

CHAPTER 7

*John Clare's deaths: poverty, education
and poetry**Simon Kövesi*

John Clare's access to education was dependent on the death of two of his siblings. By his own account, that his parents had a 'small family' of four children meant that Clare's mother could sustain her 'hopfull ambition . . . of being able to make me a good scholar'.¹ From birth, Clare was marked out as the child most likely to die:

in my early years I was of a waukly constitution, so much so that my mother often told me she never could have dreamed I should live to make a man, while the sister that was born with me being a twin was as much to the contrary a fine livley bonny wench whose turn it was to die first for she livd but a few weeks²

It is no surprise that two of Clare's siblings died in infancy; Clare grew up in a period when 'up to two out of every five infants died before they reached their fifth year', as Roy Porter surmises.³ If the death of a twin sister and another sibling freed the Clare family enough to support the boy's learning, poverty stymied such plans and meant that Clare repeatedly had to work alongside his father in the fields. Yet Clare would have it that the persistence of his mother to invest in her boy's education won out even if, paradoxically, she is described by her son as having 'belevd the higher parts of learning was the blackest arts of witchcraft and that no other means could attain them'.⁴ Suspicion of education is characteristic of inhabitants of Helpston, Clare implies. Many thought Clare's learning a 'folly', and his scholarly habits 'crazd' or even 'criminal'.⁵ In his 'Sketches', Clare reinforces the precariousness of his education's existence, in the context of rural poverty, with its perennial threats of deprivation, destitution and death. Clare's health is a constant problem too:

I my self was of a week const[i]tution and a severe indisposition keeping me from work for a twelvemonth the ran us in debt we had back rents to make up, shoe bills, and Bakers etc etc my fathers asistance was now disabled and the whole weight fell upon myself . . . my indisposition, (for I cannot

John Clare's deaths: poverty, education and poetry

147

call it illness) originated in fainting fits, the cause of which I always imagined came from seeing when I was younger a man name Thomas Drake after he had fell off a load of hay and broke his neck the gastly palness of death struck such a terror on me that I could not forget it for years and my dreams was constantly wanderings in church yards, digging graves, seeing spirits in charnel houses etc etc in my fits I swooned away without a struggle and felt nothing more then if I'd been in a dreamless sleep after I came to my self but I was always warnd of their coming by a chillness and dithering that seemd to creep from ones toe ends till it got up to ones head, when I turnd senseless and fell; sparks as if fire often flashd from my eyes or seemd to do so when I dropt, which I layd to the fall – these fits was stopt by a M^r Arnold M.D. of Stamford . . . tho every spring and autum since the accident happend my fears are agitated to an extreem degree and the dread of death involves me in a stupor of chilling indisposition as usual⁶

This gothic tale provides dramatic origins for Clare's psychological problems, compounded by ongoing physiological issues and their impact on his ability to earn money. Jonathan Bate considers this a fanciful passage,⁷ yet its manner of presentation is central to Clare's understanding of his own psychological development: it is as if his subsequent mental life was blighted by post-traumatic stress disorder. This is the birth story of a prophet–poet, fire flashing from his eyes; he is a wild visionary, a super-sensitized madman whose gift of perception is born of trauma, and the macabre. Clare formulates a similar transformation in the poem 'First Love'. At a deathly moment, when the natural world is inverted as love overwhelms, poetry pours out: 'I could not see a single thing/Words from my eyes did start' (*Later Poems*, II, 677). The speaker is never the same again: shocked and transfigured. Clare extrapolates this experience beyond himself in an early poem, 'Lines Written While Viewing Some Remains of an Human Body in Lolham Lane' (*Early Poems*, I, 17–18), which speculates that the 'mangled remains' to which the poem bears witness might have been those of a genius poet, whom Clare worries might be forgotten. Fanciful indeed, visionary certainly, gothic perhaps – this is nevertheless a poetic journey founded in a gruesome, upsetting spectacle. In his 'Sketches' Clare says that being witness to this death at a formative age precipitated thoughts of monetising his secret poetic scribblings. Even at his most prophetic moments, even when thrown or disturbed, Clare exhibits a practicality, born of sheer material need.

Adulthood brings with it another bodily threat to Clare's existence, in which death is corporeally bound up with sexual desire. Displaying the impetuous honesty of a latter-day Rousseau, the 'Sketches' confess:

temptations were things that I rarely resisted — when the partiality of the moment gave no time for reflection I was sure to seize it what ever might be the consequence . . . my easy nature, either in drinking or any thing else, was always ready to submit to persuasions of profligate companions who often led me into snares and laughd at me in the bargain when they had done so. — such times as at fairs, coaxed about to bad houses, those painted pills of poison, by whom many ungarded youths are hurried to destruction, like the ox to the slaughter house without knowing the danger that awaits them in the end — here not only my health but my life has often been on the eve of its sacrifice by an illness too well known, and to[o] disgusting to mention.⁸

Socialized into venereal disease, a holy fool led astray by the corruptions of male desire, Clare is brought close to death because of straightforward carnality. Whether Clare's self-diagnosis was right, or whether this story of brothel visits is the exaggerated product of a guilt-ridden hypochondriac, we might never know. Either way, Clare evidently considered such sexual experiences pivotal in determining his development.

To summarize, this prose autobiography locates two deathly contexts as being the catalysts for the poetic career of Clare — both of them traumatic: first, a reduced number of siblings frees up the money and the parental attention to provide him with foundational learning. Second, being witness to a corpse which had suffered a violent end leads to a 'dread of death' that stimulates a visionary capacity. The impairment of the fainting fits that follow in turn give practicable impetus to his desire to be a published poet, while uncontrolled sexual desire threatens to mortally and morally wound all of his plans for a public life. The poet's efforts are impelled by a desire to relieve the poverty of all around him, not least his parents, for whom his literary money (as he happily estimated it in 1821 at least) would act 'as recompense for the rough beginnings of life bid their tottering steps decline in peaceful tranquillity to their long home, the grave'.⁹ Graves bookend this presentation of a fledgling literary life: from birth of a womb shared with a soon-dead twin, to poetry providing solace to the final destination of his parents. This frame of morbidity stuck with Clare; in the 1840s, for example, he wrote 'Infants are but cradles for the grave/& death the nurse as soon as life begins'.¹⁰

The 'Sketches' were sent to his publisher, John Taylor, on 3 April 1821 — though possibly not for publication.¹¹ At this time Clare anticipated that publishing would provide relief from the poverty he and his family had always endured. As it turned out, he was naïve in the extreme about how much money could be made from poetry. He could not know then that having peaked in 1820 — his first year on the London literary scene — poetry

publishing was about to suffer a precipitous decline in fortunes.¹² It was the wrong time to start out as a poor poet.

Partly because none of his subsequent works sold better than the first of 1820, Clare's 'dread of death' would have good cause to stick with him for the rest of his life, leading to restless 'night fears'¹³ and, possibly, to more serious debilitations in later years. As I have suggested, some of these deathly hauntings seem to be extensions of Clare's intense, even violent, apprehension of the world around him. But other manifestations of the threat of death are impersonal, imposed on Clare by a literary culture that – whether for commercial positioning or moralistic instruction – makes death the overriding context for the labouring-class poet. The desire to be a poet was meant to be fatal for someone like Clare, and so his story was readily and variously deployed as warning or rallying call for those who might follow him. This chapter will consider such responses to Clare from the beginnings of his career, through the stages of his impoverished obscurity, on to his presumed death, and, finally, to his actual death.

Clare's position as a poetic phenomenon became so overcast by the shadow of death that it seemed to negate the possibility of a literary estate or posthumous legacy. Indeed, if Romantic poetry is characterized by writers who gnaw away at their future reputations, at their posthumous remains, and at the transitory nature of fame, then, in this regard at least, Clare is quite typical.¹⁴ But there are specific social and economic dimensions to Clare's situation which marked him out as being part of a distinct tradition. With hindsight, it is as if the doomed morbidity which grips the speaker of 'Resolution and Independence' leads directly to the social-poetic position of Clare, via the wobbly stepping stones of Chatterton, Burns, and, now, a trepidatious Wordsworth:

I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,
The sleepless Soul that perish'd in its pride;
Of Him who walk'd in glory and in joy
Behind his plough, upon the mountain side:
By our own spirits are we deified;
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness.¹⁵

Clare was deliberately pitched at this succession of poets which serves as a route map pre-determining how his work was to be received. From before Clare's time through to our own, poets and critics have loved a tale or backdrop of doom and death, of disparagement, failure and neglect,¹⁶ as do

publishers promoting their charges. And so it was for the way Clare was presented at the outset of his career. Here Taylor introduces Clare's first collection in 1820:

[T]hough Poets in this country have seldom been fortunate men, yet he is, perhaps, the least favoured by circumstances, and the most destitute of friends, of any that ever existed . . . One of our poets has gained great credit by his exterior delineations of what the poor man suffers; but in the reality of wretchedness, when "the iron enters into the soul," there is a tone which cannot be imitated. CLARE has here an unhappy advantage over other poets. The most miserable of them were not always wretched. Penury and disease were not constantly at their heels, nor was pauperism their only prospect. But he has no other, for the lot which has befallen his father, may, with too much reason, be looked forward to as his own portion.¹⁷

The poet who has been successful in his 'exterior delineations of what the poor man suffers' is Wordsworth. Poverty poetry is en vogue, and Taylor hopes this book will latch on to it. Yet even at this early stage, Clare is contradistinguished from the forerunner of rurally situated poetry about the poor: Clare is someone who lived the sort of impoverished life of the fields that other poets could describe only through 'exterior', if sympathetic, observations. Clare is said to live in depths and qualities of impoverishment that Wordsworth and his ilk – including Taylor's anticipated readership – simply could not fathom. It is almost as if Clare writes out of a different species of deprivation. He is a superman of poverty, being '*least favoured* by circumstances, and the *most destitute* of friends, *of any that ever existed*' (my italicized emphasis). Clare is *the* human abject, the *ur*-pauper, the poorest poet that ever did exist, *sui generis*. If other poets follow Thomas Gray to churchyards touristically to meditate on mortality and death, but then head off for a good dinner and a warm bath, here a pauper's grave is already dug for Clare. It is only a matter of time. The type of isolating threat that Taylor builds here will frame Clare's career, from the cradle of this first publication in 1820 to the graveyard of newspaper notices in 1864.

It would be a mistake to see this as a mere imposition – as Taylor tailoring Clare to fit a perceived market hunger for the rural original, for a 'genuine' voice of poverty. Taylor's sensitized sympathy for Clare's lot is a motivation which Taylor seems desperate to have replicated in the readership. Taylor's superlatives suggest that he is overwhelmed by Clare's circumstances – not that he is cold to them, or exploitative of them, as other critics and editors have variously implied.¹⁸ If ravaging poverty and looming death together form a marketing construction Taylor deliberately

intended, it is not without a rich source in Clare's own verse. Clare was fully aware that poverty threatened to shorten life brutally, abruptly. He frequently drew on the threat of death in his verse, in poems ranging from the paradoxical ('Invite to Eternity'), to the strangely celebratory ('The Soldiers Grave'), to the purely apocalyptic ('Song Last Day').

Even when he is idealizing his dream home in his youth, the ever-present pains of labour mean that Clare cannot entirely shake off dire portents.¹⁹ 'The Wish' (*Early Poems*, I, 43–50) is structured around a conditional fantasy where the speaker considers the ideal dwelling that would 'free' him 'from all labouring strife' (line 3). Salivating over full cupboards, beneath a roof framed by 'british oak' (line 15), and topped with stone rather than thatch, '[b]ecause slate roofs will not so easily fire' (line 18), the speaker builds for himself a safe, warm, snug cottage, with 'books in eightvo size or more' (line 48), shelves to sit them on, shiny kitchenware, good views and an expansive garden described luxuriously here. Years later Clare would reduce woman to an emotional thing and exclude her from his posthumous green garden, imagining a heavenly world, 'where woman never smiled or wept' (*Later Poems*, I, 397, line 14) in the ever-prominent poem 'I Am'. Similarly, the young Clare cannot imagine a peaceful, labour-free home with a wife:

With trifling in the garden now and then
 Which finds employment for the greatest men
 Each coming day the labour should renew
 And this is all the labour I would do,
 The other hours I'd spend in letterd ease
 To read or study just as that might please,
 This is the way my plan of life should be
 Unmarried Happy in Contentment free.
 For he that's pester'd with a noisey wife
 Can neer enjoy that quietnes of life
 That does to life belong—Therefore I'd ne'er
 Let Hymen's torch within my cot appear.
 For all domestic needs that did require
 Womans assistance—I'd a servant hire

(Early Poems, I, 49, lines 208–21)

This is a poem all about a desire to avoid labour: even the effort of a domestic relationship seems a ludicrous and irrational burden for someone with serious writerly aspirations. But this is no monk's cell, no ascetic hermit's retreat. He knows well that literary pursuits depend upon a writer's domestic security – so he furnishes his home with a female servant.

Before we laugh, let's remember that the fantasy is not idle. This is a boy looking at his most likely future: a life of rural labour. 'The Wish' is driven by a desperate desire to escape the seeming doom, the certain pains, of a labourer's life which, other than poetry, is all he can see before him:

My eyes shall wander oer
A Pleasent prospect, Acres just threescore,
And this the measure of my whole domains
Should be divided into woods and plains,
O'er the fair plains should roam a single cow
For not one foot should ever want the plough
This would be toiling so I'd never crave
One single thing where labour makes a slave.
Tho health from exercise is said to spring
Foolhardy toil that health will never bring.
But 'stead of health—dire ills a numerous train
Will shed their torments with afflictive pain.
Be as it will I hold in spite of strife
That health ne'er rises from a labouring life . . .

(Early Poems, I, 48, lines 189–202)

This is as close as Clare gets to adopting the mantle of estate ownership in his work, to easing himself into the cosy position of a middle-class gentleman, albeit of modest means. And though modest, this dream was completely unrealizable. The capitalized 'Pleasant prospect' has the ring of a phrase lifted straight out of popular travel writing, or theorizations of the picturesque. The view afforded by the position of his 'domains' is to be a controlling one. But this project is explicit that its ambition is not aesthetic, but pragmatic: to secure his existence against the blunt realities of a labouring life – a future that intrudes suddenly here and throws the speaker back to a leaden mortality. In an early untitled stanza Clare talks of taking his 'corpse to work', and continues:

Deuce take a labourers life thought I
They talk o slaves els where
I sees much choice in foreignn parts
As I do in Slavery here *(Early Poems, I, 352, lines 5–8)*

Similarly, a labouring life for the speaker of 'The Wish' means a miserable and painful route to an early death. He hopes instead for a 'single cow' and a female servant to milk it, while he watches from his perfectly positioned 'chamber window' (line 79). The jarring combination of poetry with labour is too painfully paradoxical to contemplate. There will be no ploughing here, and no plough-boy poets either.

We now move two decades forward, to a less hopeful time for Clare. In 1840, Clare died, in the press at least.²⁰ His public career had begun dying long before, from 1827's sales failure of *The Shepherd's Calendar* through to the reduced appearance of *The Rural Muse* in 1835, his final book. With few facts to hand, the press took Clare's absence from the public scene to its next natural stage. Starting in the *Halifax Express*, and repeated in *The Times*, news of the poet's death rapidly spread across the nation in June of 1840. The curt line in *The Times* ran 'The poet Clare died some months ago at the Lunatic Asylum at York – *Halifax Express*'. This was repeated, often verbatim, in papers such as *The Morning Post*, *The Standard*, *The Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser*, the *Hampshire Advertiser and Salisbury Guardian*, *The Examiner*, *The Belfast News-Letter*, *The Derby Mercury* and *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser*.²¹ Clare's name still had enough currency to be reported across Britain.

Matthew Allen corrected the error in *The Times* and again, news spread nationally and rapidly.²² Clare was alive, though poverty remained a threat, as Allen's letter attests:

The Northamptonshire peasant poet, John Clare, is a patient in my establishment at Highbeach, and has been so since July, 1837. He is at present in excellent health, and looks very well, and is in mind, though full of very strange delusions, in a much more comfortable and happy state than he was when he first came. He was then exceedingly miserable, every instant bemoaning his poverty, and his mind did not appear so much lost and deranged as suspended in its movements by the oppressive and permanent state of anxiety, and fear, and vexation, produced by the excitement of excessive flattery at one time, and neglect at another, his extreme poverty and over exertion of body and mind, and no wonder that his feeble bodily frame, with his wonderful native powers of mind, was overcome.

I had then not the slightest hesitation in saying that if a small pension could be obtained for him, he would have recovered instantly, and most probably remained well for life. I did all I could to obtain it for him, but without the slightest success. Indeed, some noblemen have withdrawn the pittance they allowed him, his wife, and family, and most are in arrears.

Allen grasped the opportunity to bring Clare back to the public consciousness, and at the end of the letter asks readers to donate to the poet's cause. Either we can think kindly, that Allen did this to help Clare find the financial stability that he thought was undermining the poet's mental health and that, previous to his admittance, had led to an incapacitating malnourishment; or we can think cynically, that Allen did this to help pay Clare's trustees' outstanding residential fees.²³ Clare's time with Allen has

been considered widely,²⁴ so for our current purposes we will focus upon the manner in which the doctor repeatedly ties Clare's health to his dire poverty. What Allen wants to see is bills paid, and Clare in that same worry-free position he fantasized about when young in 'The Wish', albeit with the addition of a wife and seven children.

Allen's corrective note garnered widespread attention and led to the first substantial publication of Clare's work since 1835. An essay about Clare, including twenty new poems, appeared across two issues of the *English Journal* in May 1841.²⁵ The author Cyrus Redding, owner and editor of this Saturday weekly, set out his stall on the opening page of his first issue in January of the same year:

Our object now is to mount a step higher, still catering for rich and poor alike, – for all who desire to store their minds with facts, and awaken the imagination to agreeable associations . . . As the empire of letters under which the mind is cultivated constitutes a republic, so should its benefits belong to all and its fruits be equally and universally attainable. Knowledge is no heritage of a condition, but the certain reward of those who seriously labour in its pursuit . . . It remains now that we become an intellectual and a thinking people, and that can only happen through the general cultivation of the intellect . . . Those who are born to toil, may still find time to exercise thought, if their pursuits are merely mechanical, by employing the mind upon agreeable and useful subjects during the time of labour. Bloomfield was a remarkable instance of this, for he composed his "Farmer's Boy" while working at his trade with six or seven others.²⁶

With social inclusiveness foremost of his aspirations, the first writer Redding mentions in his new publication is the shoemaker poet Bloomfield – the most significant English figure in shaping Clare's sense of a labouring-class poetic tradition.²⁷ The moderate yet progressive Redding leapt at the chance to interview a living Bloomfield in John Clare. It is not the aim here to consider Redding's account of his visit to High Beach, as this story has been told many times, and has even been novelized and dramatized.²⁸ Instead, working towards the theme of death, I will focus on a writer who knew Redding, who wrote to Bloomfield, whose work appears in the *English Journal*, and who might well have visited Epping Forest to see Clare, but who has mostly slipped under the radar of Clare scholars, receiving just a brief mention in the Tibbles' biography.²⁹

Inspired by Redding's call to readers to donate generously to Clare, James Dacres Devlin published a poem in the *English Journal* in June 1841, which I reproduce with its footnote in full:

John Clare's deaths: poverty, education and poetry

155

A REFLECTION

ON READING THE APPEAL IN BEHALF OF THE POET CLARE
 IN THE "ENGLISH JOURNAL," MAY 15.

BY JAMES DEVLIN.

ALAS, poor CLARE! and so it still hath been;
 And thou seem'st but another with the rest—
 A BURNS, a BLOOMFIELD, and the Boy unblessed,
 Who sought in Redcliffe's aisles his fears to screen,
 Doubtful to let the clever truth be seen,
 So played the fame-prank of a ghostly guest!
 And they, the spell-cursed of the Island Green;
 And he, with life and love alike oppressed:*
 These—aye, these—and others, through all times,
 And every place, have felt the trying doom—
 The want of solace—bread! the tear that grimes,
 The cruel fate, denying living room!
 We build the palace gaol to hold our crimes;
 At best, we give to Genius but a tomb!

* The cases of BURNS, BLOOMFIELD, and CHATTERTON, are of the familiar misfortunes of our knowledge. The world has already rung of the "Inspired ploughman," and of WORDSWORTH'S "Sleepless Boy," and may yet hear more of the "Gentle GILES". BOYCE was of Ireland, and fell a victim to the bad taste of the age, when the flashes of intellect were constrained to administer to the destructive applause of the midnight wine-bibber: and DERMODY, also of Ireland—even in his childhood a prodigy—was thrown into the same desperate fascination. He lies buried at Lewisham, near Deptford, a plaintive verse, of his own composition, being scratched over the stone slab that covers the remains of the "Poet." The story of TANNAHILL, a native of Cumberland, is more isolated. The conjoined sweetness and earnest power of many of his lyrics have great interest. He was one of those, who, too sensitive and fervent for the many cares which gathered around him, felt the madness of the mind batter down his hopes; and, in a moment of melancholy desperation, drowned himself. The immediate cause, it is said, was love-disappointment. However gratifying it was to be sung of, as he sang of his charmer, still it was perilous to unite herself, inextricably, with the unsevering curse of poetry and poverty. She refused her hand, and *that* broke his heart. But CLARE! *he* still lives; and, what is more, there are those in his divided home, who alone live for him! and, if money can help, shall it not be given? Aye, even to the "penny of the poor!" At least, he shall have mine.³⁰

Devlin the shoemaker reaches out to a fellow traveller, another 'hand-producer' as he labels himself,³¹ in much the same way that Bloomfield did to Clare, and as Clare did to Allan Cunningham in turn.³² Devlin follows

Wordsworth in building a succession of famous poets who have suffered for their art. In his footnote, Devlin extends Wordsworth's tradition with a number of other case studies of impoverished poets and details their neglect and deaths. Along with other poems, Devlin published a startling two-part essay on the poor in the *English Journal*, which is rare in its moving detail about how the poor lived, and in its quiet rage.³³ Under his pseudonym 'The Trialist' Devlin published a collection of poetry and prose in the late 1830s, while publications under his own name made him the foremost reformist voice in shoemaking.³⁴ Eric Hobsbawm and Joan Wallach Scott consider Devlin to have been 'the best craftsman in the London trade'.³⁵ Shoemaking was the most politically active of all trades in the nineteenth century and Devlin was a substantial figure at a crucial moment in Chartism.³⁶ Clare would have read Devlin's co-authored letter and poem to Bloomfield as it was included in an appendix of correspondence in the posthumously published *Remains* of 1824.³⁷

Devlin wrote the first and only book-length poem dedicated to Clare published during his lifetime.³⁸ His imperatively entitled *Go to Epping!* was produced by the pre-eminent radical publisher in London, Effingham Wilson, a 'determined champion of a free press', leading publisher of the reformists, and pillar of the 'popular education movement'.³⁹ For the title, Devlin plays on the notoriety of the 'Epping Hunt' as having been an attractive 1820s pursuit for all manner of riff-raff from London – 'famous in the annals of *cockneyism*', as Pierce Egan puts it.⁴⁰ Indeed, so snootily downgraded did the Epping Hunt become, that in 1829 Thomas Hood published a popular, teasing account of it, his comic verse illustrated by George Cruikshank.⁴¹ Hood had been central in the *London Magazine* scene, and Clare met him at Taylor's dinners.⁴² Epping Forest had also been a location for boxing matches, a fact that cannot have been lost on Clare, who was reaching for masculine empowerment in 1841 through fantasies of prize-fighting as a Regency-period champion, Jack Randall, and through writing as one of the Fancy's most famous followers, Byron.⁴³ Randall served in the corner for a fight in Epping Forest during the Fancy's heyday.⁴⁴ By 1841, both hunting and boxing had long departed, leaving Devlin to play with cultural traces of Epping Forest's significance as a socially inclusive entertainment destination.

No longer extant in full, Devlin's poem surfaces only as fragments quoted in a review in the Chartist weekly *Cleave's Penny Gazette* in June 1841.⁴⁵ The reviewer feels sympathy for Clare, and, while charmed by the poem overall, is perturbed by Devlin's politicization of poverty:

John Clare's deaths: poverty, education and poetry

157

It is of no great length, but there are many passages very far above average merit, possessing strength with sweetness, thought with melody, within its compass. Yet, as an exponent of the worldliness that pervades society, we would fain not wholly accord with its truthfulness in some particulars. We hope—trust earnestly, that the light of Poesy has yet power amid the “reckless money rout,” and the thronged battle-field of Politics. We will quote lines, that for *their own sakes*, as poetry, are to us pleasing and forcible.

“Go to Epping! will you go?
 Are you deaf, or blind, or lame?
 There the forest trophies grow,
 There abides the son of Fame!
 Would you hear the blithe birds’ gladness,
 Would you see the Poet’s sadness
 Falling—fallen into madness!
 Go—I bid you go!”

The reviewer quotes only this stanza and the following two which, together, at least give a sense of Devlin’s political rage at what Clare’s suffering symbolizes:

’Tis a feeling coarse, as cold
 That nor worth nor beauty sees,
 But as the hand may actual hold,
 And never in these reveries.
 Most mistaken—most deceiving,
 Is this profitless believing;
 There are truths of Fancy’s weaving,
 Firm as e’er was told!

Oh! If ever thou hast dwelt
 On the wrong the Poet grieves;
 Oh! If thou hast ever felt
 What it is that so deceives;
 If, like him, thou hast hope-striven,
 Dreamt the dream that seem’d of Heaven,
 Be the holy fault forgiven,
 And in kindness melt!

This might not amount to memorable poetry in itself, though to give Devlin the benefit of the doubt, it is possible that the reviewer – given the gestures towards issues of taste – omits the most intriguing stanzas. I quote Devlin at length to illustrate just what Clare could mean to a fellow ‘hand-producer’ poet. Devlin wants ‘the son of Fame’, surrounded by ‘forest trophies’ (echoing the departed sports, perhaps?), to be a celebrated *living* tourist attraction; not a grave or sepulchre to visit, or literary curio, but

instead a figure at the centre of a call for socio-economic change. Devlin uses his example – and the tradition of labouring-class poets' suffering – for a wider cause of improving the lot of the poor, though Clare never became an icon for the Chartists.⁴⁶ Pressingly, and more personally, Devlin is desperate to ensure that Clare does not succumb to the weight of poverty and deprivation, as had so many poor poets.

There is no record of Devlin visiting Clare at High Beach, nor of Clare reading the shoemaker's pamphlet poem. This was an especially complicated time for Clare, as he had Byron, Mary Joyce, Randall and escape on his mind. If anyone had followed up on Devlin's call, and had visited Epping Forest to meet Clare, they probably would have missed him. The pamphlet was published just a few weeks before Clare took leave of Allen's asylum, and left Epping for good, on his 'Journey Out of Essex', in July of that summer.⁴⁷

From December 1841 until his death in 1864, Clare was committed to the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum. The successful writing partnership of husband and wife William and Mary Howitt visited him twice in the early 1840s.⁴⁸ While neither appears to have written about these visits, William did talk of it with dramatist, rural writer, and poet Mary Russell Mitford.⁴⁹ In 1850 she published her second-hand version of the visit:

A few years ago he was visited by a friend of mine, himself a poet of the people, who gave me a most interesting account of the then state of his intellect. His delusions were at that time very singular in their character. Whatever he read, whatever recurred to him from his former reading, or happened to be mentioned in conversation, became impressed on his mind as a thing that he had witnessed and acted in. My friend was struck with a narrative of the execution of Charles the First, recounted by Clare, as a transaction that occurred yesterday, and of which he was an eye-witness, – a narrative the most graphic and minute, with an accuracy as to costume and manners far exceeding what would probably have been at his command if sane . . . Or he would relate the battle of the Nile, and the death of Lord Nelson with the same perfect keeping, especially as to seamanship, fancying himself one of the sailors who had been in the action, and dealing out nautical phrases with admirable exactness and accuracy, although it is doubtful if he ever saw the sea in his life.⁵⁰

Mitford's version of William Howitt's July 1844 visit constructs a Clare who is out of time, and dislocated. His madness is modelled on a collapsing of fact with fiction, past with present; the sad life of the enclosed asylum in which the stories are related, contrasted with the exciting lives of the

historically magnificent and unbounded. His poetic sensibility is evoked in the remnants of an ability to tell stories with an apparently insanity-proving amount of 'accuracy'. History and fantasy spill into each other, and we are to believe that Clare as a controlling subject is lost. It is instructive that Clare's stories are about glorious deaths. He plucks two male figures from distant ends of English history: meritocratic and monarchic, long distant and relatively recent – yet both figureheads, and figurations, of a nation in dire trouble. The end of these two lives were to become state-quaking moments, no matter what side of the Napoleonic or Civil wars was adopted by the teller. These popular, heroic stories of geographic extensiveness are contrasted by Mitford with observations of the teller's supposedly limited horizons. Whether Clare appreciated that his own death was likely to be less monumental than a King's or a Vice Admiral's, some twenty years before he was to die in that same asylum, is unknowable. The overall effect is pathetic: lives lost in the eye of historical storms, aped by a life lived as if plucked out of history altogether; the remembered, heroic dead, contrasted with the forgotten poet, presumed by many to be long dead, but who clings onto these tales of monumental men with an eye-witness's breathlessness. The disenfranchised, de-historicized, parochialized poet reaches desperately for security in stories of masculine power, of international consequence. The Romantic poets' concerns about fame and their longevity in the memories of future generations runs wildly, excitedly in Clare, and latches onto characters whose fame is certain to be everlasting.

Mitford asserts that Clare is the lucky beneficiary of 'the triumph of humanity and of science in the present day' that is the liberal asylum.⁵¹ She uses Clare's example to mount an impassioned warning to peasants and their putative patrons:

We cannot, I repeat, do too much for John Clare; he has a claim to it as a man of genius suffering under the severest visitation of Providence. But let us beware of indulging ourselves by encouraging the class of pseudo-peasant poets who spring up on every side, and are amongst the most pitiable objects in creation. One knows them by sight upon the pathway, from their appearance of vagrant misery, – an appearance arising from the sense of injustice and of oppression under which they suffer, the powerless feeling that they have claims which the whole world refuses to acknowledge, a perpetual and growing sense of injury. It is a worse insanity than John Clare's, and one for which there is no asylum. Victims to their own day-dreams, are they! They have heard of Burns and of Chatterton; they have a certain knack of rhyming, although even that is by no means necessary to such a delusion; they find an audience whom their intense faith in their own

power conspires to delude; and their quiet, their content, their every prospect is ruined for ever. It is this honest and unconquerable persuasion of their own genius that makes it impossible to reason with or convince them. Their faith in their own powers – their racking sense of the injustice of all about them, makes one's heart ache. It is impossible for the sternest or the sturdiest teller of painful truths to disenchant them, and the consequence is as obvious as it is miserable . . . They believe poetry to be their work, and they will do no other. Then comes utter poverty. They haunt the ale-house, they drink, they sicken, they starve. I have known many such.

Happily there is one cure, not for individual cases, but for the entire class; a slow but a sure remedy . . . Education, wide and general, not mere learning to read, but making discreet and wise use of the power, and the nuisance will be abated at once and for ever. Let our peasants become as intelligent as our artisans, and we shall have no more prodigies, no more martyrs.⁵²

The deluded peasant poet is doomed from the outset, and is disabled by the social and educational over-reach of his self-displacement. Aggrandized by himself and the fawning of others into a permanent state of embittered social awkwardness and inherent humiliation, the peasant poet is the product not of intermittent oases of literacy, but of a piecemeal, threadbare approach to the democracy of education. Presumably if her readers were as roundly educated as Mitford herself, they too would recognize these 'vagrant' interlopers – not just by their destitution and hunger, but also by their air of benighted grievance.

Mitford's logic takes her to a principled role for educational reform, which would have a levelling effect in raising the peasant onto a utilizable platform of pragmatic, empowering and fecund literacy and understanding, which is opposed to the barren plains of inappropriate poetic aspiration. The end result of such reform, inspired negatively by Clare's example, would be that the newly level-headed working-classes would forego poetic musings altogether.

For our conclusion, we now turn to a posthumous assessment of Clare, published in October 1864, by which time the news of Clare's actual death on 20 May had circulated nationally.⁵³ Clare's story is again deployed as a warning, but here is steered to say something about English society. The obituary in the Saturday supplement to the *Manchester Weekly Times* celebrates the life of a French poet called Jacques Jasmin, an Occitan or *langue d'Oc* poet who died that same month. Jasmin was Clare's junior by five years, and for the anonymous writer, of comparable social stock:

The life of the "last of the Troubadours" certainly forms a remarkable story, and the more remarkable if we contrast it with a similar life in our own country which came to an end not many months ago, John Clare, the

John Clare's deaths: poverty, education and poetry

161

peasant-poet of Northamptonshire, who died last spring, was a “troubadour” fully as inspired by the divine gift of song as Jacques Jasmin. Like the latter, too, he was born in abject poverty; and like him he sang of trees and flowers and green fields, and the simple life of labourers and peasants, the lowliest of mankind. John Clare was born in 1793, and Jacques Jasmin in 1798; and the English minstrel came out with his first volume, “Rural Life”, in 1818, while his French brother followed, in 1825, with “Mi cal mouri”. So for the career of both poets alike, with the additional likeness that the success and fame of both came at once upon the first publication of their works. At this point, however, the lives of the English and of the French poet begin to differ widely, ending with the one in a madhouse and an obscure grave, and the other in a public funeral and proposed marble statue. There is something singularly characteristic of the two nations in the career of these two poets. John Clare, drawn overnight from utter obscurity, by an article in the “Quarterly Review,” *feted* and praised by noble lords and ladies, and made a nine days’ lion in the metropolis, found himself, after his sudden access of fame, never more at home behind the plough. While, on the other hand, his proud heart revolted against living upon what seemed to him charity, and, like a true poet, hating to exhibit his poetry and himself before gaping multitudes, he at the same time found the hard labours of the field too uncongenial for his mind and his delicate physical organisation, and before long fell a victim to these antagonistic elements. But see how Jacques Jasmin, the French Clare, gets out of this fatal struggle.⁵⁴

What follows for the ‘French Clare’ is a story of state honours, money, parties and gifts, the full patronage of aristocracy and royalty, and a solidly decent professional life following Jasmin’s literary success as the ‘coiffeur’ poet (the author gets some details of Jasmin’s life factually wrong;⁵⁵ Gilchrist’s *Quarterly* essay on Clare appeared in May 1820;⁵⁶ while Clare’s first book was in fact published in 1820). This poet-barber did well financially and lived a long, healthy life – and the ‘fervour of his poetry lost nothing from his daily unromantic avocation’. In Jasmin’s example – and expressly not in Clare’s – the author finds that ‘there is nothing to show . . . that true poetry will suffer from association with any trade or handicraft’. The author makes a firm point that in contrast to other countries, England neglects its poets, and always allows them to die in penury, no matter the riches they bestow upon society through the gift of their verse (John Wilson made exactly the same point when discussing Clare’s lot in 1835⁵⁷). The author is clear that England sees and allows – indeed, *expects* – a damaging disjuncture between social position, occupation and poetic writing. The ‘French Clare’ illustrates that this need not be so.

Clare was always the model of the fatally doomed poor poet, a warning to any who might follow, and a nationally-defining marker of how England treats its poets, and its poor. The ‘hand-producer’ tradition that enabled Clare to get a foothold in the literary world could be modelled in a noble fashion in the hands of a craftsman such as Devlin, who implores us to build a community of support and sympathy for Clare. But, far more commonly, the labouring-class poet was thought to be doomed and isolated at the outset. Certainly, a sense of inevitable tragedy dominated Clare’s critical reception in life, while the assumption that he would always struggle with the jarring combination of poverty and poetry – of labour and literary culture – continued to inform his literary legacy and reputation following his death.

Notes

1. ‘Sketches in the Life of John Clare’, *By Himself*, p. 3.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3.
3. Roy Porter, ‘Medicine’, *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776–1832*, ed. Iain McCalman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 170–7 (p. 171).
4. *By Himself*, p. 2.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 78.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.
7. Bate, pp. 252–3.
8. *By Himself*, p. 29.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
10. My transcription of the first two lines of an untitled short-form Spenserian stanza, Nor. 19, p. 6. The Oxford editors date the poem to 1845 (*Later Poems*, I, 165), which year is part of the notebook’s opening inscription. The notebook also contains two doodled references to the year ‘49’ (Nor. 19, pp. 52, 115). No other possible year dating appears. Other references – to Eliza Cook (whose poems were published in 1845 and 1848) and Dowager Queen Adelaide (who died in 1849), for example – might situate at least some of the contents towards the end of the 1840s (pp. 24, 63).
11. See Bate, p. 222.
12. See Gary Dyer, *British Satire and the Politics of Style, 1789–1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 139–42.
13. *By Himself*, p. 45.
14. For excellent considerations of death and Romanticism, see Andrew Bennett, *Romantic Poets and the Culture of Posterity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), and Paul Westover, *Necromanticism: Travelling to Meet the Dead, 1750–1860* (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke and New York, 2012).

John Clare's deaths: poverty, education and poetry 163

15. William Wordsworth, 'Resolution and Independence', *Poems in Two Volumes*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1807), 1, p. 92 (no line numbers).
16. Critics constantly complain about the neglect of Clare. For the latest contribution see John Dugdale, 'Week in Books', *Guardian*, Review section, 17 May 2014, p. 5.
17. John Taylor, 'Introduction', *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1820), pp. 7, 9.
18. Correctives to versions of Taylor's supposed bad faith are offered by: Zachary Leader, *Revision and Romantic Authorship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 206–61; Sales, especially pp. 66–75; Bate, especially pp. 563–75; Tim Chilcott, *A Publisher and His Circle: The Life and Work of John Taylor, Keats's Publisher* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), and *The Shepherd's Calendar: Manuscript and Published Version*, ed. Tim Chilcott (Manchester: Carcanet, 2006), pp. vii–xxviii.
19. See the headnote to 'The Wish', *Early Poems*, I, p. 43, and *Letters*, p. 431.
20. A brief account of this death notice is used as the springboard for a fine analysis of fame by Jason N. Goldsmith in 'The Promiscuity of Print: John Clare's "Don Juan" and the Culture of Romantic Celebrity', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 'Nineteenth Century', 46.4 (Autumn, 2006), 803–32 (803–4).
21. *The Times*, 17 June 1840, p. 5. News of Clare's death appeared in *Morning Post*, 16 June 1840, p. 5, and 17 June 1840, p. 3; *Standard*, 16 June 1840, p. 2; *Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser*, 20 June 1840, p. 8; *Hampshire Advertiser and Salisbury Guardian*, 20 June 1840, p. 4; London's *Examiner*, 21 June 1840, p. 398; *Belfast News-Letter*, 23 June 1840, p. 4; *Derby Mercury*, 24 June 1840, p. 1; *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser*, 25 June 1840, p. 4.
22. Allen's letter was published in *The Times*, 23 June 1840, p. 5. Corrective notes, some quoting Allen's letter at length, were published in papers like the *Leeds Mercury*, 27 June 1840, p. 7; *Hampshire Advertiser & Salisbury Guardian*, 27 June 1840, p. 4; London's *Morning Post*, 24 June 1840, p. 1; *Bradford Observer*, 25 June 1840, p. 3; *Glamorgan, Monmouth and Brecon Gazette and Merthyr Guardian*, 4 July 1840, p. 4; Edinburgh's *Caledonian Mercury*, 4 July 1840, p. 2.
23. From first admittance in 1837, Allen thought Clare was suffering from malnourishment brought on by poverty, and that hunger combined with anxiety over poverty were the root causes of his debilitation. See Pamela Faithfull, *An Evaluation of An Eccentric: Matthew Allen MD, Chemical Philosopher, Phrenologist, Pedagogue and Mad-Doctor, 1783–1845* (University of Sheffield: PhD Thesis, 2001), pp. 173–88.
24. On Allen, see Faithfull, op. cit.; Tibbles (1972), pp. 337–40; Valerie Pedlar, "'No place like home": Reconsidering Matthew Allen and his "Mild System" of Treatment', *JCSJ*, 13 (1994), 41–57; Sales, pp. 126–9; Bate, pp. 421–50.
25. *English Journal*, 1.20 (15 May 1841), 305–9 and 1.22 (29 May 1841), 340–3.

26. Cyrus Redding, 'A Word or Two with the Readers', *English Journal*, 1.1 (2 January 1841), 1–3 (1–2).
27. For an analysis of the significance of Bloomfield to Clare, see John Goodridge, *John Clare and Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 83–101, and Mina Gorji, 'Burying Bloomfield: Poetical Remains and "the Unlettered Muse"', in *Robert Bloomfield: Lyric, Class, and the Romantic Canon*, ed. Simon White, John Goodridge and Bridget Keegan (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2006), pp. 232–52. For the tradition of labouring-class poetry in relation to Clare, see Bridget Keegan, *British Labouring-Class Nature Poetry, 1730–1837* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 148–71.
28. Patrick Stewart played Redding in a BBC1 programme broadcast on 8 February 1970, starring Freddie Jones as Clare. An account of Redding appears in Bate, pp. 438–41, while High Beach is central to Adam Foulds' novel *The Quickenin Maze* (London: Random House, 2009).
29. The Tibbles write: 'The Appeal was commended to the public by Cyrus Redding in two articles in the English Journal . . . by James Devlin in the same, and by an unknown in a collection of verse entitled *Poetry*, 1841.' Tibbles (1972), p. 342. This could be 'Go to Epping!'
30. This is the second of two Devlin sonnets in this issue. *English Journal*, 1.23 (5 June 1841), 368.
31. The first part of Devlin's essay in the *English Journal* carries the title and authorship of 'The Trialist; or, Head-Attempts. By a Hand-Producer. A New Beginning with an Old Name', *English Journal*, 1.13 (27 March 1841), 204–5.
32. *Letters*, p. 302.
33. 'The Condition of the Poor, and their Claims', *English Journal*, 1.19 (8 May 1841), 294–6. This continues on from the 27 March essay. Devlin's brilliant work forms a consciousness-raising platform for the reception of part one of Redding's Clare coverage the following week. It was an expanded version of 'Considerations in Behalf of the Poor', *The Trialist: A Series of Attempts at Prose Composition, by One of the Operative Class* (Dover: printed for the author, 1836), pp. 97–102. This collection, on diverse matters, is interspersed with Devlin's poetry.
34. Devlin's trade-based books include *The Guide to Trade: The Shoemaker*, 2 vols. (London, 1839), *The Shoemaker, Part II* (London, 1841), *Critica Crispiana: Or, The Boots and Shoes, British and Foreign, of the Great Exhibition* (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1852). He became increasingly reformist, as shown by the long titles of *Strangers' Homes; or, the Model lodging houses of London described and recommended, as an example of what ought to be done . . . for the stranger work-seeker in general; but especially as regards the humbler class of emigrants* (London: Trelawney W. Saunders, 1853) and *Contract Reform: Its Necessity Shewn in Respect to the Shoemaker, Soldier, Sailor* (London: E. Stanford, 1856).
35. E. J. Hobsbawm and Joan Wallach Scott, 'Political Shoemakers', *Past and Present*, 89 (November 1980), 86–114 (107, n. 98).

36. See David Goodway, *London Chartism: 1838–1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 159–69.
37. *The Remains of Robert Bloomfield*, 2 vols. (London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1824), I, pp. 164–6. A letter and poem of 12 June 1820 are included, addressed to Bloomfield by shoemakers Devlin and John O'Neill, and announcing their forthcoming poetry collection (untraced). Another recorded letter was sent to Lady Morgan in 1828. Morgan records an occupation-based response to Devlin's aspirations: 'What a contrast between the humble confidence that he can make good boots and shoes for gentlemen and the "fortitude from despair" with which he wrote his bad poetry! Oh! why will not every one find out his "last" and stick to it.' *Lady Morgan's Memoirs*, ed. W. H. Dixon, 2 vols., 2nd edn. (London: Wm. Allen, 1863), 2, pp. 264–5 (264).
38. A collection of poems to Clare was edited by John Lucas: *For John Clare: An Anthology of Verse* (Helpston: John Clare Society, 1997). Devlin is not included.
39. Laurence Worms, 'Wilson, Effingham (1785–1868)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): www.oxforddnb.com.oxfordbrookes.idm.oclc.org/view/article/38136. Accessed 27 September 2014.
40. *Pierce Egan's Anecdotes of the Turf, the Chase, the Ring, and the Stage* (London: Knight and Lacey, 1827), p. 3.
41. Thomas Hood, *The Epping Hunt* (London: Charles Tilt, 1829).
42. See Bate, p. 240, and Simon Kövesi, 'John Hamilton Reynolds, John Clare and *The London Magazine*', *Wordsworth Circle*, 42.3 (Summer 2011), 226–35.
43. See Kasia Boddy, *Boxing: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), especially pp. 49–75, Tom Bates, 'John Clare and "Boximania"', *JCSJ*, 13 (1994), 5–17, and Bate, p. 438.
44. Epping Forest was revived as a boxing venue in 1816. *The Sporting Magazine* reports a succession of 'second rate' bouts in 1808 (XXXI.185, p. 265), while Egan recounts two fights near Ilford on 5 December 1816, including 'The Bow Boy' Jem Bunn who fought a sailor seconded by Randall. *Boxiana; or Sketches of Ancient and Modern Pugilism*, 5 vols. (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1829), II, pp. 380–1 and 479. London's *Morning Chronicle* reports on these fights too: the occasion was a 'renewal of the sports in the pugilistic ring' at this location (6 December 1816, p. 3). Ilford is eight miles from High Beach.
45. Anonymous, 'Sights of Books', *Cleave's Penny Gazette of Variety and Amusement*, 26 June 1841, p. 3. The publication itself is currently lost: J. Devlin, *Go to Epping!* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1841). *Go to Epping!* is also noted as having been received by *The Spectator*, 5 June 1841, p. 547.
46. Sales is the only scholar to consider Clare in a Chartist context: the movement led to a general suspicion of working-class poetry, following Thomas Carlyle's lead especially. Sales, pp. 76–101.
47. See Tim Chilcott's *John Clare: The Living Year 1841* (Nottingham: Trent Editions, 1999).
48. *Letters*, p. 659 and n. 2.

49. See Tibbles (1972), p. 375. Both Howitts are mentioned by Devlin at the start of each part of his essay on the poor in the *English Journal* (op. cit.), while a ‘country story’ by Mitford is the first piece (after Redding’s introduction) in the first issue, 1.1 (2 January 1841), 3–6. In the same year as his first visit to Clare, William Howitt jokingly claims that Clare was driven insane by the proliferation of police (which Howitt is against): ‘it is the day of the rural police. John Clare got a glimpse of them, and it operated, as it must do on all poets—it drove him mad, and he took to an asylum’. *German Experiences: Addressed to the English; Both Stayers at Home and Goers Abroad* (London: Longman, 1844), p. 113.
50. Mary Russell Mitford, ‘Readings of Poetry Old and New: Peasant Poets—John Clare’, *The Ladies Companion*, V.38 (7 September 1850), 163–6 (165). This essay was included in Mitford’s *Recollections of a Literary Life: Or, Books, Places, and People*, 2nd edn., 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1857), vol. 2, pp. 147–62 (first published 1852).
51. Mitford, ‘Readings . . .’, 165.
52. *Ibid.*, 165–6.
53. The *Cambridge Independent* and *Northampton Mercury* are often credited as original sources for the story of Clare’s death, announced in papers such as: *Birmingham Daily Post*, 30 May 1864, p. 3; *Leeds Mercury*, 30 May 1864, p. 4; London’s *Daily News*, 30 May 1864, p. 5; London’s *Standard*, 30 May 1864, p. 3; *Dundee Courier & Argus*, 31 May 1864, p. 3; *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 31 May 1864, p. 3; *Essex Standard and General Advertiser for the Eastern Counties*, 3 June 1864, p. 4; *Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 3 June 1864, p. 5; *Newcastle Courant*, 3 June 1864, p. 3; *Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 4 June 1864, p. 9; *London Examiner*, 4 June 1864, p. 366; *Leicester Chronicle*, 4 June 1864, p. 6; *Manchester Weekly Times: Supplement*, 11 June 1864, p. 8.
54. *Manchester Weekly Times: Supplement*, 22 October 1864, p. 339.
55. For correctives, see Samuel Smiles’ biography, *Jasmin: Barber, Poet, Philanthropist* (London: John Murray, 1891).
56. *Critical Heritage*, pp. 94–100.
57. Taylor thought Wilson’s (Christopher North’s) 1835 *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* review of *The Rural Muse* a ‘very poor one’ when he sent it to Clare (*Letters*, p. 628, n. 2). Wilson defended Scotland’s supposed neglect of Burns by pointing to England’s neglect of Bloomfield – with Clare caught unhappily in Wilson’s cross-fire. ‘England’, Wilson writes, ‘never had a Burns. We cannot know how she would have treated him – had he “walked in glory and in joy upon her mountain-sides.” But we do know how she treated her Bloomfield. She let him starve’ (*Critical Heritage*, p. 237).