun's area of reference. But here again differences strike the reader, for Thomson's personified Winter is majestic, whereas Clare's personifications such as "chance"[2] have more homely, less exalted associations in keeping with his close-up view of nature. Thomson often personifies large areas. In a passage describing a snow-storm,[3] we read that "The cherished fields / Put on their winter-robe of purest white.", "Low the woods / Bow their hoar head;" and "Earth's universal face, deep-hid and chill, / Is one wild dazzling waste, that buries wide / The works of man." One notices the movement from, not a particular field, but fields in general, through the woods whose great age is suggested in "hoar head" to "earth's universal

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[1]Barrell, Landscape, pp. 21 & 43.

[2]See above, p. 41.

[3]James Thomson, ed. by Logie Robertson, p. 194, Winter, ll.232-240.

face"; the scope of the movement becomes wider and wider, and man is finally included in such a way as to extend his sphere of influence beyond the more limited meaning of "the works of man".

This is not to say that Thomson does not descend from his vantage point. A few lines further on he singles out the robin from "the fowls of heaven" as the bird "leaves / His shivering mates, and pays to trusted man / His annual visit". The poet captures the quick startled, unsure movements of the timid bird, the tilt of his head, the pin-thin legs that are drawn towards the crumbs as towards a magnet, in the passage:

> ...Half afraid, he first
> Against the window beats; then brisk alights
> On the warm hearth; then, hopping o'er the floor,
> Eyes all the smiling family askance,
> And pecks, and starts, and wonders where he is -
> Till, more familiar grown, the table-crumbs
> Attract his slender feet. ...

But Thomson takes care to place the robin within his extended view of the whole. The description is framed by "the fowls of heaven,/ Tamed by the cruel season," claiming "the little boon / Which Providence assigns them" and "the foodless wilds / Pour[ing] forth their brown inhabitants". In the eighteenth century moralistic tradition, it is Providence, not man, or a personified abstract noun such as Clare's "chance", that provides the boon. Thomson's robin is thought of from the point of view of the household -- "sacred to the household gods" --[1] rather than from the personal view so apparent in the "I love..." tone of Clare's poetry.

In contrast to Thomson's single robin passage in his Seasons, Clare's robin enters many of his eclogues almost as a motif echoing

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[1]Ibid., p. 194, l. 242; p. 195, ll. 248-250; p. 195, ll. 250-256; pp. 194-195, ll. 242-245; p. 195, ll. 256 & 257; p. 195, l. 246.

the weather of the month through his situation each time he appears,[1] and at the same time, linking the different months by his presence. This is overtly done at times.[2] But it is delicately done, for the robin seems to flit in and out of Clare's scenes quite arbitrarily, staying for differing periods of time; a situation in keeping with the value Clare placed on freedom.

Thomson's powers of perceiving details of the natural world and vividly reproducing them in his poetry are no less strong than Clare's; but he treats his material in a different way, for a different purpose from that of Clare.

It is not surprising that lines 105, 130 and 131 of Winter which Clare, in his journal, quotes from Thomson's Seasons[3] are great favourites of his, for they show Thomson's delicate and precise capturing of detail at its best. It is interesting to find reflections of these lines in the opening lines of Clare's March eclogue in The Shepherd's Calendar:

> Wi thundering sound and over powering shocks
> And headlong hurry thro the meadow brigs
> Brushing the leaning sallows fingering twigs
> In feathery foam and eddy hissing chase [4]

In these four lines the following words in the three lines from Winter are echoed: "foams", "thunders through", "eddies", "plays the wither'd leaf" and "feather". But the overall picture given by the words in their new context is quite different from Thomson's

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[1]Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, p. 6, ll. 7-14; p. 8, ll. 7-14; p. 11, ll. 17-22; p. 26, ll. 25-28; p. 27, ll. 13-16; p. 34, ll. 15 & 16; p. 36, ll. 25-28; p. 107, ll. 9-12; p. 113, l. 20.

[2]Ibid., p. 6, l. 13.

[3]Quoted above, p. 81.

[4]Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, p. 29, ll. 6-9.

impression of the flood. The main difference is brought about by Clare's focussing lines, "...at his cottage door / The shepherd stands to hear the distant roar".[1] The shepherd, because of his own intentional involvement with the flood through the act of listening, becomes one with the flood, both in his central position in Clare's picture, and in his willing acceptance of nature's activity. Thomson's "cottage hind", on the other hand, remains indoors and

> Recounts his simple frolic: much he talks,
> And much he laughs, nor recks the storm that blows
> Without, and rattles on his humble roof.

Thomson's shepherd is not regarded as "one with nature" in the way that Clare's shepherd is. Thomson addresses shepherds thus from an authoritative position: "Now, shepherds, to your helpless charge be kind",[2] an example in the eighteenth century tradition of moral sentiment awakened by the works of nature.[3] The injunction to be kind overflows onto the reader who is implicitly included in the general knowledge that kindness in such circumstances is desirable.

Thomson's position in the poem is one of a man deeply affected by the works of nature and responding to them, yet separated from them. Clare, on the other hand, although sufficiently apart from the inhabitants of his landscape to depict them with the wisdom of a sensitive observer, yet seems a part of that landscape or scene in a way that Thomson does not. Although the phrase, "I love to see (or hear) ...", which recurs throughout Clare's poetry does not

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[1] Ibid., ll. 3 & 4.

[2] James Thomson, ed. by Logie Robertson, p. 188, Winter, ll. 89-93; p. 195, Winter, l. 265.

[3] Ibid., p. 241, l. 1.

appear as such in The Shepherd's Calendar, it is yet constantly implied. Clare is responding to the scene with a personal emotion more akin to that of the Romantic poet than to that of the eighteenth century poet whose valuing of decorum (which involves, among other requirements, good sense, elegance and correctness) does not allow him to break away from the basically calm, measured statement save into controlled effusion or apostrophe. And yet this does not mean that Thomson is devoid of pity for the poor or for those in trouble. One is aware of the poet's sympathy and concern for the swain dying in the snowstorm, and of his pity for the man's wife and children,[1] but it is pity expressed from an elevation. Clare will rather describe hardship as if he were alongside the sufferer; and will not usually make overt comment upon it. Both poets are able to have the suffering extend, as it were, to the whole human race through the reader who accepts the suffering as that of every shepherd, every rustic man, and then as that of every man. But Thomson's words, "Man superior walks / Amid the glad creation",[2] reflect an attitude different from Clare's view of man. While both poets regard man as another of nature's creatures, the difference lies in their view of his status. Thomson sees man as superior to other created beings, and on a much higher plane; man, for him, is in a position of responsibility towards nature and her creatures, and harmony between man and nature depends largely upon man's realising this authoritative responsibility and acting upon it. Clare does not dwell on the theological distinctions between man and other creatures (which Thomson assumes), but

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[1]Ibid., pp. 196 & 197, Winter, ll. 276-317.

[2]Ibid., p. 9, Spring, ll. 170 & 171.

presumably he too assumes a spiritual difference. However, for Clare the difference is much less marked. He does not see man as aloof from the rest of nature in the role of observer, but as a participator with the ability to restore shattered harmony when in proper relation to nature. Moreover, Thomson writes as the gentleman, Clare as the countryman, the labourer.

(v) An added dimension is given to Clare's pastoral vision through the part played in it by the figure of Mary. The inspiration for this figure has been said by some critics to go back to his idealistic, Platonic[1] love for Mary Joyce. However, the identification with Mary Joyce of the unsurnamed Mary in Clare's biographical prose writings is problematic. (In the first chapter of this thesis, where an attempt at such an identification has been made, only two instances where Clare wrote the name, Mary, together with the surname, Joyce, have been noted from the texts available to the present writer. Other evidence suggests that, after Clare's first meetings with Mary, he did not necessarily need the knowledge that she existed physically, in order that his Mary figure should be a reality for him.)[2] But whether the Mary of Clare's biographical prose writings be related to Mary Joyce or not, or whether the Mary of a poem refer to Mary Joyce or not, it is perhaps important to make clear that the latter Mary and the Mary of Clare's poems are not identical, just as Clare and the lyric persona of his poems are

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[1] _Prose_, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 44, ll. 7-9, "...my first attachment being a schoolboy affection was for Mary who ... was belovd with a romantic or Platonic sort of feeling".

[2] See above, pp. 16-19.

not identical. As M.H. Abrams writes in his discussion of Persona, Tone and Voice,[1] "The application of the terms 'persona,' 'tone,' and 'voice' ... involves some of the most subtle and difficult concepts in modern philosophy and social psychology - concepts such as 'the self,' 'personal identity,' 'role-playing,' 'sincerity.'" And further, referring to the lyric poems of Wordsworth and Keats in which the reader seems invited to identify the speaker with the poet himself, Abrams writes, "...these lyric speakers exist at some remove from the men who wrote the poems, and were devised to play a role in a particular situation and to conduce to a particular effect. In each of the major lyricists the nature of the persona alters, sometimes subtly and sometimes radically, from one of his lyrics to the next." This last observation can also be made of Clare's lyrics.

For the reasons given above, whenever the present writer refers to Mary in discussion of the poems, it will be to a fictive, and not to an historical person.

The single long poem in which Clare's vision of Mary is most sustained is "Child Harold", written over several months during his asylum years and probably finished by December, 1841.[2] In this poem Mary seems to be the chief subject for she is frequently named or addressed. Of the twenty-five songs and ballads which are interspersed among, and arise out of, the basic nine-line stanzas of the work, eighteen employ the name Mary in the body of the poem. Three of these poems follow a Byronic nine-line stanza in which Mary's name appears. Six of the remaining songs and

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[1] M.H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms (3rd ed.; New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), pp. 123 & 124.

[2] Robinson, The Later Poems, pp. 5 & 6.

ballads may be regarded as referring to Mary because of their similarity in style and tone to the eighteen previously mentioned. Many of these twenty-five poems as well as some of the nine-line stanzas of "Child Harold" in which Mary plays a part possess a spiritual quality not found consistently in any other group of Clare's poetry in which Mary's name appears. This spiritual dimension, arising from the nature of Clare's vision of Mary, will be more fully discussed in the pages that follow.

Difficulty is experienced when attempting to discuss the role played by Mary in Clare's poetry because the nature and function of the Mary figure in his work is not static; and it is not possible for the present writer to come to an accurate conclusion as to the time and manner in which Clare's treatment of Mary in his poetry changes, because of the absence of a definitive edition of the poet's work in which the chronology of the poems can be accepted. Bearing this in mind, it is, however, still useful to examine the most comprehensive collection of Clare's poems available at this time, the Tibble two volume edition, in order to discover some of the recurring features of the Mary figure in Clare's poetry. But it should be made clear that any attempt at classifying poems for this purpose can only be made, in this thesis, on an impressionistic basis. In the above edition, of the forty poems in which the word "Mary" appears, nine are demonstrably not concerned with Clare's usual Mary figure.[1] Of the remaining thirty-one poems, there are twenty-six in which the name "Mary" appears in such a way as to suggest the Mary figure. In these Mary-poems[2] there are widely

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[1]See Appendix A, pp. 237-239.

[2]By this term the present writer means poems in which the Mary figure defined above appears.

differing attitudes to Mary. Seven of them are predominantly laments, four are invitations and at least eight are celebratory.[1] Traces of all three approaches are usually found in each poem concerned with Clare's Mary figure, and there is no evidence of a correlation between the approximate time when a Mary-poem was written and any particular attitude to Mary in that poem. For example, "The Progress of Ryhme", judged by Tibble to have been written as early as between 1821 and 1824 at Helpston, has an approach to Mary similar to that found much later, in "Child Harold".

Clare's approach to Mary may vary, but what she represents for him remains fairly constant. In his vision of experience, nature, poetry[2] and Mary come to be synonymous through a recognition that his love for each of them, and his response to what they have to give him, is his inspiration. When, towards the end of his discursive poem, "The Progress of Ryhme", Mary's name appears for the first time in the apostrophe, "And Mary thou whose very name / I loved", Clare writes of her:

> And all of fair or beautiful
> Were thine akin - nor could I pull
> The blossoms that I thought divine
> Lest I should injure aught of thine
> So where they grew I let them be
> And tho' I dare not look to thee
> Of love - to them I talked aloud

which strongly suggests that Mary is nature for Clare; certainly her informing spirit is felt to be present in nature. In the final lines of this poem Clare equates the "cheer" that love of Mary gave

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[1]See Appendix A, pp. 237-239.

[2]Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 9, the last two lines: "...to look on nature with a poetic eye magnifys the pleasure she herself being the very essence and soul of Poesy".

him with that which poetry gave him in later years: "Yet that same cheer in after toils / Was poesy - ". Again, in the final three lines of the poem,

> ... - and still she smiles
> As sweet as blossoms to the tree
> And hope love joy are poesy ,[1]

it is uncertain as to whether "she" refers to Mary or to poesy. Thus the poet draws Mary, poetry and nature together as one in their ability to fill him with hope, love and joy; indeed, they are hope, love and joy for him. In this way they are his inspirers, and, indeed, Clare repeatedly claims that Mary is his muse. In "Child Harold", she is addressed as "Mary thou ace of hearts thou muse of song / The pole star of my being and decay" and "- Mary the muse of every song I write"; and in the same poem Clare longs for a meeting with "Mary as my vagrant muse". In this poem, as in "The Progress of Ryhme", Mary is spoken of as if she were one with nature and song or poetry. She is indirectly referred to in this way in the following lines:

> My heart to nature there was early won
> For she was natures self - and still my song
> Is her through sun and shade through right and wrong[2]

Bearing in mind the tenuous nature of the link between the Mary in Clare's biographical writings and Mary Joyce already referred to,[3] one can say that Clare's separation from Mary Joyce during her life time and through her death did not affect the clarity of his vision of the Mary of his poetry or diminish the

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[1] Ibid., "The Progress of Ryhme", p. 125, ll. 4 & 5; ibid., ll. 16-22; ibid., ll. 28 & 29; ibid., ll. 29-31.

[2] Robinson, The Later Poems, "Child Harold", p. 37, ll. 25 & 26; ibid., p. 48, l. 1; ibid., p. 48, l. 28; ibid., p. 59, ll. 30-32.

[3] See above, pp. 16-19, 88 & 89.

latter's power to inspire him through love. Even during his confinement to an asylum he was able to write a song in which, amidst all his apparent confusion of questioning, Mary remains the centre of love for him. In the final lines of this song, "Say What Is Love - What E'er It be / It Center's Mary Still With Thee",[1] there is a delicate movement between a questioning and an affirmative tone. No easy answer is forthcoming, but one is reminded of the theme of love as an act of reciprocation for mutual good,[2] found in The Shepherd's Calendar. In the song mentioned above, the theme is expressed in the result of the relationship between the speaker and Mary. For Mary, the centre of love, gives Clare the inspiration to write; and in writing he gives back to her the love which informs the poetry in which he celebrates his vision. One finds this celebration to be both in poetry and of poetry, and to be also a celebration of both Mary and nature, so often conceived of as one.

At this point it should be said that Clare, as well as sometimes identifying, or not distinguishing between, Mary and nature and poetry, also, on other occasions, makes the common association of the beloved with nature, or aspects of nature like flowers. The association may be very close, as in the final stanza of his poem, "Mary a Ballad":

> The spring comes brighter by day
> And brighter flowers appear
> And though she long has kept away
> Her name is ever dear
> Then leave me still the meadow-flowers

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[1]Robinson, The Later Poems, "Child Harold", p.70, ll. 15 & 16.

[2]See above, p. 48.

Where daffies blaze and shine
Give but the springs young hawthorn bower
For then sweet Mary's mine [1]

The close association or, at times, identification of Mary with nature partly explains Clare's tone of acceptance and joy in any season, any weather. In the first stanza of the "Song" in "Child Harold" beginning "Tis autumn now and natures scenes", Clare overtly states that his mood does not change with that of nature in the different seasons; the fields and trees may lose their colourful leaves, but nature does not find any alteration in him. This, he says, is because Mary remains his angel through every month and all ills; and in the last stanza not only is Mary his angel, his genius or tutelary spirit, but also, once again, she is alligned to forms of nature.[2]

A comparison between two poems which are alike in that spring flowers of the same kind predominate, but which differ in the degree to which Mary's influence is explicit, may help to show to what extent Mary's inspirational presence may be implicit in a poem which hardly mentions her name. (The present writer does not regard the following two poems as examples of successful lyrics, nor as among the best of which Clare is capable, mainly because, at times, the rhythm of the poems fails to blend with and modify the tone and material. They are, however, useful as a means of demonstrating certain points.)

The first of the two poems to be discussed is given below:

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[1] Robinson, The Later Poems, p. 183, "Mary a Ballad", v. 7.

[2] Ibid., "Child Harold", p. 57, "Song", vv. 1 & 3.

TO MARY

Mary, I love to sing
About the flowers of spring,
  For they resemble thee.
In the earliest of the year
Thy beauties will appear,
  And youthful modesty.

Here's the daisy's silver rim.
With gold eye never dim,
  Spring's earliest flower so fair.
Here the pilewort's golden rays
Set the cow-green in a blaze,
  Like the sunshine in thy hair.

Here's forget-me-not so blue;
Is there any flower so true?
  Can it speak my happy lot?
When we courted in disguise
This flower I used to prize,
  For it said, 'Forget me not.'

Speedwell! And when we meet
In the meadow paths so sweet,
  Where the flowers I gave to thee
All grew beneath the sun,
May thy gentle heart be won,
  And I be blest with thee. [1]

The title alone suggests that Mary is the centre of the poem and the main reason for its existence. The poet's love of singing, expressed in line one, extends to the writing of the poem which _is_ his song; and the reason given for his love of both forms of singing is that the subject of his present song, "spring flowers", resembles Mary. The folk-song echoes in the likening of the beloved to a flower are similar to those in Burns's "My love is like a red, red rose"; yet, in the next three lines of Clare's poem Mary, without any comparison being stated, seems progressively to become a flower of spring herself in her "youthful modesty", for (as the first verse made clear) in the earliest spring flower or flowers her "beauties will appear". The opening words of the next three

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[1] Tibble, _Poems_, II, 429.

stanzas not only point to kinds of flowers, but offer them as more than likenesses of Mary; they are conveyors of associations with time and place as well as a person. They are offered, as Ophelia offers her flowers in Hamlet, but not as symbols removed from their environment.

Each of the last three stanzas of the poem is devoted to the flowers which, in stanza one, have given rise to the song; but in each case the flowers are carefully and with delicacy either implicitly or explicitly placed in their relationship to Mary. Thus, in stanza two, no direct comparison is made between Mary's eyes and the daisy's "gold eye never dim", but the line, "Springs earliest flowers so fair", recalls Mary's beauties appearing in spring, in stanza one, so that the likeness is understood. Comparison becomes explicit in the simile of stanza two linking "the pilewort's golden rays" and "the sunshine in thy hair". The "forget-me-not" of the third stanza gives rise to two questions, one rhetorical and general and the other more searching, and the flower's message works in two ways, for, as well as giving the poet hope that he should not be forgotten, earlier it had been the token of Mary's plea for the same remembrance and thus of her caring for him.

Finally, a paradox is introduced into the fourth stanza. The wild speedwell becomes a word standing as a command or valediction, and there is a suggestion that Mary has to go away, in order that the poet may win her gentle heart and be blessed with her presence. The time sequence in the poem seems to strengthen this suggestion, for the first stanza begins in the present and ends in the future tense, pointing forward to the future meeting anticipated in stanza four; the second stanza is written entirely in the present

tense as if the poet were demonstrating his love of singing; the third stanza starts off in the present tense and then reverts to the past tense as it recaptures the past while trying to define the present. The final stanza contains all three tenses and has a tone of faith presented both in the allusions to future meetings in the words "when we meet", and in the speaker's belief in Mary's ability to bless with her presence. The poem appropriately begins and ends with Mary, and Mary's presence pervades the poem as if she and the spring flowers were one.

The second poem to be discussed follows:

SPRING'S NOSEGAY

The prim daisy's golden eye
On the fallow land doth lie,
Though the spring is just begun:
Pewits watch it all the day,
And the skylark's nest of hay
Is there by its dried leaves in the sun.

There the pilewort, all in gold,
'Neath the ridge of finest mould,
Blooms to cheer the ploughman's eye:
There the mouse his hole hath made,
And 'neath the golden shade
Hides secure when the hawk is prowling by.

Here's the speedwell's sapphire blue;
Was there anything more true
To the vernal season still?
Here it decks the bank alone,
Where the milkmaid throws a stone
At noon, to cross the rapid, flooded rill.

Here the cowslip, chill with cold,
On the rushy bed behold,
It looks for sunshine all the day.
Here the honey-bee will come,
For he has no sweets at home;
Then quake his weary wing and fly away.

And here are nameless flowers,
Culled in cold and rawky hours
For my Mary's happy home.
They grew in murky blea
Rush-fields and naked lea,
But suns will shine and pleasing spring will come.[1]

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[1] Ibid., II, 432.

In this poem Mary is not mentioned until the fourth line from the end and yet the poem has a singing, celebratory air similar to that of the one previously discussed; the poet does not have to say "I love to sing / About the flowers of spring"[1] for it is as clear in the tone of this poem as in the last that he does love to do this.

The title of the poem suggests its intention: to present a nosegay, and this is done in two ways. First, stanza by stanza, the poet describes the flowers in their natural habitat and in relation to other creatures of nature: "Pewits watch [the daisy's golden eye] all the day" and the pilewort "blooms to cheer the ploughman's eye"; the milkmaid is seen against a bank of speedwell; and amongst the cowslips and other flowers "here the honey-bee will come". Then, and only in the last stanza, flowers are culled; they are nameless, a fact which enables the poet to include within the nosegay any or all spring flowers.

In each stanza there is a lurking threat to the beauty and harmony present in the natural world. In the first stanza the spring has just begun and because of this the early daisy is conspicuous on the fallow land; in the second, the prowling hawk is a threat to the mouse; in stanza three the flooded rill is a potential danger to the milkmaid; in the fourth stanza the cowslip and the bee are threatened by cold and hunger; and in the last the nameless flowers, grown and picked in the cold, seem to bring their mist with them. But the sense of a haven is as strong in each verse as the sense of a threat. The skylark's nest, the mouse's hole, the milkmaid's destination for which it is worth crossing the flooded rill, the

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[1] Ibid., II, 429, "To Mary", ll. 1 & 2. (See above, p. 95.)

bee's home, and finally Mary's dwelling, all are havens.

The concluding stanza modifies the other four in that all the flowers mentioned are potentially chosen for "Mary's happy home", whether they are culled in bleak weather or sunshine, or left where they are; for Mary's dwelling is where she is, which could as well be on "fallow land", "'neath the ridge of finest mould", upon the bank of a "flooded rill" or near a "rushy bed".

The verse form of this poem is similar to the lilting variations upon the iambic trimeter and tetrameter of the first poem, but in the second poem the final line of each stanza is lengthened. This extension emphasizes the meaning of the final lines and acts in a similar manner to the Spenserian stanza's alexandrine, that is, it reaches towards the stanza to come, at the same time as it underlines the sense of the stanza to which it belongs. The rhythm of this lyric is more irregular than that of the first one discussed, and the stanzas are not smoothly linked, but rather form separate vignettes of each flower in its scenic place, and these vignettes the final stanza gathers up, as it were, and presents to Mary.

The time sequence in this poem is more simple than it is in the first. With the exception of the bee's activity which is in the future tense, the first four stanzas are written in the present. The final stanza contains the present, past and future tenses, and in tone and implication throws new light on the previous stanzas. In these, as already stated, the latent threat of unhappiness through deprivation or disaster runs as a parallel vein to the enjoyment of flowers, birds and beasts. In the final stanza, before the utterance of faith in line six, coldness and dreariness are predominant. It is only the anticipation of sharing the flowers with Mary that enables the speaker to affirm the certainty of the change to come;

only this reciprocity and this love can transform his life, filling it with sunshine and pleasure.

In the first four stanzas the flowers are in their right relationship with nature. In being culled they are taken out of it but for the loving purpose of reciprocal pleasure so that they are able to impart this felicity of relationship to their new surroundings; and this harmony reflects both back to the first four stanzas and forward into the future.

A similar sense of the harmony arising from a proper relationship with nature runs through The Shepherd's Calendar. But, whereas the harmony in the Mary poem just discussed lies in the flowers being in their correct place within their natural surroundings, the harmony in The Shepherd's Calendar has a two-fold origin. In the latter poem nature's creatures are found both in their proper place and at the right time during nature's seasonal cycle. Another similarity, with a difference, between these two poems lies in the degree of implicitness of Mary's presence in them. There is an explicit reference to Mary only in the last four lines of the former poem and yet her presence is felt throughout the verses. Although neither the poetic "I" nor the word "Mary" appears in The Shepherd's Calendar, one senses, especially in the personifications of April and May,[1] that the joy the writer finds in the natural world is shared with a female figure that inspires him through love and reciprocity. This presence of a person with whom and in whom the delight of nature may be appreciated, a person similar to Mary or one who could actually be Mary, is also found in many of Clare's sonnets, often suggested by the pronoun "we".[2]

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[1]See discussion of these two eclogues above, pp. 52-61.

[2]See, for example: "Nutting" discussed below, pp. 171 & 172; Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 160, "Pleasant Places", l. 5; ibid., "Stray Walks", l. 14; ibid., p. 163, "The Hollow Tree", ll. 9-14.

The lyric, "Mary", given below, combines three different ways in which Clare expresses Mary's power to inspire him, and also three ways in which her inspirational presence manifests itself. Although the three ways are apparently given stanza by stanza, they are not confined each to a single stanza but are accumulative. Yet, even this last word needs qualification, for the end of the lyric is, characteristically, in its beginning:

MARY

It is the evening hour,<br>
  How silent all doth lie:<br>
The hornèd moon she shows her face<br>
  In the river with the sky.<br>
Just by the path on which we pass,<br>
The flaggy lake lies still as glass.

Spirit of her I love,<br>
  Whispering to me<br>
Stories of sweet visions as I rove,<br>
  Here stop, and crop with me<br>
Sweet flowers that in the still hour grew -<br>
We'll take them home, nor shake off the bright dew.

Mary, or sweet spirit of thee,<br>
  As the bright sun shines to-morrow<br>
Thy dark eyes these flowers shall see,<br>
  Gathered by me in sorrow,<br>
In the still hour when my mind was free<br>
To walk alone - yet wish I walked with thee. [1]

In the first line of the poem the stillness referred to in the last couplet is present in two ways. Firstly, an absence of activity is suggested by the present tense of the verb "to be", which, with its lack of progression, seems to turn back upon itself and allow the idea of the evening hour to eddy into a pool of silence, so that the breathed out sigh on the aspirant of "How silent" in its

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[1] John Clare: Selected Poems, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 294. This version of the poem with its two corrections "based on Knight's transcripts which came to light in 1948" (ibid., p. 345), namely, l. 5, just not prest, and l. 9, stories not stores, has been preferred to that found in the 1935 edition of Clare's poems. (Tibble, Poems, II, 498.)

prominent place at the beginning of the second line affirms the implications of silence in the first. The trochaic pattern of "silent" seems to enforce a pause after the word, in keeping with its meaning and tone, as if the breath has been caught in wonder. Secondly, the fixed time span of an hour, with its pointing towards the hours to follow, is qualified by the word "evening" which, in association with the word "hour", takes on an endless quality which defies measurement -- much as a season is fixed and yet is not able to be confined to an ascertainable span of time. The second verb in the stanza, "doth lie", reinforces the stasis up to this point, and extends the immobility to everything within the poet's vision at that moment. The meaning of the verb overflows into the next two lines of the stanza so that "the hornèd moon" is thought of as "lying" reflected with the sky in the river. There is perhaps an added suggestion that the crescent moon seems to be "lying" on its back, as if in a recumbent position.

The moon does not need to move in order to "show her face", so that the only moving objects in the stanza are those the poet refers to as "we" who "pass / The flaggy lake" that "lies still as glass". Thus the speaker and the other person who, from the title of the poem, is presumed to be Mary, introduce movement and life into a passive scene, transforming it by their awareness of its stillness and its beauty -- an awareness revealed especially in the second line of the stanza and in the word "just" in line five which conveys the idea of the perfect placing of each item in the scene. The stillness of the lake described in line six and the proximity of the lake to the path suggest that those passing on the path have stopped to see <u>their</u> faces mirrored there.

It seems natural that, in this poised moment at the end of

stanza one, the speaker should address the person beside him; but it comes as a slight shock that the spirit of the one the speaker loves should be addressed, although the ethereal silence in the first stanza has, to a certain extent, prepared the reader for this. Another source of surprise is the force of the verb "rove" after the stillness in stanza one sustained by the word "whispering" in the second stanza. The repetition, in these two lines, of the "sp" sound in "spirit" and "whispering" and of the "s" sounds in "stories", "sweet", and "visions", all in close proximity to one another, reproduces the sibilant sound associated with whispering, which is at one remove from silence but is dominated by silence. But the word "stories" prepares one for the complete release from silence and immobility that comes with the word "rove" and with the request, "Here stop, and crop with me". The scene in stanza one seems to become one of the "sweet visions" about which "stories" are "whispered", and is subtly placed in the past so that the action requested becomes more vividly immediate by contrast; and this immediacy turns the request into an urgent injunction. Yet the command remains a plea to Mary's spirit to become actively involved in the poet's life, to share in the plucking of the flowers, an action with a suggestion of the habitual about it because of the continuous present sense of "stop" and "crop". Again one is led back to stanza one which is placed more firmly in the past by means of the description of the flowers as those "that in the still hour grew". This stillness and inactivity now seems to extend to the second stanza in the words "whispering", "stories" and "visions", but these impressions are not allowed to linger, for the line that follows is charged with life, hope, anticipation and intention. The poet is asking Mary's spirit to join him in an act of reciprocity

for mutual good which, for Clare, is love. The words, "We'll take them home", are filled with faith and confidence, and the lovely image that follows, "nor shake off the bright dew", radiates back not only to the flowers that the poet hopes Mary will help him gather, but to the freshness, the sparkling beauty, the delicate fragility of the relationship of love which is hinted at in the first stanza and which is sought in this. The phrase also recalls the stillness and the "evening hour" in the first stanza, both accompaniments of dewfall.

In the final stanza it is as if the relationship of love asked for with such confidence in stanza two has imbued Mary's spirit with a reality almost tangible to the poet; he seems to sway between Mary as tangible reality and Mary as spirit, pivoting on the word "or" in line one of the stanza. But this uncertainty is thrust aside in the second line which rings with the sureness of a pledge: "As the bright sun shines". Then, with the enriching ambivalence which Clare's placing of subordinate clauses or phrases in ambiguous positions so often achieves, the phrase of line two works in such a way that, when linked to the previous phrase, it intensifies the poet's expressions of faith in Mary -- not only is the sun shining at present but it will shine "tomorrow". The same phrase, when linked with the line that follows it, pinpoints the day of Mary's seeing the flowers, underlining the faith which quietly asserts itself in the verb "shall see".

The first explicit hint of grief in the poem lies in the darkness of Mary's eyes which increases her beauty but seems to reflect the speaker's sorrow referred to in the fourth line. But the full poignancy of the poet's situation is revealed only in the final two lines of the poem. The apparent present reality of the beauty

manifest in the first stanza becomes a memory in which freedom of mind and of choice are his -- "In the still hour when my mind was free / To walk alone" -- and yet, with this freedom, his "wish" or choice remains a wish and not a reality; Mary remains spirit, not the mortal being he longs for in stanza two.

The final phrase in the poem, "Yet [to] wish I walked with thee", embraces the whole utterance, as effectively injecting a tone of longing into the very first line as suggesting the failure of the poet's plea for Mary's physical presence in stanza two. This suggestion of failure might overflow into a final position of despair were it not for the affirmation which lies in the fact of the poem itself, as well as in its tone of praise. The poem is inspired by Mary, but the pure, unspoilt, Eden-like freshness of Mary's beauty does more than inspire; it becomes the subject of the poem, as for Clare it becomes almost part of his material, nature. Thus the poet's wish, while remaining unfulfilled in one sense, is fulfilled in another by the poem itself.

In this poem, Mary appears implicitly in stanza one (suggested by "we" in line five), as she does in many of Clare's lyrics where, as well as being a source of inspiration for Clare, she is part of his material in the sense that she becomes synonymous, or closely associated, with nature. In the second stanza Mary's spirit is called upon to be the speaker's companion in reality, and this wish for her presence is echoed in many of Clare's poems.[1] Finally, Mary's very absence, lamented in the last verse, paradoxically gives

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[1]See, for example: Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 1, "Dedication to ****"; Robinson, The Later Poems, "Child Harold", p. 36, ll. 26 & 27; John Clare: Selected Poems, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 330, "My Loved One my Own", vv. 2 & 3.

the speaker the freedom to long for her presence, and, in longing for it, there is created that tension within the poem which gives it vitality. A similar tension is found in very many of Clare's successful poems; a delicate tension often brought about in much the same way as it is in the poem discussed above; that is, through the suggested or stated presence or absence of an inspirational figure which can often be identified as Mary. This figure may participate in or inspire the poet's wonder at and perception of the beauties of nature; or her absence, usually reflected for the poet by the reactions of the natural world, may inspire a lament or invocation. Thus it can be said that, for Clare, in one sense of the term Mary is "poesy".

The way that Mary's presence and absence works in this poem epitomizes the nature of the pastoral vision that is central to Clare's poetry. The three main pastoral themes that have been discussed in connection with The Shepherd's Calendar, namely, the unity of man and nature realised in shared experience; the fulfilment of being of nature's children, including man, when they have found, and are acting in, their proper place; and especially love as an act of reciprocation for mutual good, are to be found working in the poem "Mary". The first of these themes is present in the experience of silence shared by man and nature in verse one of the poem. The speaker in this verse is aware of the silence and is able to become one with it in mood and movement in the scene of which he and his companion are a part; a scene in which "all" lies silent and the "lake lies still as glass". The second of the themes is also to be found in the first stanza where "all doth lie" (that is, all creatures of nature) in stillness, in their proper place at that time, thereby fulfilling themselves in their right relationship to

the demands of the overall mood or state of their surroundings at that moment. The lake is _just_ by the path and the moon is in the correct position in the sky for reflection in the river. Man, too, represented by the speaker and his companion, is in his proper place at the moment, that is, in a position to see and experience the natural scene, and to be part of the interaction between the constituents of the whole scene at that moment of stillness. The third theme is present especially in the second stanza in the speaker's request to Mary to join him in picking flowers, a loving act of reciprocation in which Mary would be giving him her presence for his good while he would be giving her the flowers as part or token of all the beauty he wishes to give her and which he does give her, metaphorically, through his poem.

For Clare, Mary's presence in nature is a constant factor, but the form her presence takes does not remain fixed, just as it does not do so in the last lyric discussed. It is as if the figure of Mary accompanies Clare, the poet, at all times, even when she is seemingly unperceived, or thought of as lost. On his journey through life she grows with him; she changes with him. As his particular need changes, so the nature of her presence seems to change to meet his need. She is perhaps the Hope that enables him ultimately to overcome the disintegration that threatens his personality.

The figure of Mary in Clare's poetry has been likened to that of Dante's Beatrice.[1] In so far as she is an inspirational figure accompanying Clare on his long, lonely road of exile from her physical presence, a tentative analogy could fruitfully be made; but it is clear that at this point the nature of the two figures diverges.

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[1]Tibble & Tibble, _John Clare: A Life_, p. 375.

Mary is not, for Clare, an explicitly religious figure and is certainly not seen within a Christian framework as is Dante's Beatrice. More light is thrown on Clare's poetry if one regards Mary as a pastoral figure of a particular kind. She is not seen as the alluring shepherdess, often tantalizingly beyond capture; and yet she is imbued with attributes quite often assigned to the shepherdesses associated with the traditional Classical and Renaissance form of the pastoral genre, especially those of a pastoral goddess. But, more importantly, Mary appears in nature as beauty, and as the composite "hope love joy";[1] and she brings forth Clare's response of love for nature that does not have to be expressed in the specific words, "I love...", so often found in his poems, but that can be apprehended through his accurate perception and rendering of minute detail of the natural world which opens up a new vision of this world for the reader.

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[1]Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, "The Progress of Ryhme", p. 125, l. 31.

## CHAPTER III

## CLARE'S SONNETS


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(i) It is a little surprising to find pastoral themes in sonnet form, but the sheer number of sonnets or sonnet-like poems on such themes that Clare wrote (namely, most of the four hundred and thirty-three considered here)[1] suggests that he needed the sonnet form in order to express his predominantly pastoral vision in a certain way. A number of the poems by Clare which Tibble has placed under the heading "Sonnets"[2] (of which one hundred and twenty-eight are in rhyming couplets)[3] would, perhaps, not be classified as such in certain critics' understanding of the genre.[4] In this chapter, consideration will be given to the problem of whether Clare's many quatorzains which do not resemble the generally accepted sonnet form may be called sonnets. But this cannot be done until an attempt has been made to understand the nature of sonnet.

A final definition of the sonnet, as of poetry, is perhaps not possible. Even a tentative definition would need qualifications and, to make it tenable, would require to be supported by both argument and example from all ages. But in an account of Clare's poetry some criterion is needed against which to measure his sonnets and as a basis on which to discuss them.

Before attempting to define the sonnet, a brief look at the history of the genre is necessary.[5] As this is to be related to

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[1]See Appendix B, p. 240.

[2]*Ibid.*, pp. 245-258.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 240.

[4]John Fuller, *The Sonnet*, The Critical Idiom, ed. by John D. Jump (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1972), p. 33.

[5]In the discussion of the sonnet below (pp. 110-117), information has been drawn chiefly from J.W. Lever, *The Elizabethan Love Sonnet*, University Paperbacks (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1956).

Clare's poetry, more emphasis will be given to those poets and tendencies which either shed light on Clare's practice or parallel it in some way.

(ii) The basic sonnet form of a single fourteen lined stanza was popular on the Continent long before it was introduced into England by Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) and the Earl of Surrey (1517-1547). It seems to be agreed that the form appeared first during the reign of Frederick II of Sicily who died in 1250,[1] but the acknowledged father of the sonnet form which gave rise to the sonnet in English was the Italian scholar, Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374), who wrote a series of sonnets to his mistress, not in Latin but in the vernacular. Hence the name, "Italian", given to sonnets based on the structure of these poems of his, although it is perhaps more accurate to call them "Petrarchan". Petrarch's sonnets consisted of a single fourteen lined stanza of pentameters rhyming abba, abba, cde, cde (or ccd, ccd; or cde, edc). The rhyme scheme of the octave resulted in combining the effect arising from progression which lends itself to narrative and exposition (ab-ba), and stasis achieved by the repetitive rhyming couplet (a-bbaabb-a). The overall effect is one of captured, not progressive, thought, intensified through the repetition of the rhyme scheme (ab-ba) in the second quatrain of the octave. The division of the sestet into two tercets, with a symmetrical yet flexible rhyme scheme, allows for the correlation of thought with that of the octave. The rhyming couplet rarely appears

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[1]Patrick Cruttwell, <u>The English Sonnet</u>, Writers and their Work : No. 191 (London: Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd., 1966), p. 6, and Fuller, <u>Sonnet</u>, p. 1.

at the end of the sonnet as this would give the impression of a logical argument concluded, whereas the effect aimed at is an intense imaginative experience arrived at through combined thought and feeling.[1]

The sonnet belongs ultimately to the Medieval Lyric school of Provençal poetry.[2] It is not surprising, then, that, in the Elizabethan period following that of Wyatt, and also during the seventeenth century, songs and sonnets were often classed as a single genre, many songs being named sonnets although not conforming to the basic sonnet form. The progression from the medieval Provençal lyric to the Petrarchan sonnet which has so strongly influenced European literature came from the fusion of the Provençal and Tuscan traditions of poetry into which was injected realism arising from the personal note of Petrarch. It would seem that the prescribed attitudes of the later Provençal lyrics with their tendency to sensuous eroticism, combined with and tempered by the idealism and etherealism found in thirteenth century Italian poetry, were not enough to capture an immediate experience of love where the beloved was fully realized as a human being.[3]

The first sonneteers in English as far as can be ascertained were Wyatt and Surrey, as has been mentioned above. Both poets translated and imitated Petrarch's sonnets, yet, in both cases, they created something new. Their sonnets, following the Italian tradition epitomised by Petrarch, were usually on the subject of romantic love.

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[1] Lever, Sonnet, pp. 6 & 7.

[2] W.P. Ker, Form & Style in Poetry, ed. by R.W. Chambers (London: Macmillan, 1966, first published 1928), p. 188.

[3] Lever, Sonnet, pp. 2 & 3.

Yet, in a group of sonnets written later, Surrey departed from this subject and addressed sonnets to a noble lady who was not the beloved; to Wyatt; to a fellow soldier who had died saving the poet's life; and to the monarch[1] -- forerunners of the public and political sonnets of such poets as Milton and Wordsworth. The style of Wyatt and Surrey was largely one of "restraint, dignity and simplicity".[2] In Surrey's sonnet beginning with the following quatrain:

> Set me wheras the sonne dothe perche the grene,
> Or whear his beames may not dissolve the ise;
> In temprat heat wheare he is felt and sene;
> With prowde people, in presence sad and wyse;[3]

one notices the monosyllabic nature of the first two lines, each containing only one disyllable. The words flow within the lines, the lines flow in relation to each other, and a controlled dignity reflects the wish for the temperate. Simplicity and restraint complement one another.

In some of Wyatt's sonnets one sees the possible forerunner of a sonnet like No. 61 from the sequence, Idea, by Michael Drayton (1563-1631) with its colloquial style and its series of ironic contradictions, captured in the first and last lines:

> Since ther's no helpe, Come let us kisse and part,
> Nay, I have done: You get no more of Me,
> ........................................
> Now if thou would'st, when all have given him over,
> From Death to Life, thou might'st him yet recover.[4]

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[1]Lever, Sonnet, p. 48.

[2]Ker, Form & Style, p. 189.

[3]Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey: Poems, ed. by Emrys Jones, Clarendon Medieval and Tudor Series (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 2, Poem No. 3, ll. 1-4.

[4]Lever, Sonnet, p. 159, Sonnet LXI, ll. 1, 2, 13 & 14.

In the following opening quatrain from a sonnet by Wyatt,

> You that in love finde lucke and habundance
> And live in lust and joyful jolitie,
> Arrise for shame! Do away your sluggardie!
> Arise, I say, do May some obseruance! [1]

there is a combination of the colloquial tone and the broken rhythms of speech later found in some of the provocative Songs and Sonnets of John Donne (1571-1631). One finds a similar forcefulness and quick, dramatic change of tone.

Wyatt had already shown, in his translation of Petrarch's sonnet No. 140, ("The longe love, that in my thought doth harbour")[2] a willingness to depart from Petrarchan melodic line and abstractions which lost much of their resonance in English translation. He replaces a sonorous hyperbole with a tough vitality, most apparent in the verbs he uses, and in this way more truly captures the personal passionate involvement shown in the sonnet form. Another change that both Wyatt and Surrey made in some of their sonnets was to replace the Petrarchan rhyme scheme of the sestet with one that ended in a rhyming couplet. Saintsbury says of the final rhyming couplet in a sonnet, "The swift counter-twist in form of the couplet-close suits our headlong and masterful tongue better than the drawn-out dying of the sestet".[3] This as a general statement has truth, but is qualified when considering especially certain sonnets by Milton and Wordsworth. Surrey's further contribution to the sonnet in English was his introduction of the rhyme scheme abab, cdcd,

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[1] Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt, ed. by Kenneth Muir, The Muses' Library (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1963), p. 75, Poem No. 92, ll. 1-4.

[2] Cruttwell, Sonnet, pp. 8 & 9.

[3] George Saintsbury, A History of English Prosody (3 vols.; London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1908), II, 146.

efef, gg, later constantly used by Shakespeare. It allowed controlled logical exposition as well as enrichment through contrasts and appositions.[1]

Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) gave a new turn to the English sonnet, "made it popular, determined its form, sowed its seed broadcast among the fertile poetic soil of the time."[2] Nineteen of his early poems were sonnets proper, but most of them "were of the class known to Elizabethans as 'songs and sonets' - that is, English variations of rondeaux, epigrams, and sonnets, of anything between six and eighteen lines in length".[3] Later, his poetic powers crystalized and he found his true voice in his Sonnets of Astrophel. This sonnet cycle demonstrates that there can be great variety in a genre; the relationship between the poet and the beloved changes at various stages of the sequence, with accompanying changes in the theme, emphasis, mood and structure of the various sonnets. A change to alexandrines throughout certain sonnets gives weight and added substance to them, or contributes to Sidney's gentle mockery of over-elaboration in the form. His rhyme scheme varies considerably in this cycle in which "there are four types of octave and six types of sestet".[4]

Sidney uses the accepted sonnet medium to gain freedom for his wit, sensibility and self-examination; Stella's idealized attributes of womanly beauty and virtue are conventional. But the poet's

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[1] Lever, Sonnet, p. 46.

[2] Saintsbury, English Prosody, II, 95.

[3] Lever, Sonnet, p. 51.

[4] Ibid., pp. 88 & 89.

treatment of and reaction to them in his different capacities of poet, diplomat, soldier, cultural humanist and Christian, is highly individual. The focus is on self-searching and the emphasis is on the dramatic with vigorous rhythms of speech and plain vocabulary. This is a moving away from the previous sonnet tradition. In the Petrarchan sonnet the syntax often divides the octave into quatrains, and in the sestet creates two tercets pulling against the quatrain/couplet rhyme scheme. Sidney's method, unlike that of Petrarch or Surrey, is to "balance opposite considerations and induce a kind of surprise conclusion in the last lines".[1]

A few years after Sidney's sonnet cycle appeared, Edmund Spenser (1552-1599), already mature and having completed Book VI of The Faerie Queene, published his sonnet sequence, Amoretti. One finds, in his best sonnets, a "devout, quiet, harmonious pattern. The effect...is close to Petrarch's own but without the melancholy".[2] This "harmonious pattern" is effected largely by the rhyme scheme of abab, bcbc, cdcd, ee which, while gradually progressing, flows back at the same time. It echoes strongly the rhyme scheme of the stanza Spenser used for The Faerie Queene, namely, abab, bcbcc and "reintroduces the couplets characteristic of the Italian sonnet...[which], by blending the quatrains together, offers the opportunity for more closely developed argument".[3]

Spenser's treatment of the lady of the sonnet is unusual in that, rather than dwell on her character as shown through her actions,

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[1]Lever, Sonnet, p. 89.

[2]C.S. Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century excluding Drama, Oxford History of English Literature, ed. by F.P. Wilson and Bonamy Dobrée (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1954), p.372.

[3]Fuller, Sonnet, p. 21.

he regards her in terms of the mystical ideal of sacramental marriage.[1] His sonnet sequence begins not with the lovers' first meeting but with an examination of a spiritual state[2] and develops, not from sonnet to sonnet, but in a time sequence through the seasons which gives the sequence a wider setting. Spenser seems to seek the "golden mean" between misery and ecstatic joy crystralized in the beatific state of final union.

Other Elizabethan poets who wrote sonnet sequences of perhaps less importance yet containing some fine poems were Daniel with Delia in 1592, Lodge with Phillis in 1593, Constable with Diana in 1592 and Drayton, one of whose sonnets taken from his cycle named Idea has already been noted.[3]

William Shakespeare (1564-1616), the master of the Elizabethan sonnet sequence, in whose cycle one finds the narrative element more strongly developed than in most cycles, perfects the use of the particular Surrey rhyme scheme of abab, cdcd, efef, gg which he imbues with the power to act not only as octave and sestet but as three quatrains pulling against, yet developing from one another, curtailed by the rhyming couplet which is not merely a neat summary but contributes something new either by a twist or by a change of position. The range of his sonnets is such that he surpasses Sidney's great sonnet on lust, "Thou blind mans marke,..." with "Th'expence of Spirit..." and goes further than Sidney in overt introspection in "Sinne of self-love..." He succeeds admirably in "grounding" his mistress in

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[1] Lever, Sonnet, p. 109.

[2] Ibid., p. 117.

[3] See above, p.112.

a witty, flaunting denial of all the conventions of other poets' love sonnets, yet raising her higher, because of this. Shakespeare not only runs the gamut of love, its truth and falsehood, but explores the very convention he is using. In Lever's able attempt to pin-point Shakespeare's genius he says, "In taking the noble friend as his theme, Shakespeare freed himself from all the encumbrances which hampered the sonnet poets of his time. Without impropriety or strain, this theme admitted a consideration, at once intellectual and impassioned, of the wide vistas of politics and society, cosmic destiny and the human predicament, which exercised the imagination of the age".[1]

An analysis and comparison of a Shakespearean sonnet with one of Clare's sonnets is made on pages 143 to 148 of this thesis which will, perhaps, make clear that further analysis of Shakespeare's sonnets within this thesis would be out of place.

Previous mention has been made of John Donne's colloquial, dramatic style in his sonnets. In some of their sonnets, Wyatt, Drayton and Sidney were forerunners of this style. Donne's unusual contribution is his Holy Sonnet which examines the relationship not between the poet and his lady but between the poet and God.

In the first half of the seventeenth century William Drummond of Hawthornden (1585-1649) anticipated Milton to some extent in not using the sonnet purely for love themes. Unlike Milton's sonnets, however, his sonnets, in presenting their argument, are often descriptive of the natural world, especially in the first quatrain. In "A Solitary Life" natural scenes weave in and out of the poem to the last line.

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[1]Lever, Sonnet, p. 276.

John Milton (1608-1674) is usually seen as the introducer of the public sonnet, the material of which is political or national. Other poets had written on such subjects, but without the resounding Miltonic "public" rhetoric. Milton was first recognized as a poet in the Italian language in which he wrote five sonnets. It is not surprising, then, that his sonnets are written in the Petrarchan form which he recreated in English. "He uses run-on lines and strong medial pauses and often disregards normal word-order and a strict division between octave and sestet, so that, in spite of the rhymes - which may be...notably sonorous and emphatic - the sonnet becomes in effect a paragraph of blank verse".[1]

Just as allegory, on the whole, needs more room to develop than the sonnet allows, so satire, the form of poetry in which the eighteenth century poets largely found their voice, is not usually successfully contained by the sonnet. This can be seen as one important reason why the eighteenth century poets did not, in comparison with the noted sonnet writers of former centuries, contribute anything especial to the history of the sonnet. (The outstanding poets of the eighteenth century, such as Pope and Dryden, are not regarded as sonnet writers.) Nevertheless, it does not always take a "great" poet to influence a writer of the immediate future, and there was much of interest being done in the sphere of the sonnet by eighteenth century writers of some repute such as Thomas Edwards (1699-1757), Thomas Warton (1728-1790) and William Lisle Bowles (1762-1850).

Thomas Edwards is regarded by R.D. Havens as "the real father

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[1]Milton: Poetical Works, ed. by Douglas Bush (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 169.

of the eighteenth-century sonnet",[1] at a time when "the eighteenth-century sonneteers, in their ignorance of what lay on the other side of the deep gulf stretching between them and their forefathers, were free to do whatever they chose".[2] This freedom is found in Warton's sonnets among others, where the choice has been made "to turn for [his] subjects from persons to nature and to places of legendary or historic interest" often introducing an unusual note of "pensive wistfulness".[3] Another area of the eighteenth century sonnet in which freedom is exhibited is in the rhyme schemes. A table by Havens, indicating "very roughly the distribution of the eighteenth-century quatorzains that were published in books", shows the following ratio of rhyme schemes from 1740 to 1800:

| Petrarchan | Shakespearean | Spenserian | Irregular[4] |
|---|---|---|---|
| 636 | 451 | 17 | 1,398 |

An irregular rhyme scheme used by Sidney that became very popular was abba, abba, cdcd, ee. It is perhaps noteworthy that Cowper has a sonnet based on this rhyme scheme and one in rhyming couplets.[5] Another rhyme scheme which Walter Jackson Bate, writing about Keats's sonnet "On Peace", describes as "common in the 1790's"[6] is abab, cdcd, ddedee. It is, perhaps, also important to note that the use of an alexandrine in the final line of a sonnet was fairly

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[1]Raymond Dexter Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1922), p. 492.

[2]Ibid., p. 495. [3]Ibid., p. 497. [4]Ibid., p. 523.

[5]Fuller, Sonnet, p. 25, and Cowper: Poetry and Prose, selected by Spiller, pp. 133 & 66.

[6]Walter Jackson Bate, John Keats (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 36.

common in the eighteenth century.[1]

As many eighteenth century sonneteers were slow to publish their work, the sonnet became popular only very gradually. It was 1777 before most of Warton's sonnets were printed. And yet, by the 1780's the sonnet had become probably the most popular kind of magazine verse. Such minor poets as Miss Anna Seward (1747-1809) and Charlotte Smith (1749-1806) were sonneteers for whom "nature [was] the most frequent theme and melancholy the dominant tone".[2] But, according to Havens, "the earliest printed sonnets to deal almost exclusively with nature" were those of John Codrington Bampfylde (1754-1796) "whose character, unfortunate career, and fresh, hearty verses in praise of country life recall the forgotten John Clare" and of whose sonnets Havens writes: "Their love of nature and of rustic life, their close observation, their healthy, happy genuineness and poetic feeling, entitle them to remembrance".[3] However, these, having a very limited circulation, were practically unknown.

Among the most important eighteenth century sonnets, largely because of their range of influence at the time, are those of William Bowles. At the age of seventeen, Coleridge (1772-1834) was introduced to these sonnets and was strongly influenced by "a style of poetry, so tender and yet so manly, so natural and real, and yet so dignified and harmonious"[4] which, he says, contributed to the development of "my fancy, and the love of nature, and the sense of beauty in

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[1]Fuller, Sonnet, p. 34.

[2]Havens, Milton, p. 501.

[3]Ibid., p. 506.

[4]S.T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, ed. by J. Shawcross (2 vols.; London: Oxford University Press, 1907, with corrections 1954), I, 10.

forms and sounds".[1] He thought Cowper and Bowles to be "the first who reconciled the heart with the head".[2] Yet by 1802 he had come to see a looseness in Bowles's poetry.[3] In 1793, "Wordsworth came across Bowles's sonnets for the first time, and found the same charm in them".[4]

The first fourteen of Bowles's fifty sonnets[5] were not intended to be in the strict Italian model, but rather quatorzains in which, as Bowles explained, "I confined myself to fourteen lines because fourteen lines seemed best adapted to unity of sentiment."[6] The subject of the poems was chiefly river scenery and it is interesting to note that, although Bowles's influence on Wordsworth is undisputed now, yet, in his lifetime Bowles felt it necessary to point out that his "river" sonnets "were published ten years before those of Wordsworth on the River Duddon, Yarrow etc."[7]

Havens, with balanced sensitivity, says, "Bowles's quiet sonnets, though not great and far from revolutionary, are natural in language, genuine if over-melancholy in feeling, easy and flowing without being diffuse, dignified without being stilted, and, with their pensive interpretations of nature, have a tender charm".[8]

In the nineteenth century poetic values were moving from a

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[1] Ibid., I, 10. [2] Ibid., I, 16.

[3] Ibid., I, 207. [4] Ibid., I, 207.

[5] The present writer has found only forty-four sonnets in The Poetical Works of William Lisle Bowles, ed. by George Gilfillan (2 vols.; Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1855), whereas, in Havens, Milton, p. 512, there are said to be a total of fifty.

[6] Bowles, ed. by Gilfillan, Vol. I, n. 1, p. 2.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Havens, Milton, p. 511.

general attitude to the lyric reflected in Rapin's observation that, "A Sonnet, Ode, Elegy, Epigram, and those little kind of Verses... are ordinarily no more than the meer [sic] productions of Imagination",[1] to an attitude such as that of Joseph Warton in which "the 'true Poet' and writer of 'PURE POETRY'" is seen as being "stamped solely by 'a creative and glowing IMAGINATION'".[2] It seems that, for Coleridge at least, Bowles's sonnets epitomised the step towards capturing the poet's reaction to an immediate experience; a step away from the restriction on overt self-expression. Most of Wordsworth's greatest sonnets capture a personal moment of vision, and although one is able to perceive the influence of Milton in his "public sonnets", many of these combine simple dignity with the plainness of language advocated in the famous Preface. An examination of Wordsworth's style and vision will be found in a comparison of his sonnet, "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802" and a sonnet by John Clare, on pages 148 to 154 of this thesis.

In the hands of Wordsworth and Keats, two of the great Romantic poets, some of the rigidities that had grown up in the sonnet form were broken down. Wordsworth's sonnet, "Surprised by joy - impatient as the wind", is an example of this flexibility. Keats who wrote more than sixty sonnets, some of which are considered among the finest in the English language, seemed to find the ode a more suitable medium for his poetry. He began, as many poets do, by writing strictly formal sonnets. Forty of his sonnets written between 1814 and 1818 are Italian. He then experimented with Italian, Shakespearean and

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[1] M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1953), p. 85.

[2] Ibid., p. 86.

irregular sonnets,[1] one of which, "If by dull rhymes our English must be chain'd",[2] expresses his impatience with being "chain'd" by the demands of the sonnet form. The final two lines of this sonnet,

> So, if we may not let the Muse be free,
> She will be bound with garlands of her own.

seem to point to Keats's preference for the ode, and his breaking away from a formal rhyming pattern in this sonnet underlines his wish for more freedom than the usual sonnet form allowed. His sonnets vary greatly in style and toughness of construction. "To one who has been long in city pent"[3] has the gliding, languid style associated with his early poetry. "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer"[4] has the richness of the odes with forcefulness in both words and word order - characteristics bound up with the poet's passionate love of the visible world and his "need to feel the 'chief intensity'".[5]

Unlike Wordsworth and Keats in their prolific sonnet output, Byron (1788-1824) wrote as few as five single sonnets and two others each placed at the beginning and forming part of longer poems. These two sonnets, "The Prisoner of Chillon" and "The Prophecy of Dante",[6] are particularly interesting in their different functions, the one

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[1] Hazard Adams, The Contexts of Poetry (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1965), pp. 121-123.

[2] Keats: Poetical Works, ed. by H.W. Garrod (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 371.

[3] Ibid., p. 37. [4] Ibid., p. 38.

[5] C.M. Bowra, The Romantic Imagination, Oxford Paperbacks (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 16.

[6] The Poetical Works of Lord Byron (London: Oxford University Press, 1904), pp. 336-340 & 370-379. Havens states that Byron wrote six sonnets. (Havens, Milton, p. 537.) He does not, perhaps, regard the "Dedication" at the head of The Prophecy of Dante as a sonnet, although this quatorzain is similar to a Petrarchan sonnet in structure.

as an "oration" and the other as a dedication.

It may seem arbitrary to end the history of the sonnet at this point when there are so many interesting and important developments to follow, but these post-date Clare and this short study is concerned with what predates his work. What is worth noting briefly here is that Clare actually anticipates some later developments in the sonnet.[1]

(iii) We now turn to examine the nature of sonnet.

Despite the wide range of English sonnet form which a history of the genre reveals, there are certain basic characteristics which permit a tentative definition of this particular lyric.

W.P. Ker believes the form of the ballad to be "an idea[2] working in the minds of many different nations independently, towards the same kind of poetical result [which view, if sound,] will prove the value of poetical form as something distinct from the individual genius or caprice of the poetical artist".[3] In support of this view, one might quote Northrop Frye:

> Poetry organizes the content of the world as it passes before the poet, but the forms in which that content is organized come out of the structure of poetry itself.[4]

These two comments are echoed by M.W. England, a writer on the hymn, a specialised form of lyric:

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[1]See below, pp. 127 & 128.

[2]The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 4th ed. rev., 1952, gives as the first definition of "idea" - "Archetype, pattern, as distinguished from its realization in individuals" which fits in with Ker's thought on the genre.

[3]Ker, Form & Style, p. 95.

[4]Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 102.

> A lyric poet stores in the recesses of being some idea of form that must be satisfied. That idea is affected by rhythms apprehended by the senses, and more deeply affected by rhythms comprehended within the physical frame. [1]

The sonnet form seems to have this existence independent of the poet - the unity in diversity found in the brief history outlined above supports this. Poets through the ages have apparently manipulated the sonnet form to accommodate their requirements, or perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say with Ker that they "feel that with that form their thought may have just that variety and unity which is the secret of life".[2] Ker sees the poet as having "the abstract tune in his head before the poem begins"[3] - that is, the sonnet form, with its particular metre and rhyme patterns, is the "music" to which the "thought" will "dance". The actual way of thinking is given by the metric pattern of the sonnet.[4]

Ker not only examines how the poet's mind and the sonnet form interact, but he looks at the "old rule and measure"[5] which is the basis of the sonnet, and says, "There must at least be something to hold on to, something stated, for the first part of the sonnet; there must be some inference or contradiction or variety in the second part....The sonnet is not a mere stanza; it is at least a double thing, with position in it and contradiction. It is a true argument.... And there may be all varieties of that duplicity, the most beautiful being when there is a change of mood rather than a change of imagery".[6]

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[1] Martha Winburn England & John Sparrow, Hymns Unbidden (New York: The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox & Tilden Foundations, 1966), p. 116.

[2] Ker, Form & Style, p. 173.

[3] Ibid., p. 101. [4] Ibid., p. 100. [5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., pp. 100 & 101; 173; 174.

In his comments on sonnet, Paul Fussell, Jr., a more recent critic than Ker, joins the latter scholar and many others in concentrating upon the Petrarchan form which embodies most vividly the central features of the genre. Two valuable observations Fussell makes about sonnet are that "the poet who understands the sonnet form is the one who has developed an instinct for exploiting the principle of imbalance", and that the accumulation of pressure "of idea or emotion borne by the octave" is released in the sestet (the two elements of sonnet involved in the imbalance) in a way "analogous to the actions of inhaling and exhaling, or of contraction and release in the muscular system".[1]

These last observations by Ker and Fussell give rise to further points.

The sonnet is dramatic to a greater degree than song and much meditative lyric other than dramatic monologue. It has tension of a particular kind which is resolved either partially or wholly through argument, or change of mood or tone. The degree of tension will vary greatly as will the manner in which tension is created and resolved, but the sense of resolution in a sonnet is strong. This is because the sonnet is concerned with a single serious topic while containing the "doubleness" Ker and Fussell speak of, and because to resolve this within a short poem demands a struggle which generates the sonnet's characteristic power. It is a stanza form which is complete in itself in such a way that it cannot be added to, though it may be part of a sequence of sonnets "tied together usually by theme and

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[1]Paul Fussell, Jr., Poetic Meter and Poetic Form, Studies in Language and Literature (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 120.

mood",[1] and occasionally by narrative.

The metrical pattern of a sonnet is usually fourteen lines of iambic pentameter. However, the sonnet form "is not a prison but a vehicle by means of which effects can be obtained",[2] and the history of the sonnet shows frequent variations on the prosodic norm. For instance, Sir Philip Sidney wrote sonnets in alexandrines, and Clare varies the length of the last line of his sonnets between the conventional iambic pentameter and the alexandrine,[3] a common practice in the eighteenth century, as has already been mentioned. One of Clare's poems which is named "Sonnet"[4] is entirely in iambic tetrameters.

The sonnet is short enough to necessitate a concentration and intensity of ideas and a corresponding intensity of language, yet long enough for the opposing line of thought or mood to be developed or resolved. Poets usually choose the conventional length of fourteen lines in which to form their poem, but Gerard Manley Hopkins' curtal sonnets of ten lines, George Meredith's sonnets of sixteen lines, and some of Robert Frost's sonnets[5] are examples of the poet's adapting a form to the needs of his poem. There are so many examples in English literature of departures from the Petrarchan and

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[1]Adams, The Contexts of Poetry, p. 50. Clare wrote at least thirty-two sonnet sequences of lengths varying between two and six sonnets. (See Appendix B, pp. 241-263.)

[2]Ibid., p. 48.

[3]There are twenty-four sonnets which end in an alexandrine in the Robinson and the Tibble editions of Clare's poems included in Appendix B, pp. 241-263.

[4]Robinson, The Later Poems, p. 167.

[5]e.g. "Hyla Brook" in the Complete Poems of Robert Frost (London: Jonathan Cape, 1951), p. 143.

Shakespearean sonnet rhyme schemes that Clare's experiments in sonnet rhyming are by no means unusual.[1] What is unusual is his blending of the expected and the unexpected in matters of both form and material.

(iv) Clare's poem, "Winter Fields", a sonnet and yet in so many ways unlike a sonnet, presents a case in point:

Winter Fields

1. O for a pleasant book to cheat the sway
2. Of winter - where rich mirth with hearty laugh
3. Listens and rubs his legs on corner seat
4. For fields are mire and sludge - and badly off
5. Are those who on their pudgy* paths delay
6. There striding shepherd seeking driest way
7. Fearing nights wetshod feet and hacking cough
8. That keeps him waken till the peep of day
9. Goes shouldering onward and with ready hook
10. Progs* oft to ford the sloughs that nearly meet
11. Accross the lands - croodling* and thin to view
12. His loath dog follows - stops and quakes and looks
13. For better roads - till whistled to pursue
14. Then on with frequent jump he hirkles* through [2]

A study of the liberties Clare takes with the more traditional sonnet form (Petrarchan and Shakespearean), together with a close look at the form of this poem, may reveal what makes this a sonnet. It certainly will show that Clare is saying much more than a paraphrase of his poem could impart, however direct and apparently explicit

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[1]Both Clare and Frost have written unrhymed sonnets, e.g. Frost's "For Once, Then, Something" (ibid., p. 250) could qualify as a fifteen lined, unrhymed sonnet. Clare's "Signs of Winter" (Tibble, Poems, II, 314) and "The Mock Bird" (ibid., II, 381) are unrhymed throughout, and his "Gipsies" (ibid., II, 379) rhymes in the final couplet only. See also Appendix B, pp.241-263 for examples of the variety of rhyme-schemes Clare used in his sonnets.

[2]Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 139, and "glossary", p. 204. Gloss: pudgy - full of puddles; prog - to poke or prod; croodling - contracting the body from cold, shrinking or huddling; hirkle - to crouch, to set up the back, as cattle who shrink from cold.

his method be - and that "more", as in the discussion of his poem, "The morning wind", with its first line, "Theres more then music in this early wind",[1] is not easily captured in words, for it is communicated through the prosody of the poem, its metre, rhyme scheme, and all the subtleties of arrangement of words. "The morning wind" is much nearer to the formal sonnet form than the poem under discussion. It is written in iambic pentameter from which it seldom deviates, and has the regular rhyme scheme abab, cdcd, efegfg which divides it into octave and sestet both in form and thought pattern. It is more difficult to trace a pattern in the rhyme scheme and divisions in "Winter Fields", but such an exercise will partly reveal the thought pattern and the tensions and turning point which go to make it a sonnet.

The rhyme scheme in "Winter Fields" is apparently haphazard and bears no resemblance to that of a formal sonnet, nor to many other Clare sonnets which are very often written in rhyming couplets, for example, "Nutting", "Hares at Play", "Wood pictures in winter", "Beans in Blossom", "May", "Wood pictures in Summer", "Wood Pictures in Spring", "Stepping stones", "Pleasant Places" and "The Hollow Tree".[2] Others have a regular rhyme scheme, often the abab, cdcd, efef, gg of the Shakespearean sonnet, or the variant efgefg ending; for example, "The Village Boy", "The Fern Owls Nest", "Sand Martin", "Winter", "Cottage Fears" and "Salters Tree".[3] But Clare tries any

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[1]Ibid., p. 153, "The morning wind", l. 1. (Italics mine.) See discussion of this poem below, pp. 222-234.

[2]~~Ibid.,~~ Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, pp. 138, 89, 141, 159, 127, 129, 127, 159, 160 & 162 respectively.

[3]Ibid., pp. 19, 68, 69, 141, 156 & 163 respectively.

rhyme schemes which will allow him freedom to shape his sonnet, yet will bind the whole, in such a way as to intensify the sense; for example, rhyming in "The Wren"[1] begins regularly in the octave, and then has a slight variation which firmly binds the sestet, at the same time linking it to the second quatrain and transferring the qualities implied in the rhymes, "well" and "bell" to the wren. In "The Woodman"[2] the odd, unrhymed line nine is the key to Clare's theme of the beauty of nature coming to those who wait, await, or are ready and eager to receive it. The line is linked to the sestet through the assonance of "home" and "morn". In "First sight of Spring"[3] the poem ends on an unrhymed line, yet Clare's ear is unerring, for "drest" does seem to arise out of "errect" and "collect". In the two poems, "Emmonsails Heath in winter" and "Sonnet: 'I Am'",[4] the poet uses two rhyming couplets with which to end the sonnets. The use of a double couplet at the end of "Sonnet: 'I Am'",

> Tracing creation, like my maker, free -
> A soul unshackled like eternity,
> Spurning earth's vain and soul debasing thrall
> But now I only know I am - that's all.

emphasizes the positive, yet controlled freedom not only of the thought presented in the first three lines quoted, but of the poet himself to end his poem in this unconventional way, by repeating the couplet device; and in the poem, "Emmonsails Heath in winter", the couplets add to the cumulative effect of the many fieldfares and their perpetual business.

Few other sonnets of Clare's are as apparently irregular in rhyme as "Winter Fields" with its scheme of abcbaabadcedee. In

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[1] Ibid., p. 68.
[2] Ibid., p. 105.
[3] Ibid., p. 126.
[4] Ibid., pp. 138 & 196.

"Mist in the Meadows"[1] on first examination the rhyme scheme seems to break down between the first and last quatrain, but the break in regularity and pattern of rhyme in lines five to ten (that is, cdedcf, neither e nor f rhyming in the poem at all) echoes the poet's theme of broken outlines and half-seen forms conjured up by the mist. The strong caesuras of the halting lines between lines three and thirteen support this theme too.

"Summer Moods"[2] begins with the same rhyme scheme as "Winter Fields" - namely, abcb - but, in the former poem, instead of a couplet following this quatrain, the first rhyme, a, is incorporated with the next new rhyme pattern, thus: abcb, adad. Then the c rhyme is repeated not once but three times, and there is not a couplet in the poem. The rhyme scheme in this poem supports the sense of dis-association which runs through it - the poet walking alone; the snail coming from beneath the grass; the "hidden quail"; the "seldom-seen land rail"; all eventually hidden by "the evenings dewy veil". In "Winter Fields", on the other hand, most noticeable are the two couplets and their spacing, that is, the fifth and sixth lines, and the final two lines; the distance apart of the c rhymes of lines three and ten; the incomplete rhyme of lines nine and twelve; and the limiting of the rhymes in the octave to two only, a and b, apart from the lone c rhyme of line three.

This short comparison between the rhyme schemes of "Winter Fields" and "Summer Moods" reveals the need for a more detailed examination of the pattern and purpose of rhyming in "Winter Fields". The function of the rhyme scheme as well as the rest of the prosody

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[1]Ibid., p. 154. [2]Ibid., p. 151.

of the poem will become apparent through the detailed discussion of the poem which follows, and this in turn may give the thought and particular shape which makes it a sonnet.

The title of this poem is typical of the natural, apparently uncontrived ambiguity which often arises from Clare's poetry. Here it combines the ideas of the specific fields to be encountered during the winter, and of the different fields or "winter situations" in which man may expect to find himself. The shepherd and his dog, and those who delay on their "pudgy paths", find that the fields are "mire and sludge" - not a pleasant situation, yet it is part of the inevitable seasonal cycle, as the words, "cheat the sway / Of winter", imply; and thus not to be avoided, but accepted as "good", because it is cold, damp weather in its right place, that is, winter. It is the "pleasant book" and the "rich mirth" and "hearty laugh" which could in one sense be more out of place than the shepherd and his struggling dog. Yet these, too, are accepted as winter's field, for there should not be a complete parting of man and nature in winter or summer. Such uniting of opposing states of experience is an aspect of pastoral harmony. This is a slight variant of the main theme in The Shepherd's Calendar, namely, the unity of man and nature realised in a shared experience.[1] Man's mirth is enriched and his laugh heartened by the very nature of the raw weather outside; and the book is made more pleasant by the cosiness that escape from the physical hardship, and yet not from the noise of bad weather, produces.

Thus, in the first line the tension between resistance and acceptance, running through the poem, is captured in the one word,

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[1]See above, p. 48.

"cheat", which also suggests the paradox that man may choose to "cheat the sway of winter" but ultimately cannot do so. The poet sighs for his pleasant book and pities those badly off who go "shouldering onward" through the "mire and sludge". Yet he obviously revels in the human ability to accept and triumph in hardship, and delights in the give and take between man and nature. He observes and sees that "It is good" - both the mirth and the militant struggle of shepherd and dog. Obedience, too, is a theme in this poem - man's obedience to the demands of nature and weather; the dog's obedience to his master. This is an echo of the secondary theme in The Shepherd's Calendar, namely, the fulfilment of being of nature's children, including man, when they have found, and are acting in, their proper place,[1] a state necessary for pastoral harmony to exist.

The poetic paradox continues, as the rhythm of the first line reflects the idea of arresting the effects of the "sway of winter" on the poet. "Cheat" begins and ends with unvoiced consonant sounds and one is forced to pause between "cheat" and "the" for the tongue to articulate both "t" sounds, making the first word emphatic. This pause gives added emphasis, in turn, to the word "sway" as it opens out and extends, through the run on line, to embrace the entire poem and its thought. "Sway" takes over from the halt in rhythm at "cheat" and contributes to the dominance of winter's rule. The word "sway" is rich in other associations besides the chief one of "rule" - trees sway in the wind; human activities are controlled, swayed in a certain direction, by the winter weather; winter holds sway, yet its reign is governed by the particular sway of other seasons. The main function

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[1] Ibid.

of the word in the poem is that of a simple word dominating through position (at the end of the first line) and range of meaning, and giving rise to the entire sway of thought process and the swaying pull of paradox in the poem.

The vacillation between interior comfort and its attractions, and exterior demands of nature which are met with waverings and reservations,[1] continues until line eight when the "a" rhyme ends. The rhyming of "sway" in the first line with lines five, six and eight plays an important part in holding the octave together in its paradoxical theme of acceptance, yet of a seeking for protection. For example, the first wish "to cheat the sway / Of winter" is reintroduced in a modified way in line five where a break in the rhythm of progress, a delay along "pudgy paths", is similar to cheating the sway or regular demands of winter. The poet uses a rhyming couplet here, lines five and six, to prevent too distinct a break in the rhythm and thought between the delayers and the "striding shepherd", who, nevertheless, "seeks driest way" - another attempt to avoid a head-on confrontation with the hardships of winter. In line eight the rhythm of sleep is interrupted - "That keeps him waken[2] till the peep of day" - and its rhyme links it to other lines on interruptions, lines one, five and six. It is noticeable that, with the last "a" rhyme in line eight, comes the change to the positive action of meeting the weather in the phrase "goes shouldering". In the sestet the marked tension between acceptance and the wish to escape is all but resolved for man. The dog is introduced to add to

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[1]See "delay" (l. 5), and "fearing" (l. 7).

[2]"Waken" here means "awake".

the sense of man's triumph in acceptance - for now it is man who leads in a strength gained by his accepted harmony with nature and her forces.

The dominant theme of the sestet is that of the give and take between man and nature, a contribution to pastoral harmony similar to that of the theme of love as an act of reciprocation for mutual good, found in The Shepherd's Calendar.[1] The ready hook which has saved many an animal is the instrument, usually made of nature's wood, used to find the safe areas which nature provides for him who seeks and perseveres. The shepherd sets the example and the hesitant, cringing dog follows. In the final line, because of all that has gone before, the reference to "frequent jumps" and the final success in "hirkles through" applies not only to the dog, but to all men who persevere in harmony with nature. Again one finds the theme of love as an act of reciprocation for mutual good. Here it is more subtly implied perhaps than in many of Clare's poems, but it is felt in the poet's love of the very "winterness" of winter, in his revelling as much in the thought of winter's influence as in the confrontation with it, and in the give and take between man, the shepherd, and nature. It is interesting to note that, as in The Shepherd's Calendar, the shepherd, in true pastoral tradition, is the central figure in the poem.

Clare does not divide his sonnet decisively into octave and sestet, presumably because this would break the evenness of flow in his poem. He uses the rhymes "seat" in line three and "meet" in line ten, to draw the two parts together. He forces the reader at the

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[1]See above, p. 48.

word, "meet" (a dominant one in view of the themes just stated), to think of the contrast of the comfortable safety of the corner seat and the danger of fording the sloughs in order finally to obtain that comfort.

The two rhyming couplets of lines five and six, and thirteen and fourteen, have this in common, that the first line of the couplet in each case is expressing hesitation, delay or break in the continuity of partnership (however stormy) between a creature and nature. In the second line of each, there is resolution; only partial in line six, but complete in the sense of arrival in line fourteen. Thus the pattern of the rhyme scheme contributes to the form of the sonnet, however apparently haphazard or unconventional it may have seemed.

An examination of the nature of the rhymes reveals that they contribute to the unity of the poem, which is not surprising since, as Havens says, "This matter of rime-scheme is not the slight, external affair that it is commonly regarded, for it often determines the structure and modifies the idea of the sonnet."[1]

The first rhyme has already been examined. The second, that of "laugh", "off" and "cough"[2] at the end of lines two, four and six respectively, contributes to the form of the poem mainly through its effect on the themes of the poem. For example, Clare's personification, "rich mirth", can be thought of as "swaying" with his "hearty laugh" and his action of rubbing his legs with pleasure; thus extending the

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[1]Havens, Milton, p. 478.

[2]The writer has been unable to ascertain, through enquiries made of authorities on pronunciation, how Clare and his countrymen would have pronounced "laugh", "off" and "cough". Therefore no comment is possible on those of Clare's rhymes which, spoken in twentieth century "standard English", are imperfect.

influence of the first rhyming word, "sway", from the expected outdoor realm of winter to the scene of comfort indoors. The enjambment of the second line brings about an alliterative liaison between the "b" rhyme, "laugh", and the first word in line three, "listens", which halts the swaying action of the first two lines both in sense and rhythm; for there is a strong caesura after "listens". This pause prepares one for the second and third "b" rhyme phrases, "badly off" and "hacking cough", for it forces "rich mirth" to become aware of two things: his own comfort in the face of harsh weather, and the hardship of those among whom he could well have been included, facing winter weather outside. "Rich mirth" is confronted by the reality of those "badly off" through the emphasis placed on the two words in their prominent position. At the same time, the rhyme reminds the one in comfort that his laugh could well end in a hacking cough after a turn outside; he could bring such an effect of winter indoors. However true the rhyme "laugh" and "cough" may have been for Clare, he changes the weight and nature of the two words by the word set immediately before each of them. The assonance in "hearty laugh", which seems to produce the sound of laughter, is expected again in the rhyme phrase, "hacking cough", because of the repetitive "h" and the matching disyllablic nature of "hacking", but instead, dissonance prevails through the short "a" sound and the "k" sounds in close proximity to one another in the phrase which seems to produce the sounds of a cough. The "b" rhymes refer to people in different positions in relation to winter, yet bind them as it were into a potentially single person, reminding one that the various aspects of winter are ultimately indivisible under the sway of winter. Rhyme "b" is confined to the octave of the sonnet

which needs the binding effect because of the strong paradoxical pull in this part of the poem.

The first line of the sestet, a key line in the themes of acceptance, of partnership with nature, and of obedience (the word "ready" is important in this connection), produces a new rhyme, "hook". This word, with its short vowel sound and its abrupt voiced consonant at the end, gives an end-stopped line which contributes to the broken rhythm of "progs oft", which itself reflects the action indicated by the words. The rhyme between this line and line twelve is incomplete with the additional "s" in line twelve, yet this blends in so well with the surrounding words that it is only on spectific examination of the poet's rhyme scheme that it is noticeable. The poet achieves this illusion by means of the many "s" sounds surrounding the rhyme word, "looks" -

> His loath dog follows - stops and quakes and looks
> For better roads - till whistled to pursue [1]

The rhymes, "seat" and "meet", have already been discussed.

Finally, the poet links together the dog's appearance as seen by his master, the shepherd; by the poet; and, further, by the reader to whom it is presented. In other words, the poet gives man's view of the situation, and he does this through the rhyming word of line eleven, "view", and the key words, the rhyming words of the final couplet, "pursue" and "through". "Hirkles through" has been taken as the final resolving statement, but it is anticipated and strengthened by its rhyming with "pursue" for pursuit of a course is the activity necessary to winning through. In this way the rhyme scheme reflects and assists the theme as well as the overall form of the poem.

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[1] Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 139, "Winter Fields", ll. 12 & 13.

The words the poet uses are strong, simple and, to a large extent, monosyllabic. This gives a resistant edge to his poem, echoing the harshness of winter and the tough persistence demanded of men during this demanding season. Of the rhyming words, only two are disyllables, "delay" and "pursue", the rest being monosyllables; and all the rhymes are masculine. Only one line is begun with a disyllabic word, "listens", and this has the specific function of emphasizing the key verb of the fairly non-active phase of the poem. Yet the marked break in rhythm that the trochaic nature of this word enforces is in keeping with the cessation of mirth and laughter which is entailed in listening as previously observed.

Clare's frequent use of the countrified or colloquial word strengthens his poem, for he seems to choose those words that embody perfectly both the idea he wishes to convey and the sound and atmosphere linked with the sense of the idea. The words he uses also blend pleasingly with the whole he is creating and are essential to it in some way. The word, "pudgy", which means "full of puddles", conveys admirably a combination of the idea of "puddle", "squelch" and "sludge". It also alliterates with "paths". "Progs" is another local word which echoes in sound its combined meaning of "prods" and "pokes". This word is necessary to, and modifies, the words "hook" and "oft" on either side of it, as was mentioned above. "Croodling", meaning "shrinking or huddling", another colloquial and expressive word, balances in assonance the first word in its line, "Accross", and its sound seems to imitate the whining moan which a shrinking or huddling dog might make. One can picture vividly the cringing body contracted from cold. The word is assonantally linked with "view", "pursue" and "through" so that the poetic paradox is

intensified when the "croodling" dog, a pitiful object to view, is induced to "pursue" and "hirkle through" triumphant.

The tension between opposing forces, the poetic paradox, becomes clearer when one notices both how many opposing forces are pulling against each other, and their proximity to each other in this poem.

In the first line the "pleasant book" loses its potential value in being used to "cheat the sway / Of winter". Winter itself is followed by a scene suggesting such cosiness that winter's harsh features momentarily fall away entirely. The enclosed, cornered feeling engendered by the picture of the sitting reader (mirth) in the "corner seat", is directly opposed to the open air freedom of the striding shepherd in his winter surroundings - he whose legs carry him where sloughs "nearly meet", a quite different kind of meeting from the meeting of legs ("rubs his legs") on corner seat. Opposing forces are seen in comparing the adjectives, "rich" and "hearty", with the "mire and sludge" of line four; and the health of "hearty laugh" with its rhymes "badly off" and "hacking cough" already remarked on. The nature of "mire and sludge" is incorporated in "pudgy paths" which is followed in the next line by the contrasting "driest way". The shepherd's state in lines seven and eight could not be in greater contrast with the condition of the man of "rich mirth" and "hearty laugh". The unfulfilled anticipation of "O for a pleasant book", an exclamation negative in its reason for wishing - "to cheat ..." - seems at first out of character with the courageous, tenacious, willed battling through of the shepherd and his dog; yet it is the anticipation of this relaxation in comfort which gives the shepherd and his dog the will to persevere, manifest

in the line

Then on with frequent jump he hirkles through

All the different phrases of this last line are positive; the forward struggle implied in "on"; the handicaps and hurdles met and overcome ("jumped"); and the final success in "he hirkles through". Yet there is paradox once more. In spite of the atmosphere of ease at the beginning of the poem, the word, "sway", at the end of line one forecasts the "winning through" process of the final line where the shepherd and his dog, through obedience to winter's demands (in sway with them), acknowledge winter's rule (sway).

A sonnet reflects the "variety and unity"[1] of life, and "Winter Fields" certainly does this. It moves from the warm comfort and cameraderie of the first three lines to the harsh hardship of the lot of man and beast who have to play their part in the raw winter scene, unsheltered for a time. Yet the harsh exterior scene intensifies the pleasures of the interior scene, on the one hand, and on the other, there is the anticipation of warmth and shelter in the completion of the tasks of shepherd and dog just mentioned. In _playing_ their part, in harmony with nature's demands, they experience both faces of winter, her kind and her stern expression. Thus the happy reader is another aspect of the shepherd or labouring man.

Clare has the sure touch of one who, without mentioning either a fire, or a gathering of people, is able to imply the presence of both. He universalises at the same time that he distances the scene, by giving to the abstract "rich mirth with hearty laugh" the human attribute of listening. His surprising blend of abstract (mirth) with

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[1] Ker, _Form & Style_, p. 173. See also above, p.125.

concrete (leg rubbing) is typical. One pictures the scene as vividly as if he had described it in detail. Here is the art of condensing in a few lines not only a picture, mood or atmosphere, but a theme of the sonnet - that winter incorporates in its embrace many aspects of human and natural life, that its effects range from glowing pleasure in comfort to direct physical hardship.

Running through the poem is a paradoxical dual vision, a tension between opposites, which is resolved. This, too, is characteristic of the sonnet. Perhaps the strongest ironical element underlying this poem is the dual, or even multiple, role which it shows the poet as playing. He expresses his desire for the comfortable and pleasurable side of winter, and, at the same time, witnesses to the beauty even in the hardship of winter. By his very wish, he indicates that he is outside the enclosed area of warmth and conviviality. Yet he does not link himself with the shepherd. It is as if he were one with both aspects of winter, and yet with neither. He enjoys the essence of both, but, as a poet, commands an objective view denied those involved. In many of Shakespeare's sonnets[1] one is intensely aware of the irony in the writer's capturing for ever in his poetry the beauty he laments as transient. In Clare's sonnets the ambivalence of wishing to enjoy and yet enjoying, of describing simply and, in the describing, glorifying even the apparently unpleasing, is faintly present, more elusive (in a narrow sense) than the ambiguity found in Shakespeare's sonnets, and less explicit.

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[1]It is, perhaps, interesting to note that Clare was well acquainted with a number of Shakespeare's sonnets. See above, p. 22 and Prose, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 105.

In the following pages brief analyses of both a Shakespearean and a Wordsworthian sonnet are made. One is well aware that these poets are greater than Clare, and write greater sonnets worthy of far more profound exploration than the length of this thesis would allow. However, these two sonnets have been selected as a means of bringing into perspective Clare's achievements, and as a way of illustrating (by contrast) what he is and is not doing in his sonnets.

(v) The material of Shakespeare's seventy-third sonnet could lead one, at surface level, to liken it, in some respects, to some of Clare's pastoral sonnets, but a brief examination of the sonnet may illustrate where the sonnets of the two poets differ most markedly.

> That time of yeeare thou maist in me behold,
> When yellow leaves, or none, or few doe hange
> Upon those boughes which shake against the could,
> Bare ruin'd quiers, where late the sweet birds sang.
> In me thou seest the twi-light of such day,
> As after Sun-set fadeth in the West,
> Which by and by blacke night doth take away,
> Deaths second selfe that seals up all in rest.
> In me thou seest the glowing of such fire,
> That on the ashes of his youth doth lye,
> As the death bed, whereon it must expire,
> Consum'd with that which it was nurrisht by.
>   This thou percev'st, which makes thy love more strong,
>   To love that well, which thou must leave ere long. [1]

In the first quatrain of his sonnet, Shakespeare uses the imagery of Autumn as a dramatic metaphorical description of the speaker's declining years and the two apparently conflicting emotions attending them. The movement of the verse and argument in the quatrain are rounded off before the next quatrain begins, yet the theme of aging is continued, and the quatrains are naturally linked in

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[1] Shakespeare's Sonnets, ed. by Martin Seymour-Smith (London: Heinemann, 1963), p. 77.

other ways. Set against the tone of Autumnal sadness, as the leaves in line two seem to be scattered in confusion or drop arbitrarily, is the poet's nostalgic delight in past beauty as reflected in his memory of the "sweet" birdsong amongst unfallen leaves of groves suggested in line four. This delight is heightened by the contrast of "Bare ruin'd quiers" and the word "late" which implies that those days of beauty seem only a short time away, at the same time that it suggests the irretrievable. Thus joy in past beauties and sorrow at their loss are closely linked; but the quatrain ends on the note of singing birds, and the beauty no longer seems lost.

The first few words, "In me thou seest", in the second and third quatrains, echo the personal nature of the first line of the sonnet. Line five moves to another generalized metaphor, that of a sunset turning to night. The daytime of life has had its sunshine and even the idea of night's being "Deaths second selfe" is an affirmation rather than a negation of life, for all is sealed "in rest". Again, joy and sorrow are being reconciled.

In the third quatrain, the image changes to that of a dying fire. The images have moved from the cold of a season, Autumn, through the waning heat of day, to the lessening of a more intense, yet a more particular heat - that of fire. As the contrast brought about by each change becomes greater and more dramatic, so the sense of loss and the value of that which is being lost is heightened. The movement in imagery from the general to the particular and the narrowing down noticed above prepares for the final couplet which is intensely personal and which finally resolves tension between the emotions of delight in existence and grief at the thought of parting.

There is a precision in the sonnet unlike that of Clare. One

finds it in the finely balanced argument, the almost mathematical balancing of quatrain against quatrain (each being the poem in microcosm) and the final solution of tension in the couplet which satisfies in its rounding off of the whole.

The dramatic effect of direct speech and rhetorical language in this sonnet is something not found in Clare's sonnets. Where Shakespeare argues by means of images of nature used as metaphors, Clare depends on largely unmetaphorical, pictorial, realistic descriptive detail presented in plain, homely language to suggest the emotions and responses underlying them. Clare does not present an explicit argument step by step and his theme is usually implied rather than stated. In Clare's sonnets as well as in Shakespeare's there is usually a continuous juxtaposing of contrary attitudes, but in the former these are often buried, as it were, then raised to the surface at intervals. Thus in "Winter Fields", the desire for the comfortable and pleasurable side of winter is balanced by the contrary attitude that witnesses to the beauty existing even in the hardship of winter, but the latter attitude seems to go underground and works from below all through, coming to the surface in the vigorous verbs of the determination to reach home and return to the warmth and comfort of shelter.

Unlike Shakespeare's couplet, Clare's final couplet or sestet is usually open-ended, so that one can link it to the first line, to form a circular movement. Thus the final word, "through", in Clare's "Winter Fields", characteristically free from punctuation, takes one inside again to the fireside. The final line in many of Clare's sonnets is an alexandrine[1] which reinforces the sense of

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[1]See Appendix B, p. 240.

onward movement.

Perhaps a closer parallel to Shakespeare's sonnet, Clare's Shakespearean sonnet, "Winter", will provide further insight into the different ways in which the two poets' sonnets work.

> Old January clad in crispy rime
> Comes hirpling* on and often makes a stand
> The hasty snowstorm neer disturbs his time
> He mends no pace but beats his dithering hand
> And February like a timid maid
> Smiling and sorrowing follows in his train
> Huddled in cloak of mirey roads affraid
> She hastens on to greet her home again
> Then March the prophetess by storms inspired
> Gazes in rapture on the troubled sky
> And then in headlong fury madly fired
> She bids the hail storm boil and hurry bye
> Yet neath the blackest cloud a sunbeam flings
> Its cheering promise of returning spring [1]

This sonnet is divided very clearly into three quatrains and a rhyming couplet, but there its similarity to Shakespeare's sonnet largely ends. The manner of its progress is quite different.

In his sonnet, Clare uses personification, but in such a way that he manages to fuse the abstract with the concrete. Old January becomes a clad figure in whose very age and halting, though constant, progress is the promise of Spring. The theme of ordered change bringing promise of fulfilment is not argued so much as illustrated, first by Old January who "mends no pace" as he moves towards spring; then by timid February who "hastens on to greet her home again"; and then by the prophetess, March, who hurries the hailstorm by to usher in spring. The promise of the coming of spring is implicit not only in all three months' movement towards it, but in hints such as that about January who "often makes a stand", and February, "*smiling* and sorrowing",[2] and in the fact that March is seen as a prophetess who

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[1] Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 141, and "glossary", p. 204. Gloss: hirple - to limp.

[2] Italics mine.

looks to the future and works towards it.

The couplet releases the promise and seems to "fling" it back to "Old January" in the final words of the open-ended last line, "returning spring". The continuous sense of "returning" together with the "-ing" endings of both words makes these two words reach out in their promise of a never ending rhythmical cycle.

In Clare's sonnet emphasis is on the senses rather than on argument and thought. The poem is barely dramatic in this sense, and the quatrains are less unified by an underflow of idea and feeling than are those of Shakespeare's sonnet. Clare's quatrains are rather like consecutive footsteps, each dependent upon the one before, and each anticipating the one to follow. It is the sight of the items in "Winter" that fills Clare with joy which is transmitted to the reader through the homely rural details and the country vocabulary which give Clare's personifications an authenticity. As these personifications move forward in a masque-like procession before the reader, they seem to remind one of the allegorical figures of the seasons in the works of Spenser[1] and his imitators. In Shakespeare's sonnet, the imagery is not mainly pictorial or sensuous, but rather conceptual.

When writing sonnets, John Clare seems to have preferred the rhyme scheme of the Shakespearean sonnet, or a variant of it, to that of the Italian or Petrarchan sonnet. Of the four hundred and twenty-one sonnets and sonnet-like poems available in the double volume

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[1]Clare's library included a copy of Spenser's The Faerie Queene. (See Clare Collection, p. 32.) Spenser's name is included in "a list of favourite Poems and Poets who went to nature for their images" given by Clare to his publisher, Taylor. (See Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 9.)

edition of Clare's poems selected by J.W. Tibble and in the two Robinson and Summerfield editions of a selection of Clare's poetry and prose, forty-five are Shakespearean and a further nineteen are a regular variation of this rhyme scheme, the final couplet being transferred to lines nine and ten, that is, after the octave. On the other hand, in these selections there is not a single sonnet written in the Petrarchan form.[1] Two sonnets in the Robinson and Summerfield selections and twelve sonnets in the Tibble double volume[2] begin with the typical abba rhyme scheme of the Petrarchan sonnet, but in every case the poet, after the quatrain, changes the rhyme scheme to suit his requirements for the particular poem. It seems that Clare did not find the classical, formal, rather elevated form of the sonnet accommodating to his vision or material.

(vi) If one studies Wordsworth's sonnet,"Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802", examining the manner in which the poem moves and develops, it will perhaps become clearer why the Italian sonnet form suits Wordsworth's sonnet idea, and what it is in Clare's sonnet movement that needs greater freedom of form:

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[1]See Appendix B, pp. 241-263.

[2]See Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 98, "The Shepherds Fire", and p. 160, "Stray Walks II"; and Tibble, Poems, I, 116, "A Scene"; I, 118, "The Primrose"; I, 119, "The Tomb"; I, 123, "Native Scenes"; I, 278, "Joys of Youth"; I, 280, "May Noon"; I, 281, "To Patty"; I, 516, "Hope Springs Eternal"; I, 525, "The Ass"; II, 134, "The Milking Shed"; II, 240, "The Woodlark I"; II, 247, "Birds'Nests". For rhyme schemes of these poems, see Appendix B, pp. 241-263.

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still! [1]

There is an authoritative ring in the first line of Wordsworth's sonnet. It is large in its claim, and in its dimension. The emphasis on the first word, "Earth", the ultimate of "has not anything" and the balancing against "Earth" of the word "fair" at the end of the line, give the impression of the poet's embracing not only the globe, in his far flung reference, but the immediate earthy platform from which his feet may not stray. The next line uses inversion to emphasize the dullness of an imperceptive soul. There is a "majesty" not only about the scene considered, but about the poet's reaction to it in his sonnet.

While Wordsworth's tone is one of wonder and sureness, he has a controlled tenderness which brings into perspective and within reach the vision and moment of perception. The word "touching" in line three captures this quality. Up to this point it is as if the poet had given a series of exclamations. But, in the fourth line, he draws back to the reality which has given rise to the exclamations and the vision. It is not until this line that Wordsworth allows the reader's curiosity to be satisfied, and he does so by capturing both

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[1] Wordsworth: Poetical Works, ed. by Thomas Hutchinson (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 214.

the actual beauty and the ethereal quality of it in a simile that fills out the word, "fair". The vision seems to end at "The beauty of the morning", for at this point one is forced to pause, before the two words, "silent, bare", again draw one on to further description of the actual beauty. In line six the poet reveals in weighted, dignified manner each item of the scene before him - monosyllables opening out into the trisyllabic "theatres" and the disyllabic "temples"; but the short word, "lie", in its prominent place at the end of the line, is the key to this line. The word "open" at the beginning of line seven is also one of the key words of the sonnet, but it is not given its full force until the sestet in which the sun actively steeps all in his first splendour, giving to that which is open to receive. Again in line eleven, "Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!", the poet's openness to the beauty of the scene and to its power and implications links with and extends line seven. The two words, "lie open", together echo the theme of willed passivity.

The rhyme scheme binds the lines of the octave closely together. The first rhyming word, "fair", seems dependent upon each of the next three rhymes, "wear", "bare" and "air", although at first glance these do not apparently have much in common with each other. Yet each is a condition of openness to change: the city must be, as it were, ready to wear the garment of beauty; it must bare itself and wait; its surroundings, too, the air, must be "smokeless".

In the octave, it seems that the poet is challenged by the unsurpassed beauty of the scene before him and responds by capturing in words what he sees and experiences. In these first eight lines the perception of beauty is nearer the instinctive, or unselfconscious, level.

The opening of the sestet parallels the singling out of the scene in line one as the poet stresses the unique nature of the experience. As in the octave, the words and sentence structure are unelaborate; the language in its simplicity is ideally that of a poet as "a man speaking to men", but a man of heightened ability and sensitivity. The emphasis, in the octave on transmitting experience, is, in the sestet, on revealing the meaning and the result of the experience. In the sestet the momentary vision is intensified as it is seen as an unsurpassed united whole, for the sun unites earth and sky, the city and the country, the natural world and the artificial world of man.

Running through the poem is the constant insistence on the need for what could be called active passivity, a readiness to receive (akin to what Wordsworth means by the phrase, "wise passiveness"). In the first quatrain it is stated that, should one pass by the vision, one would remain dull and dead. One should pause in readiness to be touched by the sight; and the pauses at the ends of lines one and five reinforce the need for stillness. The constituents of the city, too, must be ready and in a certain state, in order to wear "the beauty of the morning". The city must be "silent, bare", and the air must be clear. This theme is emphasized in the sestet as the poet unites his visual sense with his feelings, so that the deep calm of the gliding river, the houses that "seem asleep" and the mighty heart "lying still", become metaphors for his final state of active passivity.

In the sestet there are two rhymes only and these reinforce each other thematically. The word, "steep", implies a sense of depth as well as the stillness of sleep, linking with the rhyming words,

"deep" and "asleep". Both the "hill" and the heart of the city lie "still" and are open to the sun as if in their "sweet will". Then the three-fold movement of pairs of lines using two rhyming sounds - "steep"/"hill", "deep"/"will" and "asleep"/"still" - releases an accumulative wave of thought. The hill steeped in sunlight, included in the openness of will arising from a deep, accepting calm, is one with the final celebration of what has been referred to above as active passivity - all seems asleep, or unaware, but the mighty heart is lying still; the tension is resolved in all the power of the mighty heart's passive readiness.

It is significant that the words, "sweet will", refer to the river, an image often associated with life. The river is not wholly passive, yet there is no friction as long as it follows the course set by its own banks and own bounds. The paradox is perhaps understood more fully in a concept like "willed obedience".

In this poem Wordsworth describes a scene, but by combining his response to it with his description of it, he makes the elements of the scene carry more significance than descriptive powers alone could produce; the poem is oblique in revealing a vision both in the eye and of the mind.

One is aware, then, that the implications of the sestet are present in the octave, as the end of a lyric is often in its beginning, and that the classical form of the sonnet suits Wordsworth's purpose perfectly, for it provides for the change in stance or perspective so necessary to bring the vision into focus. Wordsworth needed the dignified, controlled, yet celebratory air provided by the measured, strictly formal, classical sonnet. But he fills the Petrarchan form with such controlled variety that one is almost

unaware of the discipline involved. One would perhaps be tempted to say that, unlike the dramatic, three-stage argument ending in the compressed couplet which is characteristic of the Shakespearean sonnet, this Wordsworthian sonnet is essentially peaceful and solemnly progressing. Yet this would be to underestimate the vitality within the formality. In Shakespeare's sonnet, the imagery gives depth to the intellectual argument. Wordsworth here depicts the scene as it is without comment on it, yet uses it as a vehicle in a different way, for the scene becomes a vision as it is charged with Wordsworth's emotive response. For Wordsworth, interaction is growth. One is acutely aware of the interacting, unifying forces in Wordsworth's poem.

Clare's sonnet, on the other hand, relies for its effect to a large extent on the tone of the poet's description of nature. His love for each detail of the natural world, and for the vision of Eden behind the imperfections of "Fallen Nature", is expressed through the lyrical harmony of his verse. His range of vocabulary, not as wide as that of Wordsworth, includes dialect, or rustic words, which he forms into simple speech rhythms. These are usually devoid of abstractions, inversion and other rhetorical devices or Latinate terms such as one finds in Wordsworth's poetry. Clare's strong sense of the line is reflected in two characteristics of his poetry: firstly, a single line will often contain a single thought or description in one simple sentence; and, secondly, his lack of punctuation does not in any way cloud meaning, but, rather, adds to its richness. It is as if Clare intends giving each item of the natural world that appears in his poem a place of equal importance - and he counteracts any tendency that this high-lighting of each item might have to fragment

the poem, in various ways, such as the avoidance of punctuation mentioned above, and the use of rhyme to bind the various parts together. In the sonnet under discussion, as well as in most of his sonnets, Clare's rhyme scheme, in its flexibility, allows for variety in movement within the poem. He seldom has a set position for a turning point in the sonnet. He does not seem to need the sharply defined octave/sestet arrangement of the Italian sonnet, for his changes of stance or perspective occur subtly at different points and his vision of Eden usually lies behind the entire poem, often becoming more vivid as imperfections caused by man are set against it.

Up to this point, three important facts related to Clare's sonnets in general have emerged from the discussion of "Winter Fields". Firstly, despite the often apparently haphazard way Clare uses rhyme, each rhyme has a demonstrable purpose in the organic structure of his poem; secondly, in spite of the frequent absence of explicit doubleness, volta and resolution, these are present in subtle, often diffuse ways; and thirdly, Clare's pastoral vision is as strongly in evidence in his sonnets as it is in his other poems.[1]

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[1]It seems that this pastoral vision is so strong a unifying force in Clare's poetry that there actually appear, in both Clare's The Shepherd's Calendar and Tibble's collection of Clare's sonnets, the same fourteen lines of rhyming couplets (save for two lines in The Shepherd's Calendar which are omitted after lines one and two of the poem in Tibble's collection; and other minor discrepancies which have arisen from Tibble's practice of punctuating Clare's unpunctuated work, and from possible mis-readings of Clare's often barely legible writing). In the sonnet collection, the lines are headed "March", and an examination of them reveals a sonnet shape that justifies their inclusion under Tibble's section headed "Sonnets". See Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, p. 37, ll. 11 & 12, & 15-26; and Tibble, Poems, II, 149, "March".

(vii) Clare's poem, "Emmonsails Heath in winter", is another example of his use of the various aspects of the sonnet form, such as rhyme scheme, doubleness, volta and resolution, in a way that contributes to the vision of Eden and the sense of simultaneity which are an implicit part of Clare's material in his many sonnets about the natural world.

Emmonsails Heath in winter

1. I love to see the old heaths withered brake
2. Mingle its crimpled* leaves with furze and ling
3. While the old heron from the lonely lake
4. Starts slow and flaps his melancholly wing
5. And oddling* crow in idle motion swing
6. On the half rotten ash trees topmost twig
7. Beside whose trunk the gipsey makes his bed
8. Up flies the bouncing woodcock from the brig*
9. Where a black quagmire quakes beneath the tread
10. The field fare chatter in the whistling thorn
11. And for the awe* round fields and closen* rove
12. And coy bumbarrels* twenty in a drove
13. Flit down the hedge rows in the frozen plain
14. And hang on little twigs and start again [1]

The sonnet's opening words, "I love", constitute a phrase which recurs frequently both explicitly and implicitly in Clare's poetry,[2] contributing a tone of celebration. Here, the phrase is followed by the infinitive, "to see", which by the end of the poem is understood to mean more than "to view"; for there is more than descriptive reporting in the poem. There is a particular relationship, suggested by the words, "I love", between the viewer and that which is seen,

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[1] Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 138, and "glossary", p. 204. Gloss: crimpled - wrinkled, crumpled; oddling - one differing from the rest of a family, brood, or litter, generally applied to the smallest, or to one with a peculiarity; brig - variation of "bridge"; awe - variation of "haw"; closen - the plural form of "close"; bumbarrel - the long-tailed tit.

[2] See Tibble, Poems, II, 542 & 543 for a list of fourteen poems beginning with the words, "I love".

and between each item within the poem.

The use of the first person lyric persona and the particular action of seeing, as against the continuity implied in the present tense, "love", enables the poet to speak in a timeless non-specific manner without losing vividness and clarity. The scene and the experiences within it are set before the reader at the present moment, and yet are extended by suggestion to winter after winter. This time span is strengthened by the word, "old", and the poet succeeds in embracing the past (the old heath), the present ("I love to see"), and the future, implied in the latter words ("I [always] love to see [the heath's brake which will be there each winter]"). In this way, in a single line and at this point in time, the poet suggests eternity.

The rhythm of the line follows the change in mood, as the joyous lightness of the quickly moving monosyllables in "I love to see the old heaths" becomes more laboured in the words, "withered brake". The word-play on this word, "brake", reinforces the sense of stopping, created by the end-of-line pause, and also points to the disintegration of dry leaves; but these implications are, of course, subordinate to the meaning of "fern"[1] or bracken. Withering goes naturally with age, but the word, "crimpled", a combination of "crumpled" and "wrinkled", suggests that something other than age is at work, a force that affects the natural world more speedily. The disintegrating power of winter weather quickly transforms the mingling plants (fern, gorse and heather) to a uniform wintry appearance.

The word, "old", is repeated in line three, and extended from

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[1]Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 204, "Glossary".

plant- to bird-life, incorporating, through the link with "old" heath, the inanimate, yet "lonely",lake. In its winter nakedness and desertion, the "lonely lake" seems to have an empathetic effect on the solitary heron, as the word "melancholly" is associated with the bird. But there is also an air of serenity about the movement of both heron and crow, as if they were not governed by time. This serenity and leisurely relaxation is found in the verbs and in certain phrases in the first seven lines: "mingle", "starts slow", "flaps", and "in idle motion swing". The interrupted rhythm of line four with its enforced pause after "starts slow", and the slow, rhythmic repetition after the pause, in which the laboured flap of the wing is felt through aural and kinesthetic effect, both reflect the regularity of the aging process and the seasonal arrival of winter. The slowing down of the movements and diminishing vitality of the living creatures in winter is echoed in the slowness with which the heron launches into flight.

Line five forms a rhyming couplet with line four, and this seems to underline the lazy serenity of the single heron; the "idle motion" of the "oddling" (lone) crow in the line also contributes to the unperturbed atmosphere of the first half of the poem. The use of a couplet might have caused a division in the sonnet at this point, but the enjambment of line five allows an uninterrupted flow of the feeling and thought which seems to emanate from the words, "I love". Line six, which is closely connected by syntax to line five (although it also forms the beginning of a second quatrain), figures forth age in the half rotten ash tree, thus forming a link with lines one and two. The mention of the "oddling crow" prepares the reader for the vagrant gipsy, the social misfit, the lonely wanderer. But these

aspects of the gipsey are counteracted by the other qualities of the birds which he takes on: the passivity, the serenity, the security of being at one with nature, quite naturally making his bed beside the old tree. In this poem, he suggests the unity of man and nature, one of the main themes that run through Clare's poetry.

The volta occurs midway through the sonnet, at line eight, where the peaceful tone changes as the resurgent spirit of life with its buoyancy finds expression in the upward, bouncing flight of the woodcock. The limitations of man are hinted at by the image of the bridge, but the overcoming of the black quagmire is achieved by both woodcock and man. Although man's earth-bound nature is reflected in the heaviness implied in "tread", and in the toil put into building his means of traversing the danger of the quagmire, his link in spirit with the woodcock is also implied.

The gaiety in the first and eighth lines continues in line nine, in the congregation of living things. Busy group activity is now balanced against the relaxed movement of the lone creatures of nature, in a complete acceptance of both ways of reacting to the rigours of winter. In the repetitive nature of the bustling movement of the birds in these last lines one is reminded of the cyclical nature of the seasons.

The final words, "and start again", contribute to a circular movement in the poem common to the lyric form, and fuse with the heron's slow start, embracing (as the words, "I love", have done from the beginning) all the activity within the poem, from the many new beginnings of field fares and bumbarrels, to the crow's oscillations from a single point on his "topmost twig", while the smaller birds hang momentarily on theirs. The gipsey, too, is seen in relation to

a tree. All the various creatures, including man, have found, and are acting in, their proper place for the time of year; and are, in this way, contributing to the overall affirmation of the beauty of winter's being wintry. This sense of the perfect placing of the items and the harmony of action within a scene is contributed to by a sense of all things happening at once within the little Eden created in the poem. The impression of simultaneity is intensified by certain factors. The present tense of all the verbs implies a continuity of action. This is especially evident in the three verbs that appear each at the beginning of a line, namely "I love", "mingle", and "starts slow"; the first of these, as has already been noted, gathering everything within the poem into the writer's eternally loving attitude to the Eden-like perfection he sees in all before him, though Eden is not named. Again, words indicative of space and time are placed at strategic points in the poem, especially at the beginning of a line - for example, "while", "beside" and "where".

So strongly is the sense of continuity within the poem felt that there seem to be only two pauses for breath: at the volta of the sonnet at line eight, a point of release; and two lines later, after the brief descent to the bog from which one is freed, as it were, to join the birds in their flight. This freedom is intrinsically linked with earth - the fieldfares chatter in the thorn and rove around fields, and the bumbarrels "flit down the hedge rows", hanging on twigs as they go. Thus freedom is seen to arise, not from isolation, but from the harmonious relationships between creatures, including man. And so, within the poem, both isolated beings and grouped beings, both decay and vitality, both passivity and activity, are held in an

ultimate balance, such as that achieved by the swinging crow. These apparent opposites are woven contrapuntally through the poem, and seem to continue thus, in balance, to eternity, for the poem is open-ended. This final poise for continuity is achieved through the building up of energy in the combined activity of the birds in the last five lines; in the overt statement of repetition in the last three words; and in these words being allowed to refer to every activity in the poem because of the simultaneity discussed above. Through this combination of continuity and simultaneity, the poem obliquely reflects a form of eternity.

(viii) Clare's pastoral vision can be seen to lie behind almost all his poems, and the themes already remarked upon in the above discussions on The Shepherd's Calendar and on the sonnets re-echo in nearly every poem that Clare wrote about the natural world. His range of material is wide, and his sonnets alone treat of flowers, trees, birds and man in scenes reflecting each of the seasons as well as different parts of the day. The following five poems[1] have been chosen as illustrations not only of this fact, but also, and more importantly, of the variety of ways in which Clare bodies forth his pastoral vision in the implied idea of Eden which in itself implies the timelessness of eternity. Nowhere in these poems does Clare name Eden or Eternity, but the present writer repeatedly detects the idea as implicit in Clare's tone and in the particular way in

[1]"Water-lilies" (Tibble, Poems, II, 128); "The Thrush's Nest" (ibid., II, 245); "The Wheat ripening" (Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 133); "The Village Boy" (ibid., p. 19); "Night Wind" (ibid., p. 157).

which form and material are arranged and interact in each sonnet.

"Water-lilies" is a poem the theme of which is the recurrent realization of beauty either seasonally, as suggested by the lines,

> The water-lilies on the meadow stream
> Again spread out their leaves of glossy green;
> And some, yet young, of a rich copper gleam,
> Scarce open, in the sunny stream are seen,

or diurnally, "spreading above the water, day by day", or even momentarily, as the leaves, splashed by the chubby boy's pebbles, seem to transcend their former beauty as,

> Yet quickly dry again, they shine and glow
> Like some rich vision that his eye deceives,

There are the "dangerous deeps", and the pebble throwing, but this disturbance of nature's harmony is an action that shows the boy's attraction to the "glossy green" water-lily leaves and suggests that he not only brought forth an added brightness through his action, but was ready to enjoy the vision while it lasted. In spite of these threats, the lilies' beauty is "out of danger's way", beyond permanent damage, and, by implication, a part of the Eden-world of nature now and eternally for the person open to this vision.

"The Thrush's Nest", a Shakespearean sonnet, also has a cyclical theme, that of the thrush's life cycle. This apparently descriptive poem is suffused with sunshine and charged with joyous laughter and praise. The poem begins with the poet's hearing "from morn to morn a merry thrush / Sing hymns to sunrise". The repetition of "morn to morn" expands into a longer cycle in the thrush's "day to day" toil which opens out further into the generalization, "by and by". This extension of time covers the longer wait for the arrival of the "shining eggs", the appearance of which is given an inevitability by the generalization, "by and by". These

three repetitive phrases are the keys to the three quatrains on song, work and production; all leading up to the fruition in the final lines where the hymn of praise, the sunshine and the laughter of lines two, three and four are caught up in a paean. The poem is full of light, music and joy. The "merry" song of "sunrise" is reacted to with "joy"; the "shining" eggs are likened both to "heath-bells gilt with dew" (a combination of music in the suggestion of bells, and light in the word, "gilt") and to the brightness of flowers; the "greeny blue" of the shells links the eggs with the sky even before the flight of "nature's minstrels" in the "sunny hours" achieves their blending with her more ethereal element. All the items in the poem are gathered together and included in the final line of the poem,

Glad as that sunshine and the laughing sky

Everything within the poem seems to be infused with a light similar to the "early" light of Eden, and the cycle of this single creature, the thrush, is timed, as it were, with an Eden-like perfection.

There is a similar perfection of timing in the poem "The Wheat ripening". But in the former poem man is "an intruding guest", a close follower of a natural cycle. Here it is as if the wheat's ripening is not so much the centre of the poem as a process of fruition that gives rise to the sweetness of all that follows. There is sweetness found in action and in perception; and, finally, this harmony found in the correct timing of the grain's ripening is extended to the blending of two apparently dissimilar sounds, the one discordant:

> And hoarse tongued bird boy whose unceasing calls
> Join the larks ditty to the rising sun

The calls seem to become song as they are gathered, as it were, into the Eden-world of Clare's pastoral vision implicit in the poem.

In "The Village Boy", carefree youth, as if fresh from an untainted earlier world, comes into its own - but only because it is attuned to the natural world which feeds its ecstasies. In the first lines of the poem,

> Free from the cottage corner see how wild
> The village boys along the pasture hies

the emphasis is on the freedom necessary for the boy to be "the happiest object in the summer hours". Wildness is seen as an additional attribute which seems to make him one with the "every smell and sound and sight" which beguile him. Such is the plethora of good things that nature has to offer that the boy, unable to achieve the simultaneity needed to enjoy all things at once, seems to end in a progressively quickening rhythmical discarding of items, in order to receive the next offer. This cycle goes on until he becomes, as the "happiest object in the summer hours", one with all the other objects within the scene; and yet, because of his power of perceiving the beauty and desirability of that which is offered, he is the "happiest" object. In his acts of releasing in order to receive, he is fully one with the cycle of mutability; and, through repeated renewal, he is paralleling the eternity found in this way in nature; both of which ideas are suggested by the poem.

The sonnet, "Night Wind", is a contrast to all the sonnets mentioned in this thesis in its sustained emphasis on danger and fear. Nevertheless, gleams of Clare's Eden-world shine through, by implication, even here. The natural world seems to take on human grief and woe in the opening lines,

> Darkness like midnight from the sobbing woods
> Clamours with dismal tidings of the rain

But, by the beginning of the second quatrain, in a line which forms

the only rhymed couplet in the poem,

The cotter*[1] listens at his door again

a glimmer of the hope and confidence which emerges in the final line appears in one of the senses of the line, namely, that while violent weather has seemed in command of man before, he has survived the experience. From this point onwards, fear builds up in the human beings, and its accumulation is largely revealed through contrasts of noise and silence, of intense activity and a stillness of apprehension and breathless fear. After each burst of sound the silence becomes palpable; after the rain's roaring the cottager "listens...again"; after the loud chatter around the warning flare of the candle, a hush descends as fear ascends.

Because of the pressure of fear built up in the poem and sustained by the added length and weight of the final alexandrine, the release brought about by the last four words, "untill the tempest drops", is greater in effect than the surface meaning of the words indicates. The hold of the night wind over human emotions snaps on the last word, "drops", a change prepared for by the key word, "untill".

Along with the plain meaning of the noise of the night wind working upon man's imagination and producing fear, there is a latent idea that, bound by his apprehensive fear (the dame dare not go to bed...), a fear which is based upon imagined danger only, man will need release - not "untill the tempest drops", but until he is able to accept the force of the night wind as a necessary part of nature. This ideal state of man in harmony with nature (Clare's Eden-world) is present by implication beneath the surface of the poem, affirming

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[1] *cotter: variation of "cottager". (Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 204, "Glossary".)

the possibility of its attainment.

(ix) As a final example of Clare's pastoral vision in his sonnets, the quatorzain, "Nutting", has been chosen. It will be discussed in detail, for it illustrates, in the more unusual rhyming couplet sonnet form, the three main points arising from the examination of "Winter Fields",[1] namely: that the rhyme schemes in Clare's sonnets have a demonstrable purpose in the organization of his poem; that the doubleness, volta and resolution of sonnet, often apparently absent in his sonnets, are present in a subtle and diffuse way; and that the Eden-vision and simultaneity associated with Clare's pastoral vision are strongly in evidence in his sonnets on topics of nature. Moreover, it is probable that Clare's use of rhyming couplets is in some respects related to these facts.

Clare seems to have used seven rhyming couplets in his sonnets or sonnet-like poems more often than any other rhyme scheme,[2] and a large proportion of these have natural scenes and objects, and country people, as a predominant part of their material.[3] A close

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[1]See above, p. 154.

[2]See Appendix B, p. 240.

[3]Illustrative table:

| Dates of Rhyming Couplet Sonnets | No. of sonnets having natural scenes and objects, and country people, as a predominant part of their material | No. of sonnets using other material |
|---|---|---|
| 1808-19 | - | - |
| 1819-21 | 1 | - |
| 1821-24 | 7 | 4 |
| 1824-32 | 17 | 7 |
| 1832-35 | 11 | 2 |
| 1835-37 | 51 | 9 |
| 1837-41 | 2 | 1 |
| 1842-64 | 4 | 1 |
| | 93 | 24 |
| From Robinson's editions | 11 | - |
| | 104 | 24 |

(Information is taken from Appendix B, pp. 241-263.

analysis of the example "Nutting" will perhaps reveal, amongst the important points mentioned above, the reasons for Clare's apparent preference for this rhyme scheme in his sonnets. It will also help to refute any implications or statements that Clare's sonnets (and especially those in rhyming couplets) are verse paragraphs, or some form other than sonnet.[1]

Nutting

1. The sun had stooped his westward clouds to win
2. Like weary traveller seeking for an Inn
3. When from the hazelly wood we glad descried
4. The ivied gateway by the pasture side
5. Long had we sought for nutts amid the shade
6. Where silence fled the rustle that we made
7. When torn by briars and brushed by sedges rank
8. We left the wood and on the velvet bank
9. Of short sward pasture ground we sat us down
10. To shell our nutts before we reached the town
11. The near hand stubble field with mellow glower
12. Showed the dimmed blaze of poppys still in flower
13. And sweet the molehills smelt we sat upon
14. And now the thymes in bloom but where is pleasure gone [2]

Robert Frost has said that a poem "assumes direction with the first line laid down".[3] This is true of Clare's "Nutting", although full understanding of that direction comes only with the last word

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[1]For an example of such an assertion, see below, n. 1, p.178. This mistaken attitude to Clare's collection of sonnets as a whole is, perhaps, understandable in the light of what Fuller has to say about sonnets of seven couplets: "If this variant is permissible we would have to begin to consider such things as Pope's 'Lo! the poor Indian'...more seriously. It does, however, provide variety within a sequence, as in Shakespeare 126..."; and in the light of what A.C. Partridge writes in a note on Ben Jonson's Eulogy "To William Camden", namely, "This poem illustrates the common practice of confining the eulogy to fourteen lines, not in sonnet form, but in seven couplets." See Fuller, Sonnet, p. 33, and The Tribe of Ben: Pre-Augustan Classical Verse in English, ed. by A.C. Partridge, Arnold's English Texts (London: Edward Arnold [Publishers] Ltd., 1966), p. 22.

[2]Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 138.

[3]Complete Poems of Robert Frost, "The Figure a Poem Makes", p.18.

of the poem. From the first line of the sonnet, onwards, there is a strong suggestion of the harmony in cyclic nature which can be seen as pastoral harmony. This sense of harmony stems partly from the natural flow of the simple sentence structure in the lines; partly from the use of rhyming couplets which allows the poet variety and flexibility in linking his lines to achieve overall harmony; and partly from the substance of what he is saying. In the first line, the stooping of the sun is accepted as expected and right at the time of day,[1] and the harmony is continued as the sun is linked by the word of ownership, "his", to that which is regarded as his natural end.

Yet the tension, essential to the sonnet form, which culminates, and is released through acceptance, in the final alexandrine of this poem is set up from the beginning. This "happy-sad blend of the drinking song"[2] as Frost calls it, is caught in Clare's final question, "but where is pleasure gone". In the first line, the clouds may be "his", but the sun has to "win" them, and there is a sense of loss in the very winning, as the sun's heat is lost to the world. This "great commonplace"[3] of loss in fruition which is one of the underlying themes of the sonnet, is made a reality for the reader and for the poet through his poem. Yet the sense of loss, although evident, is not dominant until the last phrase of the poem. In the first instance it has to pull against the strong sense of fulfilment

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[1]An example of the theme, "the fulfilment of being of nature's children, including man, when they have found, and are acting in, their proper place". See above, p. 48.

[2]_Complete Poems of Robert Frost_, p. 18.

[3]E.M.W. Tillyard, _Poetry Direct and Oblique_ (revd. London: Chatto & Windus, 1945), pp. 42 & 43.

which comes from the sun's having run its course and being about to arrive at the completion of its light- and life-giving journey of the day. The first line pleases with its balance which comes from the two verbs placed each at the end of a phrase. The verb, "had stooped", coming before the caesura, emphasizes another implicit theme - the paradox that one has to humble oneself in order to benefit fully from any relationship and especially that of man with nature; this theme is continued strongly when the nutters struggle through the briars and sedge. The theme of completion, which runs through as counterpoint to that of loss and striving, finds expression in these items: the nutters reaching the gate, the nuts being shelled before the nutters leave for town, the fields having been reaped, the poppies' "dimmed blaze" of beauty and, in the final line where the past tense employed from the first line onwards is changed to the present, the phrase "and now" which speaks of an achieving of the next step in the cycle of the seasons.

In the first line, one experiences the result of Clare's ability to create a forward flow in a cadence of vowel sounds and a balance of line, attained not only by spacing the verbs, as previously mentioned, but, within each half-line, by a balanced alliteration in "The sun had stooped" and "his westward clouds to win". After the simple order of words in the first half of this line, the inversion in the second fittingly emphasizes the two words, "westward", and "win", both key words in their implications. "Westward" gives the direction towards completion of the natural course of the sun and reminds the reader of the over-arching vault of the heavens, thus giving an added dimension to the poem. There is also the contrast of the daily pattern of the sun's course as an eternal cycle through

eons, with that of the fleeting of time in a single day. The movement of diminution of stature implied in "stooped" is suspended by the inversion which follows it, and at the same time is extended to a reaching out, so that the word, "win", coming as it does at the end of the line, combines in a key word the two forces pulling against each other in tension within this poem: that of sad longing engendered by a sense of loss in attainment; and that of happiness in an elusive, although only momentarily attainable, completion and fruition. One is intensely aware of the continuous giving and taking which is an integral part of loving nature and which is an organic part of the shape of the sonnet. In this poem, as in all Clare's poetry, the theme of the unity of man and nature realised in a shared experience, together with the theme of love as an act of reciprocation for mutual good, is not named or argued, but implied as something experienced by the speaker. Nature has the nuts to give, and man, in seeking, finds what nature offers; but mutability demands sacrifice and the sense of loss in fulfilment is felt. Yet the happiness which shines through this sense of loss in Clare's poetry comes from the knowledge that nature is ready to share repeatedly her nuts, the sweet smell of the molehills, the "dimmed blaze of poppys", the "mellow glower" of stubble field.

A number of the physical senses is called into play in this sonnet. "Silence fled the rustle that we made" captures not only the sound of man's tussle with nature, but the silence which Clare succeeds in making a living entity, by giving it the attribute of movement associated with human beings. Here again, there is both the sense of loss in silence having fled, and yet the joy in gathering nature's matured bounty, the nuts, at that expense. The sense of sight is stimulated

not by a naming of colours, but by the more subtly suggested "blaze", and "glower". The colours are alive and their precise nature is left to the reader's imagination. In "velvet bank", both colour and texture are suggested. "Hazelly wood" is another phrase which contains both the suggestion of nuts (the warm generosity and ample bounty of nature) and also the poet's love of the wood in his use of double description effected by adding an adjectival ending, "-ly", to an already descriptive adjective. The quality of the wood is thus enriched. The sense of smell is aroused by the simple, strongly emphatic words, "sweet" and "smelt", in the second last line, but there are other suggestions of Autumn's scents. The phrase, "near hand stubble field", brings memories of the scent of newly reaped fields; and the words, "dimmed blaze of poppys still in flower", suggest the fading of poppies' scent with the dimming of their colour. That the sedges are rank has a rightness about it for the time of year and for their place in the wilds, not "through the gate", but next to water.

In the second line,

> Like weary traveller seeking for an Inn

the "w" alliteration of the first line is continued in "w̲eary" and the "s" alliteration in "s̲eeking". Thus the alliterative pattern of line one is reversed in line two. The incomplete movement of the sun is echoed in the verb, "seeking". The poignancy of the final phrase of the poem is felt in these two lines. The transformation in the third line is epitomised by the word, "glad", which almost bursts upon one, positioned as it is after the warmth of the phrase, "hazelly wood", describing a shared experience, and emphasized by inversion. The verb, "descried", is also in harmony with the gladness

of the line, in that it incorporates through word-play a cry of joy in its second syllable.

The argument of the poem works down from the over-arching magnitude of the sun, the source of life and beauty, to the generalized "traveller", and then to the strongly felt proximity of the "we" - a word which incorporates the particular people without specifying an individual person. This reinforces the presence of the ideas of "shared experience" and "reciprocation" in the themes already mentioned,[1] and throws light on the lament at the end of the poem, where a suggestion is perhaps hidden, namely, that the speaker's sadness and loneliness comes from a separation. Since he still has nature's beauty in the fact that "the thymes in bloom", we may understand pleasure to be gone because of the absence of the other being implied in "we". The lament echoes the loss of Mary which is often a subject treated directly in Clare's poetry.[2]

The poem progresses from stooping to winning, from seeking to descrying. The couplet rhymes connect each pair of lines, which captures and contains a single thought, and the first four lines are bound by the conjunction, "when", at the beginning of the third line, so that they form the first quatrain of the sonnet, just as the same conjunction at the beginning of line seven holds the second quatrain together and balances it against the first.

The fifth line,

Long had we sought for nutts amid the shade

reverts to the past with the use of "had" as in the first line, and

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[1]See above, p. 169.

[2]See above, n. 1, p. 105, and Appendix A, pp. 237-239.

the stretch of time thus felt accentuates the sense of achievement and completion of the third and fourth lines. The seeking and the sense of loss continue in lines five and six with the verbs, "sought" and "fled". The word, "long", reinforces the "had" of the fifth line and the word, "shade", at the end of that line links the seekers' journey with that of the sun, but it is as if the manner of depicting fruition were different - the nutters come out of the shade into the sun, the task completed, but the earth will lose, not gain, light at the completion of the sun's journey. Again there is reversal and tension. Both light and silence, as well as comfort, had fled in lines five, six and seven, but again there is achievement in the next three lines. The three verbs here work forward from an advance implied by "left", a finding of place and rest in "sat us down", and an ending of the cycle of the search in the combination of success and intention contained in the phrase, "to shell our nutts". The nuts must be shelled in the right setting - yet the poem retains its impetus in the sense of travellers moving on to the town. Just as the first quatrain moves from sense of loss and a seeking to fulfilment, with the progression of the poem maintained by the inviting aspect of the "ivied gateway", so the sestet has the same pattern within it, pointing to the future movement towards the town.

The final quatrain begins in reverse order, with fruition at the beginning, a fruition that has something of the richness and contentedness of Keats's "Ode to Autumn", yet the sense of loss is a continuous thread running within the richly woven scenes of ripened maturity: the fields are not ready for reaping, but have been bereft of their fruits as the poet is bereft of pleasure; the poppies' blaze is dimmed as is his enjoyment. Only the sweet smell of the

molehills is undiminished in its fullness. This makes the impact of the poet's lament in the final line,

> And now the thymes in bloom, but where is pleasure gone

more keenly felt, for the sweet molehill smell is captured and transported, as it were, from the past to the present-blooming of the thyme, as the poet captures it for the reader in his poem, ~~and~~ Furthermore, anticipation of the poet's joy is met by the reverse; by a sad questioning embodying a simply stated bereavement the more acutely felt by the reader because of the understatement; the more poignant because of the greater cause for pleasure in the combination of beauty of sight and smell and its present reality in "And now the thymes in bloom".

The final line is an alexandrine the extra length of which is needed for the gathering of the opposing strands which have partially caused the tension in the sonnet, and the separation of them, so that, in the added clarity and force of the direct statement which has been prepared for by all that has gone before, the tension is resolved, not in the expected way, but in an acceptance that joy and sadness must and do co-exist in each situation, either one being uppermost at a given time.

(x) In the previous pages of this chapter, eight pastoral sonnets of Clare's have been examined. This final section will attempt to draw some conclusions, based on these examinations, of the nature of Clare's sonnets. The emphasis will continue to be on "Nutting", since further consideration of this poem will, it is hoped, make clear the present writer's chief findings on the topic.

Probably the most un-sonnet-like (but by no means unique)[1] features of "Nutting" and many other sonnets by Clare are: the apparently descriptive, rather than argued, nature of the theme which is usually embodied in his material, the world of nature; the lack of obvious division of his poem into octave and sestet, with volta and resolution; and the use of the rhyming couplet throughout the sonnet.

As has already been demonstrated in the discussion of Clare's sonnet "Winter Fields" and the comparison of it with a Shakespearean sonnet,[2] the theme of a Clarean sonnet is usually illustrated rather than argued - and this could be attributed to the nature of his pastoral vision, namely, that man, perceptive and attuned to nature, may experience Eden or the Golden Age present in nature now.[3] In his particular way of describing this Eden-perfection of nature (which is so often the topic of his sonnets as has been shown above) Clare brings together his theme and material so that they become one in his most successful poems. This blend of theme and material contributes to the second feature mentioned above, that is, the absence of formal sonnet division. The divisions are there, but, as demonstrated in the discussion of "Winter Fields" and of "Emmonsails Heath in winter", they do not often appear in the expected places in Clare's sonnet; they occur, rather, at points that help to define the subtly contrapuntal weaving of two opposing threads or themes in the sonnet, balancing them one against the other. In the sonnet, "Nutting", for instance, these themes are "sadness in loss or mutability" and "joy

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[1]See above, pp. 119 & 127.

[2]See above, pp. 143-148.

[3]See above, p. 75.

in fruition" which, after the slight volta in the middle of line eight, are eventually brought together, after another shaping division, at the point of resolution which in this sonnet takes place in the final line in an acceptance of the "great commonplace", the main theme, "loss in fruition".

One cannot attempt to describe the sonnet shape of a poem in rhyming couplets such as "Nutting" without bringing in all the unusual aspects mentioned above. For example, among other factors, the rhymes contribute to the duality mentioned above and to the progress towards the resolution in the last line, as they channel the thought process. This can be seen in the way the opening rhyme "win"/"Inn" works. To win the shelter of an inn entails a journey; and there must be the anticipation of a haven for there to be a purpose in the progress towards it. Thus the sun "anticipated" its setting, and the nutters their rest as they descried the haven of the pasture side. Both sun, the epitome of nature's bounty in its role of ripener of nuts, and the nutters who come to take the bounty given (the "reciprocation" theme already mentioned) in order that nature may renew herself in the cycle of reproduction, have been on a journey, and have changed and been changed. The sun has changed all it has shone upon and the nutters have changed all they have touched - indeed, their mere presence has caused silence to flee; but mutability is not restricted to the recipient - it affects the agent too. The sun, in stooping, will dim; the nutters, in stooping or reaching for nuts, are torn. Both echo the "dimmed blaze of poppys", their beauty waning as they approach fruition.

The first quatrain with its double image, hinged, as it were, on either side of the pivot word "when" in line three, hints in a

subtle way at both the fruition and the loss brought together in the final line of the sonnet through its suggestion of both the effort and time that must be expended for anything worthwhile to be achieved. The givers and receivers of nature's bounty are linked in common effort and both have run their course for the day.

The second quatrain elaborates on the effort implied in the first, while repeating, in the emphasized word, "long", the idea of extended time presented in the first quatrain. The change wrought on the active participators in nature's reciprocation is given expression after the pivot word "when" in line seven, a paralleling in this second quatrain of the shape of the first quatrain. One is made fully aware that nothing is won without effort and the use of energy, and nothing is won without change. The nuts, ripened by the energy of the sun, are, paradoxically, found hidden in the shade; the briar is torn in giving up the nuts at the same time as the gatherers are torn. Thus, from the achievement pointed to in the first quatrain, one passes to the cost of that achievement revealed in the second. In the final line of the latter quatrain, where the scene of the struggle (the wood) and the place of rest (the velvet bank) are delicately balanced, one against the other, the see-saw is tipped onto the side of rest and reward, by the addition of the adjective, "velvet", and the placing of the word "bank" at the end of the line where it gains emphasis and stability from its position immediately before a pause. At this weak, although clear, volta, the transition has been made from protective nature - the briars and rank sedges guarding nuts against alien human beings - to an easy repose and an enjoyment of what nature has given; but it is an enjoyment still bound by the work of shelling and limited in time, as the

nuts have to be shelled before the town is reached.

In the last quatrain, which spills over into the first line of the final couplet, the echoes of giving and taking in harvest are present - the shelling of the harvested nuts, the reaped field, the fading poppies, the imminent return to the town away from the harvest area of nature. The themes of "the unity of man and nature in a shared experience" and "love as reciprocation for common good" are extended to all spheres of nature, whether in her wild, Eden-state in shaded protection where she has to be disturbed, almost stormed, for her to release her harvest, to the area of more harmonious co-operation between man and nature, the cultivated fields.

In line thirteen,

> And sweet the molehills smelt we sat upon

with the word, "and", the poet seems to gather up and add to this line all that has gone before, as if it had all happened that instant, or as if the "picture-memory" in his mind were a reality that could never be lost or could extend to Eternity. This sense of continuity is added to by the word "and" at the beginning of the final line of the final couplet. This "and" brings to the statement, "And now the thymes in bloom", all the sweetness of fruition suggested in the poem so far, and especially the sweet smell of the molehill that gently protrudes as the symbol of the attainment of the reward (the nuts and the rest) the enjoyment of which is inherent in the word "sweet". The impact of the poignancy of the last line, in which the two threads of elusive, transitory happiness and sad longing engendered by mutability are drawn together, is heightened by the word, "sweet", the efficacy of which is extended both backwards and forwards by the two "and's" on either side of it. The two themes are drawn together

in this couplet-like final alexandrine in happy sadness, which is the overall theme and mood of the poem. The word-play on "thyme" adds to the poignancy of the final questioning of the poem. The material beauty and bounty in the thyme's blooming "now" and the blossoming of the right moment implied by the word-play, are reversed by the implication in the final question that time has changed the situation of the speaker and his companion so that pleasure has departed. Yet the poem remains open-ended through the phrase, "And now the thymes in bloom", for in it is the promise of nature to repeat eternally her gifts at the right time in her yearly cycle so that the person ready to enjoy them may do so.

The shape of the sonnet begins to emerge as the first quatrain places the nutters in their surroundings and begins the contrapuntal weaving of the two-stranded paradoxical theme of happy sadness. The second quatrain gives a new turn to the theme as it focuses more fully on the effects of the toil and stress on both participants in the harvest, nature and man. Then, after a lightly marked volta in line eight, a release of the tension generated between the two strands, gain and loss, in the octave, is carried over into the next six lines in the imagery of rest after harvest on velvet-soft sward, a contrast indeed to the thorns of the tearing briar. As has already been discussed, the final alexandrine carries the resolution of the sonnet, strongly supported by the first half of the final rhyming couplet.

From the above discussion of "Nutting" it has become clear that at least one of Clare's sonnet-like poems[1] in rhyming couplets has

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[1]In Tibble & Tibble, Life and Poetry, the writers claim that "Clare proposed a hundred sonnets, knowing one of his faults to lie, not like J.H. Reynolds's in the divided mind, but in diffuseness. He intended the form to window-frame a hundred pastoral descriptions." (pp. 100 & 101). Of "his sonnet-collection [which]

sonnet shape both in line groupings and in argument. This discovery can be extended to many of his successful sonnets in rhyming couplets, a finding which raises the question of what Clare's reasons may have been for apparently preferring the rhyming couplet scheme to other rhyme-schemes in so many of his sonnets.

One fact is certain, and that is that one can no longer remain under the misguided belief that Clare was a poet unconscious of the traditions and problems involved in the writing of poetry. That the belief is misguided has been illustrated in the final section of chapter one of this thesis and in Clare's comment on the pastoral,[1] and it can be further illustrated by an observation he made in a letter to Hessey about Keats's critics:

> ...if those cursd critics coud be shood out of the fashion wi their rule & compass & cease from making readers believe a Sonnet cannot be a Sonnet unless it be precisly 14 lines & a long poem as such unless one first sits down to wire-draw out regular argument & then plod after it in a regular manner the same as a Taylor cuts out a coat for the carcass - I say then he [Keats] may push off first rate - ... [2]

Clare ends the letter with the words, "I mind no fashions Farewell".[3]

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continued far beyond the hundred he had planned for a book", they write, "These form an apparently endless series of verse-paragraphs of captured country moments". (p. 131). Since no source for this information (or opinion) nor any indication of the time when Clare may have expressed his intention, has been given, this assertion, although interesting, cannot be used as a basis for argument in this thesis.

[1]See above, p. 25.

[2]Letters, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 56. The sole instance of a sonnet by Clare about the sonnet that is known to the present writer is: "I walked with poesy in the sonnets bounds" (quoted in Barrell, Landscape, p. 166), but, since it reveals little about his attitude to the form, it has not been discussed above.

[3]Letters, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 57.

An example of his awareness of the changing quality of his work and of the self-criticism he brought to bear on his sonnets is found in a letter to Taylor: "...have a good case* over the sonnets & think you will find first & last a selection far superior to the first book".[1] In another letter to Taylor he reveals a preference at that time for the iambic pentameter and an awareness that he might be accused of imitation through ignorance on the part of the critics of the fact that the best of poets influence each other.[2] Knowing Clare's propensity for rhyme rather than blank verse, his preference for the "all ten" measure, expressed in this last letter, points to the heroic couplet, especially as the poet he expects to be accused of imitating is Crabbe most of whose work is written in this measure. Clare will have been sensitive to the variety of ways this rhyming couplet may be used, for, as against Crabbe's use of it and that of Thomson and other eighteenth century poets with whose work he was well acquainted, Clare was well aware of the quite different way Keats used the measure in his long poem, "Endymion", quotations from which appear as appreciation of the poem in Clare's letter to Hessey mentioned above.

Paul Fussell has pointed to certain effects that may arise from the nature of the heroic couplet and its use in certain ways, and some of his observations throw light upon Clare's use of the heroic couplet in his sonnets. Fussell sees the heroic couplet as a compromise between what he calls the two basic ways, stichic and strophic,[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 81. ("* cast? dial. 'look'.")

[2] Ibid., p. 75.

[3] Fussell, Meter and Form, p. 113: "In stichic organization, line follows line without any formal or mathematical grouping of the lines into stanzas; in strophic organization, the lines are arranged in stanzas of varying degrees of logical complexity."

of organising a poem. Of the heroic couplet Fussell says, "Such couplets can be called stanzas only by courtesy. They could more accurately be called something like additive units, and perhaps a poem in heroic couplets is best thought of as essentially stichic, with a 'line' of twenty rather than of ten syllables."[1] This additive effect is apparent in Clare's heroic couplet sonnets. Fussell says of the poet writing in stichic form that he

> must make decisions constantly about enjambment... As he composes each line he must decide whether its nature is such that it should remain as a distinct unit - should exhibit what we can call "line integrity" - or whether it should "run on" to the beginning of the next line and fuse its syntax and its rhythms with it. If a stichic poem exhibits line integrity, the effect will resemble mosaic: we will get a sense of a whole constructed of tiny parts of roughly the same size and weight. But if a stichic poem exhibits a high degree of enjambment, we get quite a different sense: we get a symphonic sense of flow and flux, a sort of tidal variation. [2]

Clare's poetry exhibits, on the whole, a high degree of "line integrity", and this is so of the sonnets in heroic couplets; one could say that these sonnets do have a mosaic effect. However, this "fragmentary" quality is counteracted strongly by enjambment at certain key places in a Clarean sonnet, by the sonnet shape itself and by Clare's subtle use of half rhymes. Thus, in "Nutting", the mosaic effect comes through strongly in the "line integrity" which is apparent throughout the sonnet, with the exception of the enjambment of line eight which is also the line of the volta. However, the pivot words, "when", at the beginning of lines three and seven, words which shape the octave into two quatrains, also work against any tendency towards mosaic fragmentation. The full and shaded assonance of many of the rhyme words in this poem (for example: "side" and "shade"; "town" and

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[1] Ibid., p. 114.　　[2] Ibid., p. 116.

"glower"; and especially the three key rhyme words, "win", "down" and "gone") works across the poem to fuse the mosaic effect into a whole. The rhyme pattern of the poem parallels the thought process which is crystallized in the latter three key rhyme words. These capture the sense of achievement turning to rest and passing on to loss - the theme of the poem, "loss in fruition".

Not only are rhythm and theme and thought form in organic unity in this poem, and in his other successful rhyming couplet sonnets, but also, lying beneath the poem's surface, and reflected by the whole, is Clare's pastoral vision with all its implications and tensions. That vision, which is of nature seen as having Eden-like perfection now for those in the right position to perceive it, is captured and made real to the reader by a combination of the following: the nature of sonnet; the tone which is best expressed by the words "I love...", present or implicit in so many of Clare's poems as has already been observed;[1] a certain use of the rhyming couplet; and the open-ended nature of the final line.

In the poem, "Nutting", the embodying of Clare's pastoral theme as both a state and a celebration of Eden-like perfection, or a reminder of the promise of it, is captured mainly through the above mentioned methods in various ways. The tone of celebration (caught in the words "I love..." said or implied) is partly a result of the use of the sonnet genre itself which, as Fussell says, "as a form tends to imply a particular, highly <u>personal</u>, usually somewhat puzzled or <u>worshipful</u> attitude toward experience".[2] Another contributing

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[1]See above, p. 155.

[2]Fussell, <u>Meter and Form</u>, p. 133. (Italics mine.) It should be noted that Clare is not celebrating the traditional sonnet subject of the beloved mistress, to whose worship Fussell's words mainly refer.

factor to this tone of celebration is Clare's use of the closed couplet which, to quote Fussell again, "seems both by its nature and its historical associations to imply something special about the material enclosed in it. It seems to imply a distinct isolation of those materials from related things, a vigorous enclosure of them into a compact and momentarily self-sufficient little world of circumscribed sense and meaning".[1] Clare high-lights in his closed couplets each item in the scene, giving to each part of the mosaic the same size and weight, for each is of equal importance in its own perfection within the whole. By isolating each piece, he sets it apart and thus imbues it with holiness worthy of celebration.

Working against this isolating action which can be one of the couplet's qualities are the placing of present participles and adverbs of time in key positions, the use of subtle half rhymes, and the choice of the condensing and binding sonnet shape for the poem itself. These unifying agents, which enable the separate items of equal importance to the poem to be held together as interdependent parts of an organic whole, also contribute towards the revelation of Clare's Eden vision in this poem and in many other sonnets the topics of which are aspects of the natural world. Clare does not view a scene or try to capture it in his poem in the same way that Thomson does a landscape, that is, by allowing his eye to travel over the various parts of the landscape and by re-enacting that movement in his poem.[2] Clare sees within his single, unroving glance all the items and movements in the scene at once - and, for him, they

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[1] Fussell, Meter and Form, pp. 138 & 139.

[2] Barrell, Landscape, pp. 19 & 20, & 27-30.

are, in themselves and in their inter-relationships, imbued at that moment with a perfection like that of Eden. Clare tries to reproduce, in his poetry, the simultaneity of the presence of all the items, and their actions, essential to the perfection of the scene he is revealing,[1] and tries also to give all his responses to the scene simultaneously. No-one could achieve this in reality because of the nature of time and the differences of the methods of perceiving involved, that is, the act of looking which can lead to instantaneous perception of all within the range of that glance, and the act of reading and perceiving through that which is written, which cannot be instantaneous.[2] But Clare can, and in his successful poems does, give the illusion of achieving this simultaneity. The paradoxical combination of the immediate presence in time and space for Clare of what he is revealing, and the process of keeping it all happening at once, so to speak, in his poetry, together with the

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[1]Barrell, writing of Clare's sonnet, "Winter Fields", says, "The content of the poem...becomes the sense of place that the imagery and the language (and...the syntax) together express, though they can none of them fully express it without the others. The sense of place that the poem expresses is that '_this_ is how it is _here_'; and the poem thus contributes to the content that the larger part of Clare's poetry seeks to express, the particular individuality of Helpstone". (_Ibid._, p. 131.) But Barrell does not mention, in connection with the content of Clare's poetry or with Clare's "idea of place", the fact that, for Clare, the "this" and the "here" of the concept, "_this_ is how it is _here_", are imbued with Eden-like perfection. Thus Barrell seems to ignore the most important thing Clare is saying _about_ the very place he is describing: namely, that Eden is present "here, in this place, now" for the person who is in the right position to perceive it. The fact that Clare captures this Eden vision in a great number of his poems is largely what gives them their pastoral nature and their universality. (See also _ibid._, pp. 155-157, 164, 170 & 171.)

[2]As Barrell says, "We cannot say 'heath' and 'heron' at the same time, as we can see a heath and a heron together". (_Ibid._, p. 156.)

multiplicity in unity inherent in his sonnets, are factors that help create the tension necessary to the successful sonnet. Taken to the furthest degree, the attempt at capturing simultaneity becomes an attempt at capturing Eternity which, in his unchanging Eden vision, Clare himself is "seeing"[1] here and now. His poetry is concerned to render as immediate experience for the reader this reality of Eternity.

Another important way in which Clare imbues his sonnets with the quality of Eternity is by keeping the poem open-ended[2] (a quality not confined to the sonnets alone). In this way, Clare is able to link the last line of the sonnet to the first line, and so form the circular movement associated with the successful lyric, as well as mirror the repetitive nature of the seasonal cycle with its promise of perpetual recurrence which can be seen as another form of Eternity.

And so Clare's sonnets embody, make manifest and celebrate, in the ways described above, the Eden-like perfection eternally present in and promised by nature (in all her seasons) to Clare and to the reader when they are in the right position for the revelation.

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[1]See John Clare: Selected Poems, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p.304, "Autumn", l. 12, "Whoever looks round sees Eternity there". See also a discussion of this poem below, pp. 191-202.

[2]Of the twenty-four poems in Appendix B (pp.241-263) in which the final line is an alexandrine, four are in rhyming couplets. An attribute of the alexandrine as a final line to a sonnet or a verse in iambic pentameter (e.g. the Spenserian stanza) is that it can be made to carry the reader's expectations forward, keeping the stanza or sonnet open-ended, at the same time that it underlines, metaphorically speaking, all that has gone before in the stanza or sonnet.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ETERNITY IN CLARE'S POETRY


(i) A brief account of the idea of Eternity in Clare's poetry 186

(ii) Illustrations by analysis:

(a) "Autumn" ("The thistledown's flying...") 191

(b) "Emmonsales Heath" 202

(c) "Fragment" ("Vetches, both yellow and blue") 215

(d) "The morning wind" 222

(iii) A brief conclusion 234

(i) It is, perhaps, not surprising that there should be a similarity between the way Clare's Eden vision is bodied forth in his poetry, and the way Eternity finds expression in his work; for, although the poet's circumstances may change, basically his vision does not.

Clare is not a philosophical poet, and this means that Eternity in its metaphysical dimension is not considered as such in his poems. On the contrary, in keeping with Clare's vision of Eden-like perfection present in nature now for the man in the right position to behold it, Eternity is seen, not as a philosophical concept, but as a reality in the natural world and in his poetry.[1] Clare, as a part of his environment, has intuitions about Eternity which do not find expression in his poems as argument or idea, but as responses to nature presented in the material and techniques of the poem. Like the changing form that Clare's unchanging Mary figure takes in his poetry, Eternity, which in itself cannot change, is seen in, and as, different situations or places.

One cannot easily define Clare's idea of Eternity any more than he probably could or wanted to define Eternity himself. For him it is in and of nature and poetry, and it was enough to know this and to reveal it to the reader. The following quotation from Kathleen Raine's Defending Ancient Springs may throw light on the meaning of Eternity in Clare's poetry:

> ...nature is itself informed by harmonious patternings of the same kind as the ideas of poet and artist. Since natural objects are themselves expressions of the formative principle, we must recognize that artists who work from nature, with knowledge of what these forms

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[1]See comment on the poem "Grasshoppers" above, p. 58.

> really are, give no bare reproduction of the thing seen, but go back to the principles from which nature itself derives. [1]

Clare, in going "back to the principles from which nature itself derives", is going back to, as well as revealing the immediacy of, what for him is Eternity - the eternally constant, reliable, informing force of the "maker" (God, the Creator)[2] responsible for the promise of perpetual recurrence of the natural seasons, for their beauty and, in a sense, for his poetry.

That Clare is fully aware that poets "who work from nature... give no bare reproduction of the thing seen" is apparent in his poem, "Decay". In this poem, the speaker says that when his vision fails poetry begins to fail too, and even "nature herself seems on the flitting".[3] "The fields grow old and common things"[4] as they lose, for the speaker, their eternal freshness of youth and the perpetual promise of spring. Natural objects, without vision behind them, are reduced to a single dimension which excludes eternity:

> The stream it is a naked stream
> Where we on sundays used to ramble
> The sky hangs oer a broken dream
> The brambles dwindled to a bramble
> ..................................
> Mere withered stalks and fading trees
> And pastures spread with hills and rushes
> Are all my fading vision sees [5]

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[1] Kathleen Raine, Defending Ancient Springs (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 166.

[2] See, for example, Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, "The Eternity of Nature", p. 112, ll. 11-14; "Emmonsales Heath", p. 168, ll. 25-32; from "Child Harold", p. 194, l. 33. And Robinson, The Later Poems, p. 229, "The Peasant Poet".

[3] Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, "Decay", p. 182, l. 4.

[4] Ibid., p. 182, l. 5.

[5] Ibid., p. 183, ll. 27-30 & 33-35.

The difference when the speaker was able to love is remarkable: then, "beautys self was sitting bye / Till fields did more then edens seem",[1] an echo of the words, "more th[a]n music", in the poem, "The morning wind", discussed below.[2] The power behind the last line quoted lies in the poet's refusal to define the "more", so that, besides the meaning that the words gather from the accumulation of knowledge of all of Clare's work, they also point to Eternity. For when "love turned een water into wine",[3] then the speaker "thought the flowers upon the hills / Were flowers from Adams open gardens".[4] This telescoping of time is a sign of Eternity, which by its nature defies time. As mentioned in the previous chapter of this thesis,[5] Clare gives the reader the impression that he is defying time in many of his sonnets, as he imbues them with the sense of Eternity through apparent simultaneity.

In passages from Clare's poem, "The Eternity of Nature", (already mentioned in connection with Clare's idea of Eden)[6] one is aware of fusion of the poet's Eden vision and Eternity:

> Leaves from eternity are simple things
> To the worlds gaze - whereto a spirit clings
> Sublime and lasting - trampled under foot
> The daisy lives and strikes its little root
> Into the lap of time - centurys may come
> And pass away into the silent tomb
> And still the child hid in the womb of time
> Shall smile and pluck them...
> ..........................................

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[1] Ibid., p. 183, ll. 4 & 5.

[2] See below, pp. 222-234.

[3] Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, "Decay", p. 183, l. 10.

[4] Ibid., p. 184, ll. 11 & 12.

[5] See above, pp. 184 & 185. [6] See above, p. 75.

> - Its little golden bosom frilled with snow
> Might win een Eve to stoop adown and show
> Her partner Adam in the silky grass
> This little gem that smiled where pleasure was
> And loving Eve from eden followed ill
> And bloomed with sorrow and lives smiling still
> As once in eden under heavens breath
> So now on blighted earth and on the lap of death
> It smiles for ever - ... [1]

Here one has Clare's vision set forth. Simple leaves are charged with a sublime and lasting spirit that reveals in them an Eden-like perfection and an aura of Eternity. The daisy is seen as eternal in its regenerative powers and as bringing the spirit of Eden to "blighted earth", for "it smiles for ever" as it did once in Eden. Again, a blending of the poet's Eden vision and Eternity is found aurally (as it is visually above) in the robin's activity as he "sings unto time a pastoral and gives / A music that lives now and ever lives".[2] In "Song's Eternity", parts of which have already been discussed,[3] the songs of nature, such as that of the robin, are blended with the song that is the poem, so that universal song is shown to be eternal. Just as "theres more then music in this early wind"[4] so there is more than description, image and song in Clare's poetry. As Barrell says:

> ...a descriptive poem does not simply present us with an image, but, through the energy and disposition of its verbs especially, it can imitate the way in which the poet has perceived relationships between the objects he describes, and between those objects and himself. [5]

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[1]Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, "The Eternity of Nature", p. 109, ll. 1-8 & p. 110, ll. 9-17.

[2]Ibid., p. 110, ll. 35 & 36.

[3]See above, p. 54.

[4]Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 153, "The morning wind", l. 1.

[5]Barrell, Landscape, p. 17.

Clare's way of perceiving his relationships to the objects he is describing is governed by his frequently overtly stated immediate response to them expressed in the present tense of the verb, "I love", a response implicit in the above passage from "The Eternity of Nature", and in many other of his poems.[1] This verb, "I love", is frequently followed by an additional verb such as "to see" or "to hear", after which the poem seems to capture, in a single moment, mainly through verbs describing a continuous action or state of being, the harmonious relationships between the items in the poem. This ideal harmony, seen by Clare as a present Eden-state which suggests Eternity both through cyclical repetition and through the timelessness of a single moment, is represented in his poem, but in a different form. For example, the placing of the items and the verbs produces a harmony of words, ideas and movement in the poem.[2] It seems that one of Clare's purposes in writing his poems was to reflect in concrete instances this principle of the harmony he found in nature. In the following lines which have been quoted in the second chapter of this thesis,[3] but which bear repeating here, Clare suggests his aim. Referring to the bumble bee, nightingale and robin, the poet writes:

> And if I touch aright that quiet tone
> That soothing truth that shadows from their own
> Then many a year shall grow in after days
> And still find hearts to read my quiet lays [4]

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[1]See above, p. 155 and note 2 thereon.

[2]See discussion of "Grasshoppers" above, pp. 55-58 and also "Autumn" below, pp. 191-202 in which the number of verbs and their placing suggest simultaneity.

[3]See above, pp. 75 & 76.

[4]Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, "The Eternity of Nature", p. 111, ll. 6-9.

(ii) (a) As is evident in "The Eternity of Nature", Clare has the ability to write poems that both embody the theme or aspect of the vision on which he is concentrating, and explicitly state it. The latter manner of presentation often takes place only within the last few lines of the poem, although it is prepared for in some way by what has gone before. An example of this is the poem, "Spring's Nosegay", discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis.[1] A much more successful poem than the latter is "Autumn".

Autumn

The thistledown's flying, though the winds are all still,
On the green grass now lying, now mounting the hill,
The spring from the fountain now boils like a pot;
Through stones past the counting it bubbles red-hot.

The ground parched and cracked is like overbaked bread,
The greensward all wracked is, bents dried up and dead.
The fallow fields glitter like water indeed,
And gossamers twitter, flung from weed unto weed.

Hill-tops like hot iron glitter bright in the sun,
And the rivers we're eying burn to gold as they run;
Burning hot is the ground, liquid gold is the air;
Whoever looks round sees Eternity there. [2]

This poem is a fine example of two observations made by Robinson and Summerfield, namely, that Clare's "sense of stillness and movement is very acute" and that "it is not mere accuracy of observation that gives him his power. It is rather his ability to create his own universe of calm and storm, intense sunlight and misty shade...."[3] In this poem, "Autumn", Clare delicately holds in

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[1]See above, pp. 97-100.

[2]John Clare: Selected Poems, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 304.

[3]Robinson, The Later Poems, p. 11.

tension the two apparently opposite states, stillness and movement, and this is one of the ways in which he causes Eternity to be made a reality of the scene the poem describes. The thistledown is flying - an apparently inexplicable event since the "winds are all still". The movement of the thistledown is accounted for only in the context of the universe of intense heat implied in the poem,[1] a heat that gives rise to currents of convection upon which thistledown may float and apparently fly.

The first line of the poem, in which the thistledown is "seen" and experienced kinesthetically as flying despite the "stillness", anticipates the last line of the poem, "Whoever looks round sees Eternity there"; for the ideas of process and stasis in the flying thistledown and the still winds are reflected in the movement involved in looking round and in the stillness and rest suggested by the word, "there". Similarly, the theme of movements in time which suggest the timeless is present in microcosm in the first line and is found in the whole poem. For the lyric is full of movements, manifestations of life and activity, out of which comes a stillness which suggests Eternity. The way the rhythm of the first line develops imitates the theme just mentioned, and this is true of the rhythm of the whole poem.

The importance of the form (i.e. rhyme, metre and stanza

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[1]Another example of such a "universe" in Clare's poetry is that found in the eclogue, July. (See Robinson, The Shepherd's Calendar, pp. 80 & 81. Note especially the lines: "In the sun gilded flood below", p. 80, l. 12 and "The restless heat swims twittering bye", p. 81, l. 14, both lines echoed in this poem above.) Two other examples are the poem beginning "How hot the sun rushes", and verse two of "The Invitation". (See Robinson, The Later Poems, p. 180, "No title", ll. 1-12; and p. 168, "The Invitation", ll. 9-16.)

arrangements)[1] of Clare's poems in guiding the reader to see, as Clare sees, the material in his poem, has become apparent in this thesis in the chapter on Clare's sonnets, and will be noticeable too in this chapter in which four poems of different forms are examined. For example, the form of the song lyric above, with its extended lyrical line in which the internal rhyming is such a dominating factor that it seems to force the reader to think of each line as being two lines in one, contributes to the sense of Eternity "captured", as a long time is seemingly caught in a moment of intense lightness and heat. The rhythm of the first half of line one has an effect of continuous expansion and of lightness which reflects the texture of thistledown, and its seemingly arbitrary movement as it floats slowly in one direction only to stop in mid-air, hover and then change direction, before settling (only to rise once more). The pause before the change in direction is simulated by the caesura in the middle of the line, and the hovering and descent to rest by the rhythm of the second half of the line. This paralleling of the thistledown's movement may be seen in the scansion of the line:

The this|tledown's flying, || though the winds | are all still,

The line is basically an anapestic tetrameter (as are all the lines of the poem) but the irregularities are such that the unpredictable flight characteristic of thistledown is imitated. The omission of the first light syllable of the anapest in the first foot, and the

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[1]See Jacob Korg, An Introduction to Poetry (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1959), p. 46; "The word 'form' is often used in discussions of poetry to refer specifically to such technical and mechanical matters as rhyme, meter, and stanza arrangement... The organization of the thought in a poem may conveniently be called the structure of the poem."

caesura coming after the extra light syllable of the second foot, create an initial rhythmical undulation with the two stressed syllables before the caesura, (this- and fly-) as the high points of the curves. This regular rhythm, with the slowing down effect produced by the multisyllabic second and third words, works against the anapest, lulling the reader into expecting a regular see-sawing rhythm. However, the presence of three unstressed syllables in the middle of the line, one before the caesura and the two pronounced in quick succession after it, creates, as it were, a skip in the rhythm paralleling a possible turn in direction after a pause and sharp rise in the flight of the thistledown. The strongly stressed word, "winds", is followed by an anapest in which the two lightly stressed words, "are all", are more strongly stressed than "though" and "the" of the same line, giving the impression, together with the final, heavily stressed word, "still", of a spate of four stressed monosyllabic words. This narrowing of differences in stress effects a flattening out of the undulations suggested by the pre-caesural part of the line, so that there is, as it were, a drifting towards the last word in the line, "still". The sense meaning of this word is translated into the metre as the line comes to a firm halt in the masculine ending, which further emphasizes the stillness. This firm settling down upon the word is in contrast to the caesural pause after the rising effect of an unstressed syllable. This syllable is similar to a feminine ending before the caesura, and its light stress, combined with the sense of the word, "flying", seems to shorten the caesural pause in anticipation of further movement before the stillness at the end of the line. The meaning of the word "still" overflows to the mention in line two of the momentary stillness of the

thistledown lying on its bed of green grass before it rises to meet the challenge of the hill which it mounts. The green colour of the grass intrudes in the hot Autumn world of the poem, rising like one of Clare's much loved mole hills from the Eden vision which runs beneath the poem's surface. This seemingly out-of-place greenness also provides a glimpse of Eternity through its promise of constant renewal, for the grass does and will survive the searing Autumn heat; and its intrinsic greenness, implied in the idiom, "as green as grass", which Clare's phrase hints at while circumventing the trite, will be seen.[1]

These first two lines, although quite different in texture and tautness from the neo-classic heroic couplet, are similar to them in their scissor-shaped balance. The end of line one is balanced in its static effect against the inactivity at the beginning of line two; and the release into activity of the thistledown which is imparted at the beginning of line one is paralleled by the rise needed to mount the hill at the end of line two.

Clare's ability to suggest the ideal or extreme quality of natural objects, such as the green grass, while avoiding crude over-simplification, is found again in the way he presents the lightness of the thistledown which could itself be a symbol of lightness as the grass is of greenness. The poet heightens the reader's sense of

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[1]The idea of grass remaining green forever is common in Clare's poetry and, at times, becomes an emblem of Eternity, e.g.: Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 169, "The Mores", l. 2 - "Bespread with rush and one eternal green"; "Emmonsales Heath", p. 167, l. 10 - "And grass forever green"; and Prose, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 128, "...with evergreens (emblems of Eternity)...". See also the stanza quoted above, p. 74; especially the lines, "...wood brooks fields/Are life eternal...their decay is the green life of change". This image of Clare's, however, is partly founded on the fact that in England some grass stays green through all seasons.

the lightness of the seeds through their flight's being made without the help of the winds. Even currents of air seem to be absent so that air, itself, seems to have no effect upon the path of flight of the thistledown.

The contrast that is felt in the change from the element of air, and quality of airiness, to that of water and a heavier "liquidity", is lessened as the poet lightens the water's weightiness at first by pointing to its lively, forceful origin, the spring rising from the fountain. In this way he captures the ideas of buoyancy, youth and velocity, as he does in the word "flying" for the thistledown. The homely image of the boiling pot used in the simile begins the process of bringing the reader to earth after the fairy-like flight of the thistledown and the initially forceful upward thrust of the water. The image points forward to that of the "overbaked bread" in the next stanza and, by suggesting the practical, busy housewife, embraces this facet of life as contributing to the vision of Eternity. One finds, as well as contrasts in the weight and texture of the moving objects, a contrast in colour in the references to "green grass" and "red-hot" water, since green and red are colours which tend to be associated with coolness and heat respectively. There is a steady intensification of the experience of heat as one moves from the element of air, through that of water, to that of earth. At first, heat is only hinted at by the stillness of the winds, then it is more forcefully presented by the words, "boiling" and "red-hot", and, finally, the strength of the heat cracks the surface of the solid element, earth. The unusualness of calling water red-hot, anticipates the burning to gold of the rivers in stanza three. This linking of the parts of the poem and the drawing of them to a common centre, as

if they were the petals of a daisy, is continued as the words, "past the counting", stretch back across to line one and embrace the myriads of parachute-like seeds of the thistledown in their assessment of the innumerable. Through this quality of being uncountable, a state suggestive of Eternity, the poet fuses to a common centre the very different objects, stones and thistledown, giving them equality of importance by, metaphorically speaking, making them of equal weight and size, but not of shape. The relationship between the words "mounting" and "fountain" is another example of this forging of links and balancing within the stanza under discussion, this time through the use of near-rhyme combined with a common denominator in a suggestion of height in each word. The stanza is further pulled together towards a centre by the triple repetition of the adverb of time, "now". This word is followed in the first two instances by a present participle ("now lying, now mounting"), phrasing which underlines the immediacy of the experience and the insistence on all happening at the present moment. This simulation of the state of Eternity where all is seen at the same time, for ever, is furthered by the repetition in these words of the undulating rhythm of the first half of line one, "The thistledown's flying". The course of the thistledown's flight here seems to be an everlasting undulation, as it was in the first line, but, at the end of line two, "the hill" forms an obstacle both in sense and rhythmically. The reversal of the almost fully rhymed words, "now mounting" and "fountain now", tends to make the reader reverse his view of the scene, or change his position. This reversal, together with the abrupt ending to undulation in the simple present tense, "boils", followed by three more monosyllables, "like a pot", points to the

presence of Eternity. Eternity suggested in such a situation is in contrast to that of apparent eternal undulation. Innumerable bubbles seem to be bursting unceasingly in the sound of the words, "pot", "past", "count", "bubbles", "red" and "hot". The sheer busyness of the bubbling spring and the mention of stones and bubbles "past the counting" suggests an eternity of interrelationship drawing together objects with diametrically opposite characteristics such as thistledown and stones, and now bubbles, through their common numerousness and their necessity to the whole activity and scene.

This uniting of contrasting elements by a central truth or vision is found again in stanza two. There could hardly be a greater contrast between the sense of movement in stanza one, and the static, dead atmosphere conveyed in the scene described in the first two lines of stanza two. The words, "parched", "cracked", "overbaked", "wracked", "dried" and "dead", follow each other so closely that, apart from the faint memory of greenness in stanza one conjured up by the "greensward" in line two of stanza two, even the movement of breathing seems knocked out of the reader by the hammer-blows of the mainly monosyllabic words of drought and rigidity. The stillness of rest in stanza one becomes the stillness of death in the first part of stanza two. But the earth and its covering, the "fallow fields", dead as they are said to be in lines one and two, are transfigured in line three by the association with them of the words "glitter like water". It is the _way_ of seeing the parched countryside that makes it a residence for Eternity. In this stanza the poet seems to be showing the reader how to "look", in order to see "Eternity there". The last line of stanza two shows nature linking with gossamer threads, so easily broken and yet amazingly flexible, weed to weed, those plants usually thought of as lowly (although

there are other instances in literature besides Clare's poetry for their being regarded as having beauty when in their correct place in the natural world).[1] This line, "And gossamers twitter, flung from weed unto weed", is linked in movement and lightness to the flying thistledown of stanza one, and through rhyme to the "glitter" of stanza three. It is as if the gossamer thread had been flung backwards and forwards, to include every item within the poem in the poet's transforming perception.

The final stanza combines within its scope the hill and the water of stanza one, the iron hard ground and the glitter of stanza two, and the heat in both. But the stanza goes a stage further as it turns to gold all that it describes, so that the trite proverb, "All that glisters is not gold", is transformed into the idea, "all is glittering and all is gold", just as the scene is transformed by Clare's poetry into a present "Golden Age" in which Eternity is seen. This transfiguration is achieved without the loss of the intrinsic quality of any item within the scene; rather, each quality is heightened in value and added to (much as the bread and wine in the Eucharist are understood by many not to have their nature changed by the Divine presence, but to be added to in an immeasurable degree).

As frequently happens in Clare's poetry, the scene is viewed and enjoyed by the speaker and another person who is seldom identified and who is often mentioned only in conjunction with the speaker in

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[1]Sympathetic references to weeds, or plants usually classed as weeds, are found in the works of Wordsworth, Crabbe and Hopkins, amongst other poets. For some of Clare's references to weeds see Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, "The Moorehens Nest", p. 80, l. 12 - "The very weeds make sweetest gardens there", "The Robins Nest", p. 93, l. 1 - "The very weeds as patriarchs appear", and "Shadows of Taste", p. 115, l. 32 - "The common weed adds graces to his mind".

the pronoun "we" and not separately, as if their mutual sharing in nature's beauty is the necessary condition for nature to be charged with the Eden vision and with Eternity.[1]

The act of viewing is first overtly referred to in line two of stanza three, and with it comes the first direct mention of gold. The speaker sees nature as perfert, as in Eden or the Golden Age, but such vision comes only when the beholders of nature see her in a certain way. The rivers have to be eyed by man for them to be metamorphosed, as it were, from water to gold. The poet describes the transfiguration in terms of continuity - the rivers "burn to gold as they run" - and uses the imagery of smelting in order to heighten one's sense of heat and of the change it brings, and to impart the idea of Eternity present in the ever-flowing rivers of gold. The richness and plenteousness that the image evokes is transferred to the air itself as its very character is changed to liquid gold. The words in the phrase, "burn to gold", in line two of stanza three are stretched and separated in line three. The verb, "burn", becomes the present participle, "burning", which conveys a sense of there being no ending to the heat. The word, "gold", is taken as far from the word, "burning", as the sense of the line allows, and is made to counteract the hardness of the ground in being coupled with the word, "liquid", which reminds one of rivers of water and light and of gold in liquid form. Thus the four elements - earth, air, fire and water - are combined in a way that allows one to be fully aware of their interdependence and of the all-pervading touch of gold that the poet's vision and words instil into the scene. The poem is vibrant with

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[1]See above, Clare's Mary figure, pp. 107 & 108.

movement and light, and these two qualities seem to fuse in the final stanza in the image of molten gold; from the idea of "glitter" one passes to the running together of the two images, golden rivers and liquid gold sky, so that the riches in the stanza are confirmed and underlined by the last words of the poem, to which a condition is attached:

Whoever looks round sees Eternity there.

The Golden Age is a reality in the scene the poet depicts, but the requirement for perceiving this vision is to look round. This word has many implications and reverberations. To look in this way is to look with even emphasis upon all within view, for the word, "round", presupposes a centre; and that centre of perception is compellingly pointed to as the reader; the poet is only standing in, as it were, for as long as it takes for the vision of Eternity to become a reality for the reader. Another connotation of the word, "round", is of the circular form of the lyric mentioned before. For instance, the last line of "Autumn" delicately parallels the first line, complementing it and completing the circular movement of the poem: the thistledown is flying everywhere - it is on the green grass, up the hill; one is reminded of it in the gossamers that "twitter", and of its positions on green grass and mounting the hill by the references to greensward and hilltops glittering. One must look everywhere, that is, round as far as the eye can see, to find the entirety and Eternity of the scene. The second half of line one ("though the winds are all still") with its air of mysterious stillness, is caught up again in the seeing of Eternity there, in the unexpected. Only if one looks round, not just looks, will one see a relationship between all the items in the circle of vision and the circle of the lyric, and between the reader

and both circles. And the particular nature of the relationship, that of existence in harmony with others, can be perceived only by the person who is in the right position to do so. This position is that of the lover in relationship to that which is loved. In other words, the "I love..." relationship is necessary for Eternity to be perceived. Open-endedness is created by the last two words, "Eternity there". The word, "there", allows the place to remain non-specific so that the "there" could mean the place where the thistledown is flying or any place.

(ii) (b) As a contrast in certain respects to this song lyric, a study will now be made of Clare's Eden vision and "seeing" of Eternity in the natural world, in a ballad-like poem, "Emmonsales Heath". Perhaps the first difference to be noted between the two poems is their shape upon the page. In the three stanzas of "Autumn", one finds a circular movement with tightly interwoven threads pulled towards a centre. The long, sinuous shape of "Emmonsales Heath" may be seen as circular in quite a different way from "Autumn", contributing in a manner nearer to that of a ballad to Clare's vision of Eden and the realizing of Eternity in nature. The following analysis of "Emmonsales Heath" will (it is hoped) make both contrasts and similarities between the poems clearer, and also reveal the way Clare achieves his aim of capturing the tone of the particular part of the natural world he embodies in his poem.[1]

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[1]See above, p. 190, for an example of the poet's expression of this aim.

Emmonsales Heath

1. In thy wild garb of other times
I find thee lingering still
Furze oer each lazy summit climbs
At natures easy will

2. Grasses that never knew a scythe
Waves all the summer long
And wild weed blossoms waken blythe
That ploughshares never wrong

3. Stern industry with stubborn toil
And wants unsatisfied
Still leaves untouched thy maiden soil
In its unsullied pride

4. The birds still find their summer shade
To build their nests agen
And the poor hare its rushy glade
To hide from savage men

5. Nature its family protects
In thy security
And blooms that love what man neglects
Find peaceful homes in thee

6. The wild rose scents thy summer air
And woodbines weave in bowers
To glad the swain sojourning there
And maidens gathering flowers

7. Creations steps ones wandering meets
Untouched by those of man
Things seem the same in such retreats
As when the world began

8. Furze ling and brake all mingling free
And grass forever green
All seem the same old things to be
As they have ever been

9. The brook oer such neglected ground
Ones weariness to sooth
Still wildly threads its lawless bounds
And chafes the pebble smooth

10. Crooked and rude as when at first
Its waters learned to stray
And from their mossy fountain burst
It washed itself a way

11. O who can pass such lovely spots
Without a wish to stray
And leave lifes cares a while forgot
To muse an hour away

12. Ive often met with places rude
Nor failed their sweet to share
But passed an hour with solitude
And left my blessing there

13. He that can meet the morning wind
And oer such places roam
Nor leave a lingering wish behind
To make their peace his home

14. His heart is dead to quiet hours
No love his mind employs
Poesy with him neer shares its flowers
Nor solitude its joys

15. O there are spots amid thy bowers
Which nature loves to find
Where spring drops round her earliest flowers
Uncheckt by winters wind

16. Where cowslips wake the childs supprise
Sweet peeping ere their time
Ere april spreads her dappled skyes
Mid mornings powdered rime

17. Ive stretched my boyish walks to thee
When maydays paths were dry
When leaves had nearly hid each tree
And grass greened ancle high

18. And mused the sunny hours away
And thought of little things
That childern mutter oer their play
When fancy trys its wings

19. Joy nursed me in her happy moods
And all lifes little crowd
That haunt the waters fields and woods
Would sing their joys aloud

20. I thought how kind that mighty power
Must in his splendour be
Who spread around my boyish hour
Such gleams of harmony

21. Who did with joyous rapture fill
The low as well as high
And make the pismires round the hill
Seem full as blest as I

22. Hopes sun is seen of every eye
The haloo that it gives
In natures wide and common sky
Cheers every thing that lives [1]

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[1] Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 166. The stanzas have been numbered to facilitate reference to them.

The poem begins on a nostalgic note to which both the thought and assonance of the first line contribute. The backward glance implicit in nostalgia seems to extend the beginning of this poem back into the past ages implied by the phrase "other times"; and as one moves forward in the poem the place where the source of the utterance lies, as it were, and whence it flows bringing with it the nature of the place, is established more and more securely, although not overtly, as Eden.

Clare imbues Emmonsales Heath with the human attribute of "wearing" her wild covering of other times. He adds to the note of longing in the first line, as he pictures the "lingering" Heath seemingly waiting, yet about to depart. He captures a serene beauty in the words "lingering still" as if the beauty were a maiden, close to nature in her wild garb - a faint echo, perhaps, of the pastoral shepherdess. The serenity comes from the word-play on "still"; and the tension between the words, "lingering" and "still", creates a near paradox. This tension between apparently opposing states of being, or time, is found also in the delicate suggestion of an Eden-like perfection of form in the Heath now, as well as in its appearance at other times. As the poet blends the past and present together, the conditions for realizing Eternity in the situation emerge. The time span between "Eden-then" and "Eden-now" is contracted to a point where both meet and in which the poem finds its theme and its vision.

The serenity in the first two lines is continued in the onomata-poeic words, "lazy" and "easy", of lines three and four, each with two vowel sounds on either side of the voiced "z" sound:

> Furze oer each lazy summit climbs
> At natures easy will

The rhythm and the enjambment of the lines as well as the stress patterns of the two words parallels the continuous undulation suggested by the sense of "each lazy summit". A further unifying feature of the stanza is that of the assonance of key words in three lines: "Thy wild", "times", "I find" and "climbs". The rhyme words, "times"/"climbs", direct the reader to Clare's vision of Eternity in the fusion of past and present as the past ages suggested in "other times" are brought forward by the present tense of "climbs". The rhyming words, "still" and "will", emphasize the obedience and acceptance, the "waiting upon" nature's will by the Heath. Thus the rhymes contribute to the single thought contained in the first stanza, a thought which is the theme of the poem in generalized form, "the everlasting orderliness of the natural".

In the second stanza the "wild garb" of the Heath is added to in more specific detail as grasses and wild weed blossoms become part of the Heath's natural covering. For Clare, the important adjective, "wild", repeated here, does not mean "uncontrolled" or "unharmonious", but "uncultivated".[1] The word has a compelling, affirmative meaning for Clare; one that can be regarded as the near opposite of "savage". It is savage men, in stanza four, who may destroy the wild order and harmony of the Heath because of insatiable greed. But this threat does not arise until the last line of stanza two. The first line opens with a trochee, "grasses", varying the predominantly regular iambic rhythm of the first stanza, and drawing attention to another of the Heath's clothings. A peculiar intimacy between the grasses and the poet emerges in the description, "grasses that never knew a

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[1]See above, n. 1, p. 199.

scythe". This immediate relationship adds to the sense of age in "other times" and "lazy summit". The freedom expressed in "wild" is apparent in the lack of contact between the grasses and the mechanisms of civilization embodied in the scythe, for this lack of contact results in the freedom of the grass to "wave all the summer long". The rusticism of "grasses...waves", in which the action of the singular form of the verb, "waves", on the many grasses makes them a single entity, harks back through generalization to the wide-spreading mantle of the furze. At the same time, the unusual combination of the two words stretches forward to parallel, through the many single grasses, the "wild weed blossoms" of the next line. This duality of function is a quality often found extending and enriching Clare's words.

Again, in this stanza, the rhymes exert a faint opposition to the mood of lines one and three (freedom) and lines two and four (timelessness); for the words, "scythe" and "wrong", impart a warning note which counteracts the freedom associated with the words, "blythe" and "long".

The alliterative ring of line three with its repeated "w"'s and its satisfying balance of sound and stress - "And wild weed blossoms waken blythe" - reminds one of the lilting rhythm of some folk songs. The final line of the stanza, however, raises these weeds, usually thought of as humble and useless, although lovely in their simplicity, to a height where wrong would be done should they be destroyed by the ploughshares.[1]

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[1] See above, n. 1, p.199, for a similar respect for the weed.

The scythe and ploughshares are seen as individual enemies of the Heath. When they are united under the more general concept, industry, stern and stubborn, they gain strength in unity; and, because industry is felt as a powerful, amorphous force, its "wants unsatisfied" assume frightening proportions. The heavily stressed first syllables of the line, "Stern industry with stubborn toil", echoes the relentless encroachment of agricultural industry. The contrast between "stern industry", the ever demanding tyrant, and the lovely free, wildly garbed maidenhood of the Heath is captured as the poet recalls the wild heath through the phrases, "thy maiden soil" and "unsullied pride".

In stanza four the regular rhythm of nature, the unhurried, inevitable cycle, is suggested by the word "still" which is also a link with stanza one. "Stubborn toil" and man's savagery are resisted, and in both verses the word "still" adds a breath of wonder.

The sense of nature wronged builds up until, in stanza five, man is no longer considered a part of nature's family. He has neglected the beauty of the Heath which ironically supplies the security of peaceful homes, usually associated with human beings, to the blooms. But then, in stanza six, Clare admits to his Eden-like world of nature the rustic, the swain and the maiden. One notices that the swain is sojourning there - no more. He is not there to exploit, so that it is as if nature, because of this, offers him and the maiden her joys which Clare has, in a masterly way, made appeal to the senses. The wild rose actively "scents" the air; movement and shape are vividly portrayed in "woodbines weave in bowers". The first two lines of this stanza distance the Heath from human interference as it is the Heath's summer air that the rose scents, yet this is done for human gladness,

for those persons who do not neglect the beauties the Heath has to offer.

The unspoilt purity of Eden which permeates Clare's view of nature and his poetry is explicit in stanza seven's "Creation's steps...untouched by those of man". The poet extends the boundary of the present Heath to incorporate, both spatially and temporally, man's and nature's beginnings. The reader is reminded of man's comparative youth and bustle compared with nature's greater age and serenity. Slow, progressive movement is implied in "Creations steps" and the purposeful, controlled rhythm of the two words with the enforced pause between them echoes this. The effect is added to by the contrast in the rest of the line where the alliterative sound of "ones wandering" and the extra syllable in the line reflects the joyously free meandering of man. The heavily end-stopped second line of this stanza reinforces the image of man's chance meeting with unsullied nature. The poet recaptures the freshness of Eden in "Creations steps...untouched by those of man" and emphasizes his backward glance to "when the world began" in the word "retreats";[1] then he arrests time as if capturing in a painting the scene of "furze ling and brake" in the phrase "and grass forever green", the ever green plant being, for Clare, an emblem of Eternity. The phrase is reminiscent of Keats's "Ode to a Grecian Urn" but, whereas Keats in his poem refers to the permanence of art, Clare refers to the permanence, or eternity, of nature.

In stanza nine, "neglected ground" reminds one of man's neglect of beauty, and the line,

> Still wildly threads its lawless bounds

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[1] cf. Henry Vaughan's "The Retreate".

continues the image of the Heath in its "wild garb"; yet nature has the ability to soothe. The tension between the lawless freedom of nature and its capacity for soothing and smoothing is beautifully maintained in this stanza ending with the paradox of "chafes the pebble smooth". The word, "crooked", coming as it does immediately after the word, "smooth", prolongs the tension, and "rude" serves to build up the impetus of the Eden-fresh power in the brook. There is a childlike vigour about the exploring, straying stream in its link with earth's youth "when at first / Its waters learned to stray"; and this sense of vigour continues as the stream is seen to have "washed itself a way". Again, the parts of a paradox are delicately balanced, for the brook is, at first, breaking new ground in creating its course; but, at the same time, that course is governed by the contours of the land through which it is flowing. Thus the stream's free, natural action creates order just because it is ordered by, and obedient to, the harmonious whole of nature of which it is a part. This wild order of the brook echoes a pastoral theme found in The Shepherd's Calendar, the fulfilment of being when a creature of nature finds its proper place; the stream will not reach its destination, the sea, unless it "tunes in" to the rhythm of the landscape, falling in harmoniously with the natural gradient of the land.

There is a suggestion of a youthful lack of restraint so often associated with "burning oneself out" in a possible secondary sense of the last line of this stanza, "It washed itself a way". As if this extreme abandon has imparted itself to the poet, his voice comes directly to the reader in the next stanza. It is raised in an exclamation of wonder and incredulity at anyone's not being touched and gripped by beauty; yet there is restraint in the very joy, for the

speaker knows that it is possible only for a while, an hour, to leave life's cares. He moves from the pathos of fleeting human time and links the human and the abstract in the line, "passes an hour with [not in] solitude". (Italics mine.) The homely tone of the line, together with the verb, "passes", and the verb, "meet", in the line, "He that can meet the morning wind", creates personifications that are really felt. It is as if solitude and the morning wind are ordinary country people, yet of great beauty, often met in the daily round. The verb, "passes", in stanza twelve reaches back to "pass" in stanza eleven, embracing "the lovely spots" as part of the personified company.

The linking of the human with the intangible, the morning wind, in stanza thirteen, draws together exiled man of stanza seven and the untouched beauty of the lingering Heath in stanza one. The poet cannot believe that he who experiences such places as the Heath will not leave at least as much of himself behind as is in a "lingering wish". He believes that not only the flowers will find peaceful homes in the Heath but that the appreciative man will wish to make the peace found in such places his home.

Peace is extended to the quiet hours, but the imperceptive person's heart is dead to this. Placing the word, "dead", near "quiet hours" creates a paradoxical shock. The mind, too, is left passive, for the active, living force comes from love. In the line,

Poesy with him neer shares its flowers

Clare reveals his characteristic humility and his understanding of the workings of Poetry, for it is a sharing, the potential poet being in a receptive and attentive state.[1] It is significant that that

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[1]This is an example of the pastoral theme, "Love as an act of reciprocation for mutual good". See above, p. 48.

which Poesy (a pastoral being, for Clare)[1] shares is flowers, for there is, in Clare's writing, an almost tangible quality in his bodying forth of nature's beauty.

The poet does not long refrain from revelling in the concrete, the particular. In a natural, quiet transition, the poem's argument moves apparently effortlessly from the negative, generalized state in stanza fourteen, to a more specific offering of Poesy's flowers. The speaker pinpoints the places where spring "drops round her earliest flowers" - a lovely image of generosity and abundance. Clare seems to associate youth and nature's beauty so closely that the presence of the one awakens in the other a sure response:

> Where cowslips wake the childs supprise

In his poem, "The Dying Child", there is even more; there is a communion so close that the natural seasons actually seem to prevent the child from dying before nature is prepared to die in winter - "He could not die when trees were green".[2] The spontaneity and freshness of Clare's poetry is apparent in his portrayal of the child's surprised reaction to the beautiful; and it is only when, in "The Dying Child",

> Birds' nests and eggs caused no surprise[3]

that one knows that death is very near.

Youth reaches forth to enjoy, in stanza seventeen:

> Ive stretched my boyish walks to thee

and the child of spring becomes the youth of summer with all its

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[1]See this aspect of Clare's Mary figure discussed above, p. 91.

[2]Tibble, Poems, II, 467, "The Dying Child", l. 1.

[3]Ibid., l. 23.

promise, its greenery, made more intensely green by Clare's verb, "greened", in this stanza. The precise measurement of the height of the grass on a human being is another instance of Clare's delicately touching in of sense impressions mentioned above.[1] This detail brings healing, as it were, to the breach between man and nature so apparent in the first stanzas of the poem.

In stanza eighteen Clare portrays truly and with sensitivity the child at play; the child so lost in play that he mutters "when fancy trys its wings". Clare's integrity and sure touch does not allow him to become sentimental. He joys in the mighty power, the source of harmony, but in his "boyish hour" there were only gleams of this - he is realistic in his joy. The blessing he speaks of is not less for man or beast. There is a generosity, an all pervasiveness about Clare's conception of joy which he sees not only emanating from nature, but blessing equally all that lives, making "the pismires round the hill / Seem full as blest as I". In the final stanza, Clare sees all living things as influenced by the halo of hope's sun; for the sky is common to all. And Clare's wide, generous and universal view of nature is epitomised in the vision of "natures wide and common sky".

The theme of nature, wild, uncurbed, unconfined, but ordered by its own laws into harmonious shapes fresh with an Eden purity and of a divine generosity, rings through this poem and gives it unity.

In "Emmonsales Heath" Clare's themes and material are characteristically coextensive[2] - nature is shown to possess a wild order through a presentation of this in his poetry. This paradox may be

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[1]See above, p. 209.

[2]See above, p. 75.

seen in the superficial appearance of a disordered rambling in a poem which belies this impression through the satisfaction it gives the reader. The satisfaction is imparted by a demonstrable, disciplined order at a deeper level. Such order has already been revealed at two major points of transition; that in stanzas six and seven, where "exiled" man, become receptive to nature's laws of harmony, is admitted to her joys; and that in stanzas fifteen to nineteen, where the poet bodies forth both nature's riches, and the participation of those creatures, including man, who are blest in enjoying them. These major transitions, so delicately achieved, are but a more strongly felt example of the almost imperceptible thread linking each autonomous verse to its neighbours and to the whole poem.

Space does not allow for more than a single example of how this thread is woven through the poem. From stanza one to stanza two, the generalized "wild garb" becomes the particular "wild weed blossoms" in an area of nature which keeps its beauty through the absence of man; but these wild children of nature are carried over to stanza six where the "wild rose" scents the air for man who is now attuned to nature, and who, therefore, shares in her beauty. The fourth and central image of wildness then appears mid-poem, in stanzas nine and ten, in the paradox of the brook, "wildly threading its lawless bounds". Here the poet incorporates two paradoxes in one line; for to thread implies a disciplined control over against wildness; and lawlessness does not usually respect "bounds". At this water-shed of the poem, the central theme, which could be described as the orderliness of the natural, is revealed. The wildness emphasized in the first half of the poem meets the order to be a feature of the second half, and the word "wild" does not appear in any form in the poem again.

The poem itself could be seen as a stream, winding apparently "at its own sweet will", but governed by both its own "prepared" bed and the course imposed upon it by the whole, which is nature. The argument seems to wind with joy-filled abandon through the "joyous spots" made almost tangible by the particularity of the furze, wild weed blossoms, summer shade, rushy glade, cowslips, dappled skies, powdered rime and grass greening ankle high. The generalizations are imbued with this near-tangibility through Clare's subtle use of personification. The poem maintains a sure course, begun, as it were, in Eden, bringing Eden's beauty with it (embodied in the particular delights to be found in the "joyous spots") and gradually drawing in and including alienated man through a transformation of the negative in him to a positive recognition of his role as equally a creature, tuned in to nature's harmonious laws. The change seems to be brought about by the sheer abundance of the beauties that Clare makes available in his poem.

Eternity finds its place in the poem through the poet's already mentioned realization of "Creation" and "Eden" as present simultaneously; and in his embracing in the present moment the future to which the word "hope" in the final stanza points.

(ii) (c) The two poems that have been examined in this chapter so far are obviously complete. The following lines to be considered in the light of Clare's vision of Eternity are headed "Fragment" in both the Robinson and the Tibble editions of Clare's poems. The present writer believes, however, that the lines can be seen to have a unity that belies their appearance as a "fragment", much as Coleridge's

"Kubla Khan" may be regarded as a complete poem despite the poet's opposing claim.[1] Clare's six line poem, "Grasshoppers", which is found as the final poem under a group headed "Sonnets" in the Tibble edition,[2] could, in such a position, give the impression of being a fragment, as the above "Fragment" may have done to the editors, appearing as it does after a poem in three stanzas called "Isabella"; but an analysis of "Grasshoppers"[3] reveals it to be a beautifully balanced whole, and an analysis of this "Fragment" will show a similar balance and unity.

Fragment

Vetches, both yellow and blue,
Grew thick in the meadow lane,
Isabellas shawl kept off the dew
As thickly upon her it came,
A thorn bush caught her umbrella
As though it would bid her to stay,
But the loving, and loved Isabella,
Went laughing, and walking away. [4]

The first line of the poem announces in an apparently direct manner the vetches of two colours; and yet there is a tone of surprise conveyed by the word "both" which counteracts anything mundane in the description and raises the vetches from the usual humble position associated with weeds. It is as if the yellow flowers would have been

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[1]See, for example, G.W. Knight, "Coleridge's Divine Comedy," in English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. by M.H. Abrams, A Galaxy Book (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p.169.

[2]Tibble, Poems, II, 330.

[3]See above, pp. 55-58.

[4]Robinson, The Later Poems, p. 253.

enough of a wonder to behold, without the added riches of the blue. The first word of the poem announces the flowers as if they were young girls entering a ballroom. Through the stress upon the word and its position attention is drawn to the importance of the weed through its name. The pause after the word, "vetches", indicates a tone of pride as the speaker introduces them and waits, as it were, for the expected reaction of admiration for their beauty. The additional announcement of their yellow and blue attire comes as a further cause for wonder.

The delicately coloured vetches are fitting harbingers of the joy to follow. Only by the second line does the reader learn of the generous abundance of these beauties who thickly line the meadow lane as if in waiting for the person who is the reason for the announcement and for the existence of the poem. The verb, "grew", at the beginning of line two anchors the vetches firmly to the ground, and in their proper place, while acknowledging their freedom to grow. The expectation set up by their presence in such abundance in the lane gives rise to the idea that they are there solely to be in a position to welcome Isabella; and yet there is a suggestion of timelessness in their waiting and their number.

The many trisyllabic feet of the lines (usually trimeters) vary so freely throughout the verse that the basic metre seems as elusive as Isabella herself. The first line, "Vetches, ‖ both yel|low and blue", has the appearance of an ordered statement, moving to a masculine ending made stronger by the contrast of the two unstressed syllables of the anapest. The second line, "Grew thick ‖ in the mea|dow lane", seems to have more syllables than the first but this illusion is partly brought about by the double stress in the first

foot (a spondee) and the anapestic second foot. The masculine rhymes give a firmness to the setting of the scene and the placing of the vetches, as if they, at least, are static and reliable. But they are also the gay, expectant recipients of the moving Isabella. Too great an emphasis on firmness or heaviness would belie the celebratory effect of the colours and the feeling of freedom which the non-conforming feet of the second line convey.

The central figure of the poem, Isabella, is not announced, but seems to appear on the scene as if she has always been there. She is introduced into the setting as if her shawl, simple and useful, were as important for the moment as her presence; and then it is seen to be necessary to protect its wearer. The simple shawl is raised in stature, as the vetches were in the first lines, by its almost chivalric gallantry in sheltering Isabella from the dew. The yellow and blue flowers of the vetches are in direct contrast to the shawl, a homely article of clothing the colour of which is too unimportant to mention; and yet some of the vetches' brightness seems to flow over into the shawl which, being a light covering, anticipates Isabella's lightness of step imitated by the rhythm of the last two lines. The lightness of the shawl also contrasts with the emphasis on thickness in both the second and fourth lines which seems to create an effect of crowding of objects on Isabella, so that the reader is not surprised when a thorn bush catches her umbrella. The double stress of "grew thick" echoes the heaviness of the fall of dew. Nature's creatures seem to be doing all they can to be near to Isabella, to enfold her, and to make her theirs. For she is a child of nature. Nature's embrace would seem to come from all sides: but for her shawl, the vetches in their abundance would brush her with dew, and the dew would

fall on her from above. Then, the dew's gentler efforts and the vetches' slender tendrils and their beauty having failed to detain her, as it were, the thorn bush tries to hold her forcibly, but succeeds only in catching her umbrella. The line, "As though it would bid her to stay", seems to include the vetches and the dew in the action of delaying the girl. The word, "caught", implies that Isabella is moving fairly fleetingly, too fast for the thorn bush to catch anything more than her appendage, the umbrella, an article that does not even appear to be needed, for it is the shawl that keeps off the dew. The poet leaves it tantalizingly unsure as to whether the thorn bush succeeds in gaining the umbrella, and so delaying Isabella for a few more moments. Then the final lines of complete freedom and release in their lilting, waltzing rhythm relieve the tension. One learns that the free Isabella, free because she loves and is loved, laughs with the knowledge of that freedom, and only needs to walk away, so sure is she of being loved and of being in her proper place.

The rhythm of the poem is one with its sense and with the subtle, progressive changes towards the open-ended freedom of the last lines. In line three, the scansion of Isabella's name mirrors her lightness of foot and her freedom-loving nature. Placed at the beginning of the line, the four syllable word, "Isabella" (∪ ∪ — ∪), scans in a way that opposes the stressed first syllable in each of the first two lines of the poem. The second time the word, "Isabella", appears in the poem it is caught up, as the girl seems to be, in the gay, waltzing rhythm of the final two lines.

In line three, with its extra foot, Isabella's movement along the lane is suggested, for the poet does not allow one to draw breath

until the word, "dew", and then only for a fleeting moment as the enjambment carries one over to line four. The latter line seems both to carry on the rhythm that parallels Isabella's light steps, and to slow down the speed of her progress, as the syllables of the line are reduced by one, and the sense of arrival in the word, "came", is strengthened by its masculine ending. The assonantal half-rhyme, "lane"/"came", is subtly prepared for in both lines so that, unless the reader is concentrating on the rhyme scheme in the poem, he does not notice the off-rhyme. The "m" of "meadow lane" prepares the ear for the replacement of "n" by "m" in the second half of the rhyme pair. Similarly, in line four, the stress on the second syllable of "upon" gives the "n" an impetus which carries its sound forward so that it seems to become part of the rhyme word, "came".

The poem is divided in content, action and tone into two parts, the turn coming after line four. But Clare does not allow the poem to be broken into two halves. There is not a full stop after "came", but a comma which leads the reader on to the next line.[1]

In line five, three stressed monosyllables follow each other at the point in the narrative where the thorn bush catches Isabella's umbrella; these slow down the rhythm in sympathy with the probable slowing down of Isabella by the detaining thorns, the only discordant action in the poem. One notices that the thorn bush did not catch at her umbrella, but actually caught it. Clare's unerring touch and sensitivity prevails in line six where the slight suggestion of personification of the thorn bush is maintained by the comparison.

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[1]In John Clare: Selected Poems, ed. by Tibble & Tibble, p. 336, this poem has a full stop after the word, "came"; another example of the danger of distortion of the meaning in a poem if Clare's work is punctuated in a way other than that found in the original MSS.

Clare's integrity of tone continues throughout two levels of the poem. At the descriptive level (the setting of the scene; the practical precautions a young girl would take on a dewy evening; the overgrown lane; the umbrella catching on a thorn bush; and the freely laughing and walking Isabella) his acute observations and his "I love..." reaction to them are of a man who knows and loves the country life. At the level where the poem embodies Clare's vision of Eden in nature, and of nature's Eternity, this "Fragment" of only eight lines as against the twenty-two stanzas of "Emmonsales Heath", can, with the latter poem, be likened to a stream, but a stream in microcosm. However, in the "Fragment" there is no stream reference made or implied (as there is in "Emmonsales Heath"); but the use of such an image helps one to explain the relationships between the items in the poem. The yellow and blue vetch-lined lane can be thought of as the bed of the stream, eternally waiting for and expectant of the water to flow through its ready made course. It is as if Isabella's arrival, or presence in the lane, represents just that flow of life-giving water needed to fulfil the existence of the river-bed. There is a paradox in Isabella's first appearance in the poem. She seems to have been forever there - she does not arrive, or is not announced as the vetches seem to be - and yet her presence is transitory and her movement is light and swift; even the thorn bushes cannot detain her, any more than they could keep back flowing water. In her oneness with nature and in the mutual love that exists between them - "the loving and loved Isabella" - lies her freedom. The penultimate line includes both speaker and subject in the relationship of love. At this point the poet's love for his creation, Isabella, and for all the other creatures of nature that appear in

the poem becomes fully manifest.

In the final line, "Went laughing, and walking away", the continuity implied in the two present participles, and the freedom from restriction suggested by the final word, "away", contribute to the open-ended nature of the "Fragment". The poem opens out releasing Isabella into her future which (one can assume) depends on, and will always lead back to, nature. In this poem, Eternity is felt to inhere in Isabella's freedom, which, in turn, depends upon her loving and being loved. The main pastoral themes discussed in this thesis[1] are evident in the lines in Isabella's particular loving relationship with nature presented in a scene of Eden-like innocence and beauty. The concept of Eternity present in this moment of Isabella's interaction with nature is contributed to by both protagonists at that moment. Isabella's freedom seems to take on an eternal quality as it is maintained, despite opposition, throughout her movement along the lane; and nature, in her creatures, vetches, dew and thorn bush, imparts a sense of eternal constancy and reliability in being forever ready, in her place, to meet Isabella.

(ii) (d) The final analysis in this chapter is of "The morning wind", a poem with which it seems appropriate to end in view of Clare's pre-occupation with the sonnet genre. The poem exhibits the main characteristics of Clare's sonnets discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis. In addition, it is an example of Clare's ability to imbue a

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[1]These themes are: the unity of man and nature realised in a shared experience; love as an act of reciprocation for mutual good; and the fulfilment of being of nature's children, including man, when they have found, and are acting in, their proper place. See above, p. 48.

scene with the trascendental, without allowing any aspects to lose their natural quality. The Biblical imagery which permeates the poem lifts it to the border of the mystical but, at the same time, the images become part of earth's reality. "Earths music"[1] is not diminished but is understood to be "heaven's music", that is, eternal, and rendered fully accessible.

The morning wind

1. Theres more then music in this early wind
2. Awaking like a bird refreshed from sleep
3. And joy what Adam might in eden find
4. When he with angels did communion keep
5. It breaths all balm and insence from the sky
6. Blessing the husbandman with freshening powers
7. Joys manna from its wings doth fall and lie
8. Harvests for early wakers with the flowers
9. The very grass in joys devotion moves
10. Cowslaps in adoration and delight
11. This way and that bow to the breath they love
12. Of the young winds that with the dew pearls play
13. Till smoaking chimneys sicken the young light
14. And feelings fairey visions fade away [2]

The key to this poem's tone of freshness and joy lies in the word, "morning", of the title. Wind in itself is a cleansing, freshening force, and that it should be the morning wind which the poet is joying in adds to the clarity, the new-day purity and the Eden-like youth of the as yet unsullied world over and through which the wind blows. The depth of implied as well as stated feeling in the poem is apparent from the first line where the poet perceives "more then music in this early wind". In leaving the reader's mind open to what that "more" is, Clare is able to fill it with the joy he

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[1] Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. 157, "Sabbath Bells", v. 2, l. 7.

[2] Ibid., p. 153.

himself experiences in the situation he gives.

The sound of the first line echoes the music of the "early wind", for it is finely balanced in the first instance with the alliteration of both the "m's" in "more" and "music" and the "r's" in "theres", "more" and "early", and in the assonance of the repeated short "i's" in "music in this early wind", all of which gives the line a lilt. The line gains assurance from the statement of the first word, "Theres", and from the controlled yet widening implications in the simple, "more". That the experience is one of the present moment for the poet is seen in the word, "this". "Early wind" is an unusual collocation. It is as if the wind were not only early in time, but possessed of other, non-temporal qualities associated with earliness. One is thus prepared by the last two words in the first line for the life-giving simile in the second line; the early wind, associated with the bird, seems as alive to the rhythms of nature as the awakening bird is. The bird simile is especially lovely in its blending with, and adding to, the music and the lightness of the wind. "Refreshed" captures the repetitive rhythm of nature as well as the freshness of each delight, while "bird" is linked by association with "music", "early", and "wind" in the first line. The second line is balanced by the antithesis of the first and last words, "awaking" and "sleep", and the unfolding of the three-syllabled word, "awaking", is terminated by the final monosyllable, "sleep", reflecting a state of completeness and rest. The movement in this line reminds one of the act of stretching - the opening out and closing actions made on waking.

The idea of earliness, first associated with the day, is now referred to the earliest chronological time, that of Adam, and it

is as if the world in its largest dimension were refreshed and brought to an Eden-like purity. Joy from undefiled Eden, borne by the early wind, permeates the speaker's world. In this way the limiting action of time is overcome and all past perfection seems to be embraced in the present scene in a moment. The third line is finely counterpoised against the first; the "more then music" in the first line is added to by "joy" in the third, and "eden" in this line has its counterpart in the spirit of the early wind. The ambivalent grammatical function of the words, "joy" and "what", in these first three lines allows them a freedom of association which parallels the freedom of the wind:

> Theres more then music in this early wind
> Awaking like a bird refreshed from sleep
> And joy what Adam might in eden find

If one takes the two words, "joy what", to mean "the joy that", one can then link the phrase with "bird" thus: "Awaking like a bird... [and like the joy that] Adam might in eden find". There is also some attraction of "sleep" into a relationship with "refreshed" such as "refreshed [by] sleep", and "joy" is attracted similarly, thus: "refreshed [by joy ]". But probably the truest interpretation would be the non-grammatical one of accepting "joy" as a quality to be placed in the neighbourhood of the undefined quality, "more-then-music", both "joy" and "more-then-music" being part of the wind.

The fourth line is paralleled in some respects by the second, for angels are a heightened form of the winged beauty of the birds, and the awakening after refreshing sleep has the aura of a communion. This blend of the natural world and the spiritual is characteristic of the whole sonnet, as will be seen. The word, "keep", coming as it does at the end of the line, emphasizes the continuation of harmony

and communion in Eden and implies the possible loss of this on earth. The atmosphere of worship and reciprocation in love and fellowship which the word "communion" imparts is continued in the wind's giving of itself in breathing balm and incense. Reciprocation comes later in the returning of adoration and delight by the grasses and flowers. The wind becomes an agent now, not only of beauty of sound, but of beauty of scent. Its position as giver of blessings "from the sky", and its generosity in the giving which the word, "all", implies, reminds one of the source of the wind itself and its gifts. But the religious implications are presented as so much part of nature and its reality that it does violence to separate the image from the essence of the experience.

In the second quatrain there is a movement in each pair of lines from the blessing to the blessed; the balm and incense of the wind bless the husbandman, and its joys bless the early wakers. Line five has a similar rhythm and is patterned in a similar way to the first line. Here again there is alliteration in "breaths all balm", and the line opens out in the expansion of "sky" as the first line did into the all pervasive wind with its far reaching effects. Furthermore, the two, sky and wind, are joint givers of blessing; the sky being the source and the wind the purveyor. Again, as in the first line, all the words are simple monosyllables, apart from the words, "early" and "incense" (the latter paralleled by the word "music" in the first line and this link giving emphasis to the senses of sound and smell). The sentence structure is perfectly straightforward in both cases, with no inversions, qualifying clauses or parentheses. The rhythmic resemblance in the lines resides chiefly in the phrasing, thus:

| Verb Statement | Effect (Metaphoric) | Region (Concrete) |
|---|---|---|
| Theres | more then music | in this early wind |
| ↕ | ↕ | ↕ |
| It breaths | all balm and insence | from the sky |

The assonance of each line - smooth, soft sounds - helps connect them, too. In the very simplicity and lucidity of the statements lies their strength, and the poet's serene, joyful acceptance of the beauty of perfect harmony in relationships in nature, and of the gifts it has to impart, comes to the reader essentially through such lines as these. The calm, unruffled nature of the spreading of the wind's gifts is captured in the word, "breaths", in line five, and the even flow of the monosyllables adds to the effect. The disyllabic "insence" then assumes greater significance as it is associated with the word, "communion", in the previous line; and this religious theme of worship is continued through the following six lines in such words as "blessing", "manna", "harvests", "devotion", "adoration" and "bow". It is as if the morning wind were seen as the willing bridge between sky and earth, between the source of joy and the recipient of it. Here again is one of the pastoral themes which Clare's poetry bodies forth - that of love as an act of reciprocation for mutual good - and it moves through the sonnet and finds its peak in the line,

This way and that bow to the breath they love

In this poem, as in Clare's sonnet, "Nutting",[1] the final line is a sigh rather than a cry of bereavement; but, despite the sigh, the joy does not fade as do the "feelings fairey visions". Clare is too honest a poet to live in a "fairey" world or to let one do so through his poetry. Although the "smoaking chimneys sicken the young light",

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[1]See above, p. 173.

they are part of the landscape and are acknowledged as such; Clare's vision of unspoilt, unsullied nature as that of unfallen Eden adds to the joy which permeates his poetry, but does not interfere with his integrity and honesty in facing other harsher aspects of life. He does not deny the human being's tendency to besmirch his surroundings; nevertheless he affirms that, where human beings such as the husbandman and the "early wakers" in this poem are open to the joys brought, as it were by the morning wind, and are willing to respond to the gift in love, then the atmosphere of Adam's loving, whole response to the beauties of unspoilt Eden is found. The youth and freshness of this Eden-world runs through the poem beginning with the promise contained in the first line's "early wind". It continues in the bird's awaking "refreshed" from sleep, Adam's first joy in Eden, the husbandman's invigorated powers, and the "_early_ wakers" (italics mine), until it reaches its climax in the lovely line,

Of the young winds that with the dew pearls play

and ends, before the vision fades, in "young light".

For children Clare wrote such verses as "Little Trotty Wagtail",[1] and his observation of children's way of play in such poems as "Emmonsales Heath", where "childern mutter oer their play",[2] appears in this sonnet. Here the morning winds are seen as young, and as playing like children with the pearl-like drops of dew. The word, "play", points to another of the pastoral themes noted elsewhere as present in Clare's poetry, that of the fulfilment of being of those acting in their proper place.[3] Such action frees the agent from the

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[1]Tibble, _Poems_, II, 447.

[2]See above, p. 213.

[3]See above, p. 48.

distinction between work and play, so that work-play becomes a form of worship and praise of the Creator. This worship, in turn, gives rise to joy - the joy that unfallen Adam found and that the child still finds in his perfect relationship with the natural world of Eden and with its Creator. This is the joy that the morning wind brings to all who would receive it, and it is the joy of the humble grass moving in a harmonious relationship like that of Adam. In "play", joy becomes eternally present. This joy is communicated partly by the appeal to various senses. In the first quatrain, the music of the early wind plays on the aural sense, and the harmony of Adam's communion with angels continues the effect of suggested sound. The second quatrain begins and ends with the sense of smell being provoked, first directly, by the words, "insence" and "balm", and then by implication in the harvests of flowers.

Through the poem runs the ripple of movement, all of it gentle, but with reserves of power. The birds awaken refreshed, and we feel their awakening and new strength; the husbandman is imbued with "freshening powers"; the grass moves in joyous devotion, the "cowslaps" in adoration bow "this way and that", and finally the rhythm quickens in the line,

> Of the young winds that with the dew pearls play

but still there is no urgency.

As has been noted previously in this thesis, Clare never ignores nature's more humble creatures and, in this poem, the lowly grass moves in "joys devotion" and is thus included in the "cowslaps" bowing "in adoration and delight". Simple grass and weeds are beautiful, to Clare, in their place.

The progress of the poem seems to be a movement from the promise

in the first line, through an awakening of bird life, a strengthening of the life of him who works with nature, and a gift reminding one of the manna from heaven, fallen and waiting to give joy, to the climax of adoration, love and delight; only to end in a sense of bereavement. There is the faintest warning, in what comes before, of the final two lines of sorrow. To speak of the warnings is to harden what is a suggestion into something overt, but a suggestion of loss does accompany the overwhelming waves of joy. Will the wind remain gentle and unadulterated when it is no longer "early"? Adam did not remain in Eden. Only the early wakers are blessed with joy's manna; dew does not last.

The impact of the final two lines is heightened by the drop from adoration to sickness; by the profound sense of wrong which accompanies the sickening of the young - for it is the "young light" that is sickened by sullying smoke.

The final line combines a sense of bereavement and acceptance; of delight in the feelings' visions and an acknowledgement that they are visions and that feelings must not be the sole criterion - they can be "fairey", a word not denoting the unreal to Clare, but implying the need for a whole view of life, not a limited one.[1]

The changing rhythms in the poem reflect the nature of its movement. The lightness and awakening freshness, linked with music and birdsong in the first quatrain, deepens into more mellow ripeness in which the wind gives generously all balm and incense,

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[1]"Comfort" enjoying the weather from the interior fireside warmth must be balanced by the shepherd's meeting of seasonal hardship and winning through. See the discussion of "Winter Fields", above, pp. 128 - 143 and of The Shepherd's Calendar, "January: A Winters Day", above, pp. 36 & 37.

freshening powers and "joys manna". There is a movement from high to low as the influence of the wind descends from sky down to earth, so that in the sestet and in line twelve in particular, the young winds are down in the grass with the dew. There is also a movement from early light to daylight as the pre-dawn wind first wakens the birds, then the dawn-risers; only then are the fires lit, the result of which "sickens the young light", making it "old". One moves through the octave down to the particularization of "cowslaps" and "dew pearls" in the sestet as if from a height or distance, and this movement is delicate and seemingly natural. The winged imagery of the first quatrain - the connotations of bird and angels - is continued in the second quatrain and throughout the poem, mainly in the image of the wings of the manna-bearing morning wind, but also in words expressing the movement of the air caused by the wings, such as "breaths", "freshening powers", "fall", "move", "bow", "play" and ending in "fairey" and "fade away". Added to this imagery is the unifying divine imagery in which is a blending of the natural world and the spiritual. The comparisons are so gently made that all the objects of comparison are seen as inhabitants of the world Clare is revealing. Angels are as "real" as birds. The special tone which his rustic language imparts to the poem is another contributory factor to the unity of the whole; the rusticity of the word, "cowslaps", of the line, "And joy what Adam might in eden find", and of the inexact rhyming, "moves"/"love", blends with a gentle formality and ease of language that enfolds both "husbandman" and "angels". Once again Clare's inexact rhyming goes unnoticed in a general reading of the poem. This is partly because "grass" is a collective noun which incorporates within it the many single grasses, so that "moves" could

as well be "move"; and partly because the singular "breath" which precedes "love" imparts to this verb a sense of joining both singular and plural nouns - "breath", "winds" and "cowslaps".

The movement in the octave mentioned above seems to narrow its range of coverage as the particularity of the sestet is reached. The lines of this part of the sonnet are closely and intricately bound together. The rhyme scheme, efegfg, ensures that the beginning of the sestet is intimately linked with the end. Furthermore, the lovely balance of rhyme pattern, e f e g f g, is an expression of the theme of harmony and serenity. Through rhyme, the poet brings together, although four lines apart, the cowslips' "delight" in line ten, and the "young light" in line thirteen, and thus heightens the effect of the fall from delight to sickness. Through the rhyming of "play" and "away", in lines twelve and fourteen respectively, the young winds' playing with such impermanent objects as dewdrops is linked with the "fairey visions" which have to fade away as dew.

All the rhymes in the sonnet reflect the theme of harmony and serenity, for every rhyme word has a long vowel and nearly all are soft sounds which invite the reader to glide through the word onto the next line, as the morning wind seems to glide through the poem. Clare's avoidance of punctuation also contributes to the gliding effect.

Continuity in the sestet occurs again through the flow of movement and feeling from one line to another. The grass "moves" in line nine and this leads to the <u>bowing</u> of the cowslips in line eleven; and the <u>playing</u> of the young winds in line twelve; the grass's devotion prepares the reader for the cowslips' "adoration and delight" and for "<u>feelings</u>" visions. (Italics mine.) The

juxtaposition in the sestet of the extremes of delight and sickness, adoration (which suggests the divine) and "fairey visions" (which suggest the transitory and incomplete), adds to the poignancy of the final lines. The alliteration in the last line,

And feelings fairey visions fade away ,

lightens the burden of the penultimate line with its faintly sinister sibilant alliteration, its harsh "k" sounds and its more laboured rhythm.

The way the lines of structure in the sonnet contribute to the unity of the poem, in conjunction with argument and theme, could be summarized as follows.

In the octave the wind is shedding joy on earth, on Adam, the labourers, the creatures. The emphasis is on giving. This part of the sonnet is more generalized than particularized, although Clare achieves both effects in one. The earth, Adam (representing unfallen man), the labourers and creatures remain large concepts.

In the sestet, the created world responds to the wind's gift with adoration. The emphasis is on receiving, although from this particular way of receiving arises a giving too. "The very grass" shows how fundamental is the response. The generalization in the octave seems to overflow onto the "grass" of the world, but this word subsumes the many different grass species and thus the particularization moves on until the poet's glance focuses upon one particular kind of flower, the "cowslap".

The counterstroke of "smoaking chimneys" in the final two lines serves to reinforce the pure Eden atmosphere by contrast, and to ground it in mundane human life. Chimney smoke seems to drive out "fairey visions" but does not do so, for the smoke is far more

ephemeral than they and is only a screen which indeed will fade as they ultimately will not. They remain behind the smoke.

The vision of nature in adoration may fade for a time, but there has been more than vision; there has been feeling engendered by and in sympathy with the harmonious "praise" implicit in the pictured mood of adoring nature. And the effect of the vision and the feeling which it has created does not remain in the past; for this moment of adoration joins that which is in time with that which is beyond time, transforming the temporal into the eternal. Thus the final aura which the poem leaves is one of joy. Joy, which was a divine gift of God to man in Eden, and is eternally there to be experienced, is captured in the poem, imparted to the reader, and, despite its fading when smoke intervenes, is affirmed as being repeatedly available to the person who is in the right position to receive it.

(iii) In the previous pages of this thesis it has been said that Clare's concept of Eternity is made manifest in his pastoral poems. The detailed discussions of the four poems that are central to this chapter will, it is hoped, render the truth of this claim apparent. But, just as one finds the word, "Eden", in only a small proportion of those poems in which Clare's Eden vision is found, so the word, "Eternity", is not often in evidence in his poems which demonstrate his idea of this state. Only in the first example of the four lyrics discussed in this chapter, "Autumn", is Eternity explicitly named, and then this is done, not to claim directly its existence in the scene described in the poem, but to mark the condition necessary for its perception. The lyric, however, does more than state this

condition; it reproduces metaphorically the vision of Eternity that the poet is offering the person who "looks round".

All the remaining examples achieve a similar embodiment of Eternity in two main ways. Firstly, Eternity is revealed in nature's reliability as she perpetually makes her joys available to those in the right relationship with her: in "Emmonsales Heath" nature's "wild order" in grass, furze, flowers and brook has always been, and always will be, there to be enjoyed; in the "Fragment", Isabella is welcomed, and the impression given is that she will always be welcomed, by both vetches and thorn bush; in "The morning wind", although the vision in the poem is temporarily blotted out by the chimney smoke, it is eternally there, behind this clouding, as a little Eden for early wakers. And secondly, Eternity is always perceptible to, and able to be realized by, the person who is in the right relationship to nature: in "Emmonsales Heath", it is exiled man reinstated, and the speaker as a child with unspoilt vision, who are able to appreciate the eternal existence of nature's joy in her "wild order"; in the "Fragment", it is the "loving and loved Isabella" (italics mine) who remains eternally free to return to nature; and in "The morning wind" it is the early wakers to whom the "early wind" brings nature's manna and her delights.

In Clare's poetry, Eternity does not exist outside the world of nature, the Eden-like perfection of which is both the material and the theme of Clare's pastoral poems. It is not surprising, then, that the conditions for "see[ing] Eternity there", in the world of nature, can be summed up in his main pastoral theme, namely, that all creatures, including man, need to be in an harmonious relationship with nature and her laws - that is, in a relationship of mutual love - in order to find fulfilment of being.

# APPENDIX A

## A LIST OF FORTY POEMS IN WHICH THE NAME "MARY" APPEARS

Taken from the most comprehensive collection of John Clare's poetry available to the writer of this thesis, namely, The Poems of John Clare, ed. by J[ohn] W. Tibble (2 vols.; London: J.M. Dent and Sons Limited, 1935).

Key to Symbols

+ = Poems connected with Clare's Mary figure mainly through tone and association. (Twenty-six poems.)

* = Poems differing from those connected with Clare's Mary figure in tone and association. (Nine poems.)

? = Poems not falling clearly into either of the above categories. (Five poems.)

| Page | Date | Title or First Line | Symbol | Reasons for Disqualification as a Mary-poem | Types of Mary-poem (pp. 90 & 91 above) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Volume I | | | | | |
| 94 | 1808-1819 | MY MARY | * | A country wench treated with jocularity | |
| 246 | 1819-1821 | TO A CITY GIRL | * | Mary figure is of the country, not the city | |
| 250 | " | BALLAD: "Where the dark ivy the thorn-tree is mounting," | + | | Lament |
| 252 | " | BALLAD: "I love thee, sweet Mary, but love thee in fear;" | ? | | |
| 257 | " | SONG: "There's the daisy, the woodbine," | + | | Invitation |
| 258 | " | SONG: "Mary, the day of love's pleasures has been," | + | | Lament |
| 259 | " | SONG: "Mary, leave thy lowly cot" | ? | | |
| 417 | 1821-1824 | THE MILKING HOUR | ? | | |
| 424 | " | A DAYDREAM IN SUMMER | + | | |
| 433 | " | THE PROGRESS OF RHYME | + | | Celebration |
| 472 | " | THE RIVALS | * | About Mary Fieldflower | |
| 492 | " | THE WORKSHOP ORPHAN | * | About Mary Lee | |
| 500 | " | GOING TO THE FAIR | ? | | |

| Page | Date | Title or First Line | Symbol | Reasons for Disqualification as a Mary-poem | Types of Mary-poem (pp. 90 & 91 above) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 529 | 1821-1824 | TO MARY (I) (Sonnet) | + | | Celebration |
| 530 | " | TO MARY (II) (Sonnet) | + | | Celebration |
| Volume II | | | | | |
| 75 | 1824-1832 | THE SHEPHERD'S SONG | + | | Invitation |
| 83 | " | FIRST LOVE'S RECOLLECTIONS | + | | Lament |
| 88 | " | NUTTING | + | | Celebration |
| 159 | " | MARY NEELE | * | About Mary Neele | |
| 384 | 1837-1841 | FIRST LOVE | + | | Celebration |
| 385 | " | WHAT IS LOVE | + | | |
| 386 | " | THE EXILE | + | | |
| 392 | " | HOMELESS | + | | Lament |
| 393 | " | THE RETURN: NORTHBOROUGH, 1841 | + | | Lament and Celebration |
| 397 | " | MARY: "'Tis autumn now, and nature's scenes," | + | | Celebration |
| 410 | 1842-1864 | THE FALL OF THE YEAR | + | | Lament and Celebration |
| 421 | " | MARY HELEN | * | About Mary Helen | |

| Page | Date | Title or First Line | Symbol | Reasons for Disqualification as a Mary-poem | Types of Mary-poem (pp. 90 & 91 above) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 429 | 1842-1864 | TO MARY: "Mary, I love to sing" | + | | Celebration |
| 431 | " | A VALENTINE | + | | Celebration |
| 432 | " | SPRING'S NOSEGAY | + | | |
| 482 | " | THE LOVER'S INVITATION | + | | Invitation |
| 489 | " | MARY BAYFIELD | * | About Mary Bayfield | |
| 490 | " | BONNY MARY O! | ? | | |
| 495 | " | MARY BYFIELD | * | About Mary Byfield | |
| 497 | " | TO MARY: "I sleep with thee and wake with thee," | + | | Lament |
| 498 | " | MARY: "It is the evening hour," | + | | Invitation |
| 499 | " | MARY: "The skylark mounts up with the morn," | + | | Lament and Celebration |
| 501 | " | EARLY LOVE | + | | Lament |
| 505 | " | MARY BATEMAN | * | About Mary Bateman | |
| 508 | " | MARY: "Honey-words make charm of blisses" | + | | Lament |

# APPENDIX B

## A LIST OF FOUR HUNDRED AND THIRTY-THREE SONNETS AND SONNET-LIKE POEMS TAKEN FROM THE THREE EDITIONS OF JOHN CLARE'S WORKS USED MOST FREQUENTLY IN THIS THESIS

### Key to Symbols

| Symbol | | Meaning |
|---|---|---|
| Rc | = | Rhyming couplets. (One hundred and twenty-eight poems.) |
| Ss | = | Shakespearean sonnet. (Forty-four poems.) |
| Ss- | = | Shakespearean sonnet rhyme scheme apart from transferrence of final couplet to lines 9 and 10, i.e. immediately after the octave. (Nineteen poems.) |
| ( ) | = | Imperfect rhyme. |
| ▢ | = | Unrhymed line. |
| $\underline{a}$ $\underline{a}$ and $\underline{\underline{a}}$ $\underline{\underline{a}}$ | = | Repetition of rhyming word, sound or syllable (e.g. makes...brakes...brakes...makes). $\underline{a}$ $\underline{\underline{a}}$ $\underline{\underline{a}}$ $\underline{a}$ See [Badger] p. 84 below. |
| + | = | Final line an alexandrine. (Twenty-four poems.) |
| ++ | = | Feminine endings (to certain lines in the poem). |

*Found in both Robinson and Tibble, but with differences in punctuation and other matters. (Sixty-two poems.)

I. Selected Poems and Prose of John Clare, ed. by Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield (London: Oxford University Press, 1967)

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| * 19 | The Village Boy | | a b a b c d c d d c d e d e | *Vol. II, p. 129 Discussed p. 163. |
| * 68 | The Wren | | a b a b c d c d c d c e c e | *Vol. II, p. 245 |
| * 68 | The Fern Owls Nest | | a b a b c d c d e f g e(f)g | *Vol. II, p. 242 |
| * 69 | Sand Martin | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e(f)g g | *Vol. II, p. 243 |
| * 72 | The March Nightingale | | a a b a b c b c(d)c e f e f | *Vol. II, p. 119 |
| 84 | [The Badger][1] | 1. Rc ++ | a a b b c c d d e e b b f f | *Vol. II, p. 333<br>1. ++ in ll. 1,3,5,7,9,11,13. |
| *. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 2. Rc ++ | a a b b c c b b d d e e f f | 2. ++ in ll. 2,4,5,7,10,11. |
| *. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 3. Rc | a(a)b b c c d d c c e e f f | |
| *. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 4. Rc ++ | a a b b c c d(d)e e f f | 4. ++ in ll. 1,3,5,7,11.<br>Only 12 lines. |
| . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 5. Rc | a a b b c c d d e e b b f f | |
| * 86 | [The Marten] | 1. Rc | a a b b c(c)d d e e f f g g | *Vol. II, p. 335 |
| * . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 2. Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| * 87 | [The Fox] | 1. Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | *Vol. II, p. 334 |
| *. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 2. Rc | a a b b c c a a d d e e a a | |
| * 88 | [The Hedgehog] | 1. Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f(f)g g | *Vol. II, p. 337 |
| . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 2. Rc | a(a)b b c c d d e e f f g(g) | 2. Begins with last rhyme in 1. |
| * 89 | Hares at Play | Rc | a a b b c c d(d)a a e e f f | *Vol. II, p. 119 |
| 98 | The Shepherds Fire | + | a b b a b c d c d d e f(e)f | |

[1]Bracketed by editors, here and hereafter, as having been printed from the first edition to supplement manuscripts. (See Robinson, Selected Poems and Prose, p. xxxviii.)

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| * 99 | Shepherds Hut | 1. Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | *Vol. II, p. 141 |
| *. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . |  | 2. Ss- | a b a b c d(c)d e e f g f g |  |
| *104 | Labours Leisure | 1. | a(b)a b b a c d c d d c e e | *Vol. II, p. 308 |
| . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . |  | 2. | a b(b)a b c d c d d c c d d |  |
| . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . |  | 3. | a b a(b)c d(e)d f(f)g(g)h h |  |
| *105 | The Woodman |  | a b a b a c a c(d)c e f e(f) | *Vol. I, p. 539 |
| 106 | Angling | 1. Rc | a a b(b)c(c)d(d)e e c(c)f f |  |
| . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . |  | 2. Rc | a(a)b b c c d d e e f f g g |  |
| . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . |  | 3. Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g |  |
| . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . |  | 4. Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g |  |
| . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . |  | 5. Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f d d |  |
| . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . |  | 6. Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g |  |
| *126 | First sight of Spring |  | a b a b b a b c d c d e e(f) | *Vol. II, p. 136 |
| *127 | Wood Pictures in Spring | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | *Vol. II, p. 121 |
| *127 | May |  | a a b b c d c(d)e e f g f g | *Vol. I, p. 518 Entitled "HOME PICTURES IN MAY" |
| *128 | Poesy a Maying | 1. Ss+ ++ | a b(a)b c d c d e f e f g g | *Vol. I, p. 536 Entitled "MAY" 1. ++ in ll. 1,3,5,7,9,11. |
| *. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . |  | 2. ++ | (a)b(c)(b)d e(d)e f g h(g)i i | 2. ++ in ll. 2,4,5,7,10,11. |
| *. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . |  | 3. | a a b c b c d e d e f e f e |  |
| *. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . |  | 4. ++ | a b a b c d c d e e c e f f | 4. ++ in ll. 1,3,5,7,11. |
| 129 | Wood pictures in Summer | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g |  |
| *133 | The Wheat ripening |  | a b a b b a c a c a d e d e | *Vol. I, p. 526 Discussed p. 162. |
| *138 | Nutting | Rc+ | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | *Vol. I, p. 538 Discussed pp.165-173. |

| Page | Title or First Line | | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *138 | Emmonsails Heath in winter | | | a b a b b c d c d(e)f f g g | *Vol. II, p. 146 Discussed pp.155-160. |
| *139 | Winter Fields | | | a b c(b)a a(b)a d c e(d)e e | *Vol. II, p. 319 Discussed pp.128-154. |
| *141 | Winter | | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f g(g) | *Vol. II, p. 133 Discussed pp.146 & 147. |
| 141 | Wood pictures in winter | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e(e)f f g g | |
| 142 | Signs of Winter | 1. | | Only ll. 10 and 11 Rhymed | |
| *. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 2. | | Unrhymed | *Vol. II, p. 314 |
| *143 | Snow Storm | 1. | | a b c c a b a(c)d d e d e d | *Vol. II, p. 313 |
| *. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 2. | | a b a b b c d c c d d c e e | 1. line 1 irregular |
| *144 | The Flood | 1. | | a b(a)b b c d c d e(f)e f f | *Vol. II, p. 140 |
| *. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 2. | | a a b c b d c d a e a e f f | |
| *. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 3. | Ss | a b a(b)c d c d e f e f e e | |
| *151 | Summer Moods | | | a b c b a d a d c b c e c e | *Vol. II, p. 129 |
| *151 | A Autumn Morning | | | a b a b b c d c d e d e f f | *Vol. II, p. 318 |
| *152 | Early Images | 1. | | a b a b c d c d e f g f e g | *Vol. II, p. 325 |
| *. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 2. | | a b a b a c d d c d c e c e | |
| *153 | The morning wind | | | a b(a)b c d c d e f(e)g f g | *Vol. II, p. 139 Discussed pp.222-234. |
| *153 | Winter Evening | | | a b(a)b b b c b c d d e d e | *Vol. II, p. 320 |
| *154 | Evening school boys | | | a b a b a b c b c b c d c(d) | *Vol. II, p. 130 |
| *154 | Mist in the Meadows | | | a b(a)b c d(e)d c(f)g h g h | *Vol. II, p. 318 |
| *155 | Happiness of evening | 1. | | a b a b c d c d(e)f(g)f h h | *Vol. II, p. 327 |
| . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 2. | | a b(a)b b c c b c d d c e e | |
| *156 | Cottage Fears | | Ss | a b(a)b c d c d e f(e)f g g | *Vol. II, p. 320 |
| *157 | Night Wind | | + | a b(a)b b c d(c)d e f(d)f e | *Vol. II, p. 314 Discussed pp.163-165. |
| *159 | Beans in Blossom | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | *Vol. II, p. 133 |

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *159 | Stepping stones | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | *Vol. II, p. 137 |
| *160 | Pleasant Places | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | *Vol. II, p. 137 |
| 160 | Stray Walks | 1. | a b a b c d e d c e f g f g | |
| . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 2. + | a b b(a)c d c c d(e)f g f g | |
| 161 | Wood Rides | | a b a b(c)(d) e f(e)(f) g h g h | |
| *161 | The Ragwort | | a b a b b c d d c d e f e f | *Vol. II, p. 315 |
| *162 | The Hollow Tree | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | *Vol. II, p. 317 |
| *163 | Salters Tree | Ss | a b(a)b c d c d e f e f g g | *Vol. II, p. 130 Entitled "THE SHEPHERD'S TREE" |
| *163 | The Crab Tree | | a b a b a c d c d e f e f f | *Vol. II, p. 132 |
| *169 | The Mores | Rc | a a b b c c a a d d e e f f | *Vol. I, p. 419 Followed by 17 rhymed couplets. Entitled "ENCLOSURE" |
| *196 | Sonnet: 'I am' | | a b a b(c)a d e d e f f g g | *Vol. II, p. 524 Entitled "JOHN CLARE" |
| *197 | Sonnet | | a b(a)b c b c b d e d e f f | *Vol. II, p. 516 Entitled "POETS LOVE NATURE" |

II. The Later Poems of John Clare, ed. by Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964)

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *167 | Sonnet | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e a a f f | *Vol. II, p. 438 Iambic tetrameter. Entitled "THE MEADOW BREEZE" |
| *180 | Sonnet. Wood Anemonie | | a b a b b c b(c)c b d e d e | *Vol. II, p. 439 |
| *258 | The Yellowhammer | | a b a b b c b c d d e f(f)e | *Vol. II, p. 445 |
| *270 | The Maple Tree | | a b a a b a c c a c a c a(d) | *Vol. II, p. 435 |
| *270 | Sonnet | Rc | a a b b c(c)d(d)e e f f g g | *Vol. II, p. 410 |

III. The Poems of John Clare, ed. by J[ohn] W. Tibble (2 vols.; London: J.M. Dent and Sons Limited, 1935)

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| POEMS WRITTEN AT HELPSTONE 1808-19 | | | | |
| Vol. I. | | | | |
| 83 | ON YOUTH[1] | | a b a b c d c d e c e c f g h g | Last quatrain can be regarded as two iambic septameters rhyming ff. |
| Section Headed "Sonnets" | | | | |
| 116 | THE GIPSIES' EVENING BLAZE | | a b a b c d d(c)c e e c f f | dated 1809[2] |
| 116 | A SCENE | | a b(b)a c d d c e f f e g g | dated 1810 |
| 117 | THE ANT | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f d d | dated 1810 |
| 117 | THE SETTING SUN | Ss- | a b a b c d c d e e f g f(g) | dated 1814 |
| 118 | THE PRIMROSE | | a b b a c d d c e f e f g g | dated 1816 |
| 118 | HOME | Ss | a b a b c d(c)d e f e f g g | |
| 119 | THE TOMB | | a b b a c a d c d c e e f f | |
| 119 | SORROWS FOR A FRIEND | Ss | a b(a)b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 120 | POVERTY | | a b a b c d d c c e e c f f | |
| 120 | TO HOPE | | a b a b a c a c a d e d e | 13 lines |
| 121 | A WINTER SCENE | | a b(a)b a b c d c d e f e f | dated 1817 |
| 121 | THE MOON | | a b a b b a c d c(d)e f e f | |
| 122 | TO THE GLOW-WORM | + | a b a b a c a c c d c d c d | |

[1]Tibble's capitals here and hereafter.

[2]Tibble's dates here and hereafter.

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 122 | EVENING | Ss | a b a b c d c(d)e f e f g g | dated 1818 |
| 123 | TO THE WINDS | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 123 | NATIVE SCENES | | a b b a b c c d c d e f e f | |
| 124 | TO A FAVOURITE TREE | Ss+ | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 124 | APPROACH OF SPRING | Ss- | a b a b c d c d e e f g f g | |
| 125 | SUMMER | Ss- | a b a b c d c d e e f g f g | |
| 125 | THE RIVER GWASH | | a b a b b a c a a c a c d d | |
| 126 | TO RELIGION | Ss+ | a b a b c d(c)d e f(e)f g g | |
| 126 | ANXIETY | | a b a b b c b c c d c d e(e) | |
| 127 | EXPECTATION | Ss- | a b(a)b c d c d e e f g(f)(g) | |
| 127 | TO MY OATEN REED | | a b a b b a c b c c a d b d | |
| 128 | TO MY COTTAGE | | a b a b b c b c d e d e f(f) | |
| 128 | TO MY MOTHER | Ss+ ++ | a b a b c d c d e f e(f)g g | ++ in ll. 1,2,3,4,5,7,9,11. |
| 129 | THE SNOWDROP | + ++ | a b(a)b b c b(c)c d(c)d e e | ++ in ll. 1,3,6,8,9,11,14. |
| 129 | WRITTEN IN AUTUMN | Ss- ++ | a b a b c d c(d)e(e)f g f g | ++ in ll. 1,3,5,7,11,13. |
| 130 | LIFE | | a a b b c c d d e e f g f g | |

POEMS WRITTEN AT HELPSTONE 1819 - 21

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 237 | A LOOK AT THE HEAVENS | | a a b c b c c d c d e f(e)f g g | 16 lines. |
| 237 | WINTER RAINBOW | | a b a b b c d c d e f e f g h(g)h | 17 lines. |

Section Headed "Sonnets"

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 260 | ON DEATH | + | a b a b(a)a c(c)d d e f(e)f | |
| 260 | NATIVE SCENES | ++ | a b a b b c c d e d e d f f | ++ in ll. 1,3,9,11. |
| 261 | PEACE | ++ | a b a b(a)b a a c b c d b(d) | ++ in ll. 12,14. |

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 261 | MORNING | + ++ | a b a b c c d e d(e)f g f g | ++ in ll. 1,3,5,6,7,9,11,12,13,14. |
| 262 | TO AN HOUR-GLASS | Ss- | a b a b c d c d c c e f e(f) | |
| 262 | TO AN ANGRY BEE | Ss- | a b a(b)c d c d a a e f e f | |
| 263 | DAYBREAK | ++ | a b a b b c d c d d e f(e)f | ++ in ll. 6,8,12,14. |
| 263 | TO THE IVY | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f e e | |
| 264 | HOPE | Ss- | a b a b c d c d e e f d f d | |
| 264 | THE ARBOUR | | a b a b b c b(c)d e d f e f | |
| 265 | NATURE | | a b a b b c d c(d)d e f e f | |
| 265 | A WISH | Ss- | a b a b c d c d e e f g f g | |
| 266 | THE LAST OF APRIL | | a b a b b c d c d d e f e f | |
| 266 | HEREAFTER | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f g(g) | |
| 267 | EARLY SPRING | Ss- | a b a b c d c d b b e f e f | |
| 267 | SUMMER | | a b a b b c d c d d e f e f | |
| 268 | THE ANTS | | a b a b b c b c d d b e b e | |
| 268 | MILTON ABBEY | | a b a b c d c d d e d e e d | |
| 269 | IN HILLY WOOD | Ss- | a b a b c d c d e e b f b f | |
| 269 | A COPSE IN WINTER | | a b a b b c b c c(d)e f e f | |
| 270 | TO A RED CLOVER BLOSSOM | | a b a b a a b a b a c d c d | |
| 270 | NIGHT | | a b a b b c b c c d c d e e | |
| 271 | NOON | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 271 | AUTUMN | Ss- | a b a b c d c d e e f g f g | |
| 272 | TO TIME | | a b a b a b a b a b c b c b | |
| 272 | WINTER | Ss- | a b a b c d c d e e f g f g | |
| 273 | TWILIGHT | | a b a b b c b c c d c d a a | |

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 273 | SPRING | | (a)b a b(c)a d e d e f e f e | |
| 274 | EARLY SORROWS | | a b a b b c b c d d c e c e | |
| 274 | EVENING | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 275 | EXPRESSION | | a b a b c b c c d c d e d e | |
| 275 | CHILDHOOD | | a b a b b c b c b b d e d e | |
| 276 | A LAIR AT NOON | Ss- | a b a b c d c d e e f g f g | |
| 276 | WRITTEN IN NOVEMBER | + | a b a b a c d c a e a e f f | |
| 277 | SUMMER TINTS | | a b a b b c d d c d e c e c | |
| 277 | SUMMER MORNING | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 278 | JOYS OF YOUTH | | a b b a b c d c c(d)e f e f | |
| 278 | WILD NOSEGAY | | a b a b b c d c d d e f e(f) | |
| 279 | SABBATH WALK | | a b a b b c b c c d c d c d | |
| 279 | ON TASTE | | a b(a)b b c d c d d e c e c | Irregular first line |
| 280 | MAY MOON | | a b b a b a a c a d d e c e | |
| 280 | SUMMER EVENING | | a b a b b(c)b d d e d e f(f) | |
| 281 | TO PATTY | ++ | a b(b)a b c d c d e f e f e | ++ in ll. 1, 4. |
| 281 | PLEASURES PAST | ++ | a b(a)b c b c b d e d(e)f(f) | ++ in ll. 1,3,5,7,9,11. |
| 282 | HELPSTONE CHURCHYARD | ++ | a b a b c(c)d(e)d e f e f f | ++ in ll. 10, 12. |
| 282 | TO AN EARLY BUTTERFLY | | a b a b a a c d c d e f(e)f | |
| 283 | TO THE MEMORY OF JOHN KEATS | | a b a b a b a b c d c d e e | |
| 283 | TO AUTUMN | Ss- | a b a b c d c d e e f g(f)(g) | |
| 284 | WINTER SONG | Ss | a b a b c d c(d)e f e f g g | |

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| POEMS WRITTEN AT HELPSTONE 1821-4 | | | | |
| *419 | ENCLOSURE | Rc | a a b b c c a a d d e e f f | Followed by 17 rhymed couplets |
| Section Headed "Sonnets" | | | | |
| 516 | HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL | | a b b a b a c d c d e f e f | |
| 516 | TO AN INFANT SISTER | | a b a b c b b(c)b d c d e e | |
| 517 | EVENING PASTIME | | a b a b c b c b d b d b d b | |
| 517 | EVENING PRIMROSE | Rc ++ | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | ++ in ll. 9,10. Iambic tetrameter |
| 517 | SUDDEN SHOWER | | a b a b c b c b d b d e d e | |
| *518 | HOME PICTURES IN MAY | | a a b b c d c(d)e e f g f g | |
| 518 | WOODLAND THOUGHTS | | a b a b c d c d(c)d e f e f | |
| 519 | SUNRISE | | (a)b a b c b cⓓc e a e a a | |
| 519 | SUNSET | | a b a b a b c d c d e f e f | |
| 520 | THE HAPPINESS OF IGNORANCE | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 520 | TO CHARLES LAMB ON HIS ESSAYS | ++ | a b a(b)c d c d c d e f e f | ++ in ll. 5, 7, 9. |
| 521 | TO DE WINT | | a b a b a c d c d(c)e f e f | |
| 521 | NOTHINGNESS OF LIFE | Ss- | a b a b c d c(d)e e f g f g | |
| 522 | THE INSTINCT OF HOPE | | a b a b c b c d c d e f e f | |
| 522 | PROVIDENCE (I) | + | (a)b a b a c a c d e d e f f | |
| 523 | PROVIDENCE (II) | | a b a b c b cⓓe f e f g g | |
| 523 | CARELESS RAMBLES | | a b a b b c d c d d e f e f | |
| 524 | THE OLD WILLOW | + | a b a a b c a c a c d e d e | |
| 524 | THE WRYNECK'S NEST | | a b a b c d c c d e e f e f | |

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 524 | FOREST FLOWERS | | a b a b b c b c d c d e d e | |
| 525 | THE ASS | | a b b a b c c b(c)b d e d e | |
| 525 | AUTUMN | Rc | a(a)b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| *526 | THE WHEAT RIPENING | | a b a b b a c a c a d e d e | Discussed p. 162. |
| 526 | TO THE MEMORY OF BLOOMFIELD (I) | | a b a b a b c b d c d c d c | |
| 527 | TO THE MEMORY OF BLOOMFIELD (II) | | a b a(b)a b c d c e d e f f | |
| 527 | OLD POESY (I) | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 528 | OLD POESY (II) | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 528 | IZAAK WALTON | Rc | a a b(b)c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 529 | SHADOWS | | a b a b c d c d e e f f g g | |
| 529 | TO MARY (I) | | a b a b b(c)d e d e d f e f | |
| 530 | TO MARY (II) | | a b a b b c c b d e(d)e(d)b | |
| 530 | ON A SKULL | | a a b(b)c d c d e e f f g(g) | |
| 531 | A FAVOURITE NOOK DESTROYED | | a b a b c d c d c d e f e f | |
| 531 | BEAUTY'S DECAY | Rc | a a b b c(c)d d e e b b f f | |
| 532 | THE LADY-FLY | | a b a b b c b c c d c d c d | |
| 532 | SUNDAY EVENING | | a a b b c c d d e f e f g g | |
| 533 | SUNSET | | a b a b c d c d e d e f e f | |
| 533 | AN IDLE HOUR | Ss | a b a b c d c(d)e f e f g g | |
| 534 | A SPRING MORNING | Rc | a a b b c c d(d)e e f f e e | |
| 534 | CROWLAND ABBEY | | a b a b c c b c d c e d e d | |
| 535 | A PLEASANT PLACE | | a b a b a a(b)c d c d c d c | |
| 535 | NOVEMBER | Ss | a b(a)b c d c d e f e f d d | |
| 536 | ROUND-OAK SPRING | | a b a(b)a c(b)c d c d c e e | |

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *536 | MAY (I) | Ss+ ++ | a b(a)b c d c d e f e f g g | ++ in ll. 1,3,5,7,9,11. |
| *537 | MAY (II) | Ss ++ | a b a(b)c d(c)d e f g(f)h h | ++ in ll. 2,4,5,7,10,12. |
| *537 | MAY (III) | | a a b c b c d e d e f e f e | |
| *538 | MAY (IV) | ++ | a b a b c d c d e e c e f f | ++ in ll. 1,3,5,7,11. |
| *538 | NUTTING | Rc + | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | Discussed pp. 165-173. |
| *539 | THE WOODMAN | | a b a b a c a c(d)c e f e(f) | |
| 539 | MORNING PLEASURES | Ss + | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 540 | HAYMAKING | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f a a | |
| 540 | MORNING | Rc | a a b b c(c)d d e e f f g g | |

POEMS WRITTEN AT HELPSTONE 1824-32

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| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 63 | APPROACH OF SPRING | Rc | a a b b c c d(d)e e f f | 12 lines |
| 64 | APPROACHING NIGHT | | a b b a b a a c d c d | 11 lines |
| 65 | FAIRY THINGS (Part) | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e | 10 lines |

Section Headed "Sonnets"

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 104 | TO NAPOLEON | | a b a a b c b d e c e d c d | |
| 104 | THE DEITY | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 105 | LORD BYRON | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 105 | VANITY OF FAME | | a b a c a c a a b d c(d)c b | Irregular line 14 |
| 106 | MEMORY | | a b a b b a c a a c a c d d | |
| 106 | DEATH OF BEAUTY | | a b a b a c c d d e f c e f | |
| 107 | THE MAGIC OF BEAUTY | | a b a b b c b c d d e f e f | |
| 107 | FAME | ++ | a b a b a b c b a c d e d e | ++ in all except ll. 12 and 14 |

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 108 | EARTH'S ETERNITY | | a b a b c b c d d a d a d a | |
| 108 | HONESTY (I) | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 109 | HONESTY (II) | | a b a b c(d)c a a e a e f f | |
| 109 | SLANDER (I) | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 110 | SLANDER (II) | Ss+ | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 110 | ANTIQUITY | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 111 | DECAY | Rc+ | a a b b c c d d e e c c f f | |
| 111 | THE FOUNTAIN OF HOPE | Rc+ | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 112 | TO CHARLES LAMB | | a b a a b a b c b c d c(c)d | |
| 112 | BOSTON CHURCH (I) | | a b a b a b c a c d e d e e | |
| 113 | BOSTON CHURCH (II) | | a b a b c b(c)d e b e d f f | |
| 113 | GLINTON SPIRE | | a b a b a c d c d e d e f f | |
| 114 | ETERNITY OF TIME | Rc+ | a a b b c c d d e e c c f f | |
| 114 | FLATTERY | Ss | a b a(b)c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 115 | OBSCURITY | | a(b)a b c b c c b d d e d e | |
| 115 | TO HEALTH | | a b a(b)c d c d c e(f)e | 12 lines |
| 116 | MERIT | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f b b | |
| 116 | ON SEEING THE CAST AND BUST OF THE PRINCESS VICTORIA, BY BEHNES | | a b a b a c d c(d)c e f e f | |
| 117 | THE TRUTH OF TIME | + | (a)b a b a b(b)c c d(d)c e e | |
| 117 | ENGLAND 1830 | | a b(a)b a b c d c d e f e f | |
| 118 | NATURE | Ss- | a b a b c d c d e e f g f g | |
| 118 | MAY | | a(b)a b a b a a c a c d c d | Irregular last line |
| *119 | HARES AT PLAY | Rc | a a b b c c d(d)a a e e f f | |

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *119 | THE MARCH NIGHTINGALE | | a a b a b c b c d c d e d e | |
| 120 | WINTER MORNING | | a b a b c b c d e f g g f g | |
| 120 | SPRING MORNING | Rc ++ | a a b b c d d e e f f g g f | ++ in ll. 6 and 7 |
| 121 | SPRING SONGS | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| *121 | WOOD PICTURES IN SPRING | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 122 | LIFE IN LONE PLACES | | a b a b b c b c d e d e f f | |
| 122 | THE BOYS' PLAYGROUND | | a b a b c d c d e e f f g g | |
| 123 | WINTER SNOWSTORM (I) | | a b a(b)c d c d e f e d e f | |
| 123 | WINTER SNOWSTORM (II) | | a b(a)(b)c d c d e f e d d(f) | |
| 124 | ASHTON LAWN(I) | | a b a b c b c d c d e f f e | |
| 124 | ASHTON LAWN (II) | Ss+ | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 125 | JUNE | Ss ++ | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | ++ in ll. 13 and 14 |
| 125 | SUMMER AMUSEMENTS | + | a b a b a c a c d e d e f f | |
| 126 | FIELD FLOWERS | + | a b a b a c a c d e d e d e | |
| 126 | SUMMER | | a b a b c d c d e d e f (e)d | |
| 127 | THE WOODLAND STILE | | a b a b a c a c a d e d(e)d | |
| 127 | A HARVEST MORNING | | a b a b b c b c b c d e d | 13 lines |
| 128 | RURAL SCENES | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f(e)f g g | |
| 128 | WATER-LILIES | Ss | a b a b c d(c)d e f e f g g | Discussed p. 161. |
| *129 | SUMMER MOODS | | a b c b a d a d c b c e c e | |
| *129 | THE VILLAGE BOY | | a b a b c d c d d c d e d e | Discussed p. 163. |
| *130 | EVENING SCHOOLBOYS | | a b a b a b c b c b c d c(d) | |
| *130 | THE SHEPHERD'S TREE | Ss | a b(a)b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 131 | THE SHEPHERD BOY | | a b a b a c a c b c b c c b | |

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 131 | SPRING | ++ | a b a b a c d c d c e f e f | ++ in ll. 1, 3 and 5 |
| 132 | THE SYCAMORE | | a b a b b c b c c d c d e e | |
| *132 | THE CRAB-TREE | | a b a b a c d c d e f e f f | |
| *133 | WINTER | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | Discussed pp. 146 & 147. |
| *133 | BEANS IN BLOSSOM | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 134 | BOYS AT PLAY | Rc | a a b b c(c)d d e e f f g g | |
| 134 | THE MILKING SHED | | a b(b)a c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 135 | THE BREATH OF MORNING | | a b a b c c d e d e d f d f | |
| 135 | BURTHORP OAK | | a b(a)b a c b c d d b d e e | |
| 136 | THE MOLE | | a b a b b c d c e d e f e f | |
| *136 | FIRST SIGHT OF SPRING | | a b a b b a b c d c d e e d | |
| *137 | STEPPING-STONES | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| *137 | PLEASANT PLACES | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 138 | THE HAILSTORM IN JUNE 1831 | Rc + | a a b b c(c)d d e e f f g g | |
| 138 | THE FAIRY-RINGS (I) | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f e e | |
| 139 | THE FAIRY-RINGS (II) | | a b a b a c a c d d e f e f | |
| *139 | THE MORNING WIND | | a b(a)b c d c d e f(e)g f g | Discussed pp. 222-234. |
| *140 | THE FLOOD (I) | | a b(a)b b c d c d e(f)e f f | |
| *140 | THE FLOOD (II) | | a a b c b d c d a e a e f f | |
| *141 | THE FLOOD (III) | Ss | a b a(b)c d c d e f e f e e | |
| *141 | SHEPHERD'S HUT (I) | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| *142 | SHEPHERD'S HUT (II) | Ss- | a b a b c d(c)d e e f g f g | |
| 142 | A WOODLAND SEAT (I) | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 143 | A WOODLAND SEAT (II) | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 143 | A WOODLAND SEAT (III) | | a b a b c d c e b e b d b d | |

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 144 | PLEASURES OF FANCY | | a b a b c d c d c e f e f f | |
| 144 | SWORDY WELL | | a b a b a c a(c)a c d e d e | |
| 145 | NATURE | | a b a b b c c b c d e d e d | |
| 145 | SUMMER EVENING | Ss | a b(a)b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 146 | AUTUMN | | a b a b b a b c a c d a d a | |
| *146 | EMMONSAIL'S HEATH IN WINTER | | a b a b b c d c d(e)f f g g | Discussed pp. 155-160. |
| 147 | GREENSWARD | | a b a b c d c c d(e)f f e e | |
| 147 | THE MEADOW HAY | Rc | a(a)b b c c d(d)e e f f g(g) | |
| 148 | THE SALLOW | Ss | a b a b c d(c)d e f(e)f g g | |
| 148 | THE FEAR OF FLOWERS | Rc | a(a)b b c c d d e(e)f f g g | |
| 149 | MARCH | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 149 | AUTUMN | | a b a b c d c d e d e f e f | |
| 150 | AUTUMN LANDSCAPE | | a b a b c b c c b c b d b d | |
| 150 | SCHOOLBOYS IN WINTER | | a b a b a b a c a c c d c d | |
| 151 | THE FODDERING BOY | | a(b)a b(a)b a c a c d c d d | |

Poems About Birds (See Tibble's note Vol. II, p. 213)

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 239 | THE FLIGHT OF BIRDS | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g h h | 16 lines |
| 239 | THE 'BLACKCAP' | | a b a b b c d c c d d c e e | |
| 240 | THE WOODLARK (I) | + | a b b a c d d(c)e f f e g g | |
| 240 | THE WOODLARK (II) | | a b a b c a c d d e f e f e | |
| 241 | ON SEEING THE SWALLOWS LATE IN OCTOBER (I) | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 241 | ON SEEING THE SWALLOWS LATE IN OCTOBER (II) | | a b a b b c b c d d e c c e | |
| 242 | THE BUMBARREL'S NEST | | a b a b c d c d e f e g f g | |

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *242 | THE FERN-OWL'S NEST | | a b a b c d c d e f g e f g | |
| 243 | THE HEDGE-SPARROW | | a b a b b c b c d e f f | 12 lines |
| *243 | THE SAND-MARTIN | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e(f)g g | |
| 244 | THE REED-BIRD | | a b a b b c d c d d e e f f | |
| 244 | THE SEDGE-BIRD'S NEST | | a b a b c d c d e f e f f e | |
| *245 | THE WREN | | a b a b c d c d c d c e c e | |
| 245 | THE THRUSH'S NEST | Ss | a b(a)b c d c d e f e f g g | Discussed pp. 161 & 162. |
| 246 | THE HAPPY BIRD | | a b a(b)c d e c d e d d f f | |
| 246 | THE FIRETAIL'S NEST | Rc | a a b b c c a(a)d(d)a a e e | |
| 247 | BIRDS' NESTS | | a b b a c d e f e f d e g g | |

POEMS WRITTEN AT NORTHBOROUGH 1832-5

Section Headed "Sonnets"

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 303 | MYSTERY | | a a b b a c d a e d e f e f | |
| 303 | PLEASURE OF POESY | | a b a b b c d b c e c f e f | |
| 304 | SUNSET VISIONS | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g h h | 16 lines. l. 16 irregular |
| 304 | TWILIGHT IN SUMMER | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 305 | PASTORAL LIBERTY | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 305 | THE CLUMP OF FERN | | a b(a)b b c d(d)(c)e e d(c)e | |
| 306 | A HAWTHORN NOOK | | a b a b c d d c d c e f e f | |
| 306 | HEREAFTER | | a b a b b a c d c c b c e e | |
| 307 | FIELD THOUGHTS | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 307 | SUMMER HAPPINESS | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f b b | |
| 308 | UNIVERSAL GOODNESS | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e c c f f | |

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *308 | LABOUR'S LEISURE | | a(b)a b b a c d c d d c e e | |
| 309 | THE MUSIC OF NATURE | | a b a b a c d c d d e f e f | |
| 309 | YOUNG LAMBS | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f(e)f g g | |
| 310 | EARLY NIGHTINGALE | | a b a b c c b d c(c)d d e e | |
| 310 | WINTER WALK | | a b a b b c c a d e d e(e)b | |
| 311 | THE SOLDIER | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e b b f f | |
| 311 | PLOUGHMAN SINGING | | a b a b c b c b d e d e f f | |
| 312 | SPRING'S MESSENGERS | | a b a b c c d c d e(d)f e f | |
| 312 | LETTER IN VERSE | Rc | a a b b c c d d e(e)f f g g h h i i j j | 20 lines |
| *313 | SNOWSTORM (I) | | a b c c a b a c d d e d e d | |
| *313 | SNOWSTORM (II) | | a b a b b c d c c d d c e e | |
| *314 | SIGNS OF WINTER | | Unrhymed | |
| *314 | NIGHT-WIND | | a b(a)b b c d(c)d e f(g)f e | Discussed pp. 163-165. |
| *315 | THE RAGWORT | | a b a b b c d d c d e f e f | |
| 315 | SUNRISE IN SUMMER | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 316 | THE HERONRY | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 316 | OLD DYKES | | a b a b c d e c e d f g f g | |
| 317 | SHOWERS | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| *317 | THE HOLLOW TREE | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| *318 | AN AUTUMN MORNING | | a b a b b c d c d e d e f f | |
| *318 | MIST IN THE MEADOWS | | a b(a)b c d(e)d c(f)(g)h(i)h | |
| 319 | HEAVY DEW | | a b c a(d)c d e e d f g f g | |
| *319 | WINTER FIELDS | | a b c(b)a a(b)a d c e(d)e e | Discussed pp. 128-154. |
| *320 | WINTER EVENING | | a b(a)b b b c b c d d e d e | |

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *320 | COTTAGE FEARS | Ss | a b(a)b c d(c)d e f(e)f g g | |
| 321 | APRIL SHOWERS | | a b c a d d d e b e f d f d | |
| 321 | EARLY MORNING | | a b a b c d e f g c d e f g | |
| 322 | RIVER SCENE | | a b a b c(b)c d e c d e d d | |
| 322 | FOOTPATHS (I) | | a b(a)b c c(b)c d e d e f f | |
| 323 | FOOTPATHS (II) | | a b a b c d c c d(e)f g f g | |
| 323 | FOOTPATHS (III) | | a b a c b c d d e d e f e f | |
| 324 | FOOTPATHS (IV) | | a b a c(b)d(b)c e(f)e d g g | |
| 324 | FOOTPATHS (V) | | a b a b a b c d c d e d e e | |
| 325 | THE YARROW | | a b a b c c b c d e d d(f)d | |
| *325 | EARLY IMAGES (I) | | a b a b c d c d e f g f e g | |
| *326 | EARLY IMAGES (II) | | a b a b a c d d c d c e c e | |
| 326 | PLEASANT SPOTS | | a b a b c b(c)d e d e f f e | |
| 327 | THE BRAMBLE | | a b a b b(c)b d e d e d f f | |
| *327 | HAPPINESS OF EVENING | | a b a b c d c d(e)f(g)f h h | |
| 328 | THE WELLAND | | a b a b b c d c d(c)e f(g)f | |
| 328 | THE HEAT OF NOON | | a b c b c d a e f e f b g g | |
| 329 | PEACEFUL SCENES | + | a b a b c(d)c e f e f f g g | |
| 329 | FIR-WOOD | Rc | a a b(b)c(c)d d a a d d | 12 lines |
| 330 | FIELD PATH | Rc | a a b(b)c c d d e e | 10 lines |
| 330 | THE OLD MAN | | a b a b b c d c d | 9 lines |
| 330 | GRASSHOPPERS | Rc | a a b b c c | 6 lines |

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| POEMS WRITTEN AT NORTHBOROUGH 1835-7 | | | | | |
| *333 | BADGER | 1. | Rc | a a b b c c b b d d e e f f | |
| *. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 2. | Rc | a a b b c c d d c c e e f f | |
| *. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 3. | Rc | a a b b c c d(d)e e f f | 12 lines |
| *334 | THE FOX | 1. | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| *. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 2. | Rc | a a b b c c a a d d e e a a | |
| 335 | THE VIXEN | | Rc | a a b b c c d d b b e e b b | |
| 335 | TURKEYS | | Rc | a a b(b)c c d d e e f f | 12 lines |
| *335 | THE MARTEN | 1. | Rc | a a b b c(c)d d e e f f g g | |
| *. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 2. | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 336 | THE SQUIRREL'S NEST | | | a b a b a c a c d d e e f f | |
| *337 | THE HEDGEHOG | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 337 | YOUNG RABBITS | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 338 | BIRDS IN ALARM | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f c c | Space between ll. 6 and 7 |
| 338 | DYKE SIDE | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 339 | AUTUMN BIRDS | | Rc | a a b b b b c c d d e e f f | |
| 340 | BLACKBIRD'S NEST | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 340 | THE PARTRIDGE | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 342 | THE NUTHATCH | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f b b | |
| 343 | WILD DUCK NEST | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e c c d d | |
| 343 | THE BEAUTIFUL STRANGER | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 344 | THE TRAMP | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 344 | FARMER'S BOY | | | a a b b c c d d e e f g f(g) | |
| 345 | BRAGGART | | | a b(a)b a c(a)c d(d)e f e f | |

| Page | Title or First Line | | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 345 | MERRY MAID | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e c c f f | |
| 346 | SCANDAL | | Rc | a(a)b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 346 | MARKET DAY | | | a b c (d) a e (f)(g) b e (h) i c i | |
| 347 | 'THE LASS WITH THE DELICATE AIR' | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g(g) | |
| 347 | THE LOUT (I) | | Rc | a a b(b)c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 348 | THE LOUT (II) | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 348 | THE LOUT (III) | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f b b | |
| 349 | GIPSIES | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 349 | THE CLOWN | | | (a)b a b a b(a)b c d c d b b | |
| 350 | THE THRESHER | | | a b a b c c d(d)e e f f g g | |
| 350 | THE STUDENT | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f e e | |
| 351 | THE MOLE-CATCHER | | + | a b a b c d(a)(d)e c e c f f | |
| 351 | THE FOWLER | | | a b a b c d c d(e)f e f e f | |
| 352 | THE PACKMEN | | | a b a b c d c d e e f f g g | |
| 352 | THE RETURNED SOLDIER | | Rc | a(a)b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 353 | THE OUTCAST | 1. | Rc | a a b b a a c c d d c c e e | |
| . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 2. | Rc | a a b b(c)c d(d)e e f f g g | |
| 353 | THE SLY MAID | | | a b a b a a c c d d c c e(e) | |
| 354 | THE GIDDY MAID | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 354 | THE SCHOOLBOY | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e(e)f f g g | |
| 355 | SUNDAY DIP | | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f(f)g g | |
| 355 | STONE-PIT | | | a a b b c c d d e e f g f g | |
| 356 | FARM BREAKFAST | | Rc | a a b(b)c c d d e e f f g g | |

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 358 | WOODCROFT CASTLE (I) | | a b a b c d c d e e c c f f | |
| 358 | WOODCROFT CASTLE (II) | Ss | a b a b c d c d e f e f g g | |
| 359 | THE STONE | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f a a | |
| 359 | A HILL-SIDE HOUSE | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 360 | NOVEMBER | Ss- | a b a b c d c d e e f g f g | |
| 360 | SPRING | Rc | a a b b c(c)b b d d e e f f | |
| 361 | WILD BEES' NEST | Rc | a a b b c c d d d d b b e e | |
| 361 | THE FEN | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 362 | GOING TO THE FAIR | Rc | a(a)b b c c d d e(e)d d f f | |
| 362 | AUTUMN MORNING | Rc | a a b b c c d d a a c c e e | |
| 363 | AUTUMN EVENING | Rc | a a b b a a c c d d e e f f | |
| 363 | FARM SCENE (I) | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 364 | FARM SCENE (II) | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g h h | 16 lines |
| 364 | MERRILY TO TOIL | | a b(a)b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 365 | COW-BOY'S HUT | Rc | a a b(b)c c d d e e f f e e | |
| 365 | THE FARMYARD | Rc | a a b(b)c c d d a a e e f f | |
| 366 | THE POOL | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 366 | DELUGE | | a(a)b b c c d d e e c f c f | |
| 367 | HEN'S NEST | Ss | a b a b c d(c)d e f e f g g | |
| 367 | WINTER WEATHER | Rc | a a b b c c d d b b a a e e | |
| 368 | MORRIS DANCERS | Rc | a a b b c c d d e(e)f f c c | |
| 368 | FARM TASKS | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 369 | TIT FOR TAT | Rc | a a b b c c d d e(e)f f a a | |
| 369 | BLACKBERRYING | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f(f)c c | |

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 370 | THE FORD | Rc | a a b b c(c)d d e e f f g g | |
| 370 | MOUSE'S NEST | Rc | a a b b c c d d e(e)a a f f | |
| 371 | SHEEP IN WINTER | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e b b d d | |
| 371 | HIGH SUMMER | Rc | a a b b c c c c d d e e f f | |
| 373 | TRESPASS | Rc | a(a)b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 374 | THE SHY LOVER | Rc | a a b b c c d d c c e e f f | |
| 375 | LOVE AND SOLITUDE | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |

POEMS WRITTEN AT HIGH BEECH, EPPING, 1837-41, AND AT NORTHBOROUGH, 1841

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 379 | GIPSIES | | Unrhymed | |
| 380 | THE COWSLIPS | Rc | a a b b c c d(d)e e f f c c | |
| 380 | A WALK IN THE FOREST | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 381 | THE MOCK BIRD | | Unrhymed | |
| 382 | WATER-LILIES | | a b a b c a c a d e d e a a | |
| 383 | ON THE NEGLECT OF TRUE MERIT | Rc | a a b b c c d d b b a a e e | |

POEMS WRITTEN IN NORTHAMPTON ASYLUM, 1842-64

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 405 | THE DAYS OF APRIL | 1. | a b a c b c d a d d e f e f | |
| . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | | 2. | a b a b a b a c c d c d e e | |
| *410 | SONNET | Rc | a a b b c(c)d(d)e e f f g g | |
| 413 | AUTUMN CHANGE | ++ | a b a b c d c d e c e(c)f f | ++ in ll. 6, 8. 6 unrhymed lines before sonnet. |
| 419 | THE SILVER MIST | Rc | a a b b c c (d) e e f f g g | Iambic tetrameter. 13 lines. |
| 422 | TO I. INSKIP, SHEFFORD | | a b a b b a b c b c d e d e | |

| Page | Title or First Line | Symbols | Rhyme Scheme | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 425 | EARLY SPRING | | a b a b b c d c d c d c | 12 lines |
| 425 | ON A LANE IN SPRING | | a b a b c b c b d b(d)b e e | l. 2 irregular |
| 430 | THE BEANFIELD | | a b a b(c)b c c | 9 lines |
| *435 | THE MAPLE-TREE | | a b a a b a c c a c a c d d | |
| *438 | THE MEADOW BREEZE | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e a a f f | Iambic tetrameter |
| *439 | WOOD ANEMONE | | a b a b b c b(c)c b d e d e | |
| 443 | THE NIGHTINGALE | | a b(a)b b c d c d c e f e e | |
| 443 | THE SWALLOW | | a b a b b c b c c | 9 lines |
| *445 | THE YELLOW-HAMMER | | a b a b b c b c d d e f(f)e | |
| 446 | THE CROW | | a b a b b c b c c b c(d)e e | |
| 464 | TO SORROW | + | a b a b b a b a(c) | 9 lines |
| 464 | THE PAST | | a b a b b c b c c | 9 lines. l. 9 irregular |
| 475 | ETERNITY OF NATURE | | a b a b b c b c c | 9 lines |
| 510 | HOW CAN I FORGET? | Rc | a a b b c c  d d e e f f g g | ll. 1 and 2 iambic hexameters. Space between ll. 6 and 7. |
| *516 | POETS LOVE NATURE | | a b(a)b c b c b d d(e)f f | 13 lines |
| 518 | TO JOHN CLARE | | a(b)(a)b a b c d c d d e(f)e | |
| 523 | WRITTEN IN PRISON | Rc | a a b b c c d d e e f f g g | |
| 523 | I AM | | a b a(b)b b c d c d e e  f g f g h h | 18 lines. Space between ll. 12 and 13. |
| *524 | JOHN CLARE | | a b a b(c)a d e d e f f g g | See Tibble's note, p. 524 |

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[1]Arranged in chronological order. The introduction by the editor or editors has been consulted in each case.

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