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THE SEEDS OF ECOCRITICISM: A STUDY IN THE POETRY OF JOHN CLARE

A Thesis

Submitted to the Council of the College of Education (Ibn Rushd) for the Human Sciences University of Baghdad in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

﴿ وَبَوَّأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْ سُهُولِهَا قُصُورًا

وَتَنْحِتُونَ الْجِبَالَ بُيُوتًا

فَاذْكُرُوا آلَاءَ اللَّهِ

وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴾ ﴿٧٤﴾

صدق الله العظيم

{الأعراف}

In the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful

"Settled you in the land, [and]

you take for yourselves palaces

from its plains and carve from the mountains, homes.

Then remember the favors of Allah

and do not commit abuse on the earth,

spreading corruption." (74)

Allah Almighty is Truthful; Almighty God has spoken truly

{Al-'A'raaf}

To

My Mother,

I wish her

a safe recovery

With

respect and love

To

My soulmate,

my heartfelt friend

Reem Majid

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the worldwide issue of the environment occupies the minds not only of ecological experts and politicians but also is addressed in cultural fields and literature in particular. The conceptualization of ecocriticism, whether in the ecological field or cultural studies, has come as a response to the increasing public awareness of numerous environmental crises. Most ecocritics regard John Clare (1793-1864) as a 'proto-ecological' British poet since his poetry incorporates ecological issues which were not then categorized as they are now.

The study offers a precise illustration of ecocriticism coupled with a number of the most significant ecological concepts proven in selected poems by John Clare. The ecocritical reading of Clare's poetry rests principally on the leading ecological theorist, Greg Garrard. The study attempts to apply the most significant ecological concepts (like 'pastoral,' 'wilderness,' 'apocalypse,' 'dwelling,' 'animals' and 'earth') that were introduced in his seminal book *Ecocriticism*: (2004). Additionally, John Coletta's ecocritical theorization guides the theoretical ground of this study through concepts like 'old-growth,' 'anthropomorphic,' 'canopy,' 'interdependence,' 'decomposition,' 'territoriality,' 'Human Competition,' 'stratification,' and 'commensalism.'

The objective of this thesis is to demonstrate that human culture has a tight relationship with the physical environment and that all forms of life on Earth are intrinsically interconnected. It also intends to broaden the concept of "the world" to include the entire ecosphere.

The outcome of the study emphasizes justifiably that John Clare's poetry planted the seeds of ecocriticism. Most importantly, his poetic vision is not limited to the interests of Romantics, as he is frequently associated with. By applying the theory of ecocriticism to selected poems written by the poet, the study comes to the conclusion that Clare can be regarded as a precursor of ecopoetical poetry in English literature. Clare's poetry is considered the starting point of ecopoetry in Western civilization as well.

Finally, the study ends with a conclusion that is followed by a list of references consulted and the Arabic version of the abstract and the title page.

Key words: ecocriticism, Clare.

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CHAPTER ONE

AN INTRODUCTION

The views towards nature changed due to two factors: the agricultural and industrial revolutions as the acceleration of population growth facilitated by the first revolution. The process of development took place from a rural community to an urban one. As a result, the natural environment receded. The demand for the lands and the raw materials increased. According to a Law approved by English Parliament between 1809 and 1869, 'The Enclosure Act,' private properties must be fenced off from common lands, that had played a big role in reshaping the landscapes and cities (Hunt 7).

William Ruddiman has recently argued that humans have had a very articulated influence on the climate since the first existence of man on earth. Carbon levels in the atmosphere are no longer what they used to be. Early civilizations reclaimed all forests for agriculture. Hence, human culture began on the face of the earth when interaction between nature and man took place (52).

In recent years, the subject of environmental literary criticism has grown and gone through several stages of theoretical refinement and institutional acknowledgment. It has risen from marginal to increasingly prominent places in literary studies (Bartosch 21). There is a need to define the ecosystem. First: it is the sum of living (biotic) and non-living (sun-air-water-cloud-dust) organisms that interact with each other and then interact with their larger surrounding physical environment (Khan 25). Second, Ecology was defined initially in the mid-nineteenth century (Haeckel 286) as a branch of biology that deals with living organisms (flora and fauna) and their natural habitats. So it is the scientific study of biologically diverse ecosystems. Accordingly, Ecocriticism (perhaps the latest in modern critical vocabulary) is

the study of literature concerning nature, ecology, and environment. It is also known as 'literary ecology,' 'ecotheory,' 'ecoliterature,' 'ecopoetry,' 'ecopoetics,' 'ecocomposition,' 'eco-consciousness,' 'Green writing' and 'Green Studies' (Khan 24,5).

Loretta Johnson asserts in her essay "Greening the Library: The Fundamentals and Future of Ecocriticism" that the word an "'eco' comes from the Greek root 'Oikos,' which means 'house.' Ecology is the study of the house, much as 'economy' is the management or law of the house (nomos = law). Ecocriticism is thus a critique of the 'house'" (623). Some ecocritics credit William Rueckert with coining the term 'ecocriticism.' He defines it as "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature" in an article titled "Literature and Ecology:" (1978) (73). Cheryll Glotfelty gives the following working definition in her book *The Ecocriticism Reader*: "Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment." Ecocriticism takes an 'earth-centered approach' to literary studies (xviii).

As a result, the writers have always shown an interest in nature, culture, and landscape because ecocriticism supports the notion that nature, as a literary topic, surrounds all aspects of existence. An ecocritical approach evaluates the human's relationship with nature through its contact with it. Ecocriticism is a fundamental aspect of literary studies because literature cannot separate characters from nature (Fenn 109). Suresh Frederick argues that "Ecocriticism gives human beings a better understanding of nature" (135).

Ecocriticism, according to Ian Marshall in the 'Western Literature Association Meeting,' is a "literary criticism informed by ecological awareness [that] means either scientific or spiritual recognition of the

interconnections of living things, including humans, with each other and with their environment″ (8). But what precisely does 'ecoliterature' imply?. It is a literary genre composed of primarily environmental literature that emphasize environmental problems and humanity's interaction with nature. Environmental awareness is gradually implanted in people's minds and behaviors. The knowledge of environmental issues goes to a larger audience (Pauer 7). Ecocriticism is now a vital critical approach that focuses on the agreement between humanity and nature. It is the devastation that exists in nature because of the changes in the modern world. The person who is directly responsible is the man (Fenn 104).

Understanding the scope of ecocriticism needs some other definitions provided by experts in the field. Thus, according to Lawrence Buell, the ‟Ecocriticism … as a study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis″ (430).

Literary criticism has not reacted to events such as oil spills, lead and asbestos poisoning, toxic waste contamination, species extinction, the growing hole in the ozone layer, global warming predictions, acid rain, the Chernobyl nuclear reactor disaster, illegal dumping in the East, droughts, floods, and hurricanes. The literary studies institute was unaware of the environmental catastrophe. There were no periodicals, professional organizations and discussion forums, and no literature and environment conferences. Associated disciplines including history, philosophy, law, sociology, and religion have been 'greening' since the 1970s. While literary studies have remained unconcerned with environmental issues. Civil rights and women's liberation movements have influenced literary studies, while the environmental movement of the same century has had minimal impact. On the other hand,

individual literary and cultural experts worked on establishing ecological criticism and theory since the 1970s, despite the fact that they have not organized themselves into a distinct organization (Glotfelty and Fromm xvi).

By the early 1990s, Ecocriticism had become a widely used literary and cultural theory. Thanks to the founding of the 'Association for the Study of Literature and Environment' (ASLE) (1992), the introduction of the showpiece journal *ISLE*: *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* in 1993, and the publication of *The Ecocriticism Reader:*(1996) (Glotfelty and Fromm xviii). Ecocriticism was coined in the late 1970s by merging 'criticism' with an abbreviated form of 'ecology.' It is the science that examines the interrelationships of plant and animal life with each other and with their physical surroundings. Ecocriticism is also known as 'environmental criticism' or 'Green Studies' (Ganaie 2). This Green branch of literary study's taxonomy designation is still up for debate. J.W. Meeker firstly used the term 'literary ecology' to describe it as: "is the study of biological themes and relationships which appear in literary works. It is simultaneously an attempt to discover what roles have been played by literature in the ecology of the human species″(9). 'Ecopoetics,' 'environmental literary criticism,' and 'Green cultural Studies' are some of the other names in use. Most academics, however, prefer the term 'ecocriticism' (Glotfelty and Fromm xx).

Ecocriticism emerged in the 1980s as a result of the environmental revolution that began in the 1960s when Rachel Carson's released his book *Silent Spring* (2002). This book, according to Linda Lear, has the seeds of a revolution. Lear comments on Carson's work sparked a revolution in the connection between humans and the natural world, as well as a public awakening to environmental consciousness (Carson x). *The Ecocriticism*

Reader, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, and *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*, by Lawrence Buell, were published in the mid-1990s, and they formally 'inaugurated' Ecocriticism (Sumathy3). In literature, ecocriticism analyzes the relationship between people and the natural environment (Glotfelty xviii) that Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells' definition, in their mainly British collection of essays *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, suggest "… ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis" (5). Barulkar Jeetendrasingh in the 'Proceedings of National Seminar on Postmodern Literary Theory and Literature,' asserts that one of the primary purposes of ecocriticism is to investigate how people in society behave and respond to nature and ecological issues. This critique has received attention in recent years because of the rising social emphasis on environmental degradation and growing technology (508).

Ecocriticism aspires to transform literary studies by connecting literary criticism and theory to broader environmental challenges. Ecocriticism is a call to literature to link to the concerns of the current environmental crisis. It, in other words, is concerned with "both nature (natural landscape) and the environment (landscape both natural and urban);" the attempt to combine natural phenomena with literary criticism. However, attempting to link between this combination raises conceptual issues since ecology is an abstract notion that arose via a historical process of the academic establishment (Oppermann 29). Ecocriticism, then, seeks to identify common ground between humans and nonhumans in order to reveal how they may coexist in diverse ways because environmental issues have become an integral part of our life. This is one issue addressed by ecocriticism in its pursuit for a more

ecologically conscious viewpoint in literary studies. Ecocriticism contributes to the establishment of relations between literary and ecological texts (Tripathi and Bhattacharjee 72).

The late twentieth century has become aware of a new threat; an environmental catastrophe. One of the most important natural disasters at that time: Nuclear war, rainfall patterns changing, winds growing stronger, oceans being overfished, deserts are spreading, forests shrinking, freshwater becoming scarcer, acid rain, and the topsoil is so eroded. The carbon dioxide that is created by the burning of fossil fuels holds the sun's heat, so the planet becomes warmer. Besides, the explosion of population, exploitative technologies, and the conquest of space in preparation for its use as a garbage dump were spread. Also, the extinction of species (though not a human problem). In terms of infectious diseases, the 'mad cow,' which causes the collapse of the central nervous system and is transmissible to humans. Finally, pollutions such as nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, benzene, and carbon monoxide exist. All of these necessitated the appearance of a literary and cultural theory; 'Green Studies' (Bate 24).

The field of ecocritical theory and practice has only been rooted and flourished since the 'Meeting of Western Literature Association' (WLA) in 1989, in 'Coeur d'Alene,' Idaho. The term 'ecocriticism' was first used to refer to the critical field of 'the study of nature writing.' The 1994 WLA Meeting in 'Salt Lake City,' Utah, on October 6, only reaffirmed this, with ecocriticism as a primary topic on the list. It aided ecocriticism's growth into a generally recognized critical theory today. It is now a well-established critical theory or method in its own right. The critical theory has indeed been institutionalized

through many professional groups and journals, including the 'Association for the Study of Literature and Environment' (ASLE) (Khan 32).

1. 1. 'Roots of Ecocriticism:' Prominent Concepts

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), and Henry David Thoreau (1810-1850) are three significant nineteenth-century American writers whose work glorifies nature, the life force, and the wilderness as represented in America (1817-1862). All three were members of the transcendentalists, a group of New England authors, essayists, and philosophers who were the first significant literary movement in the United States to attain 'cultural independence' from European Models. *Nature* (1836), Emerson's first short book, is a reflecting (rather than philosophical) essay about the impression of the natural world on him. Nature in this essay is sometimes expressed in extremely dramatic directness. While *Summer on the Lakes*, in 1843, was Fuller's first work, and it is a cleverly written journal of her interaction with the American landscape at large, she later, through a period of time, became the first woman student at Harvard. Besides, Thoreau's *Walden* (1999) chronicles his two-year residence in a cabin he built on the edge of Walden Pond, a few miles from his hometown of Concord, Massachusetts (1845). It is possibly the original portrayal of leaving everyday life and wanting to revive oneself through a return to nature; it is a work that has always had a strong influence on the attitudes of its readers. Thus, these three books are considered foundational works of 'ecocentred' writing in the United States (Ganaie 3).

On the other hand, the 'Green Studies' in the United Kingdom are based on British Romanticism of the 1790s rather than American transcendentalism of the 1840s. On the British side, the critic Jonathan Bate, author of *Romantic*

Ecology:, is a pioneering figure (1991). Many of the problems raised by British ecocritics may be found (before the appearance of the word ecocriticism) according to Raymond Williams' book *The Country and the City* (1973). The infrastructure of ecocriticism in the United Kingdom is less developed than in the United States. There are no native journals or institutional groups for ecocritics to join. Yet, there is a UK section of the *'International Association of Ecocritics'* (*ISLE*). Especially in new universities and schools of higher education, the offering of required course choices of undergraduate degree programs is becoming highly common (Ganaie 3). The movement took some time to establish its roots. 'The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment' was founded in 1992; the first professional organization of ecocritics. Its magazine, *ISLE*: '*Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*' was formed in 1993. Moreover, in the United Kingdom, a similar organization was created in 1998 with the periodical *Green Letters*. The latter was initially published in 2000 (Marland 847).

In the realm of ecocriticism, Buell's ecocriticism trilogy, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (1996), *Writing for an Endangered World* (2001), and *The Future of Environmental Criticism and Literary Imagination*, chronicles the rise and progress up of ecocriticism to the current day. According to Buell, there are two waves of ecocriticism as the fundamental distinction of the first wave is that it was primarily concerned with "nature writing, nature poetry, and wilderness fiction." Moreover, it prioritized natural history and ecocentric texts (138). Historically grounded, the first wave surfaced in the 1980s as a consequence of Rueckert's term (ecocriticism) (Slovic et al. 1).

Relatively, the second wave (mid-1990s-present) was concerned with environmental justice issues as how racial, gender, and class matters

intermingle with the environmental concerns. So, such 'social ecocriticism' considers urban and degraded landscapes as seriously as natural landscapes (Bennett 32).

Buell principally distinguished between these two waves of ecocriticism: the first and the second. In his book, *The Future of Environmental Criticism:* (2005), he writes:

> No definitive map of environmental criticism in literary studies can ... be drawn. Still, one can identify several trend-lines marking an evolution from a "first wave" of ecocriticism to a "second" or newer revisionist wave. This first-second wave distinction should not, however, be taken as implying a tidy, distinct succession.(17)

In the summer of 2009 special issue of MELUS: 'Multiethnic Literature of the United States,' Joni Adamson and Scott Slovic talk about the possibility of a new 'third wave of ecocriticism.' They write:

> Therefore, this issue will explore what seems to be a new third wave of ecocriticism, which recognizes ethnic and national particularities and yet transcends ethnic and national boundaries; this third wave explores all facets of human experience from an environmental viewpoint.(6,7)

Lately, an emergent field of 'material ecocriticism' in the fall of 2011 is considered the fourth contemporary wave. It is ‟based on the notion of shared materiality between humans and non-humans.″ This wave is working to remove the traditional division between humans and non-humans or rather highlight the fact of horizontality instead of hierarchy (Marland 857,61).

Hubert Zapf, in his article “Ecocriticism in the Twenty-First Century:” (2016), summarizes the focal characteristic of ecocriticism as such: firstly, nature by itself, rather than man by himself, is emphasized, as is the interaction between nature and people. Secondly, it involves researching literature and the environment. Thirdly, it takes an earth-focused approach to textual analysis. Fourthly, the greatest ecosystem villain is man. Fifthly, all habitants are equal. So, the main goal is to safeguard the earth (46).

The most crucial terms that are listed in the ecocriticism theory must also be defined in order to reach a conclusion. The term 'deep ecology' was originated in 1972 by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess and American environmentalist George Sessions, who created an eight-point platform for the deep ecology social movement. Deep ecology differs from other forms of environmentalism. It emphasizes deep and more fundamental philosophical statements regarding metaphysics, epistemology, and social justice. Deep ecology is a social movement with religious and spiritual aspects (Naess, *The Selected Works* Xlvi). In *Deep Ecology:*, Bill Devall and George Sessions define the term as "Deep ecology is emerging as a way of developing a new balance and harmony between individuals, communities, and all of nature"(7). Because it is of utmost importance, the deep ecology movement addresses every recent personal, economic, political, and philosophical issue (Naess, *Ecology* 32).

'Cultural ecology' is the final factor to handle in the ecopoetry literature to understand it well. Julian Steward coined the term in the seventies of the last century. Steward defines this kind of ecology as how a culture adapts to its environment and also how adjustments in that living environment affect that culture's unique characteristics. Besides, how the traditional ways of

thinking and acting enable people to respond to their surroundings because ecology studies concern the interactions between any inhabitants and their surroundings (5).

Furthermore, speaking about the ecocritics' role in motivating others to rethink the artistic and ethical issues raised primarily by the environmental catastrophe and how the language and literary works communicate moral standards with deep ecological impacts (Bradfield 15,6). Consequently, Peter Barry lists what ecocritics do, and this specifically includes:

> They re-read major literary works from an ecocentric perspective, with particular attention to the representation of the natural world … they extend the applicability of a range of ecocentric concepts, such as growth and energy, balance and imbalance, symbiosis and mutuality, and sustainable or unsustainable uses of energy and resources … they give special canonical emphasis to writers … such as the American transcendentalists, the British Romantics, the poetry of John Clare, the work of Thomas Hardy and the Georgian poets of the early twentieth century … they emphasize on the ecocentric values of meticulous observation, collective ethical responsibility, and the claims of the world beyond ourselves.(*Beginning Theory:* 264)

Ecocritics, then, believe that human culture is closely related to the natural environment. They assume the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of all living things. The term 'the world' is expanded in ecocriticism to include all of nature. In addition, there is a clear relationship between 'nature and culture,' 'literary treatment,' 'representation,' 'thematization' of land and environment. All these have an impact on-the-ground activity (Mambrol).

In his book, *Ecocriticism:*(2004), Greg Garrard recounts the evolution of the theory and delves into the key concepts that still preoccupy ecologists and ecocritics alike, such as 'pastoral,' 'wilderness,' 'apocalypse,' 'dwelling,' 'animals' and 'earth' (vii). The first ecological concept to be considered in Garrard study is the 'pastoral' concept. Initially, prosperous pastures, meadows, foxes howling in the hillsides, calm deer, foliage, blossoms, myriad birds, fish laying in the deep and cool streams are all shown in the old tradition of a 'pastoral' concept. It focuses on beautiful natural images and emphasizes humanity's and nature's 'harmony.' It indicates an idealization of country life that conceals the hardships of work (1,33).

The second key concept in Garrard's list is the 'wilderness.' The term 'wilderness' refers to nature in its natural condition and free of human influence. It is viewed as a location to re-energize individuals who are weary of the city's ethical and materialistic filth. The hope of a fresh, true relationship between humans and the planet is held out by wilderness, which is divided into two groups: 'old world wilderness' and 'new world wilderness.' The old world appears scary as it is at odd with both science and cultural certainty (Garrard 60,6). This implies that it may be dangerous at times since it is out of civilization or anything else that might hurt everyone who lives within. While the new type, similar to the old pastoral, is a place where one may relax and ponder (Harrison 121).

As the symbolic end of the world is an inevitable outcome, Christians, armed with faith, have battled and sacrificed their lives in anticipation of the apocalypse (Garrard 85). Then precisely, 'apocalyptic literature' comes in the shape of telling the ending of history (Thompson 13,4). This idea offers the concept of apocalypse; the world, imaginatively or tragically, with mankind will reach an end. Ultimately, fears, shortages, overpopulation, erosion of

nature and starvation challenges are all suggested by this term or concept (Zencey 57). On the contrary, the 'cornucopia' concept whose premise considers that the majority of environmental challenges are imaginary or overstated and can be resolved by technological means. Then, the cornucopian views that the Earth has potential materials to support the world's population-growth (Kricher 189). Linguistically, the synonym for the 'cornucopia' word is abundance.

The 'dwelling' concept comes next. In general, the dwelling expression is "the possibility of coming to dwell on the earth in a relation of duty and responsibility." However, to be more specific, the 'dwelling' concept does not refer to a temporary condition; rather, it refers to humans' entanglement in the long term "in a landscape of memory, ancestry and death, of ritual, life and work." Garrard likewise signifies a 'model of dwelling' under the type of agricultural literature that is known as 'georgic.' The latter is concerned with farming or rural subjects and frequently emphasizes outdoor work and primitive village life (Garrard 108).

In the study of Humanities, animal-human relationships are divided between cultural assessment of animal representation and philosophical considerations of animal rights (Ballard 257). This debate gives rise to the 'animal' concept, which calls for sympathy towards animals by emphasizing kinship and disrupting anthropocentric thinking systems. Most of the time, it is considered that "wild animals are linked with masculine freedom and often predation, while the domestic animals are denigrated as feminine servants of human depredation" (Garrard 121,50). Erica Fudge in her book *Animal* (2002), mentions that "We live with animals, we recognize them, we even name some of them, but at the same time, we use them as if they were inanimate, as if they were objects" (8).

Otherwise anthropocentric concept presents a system of values that prioritizes humans above all other species. Most of ecocriticism, as among its goals improvement and justice, has assumed that its aim is to eliminate anthropocentrism and define it as a core reason of environmental devastation. Actually, the deep ecologists harshly criticize 'civilization' or 'humanity,' in more narrowly, the 'anthropocentrism' (Kopnina et al. 109-12).

Hence, the last key concept is the 'earth' concept. While the ecocriticism is described in several ways as "it has been and continues to be an 'earth-centered' approach" (Glotfelty and Fromm xviii), so according to it, human practices like environmental colonialism and capitalism are to blame for the earth's destruction. In fact, Garrard points out that "the Earth itself has to be seen as a kind of super-organism rather than merely being a rock in space" (173). For that reason, the earth is one of the natural components that the ecology seeks to protect.

In addition, a number of other concepts are raised by John Coletta in his article "Ecological Aesthetics and the Natural History Poetry of John Clare," (1995). Coletta lists a number of concepts and relates them to the ecological principle inspired by a variety of Clare's poems, primarily taken from his middle-stage poetry. At the fore front of Coletta's list comes the anthropomorphic concept which signifies the ascription of human characteristics, feelings, or stated intentions into non-human entities such as living beings or inanimate (non-living things) (34).

> A description with human attributes facilitates comprehension, as it is difficult to imagine something that we cannot relate to. Sadness, anger, disappointment and other feelings, for example, have been experienced

> by every human and are therefore much easier to understand. (Pauer 50)

The 'old-growth' concept pertains to entities that have existed for thousands of years and have evolved over a lengthy period of time; when a forest is distinguished on the basis of huge and old trees, virtually unaffected by natural catastrophes like trees during windstorms (Veldman et al. 154). In the same field, the 'canopy' concept is termed to describe the outer surface or habitat layer generated for example by growing tree tops and encompassing other biological organisms. Some entities dwell beneath a bigger one, with said the larger or upper protecting the smaller or beneath (Parker and Brown 473).

The fact that states that all living beings (for their existence) are reliant on two very different things: nature and one another that brings about the 'ecological interdependence.' This concept may take many forms, extending from the food chain to habitat formation. The concept has a lot of security sense in it. The aim of the 'interdependence' is to offer the power to sustain one another and concentrate more on their own self-growth (Coletta 33).

Linguistically, *The American Heritage Science Dictionary*, points out at an essential term; such as decomposition or decay. The latter signifies, the idea that the process of decomposition or decay is not entirely negative, it can be positively looked at as the starting point of the natural cycle of life. Taking into consideration that within this cycle and more specifically through such process dead tissues (of plant or animal) degrade and decompose into smaller organic shapes that in return are utilized as nutrient by plenty of other species that lie at the bottom of the ecosystem ("decomposition," def. 2). As an

ecological term, it refers to any type of reduction, degradation, or disintegration of flora organisms and seasons (Benbow et al. 8).

Clare wrote a lot about place in his poetry, and this sometimes is connected with the concept of 'territoriality.' Typically, it is described as 'the defense of an area,' it is the case where the 'territory' is the region needs to be defended. So, territoriality provides a framework for both animal behaviorists as well as behavioral ecologists to define and predict connections between many elements of an animals' behavior. It is how individuals use the territory to transmit ownership or occupation of places and possessions (Kamath and Wesner 233).

The next worthwhile concept of interest is 'Human Competition' concept; as the world's population increases, humans are competing with nature. People's survival requirements are the same as for plants and animals. Humans share the very same air, consume the very same water, and live in the very same place (Lang and Benbow 1,2). This represents a kind of threat to all the living things that occupy the same area.

Interrelated to this is another vital concept; 'stratification' concept which denotes the layers of habitats inside an ecosystem with significant biological and physical barriers between them that may or may not be imperceptible or invisible. To look at it another way, it is the arrangement of numerous species in various levels. In more detail, it is divided into two main types: vertical and horizontal division. The former type refers to the arrangement of the living and non-living in the vertical layers in one place, for example, the trees above and the bushes under them. Whereas the latter type refers to the organization of the living and non-living organisms in the horizontal layers of the same place, for example, snail and rat (Coletta 42,4).

Within the same line of thinking, the concept of 'commensalism' springs, which is a sort of living organism's interaction wherein one organism gains from the other without damaging it; a symbiotic relationship. In ecosystem speaking, 'the commensal' advantages from another organisms 'the host' by using its resources for 'food, shelter,' or movement (Mougi 1). As a regular viewer of wildlife, Clare understands that almost no species exists in isolation; "each depends upon other forms of life for its survival, and may, in turn, contribute to the survival of other species" (Phillips 59).

1. 2. Crucial Cultural Elements in Shaping Clare's Ecological Poetry

In his book *Sketches in the Life of John Clare,* John Clare wrote of himself and sent it to his cousin, friend and publisher John Taylor. It is noteworthy that Clare, in March 1821, began writing his life to help John Taylor economically:

> I was Born at Helpston. I was born July 13, 1793, at Helpston (half way between Peterborough and Stamford), a gloomy village in Northamptonshire, on the brink of the Lincolnshire fens; my mother's maiden name was Stimson, … my father was one of fate's chance-lings, who drop into the world without the honor of matrimony.(45)

Clare's family got a very little money. His father worked as a day laborer on a farm (Clare 26). Clare has struggled to scratch out a living in the fields since he was a teenager. He was taught only till the age of twelve, but he fell madly in love with the written word from the moment he first saw it (Grigson 76). Clare had a twin sister Bessey who passed away a few weeks after he was born. He grieved for her for a long time, and she became a kind of alter-ego for him (Robinson and Powel *2002* 3,286). His other siblings were Elizabeth

(b.1796), who died in infancy, and Sophia (1798–1855) (Moyse 26). Here are a few lines from his poem "And must we part that once so close," in which he mentions 'Bessey' (by name) and he does that several times throughout different periods of his career: "In autumn and look brighter/To Bessey I'll not say farewell" (lines 17,8).

Clare did not have much formal education and had to strive to become literate. He never entirely mastered the rules of grammar and punctuation, preferring to avoid them in his poetry (Harrison 212).

Clare grew up in a folk music-loving family. He was one of the early collectors of Northamptonshire songs and dances. Clare chronicled all the local festivals in his village, Helpston, such as beating the parish bounds. He hailed them all and wrote articles about them in the newspapers. He knew that he was recording them for future generations (Robinson 2,3). Clare was the first to collect songs and dances systematically 'in the field' as anthropologists today call it. He spent many Sundays and summer evenings with Gipsy families. He was eager to learn by ear as they did. Clare could read music. But he realized that the best way to learn style and manners was to listen intently. There are irregular meters noticed in his transcriptions (Scott 684,5).

Trying to speak of Clare's Stratified Origins, he is a poet from the working class. As a laborer and the child of a laborer living within the areas of Helpston, a village in rural England, he opposes the enslavement of the poor as a radical who has used poetry to effect change, but he is not a revolutionary. Clare speaks out against slavery, although he does not encourage the laborers to do the same. Clare was categorized already as a peasant poet. However, his compassion for laborers does not imply that he

fully supports their subjugation to oppression (Mahdy 8). He was a genuine voice of a rural working-class community. Clare was also partly a social outcast who valued solitude, and he was estranged partly from the town (Hunt 23). When he fell in love, his first and true love was Mary Joyce, the daughter of a farmer near Glinton. Little is heard about this affair, except that the maiden was amazingly beautiful. After a few months of happy intimacy, Mary's father learned of their daily interactions and prevented them from continuing strongly. Clare's future bride, Martha Turner or Patty, was the subject of several magnificent pieces of poetry, but Mary Joyce was always Clare's muse and idol of love and beauty (Cherry 16). In the poem "To My Wife—A Valentine," which is addressed to Patty from the title till the end:

> Patty was my turtle dove,
> And Patty she loved me.
> We walked the fields together,
> …
> And Patty she was mine.(3-5,8)

Clare was a unique voice heard from a small village in Northamptonshire. He describes an unknown nature that was damaged by one of its inhabitants (Man). Clare spends his days and nights surrounded by nature. He knows it better than any other contemporary Romantic poet of his day. Clare writes from his own experiences as a field laborer. His nature poetry states the danger that life faces as a result of humans' destructive activities in nature. It criticizes the war that people have led against trees, waters, and animals for the sake of financial gain. Clare uses poetry to highlight his society's anti-environmental behaviors. According to his nature poetry, children and peasants destroy flower fields, harm birds, ruin their

nests, cut down trees, and slaughter animals. He grew into a patriot to protect his village, Helpston, against the Enclosure Law. The latter launched a war to destroy his village's beautiful nature. He is the environmentalist who advocates for environmental protection. This self-taught poet instilled the value of nature in his readers. Clare demonstrates that human harm in nature can be unintentional. It is caused by a lack of information and carelessness beside financial gain or amusement. Clare is a role model to imitate if humanity is worried about keeping an ecological balance. His criticism of humans' improper treatment of the environment indicates that Man is the only creature who threatens the ecosystem (Mahdy 14).

Clare's passion of nature awoke in him a desire to explore more about it. This love led him to chronicle natural history in prose and poetry. He observed trees, brooks, flowers, birds and insects with the eyes of a naturalist and a loving poet. He communicated to the reader images of the actual nature that he saw and engaged with. He did not make unrealistic nature based on an individualistic viewpoint (Hess 27,8). In his poetry, Clare defends nature's rights against the human destructive activity. His familiarity with the English countryside, where he spent his youth, enhanced his understanding of the devastating impact of these harmful habits on life. The poet attacks everyone in his society, including youngsters, older peasants and the government. He disdains their destructive attitude toward nature in its forms: plants, seas, and animals. Clare sees murdering animals for no good reason as another foolish act against nature, even if it is done for a good reason. Peasants may defend their property and crops from the harm caused by some animals (Mahdy 4).

Clare is also known as 'bard of the wildflowers.' He was an ardent follower of animals, flowers, trees and the rural environment of his hometown.

As a result, his writing has generated significant work in the literary ecology in recent years. Clare's favorite topic is birds (their ways of living and residing). He wrote several poems about them, including "The Moorehens Nest," "The Robin's Nest," and "The Yellowhammers Nest" (Erchinger 141).

Clare mostly writes about the landscape around Helpston which was already enclosed. As a result, one of Clare's critics focuses on his personification of Helpston's local landscape (Nicholson 640). According to John Barrell, Clare "opposed the ideology of enclosure, which sought to de-localize, to take away the individuality of a place" (*Landscape* 120). The Enclosure Law turned Helpston into part of a national enclosure that swallowed local uniqueness by formalizing and homogenizing rural landscapes and cultures. Clare sheds light on how the Enclosure Acts displaced him by radically changing his local landscape (Nicholson 640). In the view of Clare, the Law started a war against nature and society according to which Man smashed on everything that stood in his path of achieving financial gain (Mahdy 6). In "Remembrances," the poet stated: "enclosure like Buanaparte let not a thing remain/It leveled every bush and tree and leveled every hill" (67-8). In the view of W.G. Hoskins in his book *The Making of the English Landscape*, Clare had asserted that county of Northamptonshire was the most damaged by the new wave of enclosure between 1765 and 1820 (141).

Clare was an observer and resident of a local landscape that was influenced completely by The Act of the Enclosure of Helpston (1809). The Act corresponded with the poet's emotional sufferings as a person who suffered from mental illness for many years. Clare was restricted to institutions. He could not depart for most of his life (Nicholson 640). With the

passage of the Enclosure Acts, his poetry is imbued with a growing sense of loss. Meanwhile, agricultural capitalism thrived from the 1740s to the 1830s. This flourishment was accompanied by massive enclosures of common land that displaced the rural poor (Scrivener 43). It is said that Clare grew up in his parish of Helpston, which consisted of forests, heaths, meadows, and fens. Then, this parish's land was enclosed, divided into squares, walled and hedged. The parish's property was subjected to the landowners (Bewell 550).

Clare is indeed most recognized for his writings on rural life and natural views descriptions. This trait was an essential component of his vision of the English countryside. It all comes from having lots of opportunities to have fun in his childhood, such as digging mazes in the grass, shooting stones in the ditches, staging fake wars, fishing, swimming, and collecting bird eggs. All of these experiences created substance for his future writing (Heyes 5).

Clare also wrote about traditional stories, songs, and narratives of folk rituals such as Christmas, All Fool's Day, St. Valentine's Day, Whitsun, Allan Cunningham, sheep shearing, harvest home, and All Hallows. As Clare taught out-of-school education in the fields of environment and culture, he could write well about these festivals and became one of Northamptonshire's most famous naturalists (Chirico 10).

On the title page of his first collection *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*, Clare described himself as a 'Northamptonshire Peasant.' This phrase was a strong declaration of regional identity that gave him a voice in a county in the East Midlands. The latter was rapidly becoming a hotspot of ecological conflict. The county is marked by an unequal struggle between

advocates of parliamentary enclosure and the deprived followers of the older methods of open-field agriculture (McKusick, *2000* 77). Even after gaining some fame and making a few visits to London, he stayed at Helpston until 1832 when he was convinced to move to a more luxurious cottage four miles away in Northborough. It turned out to be a disaster (Rigby 57). Clare wrote to John Taylor, in January 1832, saying: "I have had some difficulties to leave the woods & heaths & favorite spots that have known me for so long for the very molehills on the heath & the old trees in the hedges seem bidding me farewell ..." (*Letters, 1985* 561). Clare is known for using personification to emphasize his connection to the local environment (Higgins 141). Remembering Helpston can no longer be used to satisfy Clare's nostalgia but rather to restore his identity's pieces. As in the "Love of Nature" poem: "I love thee nature with a boundless love" (1), which is a powerful statement of this need (Chan 5).

Almost everything Clare valued was torn away between 1809 and 1820 (Acts of Enclosure; violent and dishonest acquisition of property). Marshes were drained, rivers were redirected and fields were lined and organized. Farming grew more profitable, resulting in many people in Helpston losing their income, particularly those who relied on the commons for their living (Stempel 16,129). The Enclosure affected the social structure of the open field community of the village disastrously. The areas where the peasants had their festivals and celebrated the changing seasons were fenced off. The society was divided and atomized like the land (Barrell, *Landscape* 192). In so many of Clare's poems, he bravely criticized the law of the enclosure publicly or implicitly. He uses images of a fenced nature that had lost both its freedom and the freedom of all its creatures living.

Clare portrays the tearing apart of a community by enclosure and society collapsed into crime, chaos and mob law. This sensitive poet demonstrated how the era of greed began with land enclosure. The countryside near Helpston is currently one of Europe's most barren and regularized (Gorji 9). He says in "The Mores" 1820: "birds and trees and flower without a name/All sighed when lawless law's enclosure came …" (77-8). Clare lived during England's harsh Enclosures, a 'land grab.' The wealthy seized the open 'Common Land' of the people of England and gave it to the exploitative private owners. The authorized harshness was invading the countryside. The traditional peasant economy turned on its head. At the end of the eighteenth century, thousands of enclosure practices left a large number of peasants penniless by forcing them to pay excessive fees. Clare's condition was worsened by the invasion of his spiritual place. It was a traumatic experience for many including Clare. The latter never got over this problem with his literary hypersensitivity. It had a profound and awful impact on him. He was a child who loved wandering in the open regions around his village which were now surrounded by walls and hedges. All have an innate knowledge that this Earth is for all to enjoy. Clare is not the only one thinking that (Blythe 40).

In the early nineteenth century, the arguments made about parliamentary enclosure may seem familiar to modern readers. It was claimed that enclosing common fields and wilderness would justify the existing broad range of land ownership. They increased agricultural productivity by providing individual farmers with the advantage of the combined lands to their highest capacity. In general, farming would be replaced by capital-intensive agriculture. As a result, wetlands and marshes would drain, streams diverted, woodlands and scrubland removed. In the legal and political process of enclosure, the poor's rights and the environmental consequences in the new agricultural systems are

overlooked. The parliamentary enclosure was preceded by formal agreement among various types of landholders. Only a few voices were raised to criticize the plight of the poor and almost no one questioned the fate of the Earth (McKusick, *2000* 77).

Enclosure and rural capitalism's practices lowered wages and put many land laborers out of work. Clare could not earn a living as a poet or as a laborer. In 1832, he and his family traveled to the nearby community of Northborough, where they lived in a cottage. But Clare was so connected to his native landscape, which he had seldom gone beyond. Moving three miles away from Helpston increased his sense of uncertainty in social relationships and interactions. His sanity started to deteriorate. He joined his first institution (asylum) five years later. His loss of sanity is identified as the fate of poverty in his poems. Clare's literary voice was the only thing he never lost. It is still the most real and unmistakable voice in modern writing. He wrote poetry till the end of his life. He composed some of his greatest poems throughout the years he spent in various asylums. One of his physicians remarked in 1840: "He has never been able to maintain in conversation, nor even in writing prose, the appearance of sanity for two minutes or two lines together and yet there is no indication whatever of insanity in any of his poetry." This voice was clear and unrestricted. But it was precisely for this reason that Clare was doomed from the start (Harrison 212).

Enclosure, in Clare's view, was one of the most significant elements in causing this discontinuity in his situation. His emotional sense of loss is attributed to his father's shift from being an independent farmer into a wage laborer (Hunt 22). His social situation did not predetermine the patterns that his poetry would follow. Many of his poems were about birds, animals, fens, seasons, loss, love, sex, corruption, politics, economics, religion,

environmental and social change, poverty and folk life. Clare is very far from a merely Romantic poet opposing enclosure (Hess 211).

His mental health was deteriorating for some years, and he was suffering from despair, insomnia, nightmares, and losing his sense of self. His popularity had faded since his glory days in London. He was surrounded by debtors for little sums. Clare was trapped in by domesticity. He had lost all trust in his publishers and was unable to provide for himself and his family. Following John Taylor's advice, he was a voluntary patient at Dr. Matthew Allen's asylum at 'High Beach in Epping Forest' from June 1837 until July twentieth, 1841. He had illusions supposing himself to be 'Robert Burns,' 'Lord Byron,' 'Lord Nelson,' 'Ben Caunt' and the 'prizefighter' at various periods (Robinson and Powell xi). However, on the other hand, he writes a few poems about himself to heal the feeling of loss of his identity at asylum period, like "To John Clare," "The Peasant Poet," and "I Am."

During Clare's residence in Dr. Allen's asylum at High Beach, the Christian schoolmaster William W. Moseley identified the probable causes of Clare's insanity in his book *Eleven Chapters on Nervous or Mental Complaints:* which published in 1838: domestic disturbances and quarrels, irresolution, sleepless nights, disappointed love, sexual indulgence, wretchedness, nervous debility, fear of loss, delusion, blows on the head, witnessing of sudden death, the sudden and unexpected change in fortune. Clare suffered all these (64). He claimed that he had seen areas he had never visited before and had met individuals he had never encountered before. He said he had "been in America, at a place called Albania, on the Hudson river, and saw Irving and Bryant there … spoke of Burns as of a brother … been in Scotland and seen his grave" (Dudley 118).

There is little doubt that he was convinced at that time that he had two wives: Patty, whom he referred to as his second wife, and Mary Joyce, his life-long ideal. He was still persuaded of this rather stressful event for the rest of his life. He assumed he had married Mary Joyce; his boyhood sweetheart, while his real wife (Patty) was alienated by this vision. When he went insane thirty years later, he claimed that Mary had walked through his window, even though she was already dead for a long time.

There were forty patients in Allen's asylums when Clare arrived in July 1837. Patient forty-five was given to John Clare. He was described as a forty-four-year-old married man; 'Laborer & Poet' was his 'Occupation or Profession' (Storey, *Letters* 650). Clare escaped from his confinement in the forest in July 1841 and walked eighty miles home via the Great North Road (away from High Beach). In his book '*Journey out of Essex*,' he describes the experience vividly to Mary, who was dead a time ago. Clare refused to accept the news and instead sent a letter to Mary. He stated that he had "written an account of my journey or rather escape from Essex for your amusement and hope it may divert your leisure hours" (Robinson, *Autobiographical* 160).

When he arrived at Northborough, he discovered that Mary, his beloved, was missing. She had died unmarried three years prior. On July twenty-fourth, 1841, he wrote "returned home out of Essex and found no Mary." Despite finding his second wife Patty and his children, Clare noted in a message to his childhood sweetheart in July 27, 1841 that "my home is no home without Mary." He was confined to the 'Northampton General Lunatic Asylum' after five months leaving Essex. He stayed there for the next twenty-three years (1864) (Canton 69).

Clare's extended poetic and personal silences throughout his stays in several asylums would have made even his family 'wonder if he was dead.' Because Clare was exposed to many rumors about his death proclamation, on June the twenty-third, 1840, Dr. Allen wrote a corrected letter to the Times to deny the Times' account of Clare's death:

> Sir,—I observe in The Times of yesterday that it is stated … that the poet Clare died some months ago in the Lunatic Asylum at York. The Northamptonshire peasant poet, John Clare, is a patient in my establishment at High Beach, and has been so since July, 1837.(Nicholson 654)

Then the actual death came, on May twenty-fifth, his remains was brought to Helpston and buried in St. Botolph's Churchyard in his seventy-one year (Cherry 103).

Clare's legacy was held alive in his hometown through festivals from time to time. The townspeople of Helpstone and its surroundings had the opportunity to pay their final respects to Clare in their own way and on their own grounds. The students from the village's John Clare Primary School march in procession from their school to St. Botolph's Church in honor of its most famous inhabitant. In 1981 John Clare Society was established which is why the July festivities have grown in popularity since then. These annual events are held near Clare's birthday; the thirteenth of July 1793 (Crossan 19-24).

Clare was honored with a monument at Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, on June thirteenth 1989, during a ceremony. Ted Hughes, and others unveiled a Clare memorial then recited Clare's works (Sinclair 27). The John

Clare Society's President, Ronald Blythe, describes Clare as "... England's most articulate village voice, remained untouched by such revolutionary ideas"(50). His popularity to his contemporaries came from his ability to convey the reality of rural life through the views of one who worked in and with the land. In this sense, he was admired for his 'authenticity' and his colorful portrayals of nature. Clare's work regained fame in the twentieth century. Thanks to the discovery of unpublished material, which led to a new emphasis on Clare as an authentic voice in English social history. To think of his work here is not only as a 'naturalist' or as a social record, but to learn something new from his environmental descriptions and portrayals of interconnected human experiences (Irvine 120). Clare was such a careful observer of nature's tiny aspects; 'quite curious.' His poetry predicted the more formalized and systematic formulations of current ecological theory (McKusick 235).

After years of marginalization and underappreciation, Clare is considered presently as one of the outstanding English poets. Being a farmworker and poor genetically, his genius was unknown to his contemporaries. It cannot be forgotten that his mental instability later caused him to lose his poetic appreciation. So, with the development of literary theory to analyze texts, critics had to pay attention to Clare's poetry. His poetry was full of environmental criticism for what he and his generation suffered from the unjust laws of the enclosure in the nineteenth century. Clare effectively foresaw the current status of the environment. This lately appreciation shows Clare's historical importance in the twentieth century as the considerable English nature poet.

1. 3. Literature Review

To give significance to the present study and highlight its contribution, some of the previous studies on different aspects of Clare's poetic achievement can be reviewed by showing precious conducted studies and their outcomes, which would show the value of the present study:

In Gregory Dixon Crossan's thesis *"A Relish for Eternity:"*(1975), there is a kind of divinization in Clare's poems. According to Crossan, Clare's divinization is divided into two categories: past and women. The divinization of the past is not a pious reaction, but rather the last refuge of a troubled mind. According to this study, in Clare's life, there are three different aspects of his nostalgia. He lamented lost love, lost opportunities and a lost home. He can amuse himself by recalling memories of his youth's sights and sounds (62,9). The only solution for Clare was going back in time to recapture the safety of former days and to avoid past failures. His quest for eternity was inspired by his reverence for the past. Crossan even cites many poems' titles that refer to the past like "Ruins of Pickworth," "The Vanities of Life", "The Triumphs of Time" and the most famous poem about past is: "Now is past" (64,78). On relying on his volume titled *The Later Poems of John Clare*, in "Child Harold," he said: "The soul of woman is my shrine/And Mary made my songs divine" (11,2). Crossan relates that Clare also applies the divinization process to women. The poet's love for Mary and his reverence for the past is intertwined strongly. It is easy to see Mary occupy a large portion of his poetic lines because of her position inside him during times of distress, disease, and maybe even before that. The emotion he felt for that woman was similar to the reverence he felt for God, thus not to love her is to be ungrateful (197,213).

John Barrell in his book *Poetry, Language, and Politics* (1988) presented John Clare as an agricultural worker and son of an agricultural worker. According to Barrell, Clare wrote his poetry after the time of the parliamentary enclosure. As he was fascinated by the small details in the landscape around him, he wrote about them. When Clare was twenty-seven, the Act of Enclosure changed everything, especially the parish, his home. So, he depicts the old roads, old landmarks, and the old division of property as a mixture of nostalgia, regret, and amusement. Then, Barrell elaborates on how the poet, who is noted for descriptive style, writes about the new and unjust Law that caused the creation of rectangular fields, hedges, ditches, and straight paths. Clare paints a charming picture of the location. It is unbelievable that he knew the names and the place of the flowers in his region. He believes that his body is still alive in the parish. Clare also expresses the sense of the violence he experienced under the Law. The latter made him feel insecure (118,9). Clare in this study is described as a descriptive poet purely in this study. This description is not correct because he is not one of those poets who sing about what is around them only. The thinker of Clare's poems will discover enormous possibilities in his poems. For example, he deals with the prevalent political and social conditions at the time and their impacts on the peasants of his people. Also, the poems of the asylum period revealed a deep intellectual maturity.

In his article “Clare and Political Equivocation,” published in 1999, Alan D. Vardy traces how, in recent years, a critical dispute has arisen about Clare's political commitments in his studies. It is hard to identify the historical interpretations of Clare's life events to reveal this side. The late-twentieth-century critics have much to be found in the chaotic details of Clare's life. It is early and complicated to label Clare's politics as a "radical" or "conservative,"

but to ensure that he is not isolated from what was going on politically at the time (37). To prove this, Vardy draws the attention to Clare reaction to the battles of party politics around him (Whig, Tory, and Radical) as scandalous ego and skepticism. So, Clare declared in a letter to his evangelical friend Mrs. Eliza Emmerson in 1830:"I wish success heartily to my friends wether wigs torys or radicals' but to … enemy he wished none because he could not alter their opinions" (527). In his book *John Clare, Politics and Poetry* (2003) Vardy asserts that Clare merges himself into society through his poems. "The Village Funeral" is an excellent starting point for observing Clare's social nuances and political beliefs. The anonymous publication of the satirical poem "The Hue and Cry" can also be examined to learn more about his true political beliefs. These two poems are but a trace in keeping with his prolific political prose (11,83). This study is incomplete because it did not discuss the impact of John Clare's political views on his poetry and his social standing.

In 2009, Sarah Houghton-Walker wrote a book entitled *John Clare's Religion* in which she talks about Clare's faith and religious experience. Walker claims that the faith and the religious experience of Clare can be traced back to a mix of orthodox and non-orthodox religious beliefs, social assessment, personal piety, private education, and super clever logic. Clare believes that 'God' is distinct from the 'Church' (just as faith is distinct from religion) and even more he views the Christians who "Lay by religion with their Sunday cloaths" (line 548) as actually acting ridiculously (2,18). This book assesses Clare's faith in God, his mysticism, and the experience with various types of religion, especially the organized one. However, huge gaps remain.

The next critic puts his finger on the ecological vision of Clare by tracing the implied Romantic features in his poetry. James C. McKusick published the

second edition of his book *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (2010) to address the need for new hope in environmental preservation by tackling John Clare and his clear contributions to the field. McKusick's depiction of Clare's ecological vision is even more convincing than that of his contemporaries because of his poorness. Clare is indeed an enthusiastic observer of the nearby fauna and flora and an active supporter of the preservation of 'waste' and 'wild' areas. He also disliked the changes that led to economic "progress" in his village. Such as the clearing of forests and wetlands, the removal of streams, and the enclosure of common fields (29,225). According to McKusick, Clare battled to find the right words to express his ecological vision through a regional dialect. It is a purposeful feature of his poetry that adds to his sense of rootedness and his ecological vision (87,91). McCusick says: "Clare evolved the means of expression and the technique of description that enabled him to become one of the first true ecological writers in the English-speaking world″(27). Even though, the book ignores the fact that Clare's poetry was grounded in a different kind of sense of belonging. Actually, from his first collection of poetry, *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*, until the time of his death in the asylum, there is a notable presence of ecology science in his poems. As a result, the current study has covered far more ground than the research conducted by McCusick in his book. The theory of ecocriticism has been applied to several poems by Claire, and it is necessary to identify the primary and secondary concepts in the lines of the poems.

Modern critics, such as Anandita Chatterjee, attempts to analyze Clare's asylum poems. In her article entitled: “I think I have been here long enough:” (2011)**,** she seeks to say that the critics often read Clare's poems of asylum years as innovative outputs of an insane poet locked up in a mental institution. However, many of his asylum poems are not similar to his mental illness and

insanity. Chatterjee notes that the poem's internal structure and cohesion of thought set serious doubt on concepts of insanity and sanity. His asylum poems are introspective and personal. The poems contain many images of a man who was forsaken by family and friends. The man is like Clare himself was left alone in agony and isolation. During his residency in the asylum, Clare rewrote two of Byron's most famous poems "Childe Harold's pilgrimage" and "Don Juan." He thought himself the Romantic poet Byron. In addition to these two poems, he wrote his own several lyrics like "A Vision," "John Clare," "Clifford Hill," "I Am," "The Humble Bee," "The Swallow," "The Ladybird," "Love of Nature," "The Maple Tree" and "The Chiming Bells." The poems become one account of his long-term mental distress and traumatic stay in the asylum. In the view of Chatterjee, Clare is a helpless victim, but it is also possible that his mental trauma helped him to develop a mature poetic vision. Thus, the experience of emotional stress heightened the tone of pain and grief in his poetry. So, he became a creative genius due to his poverty, misery, and loss. The question remains, is the so-called mad poet wrote these poems? (425-35). This study and similar ones are not based on any poetic text which shows John Clare's mental disorder. All poems are written tightly except for some linguistic lapses that Clare insisted on; not using vowels. He used to write his name without any vowel; Jhn Clr.

Relatively, Adam White demonstrates that Clare becomes 'Romantic' only in the asylum. So, he highlights the key points that pervaded Clare's poetry in his book *John Clare's Romanticism* (2017). As a result, White mentions that Clare became one of the prominent Romantic poets, though this was not recognized at the time. But the ages that followed have witnessed this description. Most of the points revolve around: fancy, ruins, childhood, poesy, joy, loss, birds, lyric sonnet form, reflective, subjective and abstract

transcendental modes. In this way, White observes that Clare is also impressed by his Romantic contemporaries poets like Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats. He sings them in his poems that carry their names as titles (3,4). Throughout his writing, Clare is preoccupied with a variety of aesthetic and Romantic concerns. Clare writes a number of 'personal,' 'introspective,' and 'self-reflexive' lyrics poems that can be matched to similar modes used by his Romantic contemporaries (11,5). Thus, according to White, it could be judged that Clare is inarguably a crucial figure in the Romantic tradition of love lyrics and songs (290). Over the years, John Clare was studied as an elevated Romantic poet based on comparing him to his Romantic contemporaries only. This comparison is actually an underestimate of his talent and poetic ability.

CHAPTER TWO

JOHN CLARE'S EARLY POETRY: *POEMS EESCRIPTIVE OF RURAL LIFE AND SCENERY*

The early period in Clare's poetry spans from 1804 to 1822. It includes two collections of poetry titled*: Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* (1820) and *The Village Minstrel, and Other Poems* (1821). The two volumes were published in his lifetime with the creative efforts of John Taylor. In regard to Clare's critics, the assessment of those early poems focuses on his natural talent and the trait of his 'honest simplicity.' The attitudes of the first year of public attention to the first volume can be summarized as follows: Firstly, Clare's rustic origins. He is an eccentric person, maybe unique and uninfluenced by literary influences. Secondly, there is a growing recognition that Clare is primarily a nature poet. Nature is linked to the poet's identity and suffering in definite ways that render him a genuine poet, despite his lack of formal education. (Storey, *Critical Heritage* 7,8)

Clare's first collection is called *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*. It was published on the sixteenth of June 1820 and went through four editions. The book demonstrates that great poetry is widely read and valued. It is significant to note in this first poetic collection that John Clare engraved on its front cover the phrase: 'Northamptonshire peasant,' and thus, he styles himself. In Mark Storey's view, it is a kind of bravery to document his regional identity (*Critical Heritage* 251,329). The reviews were unsigned at the time of this volume because they tended to agree that anonymity ensured objectivity in some way. So, *The Antijacobin Review and Magazine* published an article in the same month of the publication of the volume on June 1820 without any name on it to review this volume. According to the anonymous

reviewer, the collection comprises a range of descriptive and tragic poetry, as well as tales, melodies, ballads, and sonnets. They display enormous literary talent and a featured mentality, delighting in honoring nature in her most humble dress and communicating the demands and tragedies of poverty's poor kids with the strength of truth. This trait appears to be a significant part of his personality beside a passion for his hometown which has a strong influence on the spirit of the unschooled peasant (Storey, *Critical Heritage* 105).

Critically speaking, the collection elevates the 'Northamptonshire peasant' to the status of a literary lion for a brief period, not because it contains his finest work, but because it shows us who is Clare comes to be. It gives to us a picture of his happy childhood, elysian days spent in the countryside, songs of the traditional folk-ballads, his parents, his education and culture (Richmond 166). *Poems Descriptive* speaks out against the transformation of the local landscape, which is causing commons, marshes, and wastelands to disappear. In this collection, memory plays a vital part, as the peasant-poet recalls minute details from his hometown of Helpstone to include in thousands of lines of poetry.

Poems Descriptive contains seventy-three poems. The work is divided into three divisions: forty poems, twenty-one sonnets and twelfth songs and ballads. The title is significant as it holds the word 'Descriptive.' The latter hints that the entire book is composed of descriptive lines detailing what the poet sees and feels in his environment. This description is noted even from the titles of some poems such as "Falling Leaves" and "To a cold Beauty, insensible of Love." Shakespeare's lines appear at the end of the title page: "The Summer's Flower is to the Summer sweet/Though to itself it only live and die." In fact, these two lines are epigraph that go back to Shakespeare's

famous sonnets XCIV, which sing of good-looking people and likens them to Summer flowers. The sonnet is a description inside a description, which confirms the reader that the group of *Poems Descriptive* appreciates and imitates the idea of description.

In the introduction of the book *Poems Descriptive,* John Taylor introduces the poet and the circumstances of his upbringing and education (vii). Taylor notes that some of the poems indicate Clare's earliest efforts. For example, a poem like "The Fate of Amy" began when he was fourteen. "Helpstone," "The Gipsy's Evening Blaze," "Reflection in Autumn," "The Robin," "Noon," "The Universal Epitaph," and some others, were written even before he was seventeen, as Taylor noted. The rest have varying dates. "The Village Funeral" was composed in 1815, "The Address to Plenty" was written in December 1817, and "The Elegy on the Ruins of Pickworth" was penned in 1818 (Xxii).

Initially, Clare is known as the 'poet of place.' His dedication to specific locations is hailed as evidence of his sense of place, whether to a cottage, village, natural landmark, farm, or region (Kövesi, *1971* 1). *Poems Descriptive* includes a number of poems that sing about the place. For example, the first poem in *Poems Descriptive* which was published in 1820 in London; the poem entitled "The Meeting." It appeared in John Taylor's introduction to *Poems Descriptive*. It is not included in the 'Poems.' "The Meeting" looks to be a love poem at first glance, and most critics have viewed it on this basis. A poet may speak about his sweetheart and associate her with beauty of nature which is rich in flowers, willows, moonlight, ethereal night, and lovely weather. None of the critics read the poem from the ecocritical side because the ecocritical theory was not found yet, so the poet was not classified at the time as an

ecopoet. Thus, because place is very important in ecopoetry, it could be seen as a poem of location that its structure expresses a strong connection to place; the anaphora 'Here' appears seven times in the first two stanzas:

Here we meet, too soon to part
Here to leave will raise a smart
Here I'll press thee to my heart
…
Here I vow to love thee well
…
Here the rose that decks thy door
Here the thorn that spreads thy bow'r
Here, the willow on the moor.(1-3,5,9-11)

Taylor explains in his preface of *Poems Descriptive* that Clare "looks as anxiously on [nature's] face as if she were a living friend, whom he might lose" (xx). Nature is present strongly through the non-human inhabitants and natural world elements as it is evident in the third, fifth and sixth stanza. The lines of those stanzas are full of words like: 'rose,' 'thorn,' 'willow,' 'moor,' and 'birds.' Grounded on the assumption that the safety and the secure environment are essential elements in the ecopoetry, the 'willow' and the 'moor' can be perceived as having a shielded convergence relationship; 'the willow on the moor.' Each one of them has a mutual utilitarian relationship. This contiguity led to the stratification at a vertical level between 'the willow' and 'the moor.' Because 'the willow' is rest and lying down on 'the moor.' So, the place of 'the willow' is located over the place of 'the moor:'

Here the rose that decks thy door

Here the thorn that spreads thy bow'r
Here the willow on the moor
The birds at rest above thee.(9-12)

At last, the concept of 'pastoral' covers all the poem through the idealization of rural life. While the concept of a 'new world of wilderness' runs also through all the lines where the wilderness is portrayed as a place of relaxation, leisure and sanctuary from the urban places.

2. 1. John Clare: Flora, Fauna and The Art of Bird-Insect Spectator

Regularly, in his poetry, Clare turns to nature and its elements to convey other philosophical themes. Nature serves as a motif in this case. In his introduction to Clare's anthology *Flower Poems* by John Clare, Simon Kövesi illuminates what the flowers represent in Clare's poems. Kövesi points that Clare's flowers signify the traditional fragility of life, and they are connected with women. Clare also uses flowers to depict peasants like those in Gray's "Elegy" who are doomed to grow and fade unseen (xxv). It is also worthy to mention that many of the poems in *Poems Descriptive* simulate flowers from titles and content such as: "To a Rose-bud in Humble Life," "Address To an Insignificant Flower, obscurely blooming in a lonely Wild," "To an April Daisy," "My Love's like a Lily," and "The primrose."

The motif usage of nature may be applied in one of his poems of flowers like "Address To an Insignificant Flower, Obscurely Blooming in a Lonely Wild." This poem and other poems of flowers fall into the category of 'Flower Poems.' The sequence of "To an Insignificant Flower" in *Poems Descriptive* is

twelfth. The poem is followed by another poem about flowers as well. It is divided into nine stanzas. It can be mentioned that even in the title, nature is present powerfully; 'Flower,' 'Blooming' and 'Wild.' Profoundly, "To an Insignificant Flower" poem is one of several poems in *Poems Descriptive* that shows a deep and moralizing voice. Clare may embrace moral viewpoints and express them in a variety of areas of rural life, as is experienced in the present poem. The moral lesson in this poem revolves around the conflict between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. To simplify it more, it is the struggle for identity which is symbolized by the 'flower.' At the period of the Enclosure Law, this type of conflict was prevalent due to the unfair conditions of the peasants whose land was taken by the rich. The peasants, like Clare, feel uncomfortable and neglected. He relates himself in the poem to lowly flowers and weeds (anthropomorphic concept):

> Wild and neglected like to me
>
> …
>
> For oft, like thee, in wild retreat
> Array'd in humble garb like thee
>
> …
>
> And, like to thee each seeming weed
> Flowers unregarded like to thee
>
> …
>
> And like to thee when beauty's cloth'd
> In lowly raiment like to thee.(2,5,6,9,10,3,4)

More specifically, Roland Blyth in his book *Talking about John Clare* (1999), notifies that Clare bemoaned the loss of weeds after the enclosure of Helpstone. So, the 'weed' serves as a powerful metaphor for common property

and common folk during the anti-enclosure efforts. Blyth interprets that the weed was a persistent problem. It had two different meanings for two distinct groups. For those who accepted the enclosure, the weed meant an annoyance that needed to be removed, while it represented perseverance, strength, and the ability to endure under awful circumstances for people fighting the enclosure (30). Clare's weed alludes to the strength of the unimproved common lands, as well as the commoners who resisted enclosure and remained 'Wild and neglected' (2). He, as a nature poet, admires the 'weedling' for its beauty. However, Clare, as an ecopoet, is so moved with self-pity that he anthropomorphizes the flower with him.

On the stylistic level, Clare employs repetition across the poem to emphasize the force and depth of his identification with this blossoming weed, which is "Wild and neglected like to me" (2), producing a negative identity that they both share alienation and otherness. Line two is repeated exactly at line twelve to reassure the linking between the poet and the plant. Similarly, the phrases 'like to me,' 'like me,' 'like to thee,' and 'like thee' appear seventeen times in the poem connecting both himself and his love Emma with the flower to identify the symmetry between the living beings who share the same fate as Clare believes. It is noted by critics that Clare's early poems use the phrase 'like to thee' frequently to depict neglected living creatures:

> For, like to thee my Emma blows
> A flower like thee I dearly prize
> And, like to thee her humble clothes
> …
> But though like thee, a lowly flower
> …

And, like to thee lives many a swain
With genius blest but like to thee
…
So, like to thee they live unknown
Wild weeds obscure and, like to thee
…
Some friend in store, as I'm to thee.(17-9,21,5,6,9,30,4)

In the third stanza, chiefly in line eleven, Clare uses the expression 'run to seed' to relate to the plant's normal reproductive cycle, but it also alludes to decline and degeneration which both are part of life in nature. The ecocritical theory celebrates the natural cycle of plants and their ability to regenerate and flourish for the next season after temporary death. In this regard, the plant surpasses the human, who is unable to do so. Clare honors the flower and its organic life cycle. But the landowners who lack this intimacy with nature would neglect this little flower and in the name of 'improvement,' ruin its life cycle. As a result, the flower serves as a metaphor for peasants who were subjugated by landowners. Gradually, the comparison between the fates of the poor 'humble' flowers and the poor 'humble' tenants becomes explicit. Clare praises the union between man's fate and the fate of the land in this text:

And like to thee each seeming weed
Flowers unregarded like to thee
Without improvement runs to seed
Wild and neglected like to me.(9-12)

Thematically, the poem has an inconsistency that increases the tension and conflict between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. On the one hand, he

resists anthropocentrism by uncovering the benefits of a plant that is dismissed as a weed, but on the other hand, he promotes anthropocentrism by implying that the plant has worth since it shares the poet's situation. From here it would be unnatural to read this poem without taking into consideration the speaker's humanly passionate cry. Clare's speaker is 'neglected,' 'wild,' 'lowly,' 'humble,' 'plain' and 'mean, ' like a 'weed' in a ditch. To get more to Clare's main point, a lonely man is pleading for help, he is in desperate need of the most fundamental of human needs: attention and companionship. However, the 'weed' or the 'flower' do not need these needs. So, after all, the 'weed' has blossomed and appeared to be doing just well without our assistance or attention, while the man cannot be considered to be in the same position:

> And like to thee lives many a swain
> With genius blest but like to thee
> So humble lowly mean and plain
> No one will notice them or me.(25-8)

There is more to come from repetition. Once again Clare uses it to describe the look of the plant in words of ragged human clothes, such as 'humble garb' (6) and 'lowly raiment' (14). This repeated metaphor also strengthens the speaker's identification with the flower, as the words 'humble' (27) and 'lowly grave' (35) repeat in his description of himself. Clare's value of ecocritical domain relies on his attachment to nature, mainly with the environment of his hometown of Helpstone. Thus, Clare's repetition of matching the fates of nonhuman creatures and humans is regarded by many academics as evidence of his foresight ecological knowledge and denial of anthropocentrism:

So, like to thee, they live unknown
Wild weeds obscure; and, like to thee
Their sweets are sweet to them alone.(29-31)

The keyword 'wild' appears sporadically in more than one stanza and it is attached to more than one word, indicating a concept of wilderness or environment unpolluted by civilization and its evils. The poem is thought to be a depiction of the freedom and purity of human civilization which has a harmful influence on all living beings and natural elements:

And though thou seem'st a weedling wild
Wild and neglected like to me
…
For oft, like thee, in wild retreat,
…
Wild and neglected like to me.
…
Wild weeds obscure ; and, like to thee.(1,2,5,12,30)

It is the closing stanza that solidifies the idea of a secluded life. The poet hopes when he passes away, someone will sigh to notice his tomb, just as he has bent to notice the flower. The poem's conclusion is gloomy with a 'sigh' heaved in memory of a dead commoner but there is a possibility of an enlightened vision to interpret this ending. In the deeper analysis, the final stanza illuminates the primary ecological fact that which states that human civilization does not separate humans apart from nature. It seems Clare wants to say that nothing will pull him away from nature. He is stuck with nowhere

to go from the moment he was born (biologically) to the moment he would die (organically). So, in the grave, he would reunite with the mother nature:

> Yet when I'm dead, let's hope I have
> Some friend in store as I'm to thee
> That will find out my lowly grave
> And heave a sigh to notice me.(33-5)

"To an Insignificant Flower" embodies a radical ecocentric attitude as well as desperate anthropocentrism arising from a broken human heart. The poet concludes that the plants are tougher than humans since the flower can exist without care and company, but humans cannot because they are social beings. So, Clare reveals his preference towards nature in all of its shapes. This preference may have surprised the critics at the time, but now it can be viewed from an ecocritical point of view.

By the end of the eighteenth century, there was a rising protest movement against the inhuman treatment of animals among the English middle classes. The protest movement resulted in the establishment of the Society Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Thomas 149). Clare's fauna poetry expresses the threat that faces life as a result of mankind's harmful activity against nature. In this domain, Clare is most probably the first environmentalist to advocate for the environment. He matured into a patriot who fights the enclosure law in his Helpston, thus, he used poetry to deplore his society's anti-environmental actions. Certainly, because of his powerful environmental protection, one might say that Clare is a model to look for, if a man is serious about keeping the ecological balance (Mahdi 14).

In his book *Green Writing:* McKusick contends, convincingly, that Clare acquired "a detailed knowledge of the local flora and fauna, an acute awareness of the interrelatedness of all life-forms, and a sense of outrage at the destruction of the natural environment" (78). Quoting from Clare when he reports in his journal on Friday, March eleventh, 1825, that "I Intend to call my *Natural History of Helpstone* 'Biographys of Birds and Flowers' with an Appendix on Animals and Insect" (*By Himself* 217). Base on this biographical fact, Clare is already fascinated by natural history since he was a kid. His skill was refined through careful study of the numerous flora and fauna in the Helpston, his readings of natural history books, and subsequent employment as a gardener. He does not display this naturalizing viewpoint on animal abuse instantly in his early work. It is an attitude that he embraces more explicitly over time (Williams 47,72).

In this respect, too, Sehjae Chun, in his article "An Undiscovered Song:" says that Clare's fauna poems are inspired by his ecological vision which stems from his loyalty to the Northamptonshire environment. Chun, also gives more details on the powerlessness and frailty of animals in agony that evokes sympathy for Clare as a neglected victim. Other critics stress Clare's inclination to connect with animals, they think that animals in Clare's poetry are a compassionate representation of his sense of self, embracing his loneliness, shyness, and even societal persecution. Clare's identification and sympathy with animals as repressed creatures is genuinely a simple mirror reflection of him. In fact, Clare's extreme interest in animals defy easy reflection or prediction by the sympathetic imagination (50). Alan Porter was the first critic to anthologize Clare's animal poems under the heading of 'Animal' poetry in his 1924 review of John Clare's *Madrigals and Chronicles:* (260).

Taylor's intervention with Clare's writing was well-known throughout the literary community. Taylor was daring to erase certain poems without referring to John Clare even if this angered the uneducated peasant poet. Animal poetry is among the poems Taylor had purposely omitted whenever he had the chance, and he had two justifications for that. Taylor's fear of animals is the first unsaid reason. The second reason is Taylor's belief that animal poems appear to be minor poetic themes and at best, serve as the background to the poet self, which reflects what New Historicists claim about Clare's animals as a societal construction (Mahood 219).

To put what has been said about Clare's animal poems in practice, one can refer to the inhumanity against them in the first poem from *Poems Descriptive* which talks about poor Greyhound that appears in the title of the poem "On a lost Greyhound lying on the Snow." Clare is always driven to the type of story-telling poems detailing sorrowful rural occurrences, which this poem exemplifies. The poem is the sixth in the sequence of the volume. It is structured into forty-eight lines or twelve quatrains. It is located in the first section that is entitled 'Poems.' It was composed between 1807 and 1809, during the Napoleonic Wars, and before the enclosure in Helpstone. In his book *John Clare's Autobiographical Writings*, Clare reports the ‟"Lost Greyhound" was made while going and returning from Ashton one winters day″ (102).

Initially, the dominant concept of this poem, as explicit in the title, is that of animals. Without a doubt, ecocritics are interested in how animals are shown in nature. Further, all the animal poems concentrate on this issue and this poem is one of them. The "Lost Greyhound" commences as a story, as a narrative poem. The poet introduces to us the main character of the poem, the

'hound.' This hound is 'poor,' 'neglected' and lying miserably on the 'ground.' The hound is no longer able to catch rabbits. This dog cannot be useful any more. Maybe it is because he is aged or sick, but who cares?. Even his 'master' is indifferent about him. The situation is depicted vividly in the opening stanza. Typical of Clare, nature or classical pastoral concept is presented by the ground (the snow) as well as the animals; 'hound' and 'hares' that are elements/beings of the landscape (Marxist attitude of exploitation):

Ah, thou poor neglected hound!
Now thou'st done with catching hares
Thou mayst lie upon the ground
Lost, for what thy master cares.(1-4)

Going through the second stanza, the social cry of Clare is repeated, which is a scathing criticism of man's brutality and oppression over all other creatures around him. Even though he benefits from them, man uses his strength to weaken them. So, the man in this case, is described by the poet as a 'proud, hard-hearted' master. When Clare sees the miserable greyhound left out in the cold in the wintertime, he feels sorry for him and lets out a 'sigh.' The main impression of the poem focuses on is that human tyranny is disgusting, Clare retrieves the equation of the humans and animals in an attempt to bridge the gap of the biological hierarchy. This is made explicit in further following stanzas of the poem:

To see thee lie, it makes me sigh
A proud, hard hearted man!
But men, we know, like dogs may go
When they've done all they can.(5-8)

After equating man and animal in a reductive manner in the preceding verses, Clare now returns to explain, again with some reduction, how they, 'Poor man' and 'dog,' might share the same fate and expresses it with the word 'fare.' Metaphorically, the greyhound symbolizes the impoverished laborers who are unemployed during the harvest season "Like thee, lost whelp, the poor man …" (13):

> And thus from witnessing thy fate
> Thoughtful reflection wakes
> Though thou'rt a dog with grief I sayt
> Poor man thy fare partakes
> Like thee lost whelp the poor mans help
> Erewhile so much desird
> Now harvest's got is wanted not
> Or little is requird.(9-16)

The message to be delivered in these lines is the horrible condition of both the greyhound and the employees. In light of the diction of the poem, the latter is depicted with a highly racist word that is 'negroes.' Clare deplores this word, which is why he uses the inferior term deliberately to associate it with the abandoned animals. Clare's characterization of the outcast 'useless negroes' as slaves creates an evident tension. As for the poet, the tension makes things upside down or 'fall' as on a stormy day. Society is unstable enough that every social class aspires to benefit from nature's abundance without having to pay. The owner used his animals in the most atrocious manner. He was careless about them when they got disabled or unwell severely. In this regard, the

image of the poor animals that must be subdued is a prevalent theme that is dominant in the social ideology of that time:

> So now the overplus will be
> As useless negroes all
> Turn'd in the bitter blast like thee
> Mere cumber-grounds to fall.(17-20)

In the subsequent lines, the pronoun 'Him' is purposefully capitalized to signify God Almighty. Then, coming to this part of the poem, the vertical stratification is completed, God, 'man,' and animal (dog and 'hares'). Clare humanizes God by pointing out that he has an 'ear' to listen to his creatures' complaints, particularly the 'oppressed.' Clare does this to bring the humans and their God closer together. Every ecologist wishes for a safe and happy world. But this time, Clare went beyond and above to include the Lord of the Earth as well:

> But this reward for toil so hard,
> Is sure to meet return
> From Him whose ear is always near
> When the oppressed mourn.(21-4)

In the preface to *A Champion for the Poor:*(2000) Eric Robinson suggests that Clare confirms the Great Chain of Being theory in "A lost Greyhound." The theory, according to the editor, ‟posited that every part of the creation was placed in that definite position by God so that the social hierarchy was part of the divine plan, and should be accepted as such″ (Liv). While Alan Vardy, in his book *John Clare, Politics and Poetry*, contradicts

this consensus, he refutes the theory by saying "the poem interrogates the sanctity of such hierarchies and struggles to free itself from them [...] It can more easily be read as a leveling image than an endorsement of aristocratic privilege" (168).

This issue will be resolved by diving further into this stanza and dismantling Clare's true intention. Since he is strongly linked to primitiveness, the peasant poet evokes the Great Chain theory of existence, which links God, humans, and animals in a hierarchical order; 'A link of Nature's chain' (26). The Great Chain of Being, which asserts that man have a duty to his inferiors (animals), was a popular notion in anti-cruelty texts of the time. It may assume that our lives and happiness are equally dependent on the wills of those above us just as those below us rely on ours. In the sense of natural kindness, all acts of cruelty and interruptions to that order look profoundly unnatural. All are equal in God's eyes, regardless of their position in the chain. Everyone deserves his kindness and care. For the sake of knowledge, the Great Chain of Being is a part of social ecology concept that sees human dominance and exploitation by others as the primary root of environmental problems:

For dogs as men, are equally
A link of Natures chain
Formd by that hand that formed me
Which formeth nought in vain
All life contains as 'twere by chains
From Him still perfect are
Nor does He think the meanest link
Unworthy of His care.(25-32)

The role of God or 'Him' that 'He' is the one who meets all of our requirements. God is the canopy for all who are being in the planet. Then, the poet gives a sanctuary to the greyhound. But since the dog represents the whole mass of the laborers, it cannot be a good solution to take all those people under his care. Possibly, Clare's chain is fundamentally horizontal, insisting on all animals' equality. The masters, the owners of the slaves who exploit the farmers and forsake their loyal servants after they have outlived their usefulness is the object of the poem's disdain. When Clare addresses the dog, he uses leveling language: 'So rise and gang with me' (40). The argument is that though Clare accepts the natural stratification of the universal order, he cannot adopt its strictly social hierarchy. In this intention, Clare wipes out this false and artificial hierarchy by rescuing the fallen dog:

> So let us both on Him rely
> And He'll for us provide
> Find us a shelter warm and dry
> And every thing beside
> And while fools void of sense deride
> My tenderness to thee
> I'll take thee home from whence I've come
> So rise and gang with me.(33-40)

In the last stanza, The unpleasant characteristics of the dog are amplified, and as they do, Clare's pity for the stray animal grows; 'Poor, patient,' 'mournful,' 'dumb' and painful. Touching on this issue, Kate Rigby (Professor of Environmental Humanities) considers in her book *Topographies of the Sacred:*(2004) that the 'Animal' poems reflect "the premodern rural world as a

place of violence, cruelty, and blind prejudice, rather than as a pastoral idyll″ (237):

Poor patient thing! he seems to hear
And know what I have said
He wags his tail and ventures near
And bows his mournful head
Thou'rt welcome come! and though thou'rt dumb
Thy silence speaks thy pains
So with me start to share a part
While I have aught remains.(41-8)

Clare feels sorry about abandoning the animals once they lose their ability to serve. The masters take their health, and now they are taking away their rights. Men even slaughter or feed them to other animals that will one day be lost, just like the dog. This may bring to the reader's mind how the animals in George Orwell's novella, *Animal Farm* 1945, are exploited and maltreated. Ultimately, it could be judged that Clare at the end of the poem succeeds in outlining the darker side of rural life which is listed under 'the old world' concept of 'wilderness;' a dangerous place outside civilization's limits.

Permanently, Clare writes about nature, but he does not merely include nature in his writings. Maria Diakantoniou proves that Clare watches and records plants and animals in extensive details. His efforts to exhibit incredible accuracy are evident in which numerous critics have remarked. Clare shows a lifelong love of birds. Here, emerges Clare's bird poetry that expresses his affinity for birds and his wish to preserve them. Diakantoniou adds, however, Clare's ability to comprehend birds is affected by his relocations from his native village of Helpstone and then to several separate

asylums. His emotional circumstances shape the way he observes and writes about birds. That is why there is a varied difference between birds in his poems before the enclosure and after it. The scholar elaborates on Clare's bird poetry and concludes that the bird poetry evolved in scope and passion throughout his life, but his fascination with birds remained constant. Clare earned a significant posthumous appreciation for his ornithological knowledge. He has produced over one hundred poems related to dozens of species of birds. Clare creates bird-related poetry for the remainder of his life, even with his mental illness. It is to be noted that though the poet employs bird imagery, his bird poems are not always titled after birds. Clare does not integrate birds in his work for the sole lyric purpose or viewing birds as just symbolic, but he regards them as real and vital. He presents birds as living beings instead of symbolic objects. This is likely credit to the fact that Clare, as a peasant poet, has personal contact with birds than any contemporary Romantic poet who lacks his in-depth awareness of the natural world (1-3).

Birds are also mentioned by Keats and Shelley in such poems as "Ode to a Nightingale" and "skylark" successively. However, the images of birds in these two poems are restricted to traditional poetic images that represent lost or spiritual love and enlightenment, whereas the birds in Clare's poems are presented in innovative and alive pictures. The persistent observations of Clare of what is found in nature, is intentionally stated and clarified in his poems from his first volume *Poems Descriptive*; in such poems as "Address to a lark, singing in winter" and "The Robin." These two bird poems and other ones in other succeeding volumes generally embody birds' names, their colors, their nests, their eggs, their ways of living, the dangers to which they are subjected at the hands of man, and their mating seasons. Thus, it could be judged that this classification of Clare's poems is precisely scientific records

that are helpful in ornithologists' research. This can be viewed from an ecological perspective.

One of the most distinguished poems that talks about man's relationship with the birds is "The Robin." It dates back to 1809 as he wrote the poem before reaching the age of seventeen when he was roaming in the meadows in the time of pre-enclosure. The poem is among the first poems that appears at the beginning of the volume. It has thirty-four lines. At first glance, the poem seems to be all about the hard birdlife in winter, but those who know Clare well will realize that it is much more intricate than that. Nature is nothing more than a tool in the poet's hand to make other intentions unfold in succession. Starting with the first line of the poem, it is very loaded with nature's elements which allude to many things. For example, the 'snow' indicates a harsh winter for a bird, and it is a good start to paint a descriptive landscape. The other essential element in this line is the 'wood' which in turn represents the refuge for the bird and protection for all the living creatures of plants and animals.

Actually, the birds, who are non-human habitant, interdepend in a sort of symbiotic relationship with the human as they 'fly' to the 'cottage' of the man to get 'their food.' But, a closer analysis of Clare's diction reveals that he uses the word 'beg' to describe the fragility of this symbiotic relationship. The word was not used arbitrarily. Man is crude and hard-hearted, so his constant humiliation to the birds forces the latter to beg for food. Here, the cottage is part of the dwelling concept because it grants shelter and security for birds: "Now the snow hides the ground, little birds leave the wood/And fly to the cottage to beg for their food" (1,2).

Taking a look at the poem's title, perhaps a question comes to mind: why does Clare choose the 'Robin' specifically?. The answer would not be intricate as the poem. The robin, as the lines three and four of the poem report, is a very 'domestic' and 'tame' bird that flies near to humans frequently, pecking on windows, singing merrily, and engaging in other human-friendly behaviors. The robin is often regarded as mankind's innocent companion: "While the Robin, domestic, more tame than the rest"/With its wings drooping down, and its feathers undrest (3,4).

In the poem, the robin's first speech includes the following three lines. His speech is a lament about being chilly and hungry. Because of man, the robin is in a miserable condition. Indeed, the bird needs shelter and food. At this point, Clare portrays man as a bad creature in nature in all of his bird poems. He causes harm to the environment and other beings deliberately and selfishly:

> "I would venture in if I could find a way
> Im starvd and I want to get out of the cold
> Oh! make me a passage and think me not bold."(6-8)

After hearing the sound of the robin, here, the voice of Clare or the narrator can be distinguished clearly by the kind invitation to the 'little' bird to come to human's 'windows.' Aside from being most welcome, the compassion is also highly valued and when the bird is described as 'poor little' bird and shows his sympathy with it. The poet envisions himself as a peaceful and innocent human being. In doing so, he isolates himself from the wicked human race insisting that he does not have a murderous impulse or even an inclination to kill by noting that he does not even have an old cat 'grimalkin' in

his house. Furthermore, he does not simply mention a cat; he says an old cat who already has experience of catching birds unwittingly. The narrator's humanism contrasts with the cruelty of the animal 'grimalkin:'

> Comes close to our windows, as much as to say
>
> …
>
> Ah poor little creature! thy visits reveal
> Complaints such as these to the heart that can feel
> Nor shall such complainings be urged in vain
> I'll make thee a hole if I take out a pane
> Come in and a welcome reception thou'lt find
> I keep no grimalkin to murder inclind.(5,9-14)

Following the picture of abuse of animals, the human race is personified and embodied by a farmer holding a 'gun.' The little robin must stay away from the armored 'peasant,' his residence, and his field; never eat from his harvest. The warning lasts till the end of the poem against the inhuman activities of humans. The race of the humans is lethal, whereas the race of the birds is harmless. This argument suggests that there is no comparison between the two races. Clare promotes the idea of birds' supremacy on humans. However, what happens next is very surprising, the idea of the murder expands beyond 'Robin' to include the rest of his species; 'wren' and 'sparrows must fall.' It has become a mass murder. Another notable thing is that the speaker (Clare) specifically appears to be aware of the variations between species and is irritated that the farmer fails to differentiate between the 'wren,' 'sparrows' and the 'robin,' which are harmless to his crops. The concept of the 'old world of wilderness' prevails along similar lines, in which rural life is a perilous place for innocent birds to live:

But oh little Robin! be careful to shun
That house where the peasant makes use of a gun
For if thou but taste of the seed he has strewd
Thy life as a ransom must pay for the food
His aim is unerring his heart is as hard
And thy race though so harmless he'll never regard
Distinction with him boy is nothing at all
Both the Wren and the Robin with Sparrows must fall.(15-22)

The warning against human beings is repeated once again. Deception and cunning are the ugliest characteristics on the earth, and they should be avoided at all costs. With his outward features, he looks like a human, yet he is a human 'wolf' in the heart. Predation, blood, slaughter, and murder are his primary concerns as a murderer. To survive, people resort to harmful practices. He feeds on the wild animals that surround him. Clare cautions the birds about the dangers of deception, but he indeed warns all of humanity against the same trap. Clare makes the peasant as one of 'the Apennine' tribe. As a result of this metaphor, a lot of speech is summarized in the structure of the poem. The Apennine people resided in caves in the Apennine mountains (now Italy) under harsh weather, making them worse than the wolves they grazed. This is a significant sign of human nature. Man is influenced by the environment in which he resides. Critically speaking, Clare's use of this metaphor is a good gesture:

For his soul (though he outwardly looks like a man)
Is in nature a wolf of the Apennine clan
Like them his whole study is bent on his prey
Then be careful and shun what is meant to betray.(23-6)

Another pleasant image of the speaker; is when the bird is summoned once more by the man but this time to the narrator's cottage personally. The narrator provides shelter to the bird from a gun-wielding neighbor. Their relationship becomes more intimate. The 'cottage' is a canopy to the robin from all its complaints. At this moment, the invitation is not just for biological necessities, but also for freedom. In his cottage, it will be 'free.' Both man and bird have the right to live freely. Little by little Clare's message becomes clearer as the poem comes to its close:

> Come come to my cottage and thou shalt be free
> To perch on my finger and sit on my knee
> Thou shalt eat of the crumbles of bread to thy fill
> And have leisure to clean both thy feathers and bill.(27-30)

In the light of the implied and direct warning against the human race in the poem, Clare is not deceitful as a man and a poet. The idea of deception is at its height in the poem's conclusion when the nestless bird is tricked into accepting a warm invitation to enter the house so that a man can catch him. The ultimate ambition of the ecological poet is to be embraced by an environment free of anything that bothers him. That is why there is insistence and repetition on safety, peace, commensalism, and coexistence among different creatures without any discrimination along the poem: "Then come, little Robin! and never believe/Such warm invitations are meant to deceive" (31,2).

The last concluding two lines carry a golden keyword which is 'mercy.' Mercy is an emotion that the poet wishes to spread among the humans to protect other creatures to obtain 'commensalism' in one ground. Thus, it could be said that Clare's ecological seeds start in his early days seeking harmony

with nature. This ecological insight overlaps with his religious belief that revolves around the idea of mercy and sin. Religiously, Adam and Eve were sinners. So, all humans from their race had sinned. Here, Clare is one of those sinners but 'God' who is most gracious and most merciful shows mercy even to the sinners. Then, as Adam and Eve were forgiven, the sinner (man) must also show forgiveness and mercy to the bird, which is also a sinner because it (crow) killed his sibling; "In duty I'm bound to show mercy on thee/Since God don't deny it to sinners like me" (33,4).

Following this long journey among the poet-narrator, farmer and species, One can find that Clare is a good human being who values goodness and care for others, which is the essence of ecological sustainability.

In the fields, Clare studied and learned from the literature, but the green fields which stretch out in front of him taught him more**.** In one of his significant declaration about nature in *The Natural History Prose Writings,* He exemplifies his preferred perspective on the surroundings: "I love to look on nature with a poetic feeling" (38).

Clare is a keen observer and he has micro-eyes to record even the tiniest aspects, such as insects flying or climbing over the grass and hiding in blossoming flowers. The passionate poet, who believes that all living things, including plants and insects, have a right to life, puts his hat down above his eyes to shield them from the sunlight, then, in sheer delight, glances up to see the lark rise about the woods in circles (Bate *Biography* 38,109). Seemingly, Clare's eye makes full use of every moving living creature that comes into direct contact with it. Actually, his delight is awakened when he sees insects and flowers in the natural world where the checker poet is constantly

interested in seeing them and becoming depressed if he does not see them in his everyday life for a long duration. He even shares his joy and curiosity at being in the company of insects and flowers in the meadows because they are an example of the freedom of the natural world. He hopes to join them to experience the feelings of continual delight (Gouli 101).

On the plus side, McKusick is one of the few people who has pondered Clare's environmental message. In his article, "A language that is ever green:' " he takes into consideration "Clare's intense engagement with the natural world, his respect for the local environment." (236) After all, Clare's strong non-anthropocentric viewpoint is defended by McKusick:

> Clare's ecological vision is confirmed by his powerful and moving poems in defence of the local environment … speaks directly for the earth and its creatures, attributing intrinsic value to all the flora and fauna that constitute the local ecosystem ... He defends the right of individual birds, animals, insects, flowers, and trees to exist and propagate ... As an environmental advocate, Clare is virtually unprecedented in the extent of his insight into the complex relation between ecological devastation and social injustice.(239)

Inspecting at the insects' sonnets in this volume marks the beginning of the treatment of free life in the folds of insects wings in Clare's poetry. The final division has two poems of insects which bear the titles: "To The Glow-Worm," and "The Ant," where the two sonnets are composed sequentially. Among all the insects in nature, Clare pays special attention to the ants in his prose and poetry. In his book *Prose,* Clare refutes false information regarding ants on the part of scientists and all book readers about ants, where he says:

> It has been commonly believed notion among [the] naturalists that trusts to books & repeats the old error that ants hurd up & feed on the cornels of grain such as wheat & barely but every common observer knows this to be a falsehood I have noticed them minutely & often & never saw one with such food in its mouth they feed on flyes & caterpillars … for which they climb trees & the stems of flowers – … in the spring they may be seen carrying out ants in their mouths of a smaller size which they will continue to do a long time transporting them away from home perhaps to form their colonys –.(199)

Effortlessly, Clare surpasses naturalists who rely on written texts and repeated misconceptions concerning ants and their habits in nature by his close observation to those little creatures. These littles move ahead in harmony with the natural world. Despite adversity and a variety of difficulties, they adjust to their surroundings in such a natural milieu (Gouli 102). In *Prose*, Clare also debunks another popular misunderstanding about ants:

> [I]t is commonly believed by careless observers that every hillock on greens & commons has been first rooted up & afterwards occupied by these little tenants but on the contrary most of the hills they occupy are formed by themselves … bringing up a portion of mold on the surface … on which they lay their eggs to receive the warmth of the sun & the shepherd by observing their wisdom in this labor judges correctly of the changes of the weather.(200)

These two quotations prove that this peasant poet has spent a lot of time in nature, pondering and contemplating everything around him. Clare, like any poet, is drawn to things that ordinary people might overlook. As a result, his

poetry is replete with perceptible and imperceptible details, exclusively based on nature. Due to this fact, he is mostly referred to as a 'descriptive nature poet' by all critics.

"The Ant" sonnet, as do all of Clare's sonnets, opens with an accurate description of an object (ant), as if the poet intends to prepare the reader or listener for a greater and controversial occasion. At first, the octave is full of a series of adjectives in that this *Poems Descriptive* is noteworthy for; 'little,' 'small,' 'minute,' 'large,' 'monstrous' i.e. enormous, and 'Larger.' So, there is a focus on size; the size of the ant, the hills as well as the mountains. Then the size and shape overlap in which the ant has a fascinating touch covers her little body. Clare does not stop describing the size and shape of the ant but goes further to describe the shape of hills and mountains, as though there is something he wants to arouse our attention by all of these descriptions of everything in the scene in front of him. Following a description of the physical size and shape of the ant, the poet proceeds to compare her with something intangible and invisible, which is 'foresight,' it has 'large' insight that goes far beyond its physical size. In the fourth line, a new sort of comparison and description is introduced, namely, the spiritual nature of the slight ant, as implied by its ability to work hard and diligently; 'Thy labouring talents.' The speaker continues to notice the 'little' ant and discusses its behavior. He praises it for having 'talents' deserving of 'fame' and exhibiting tremendous farsightedness:

> Thou little Insect infinitely small
> What curious texture marks thy minute frame
> How seeming large thy foresight, and withal
> Thy labouring talents not unworthy fame.(1-4)

As true to Clare's style, in the last two lines of this stanza, nature, which is symbolized by 'hills,' 'plain' and 'mountains,' shows powerfully. To a large extent, these three physical aspects of the landscape form an axis to display and measure the size of the small object from the point of the beholder's view, who is himself the speaker. The overall analysis of the stanza shows the interdependence concept and symbiosis between the ant and the hills, and this is a simple axiom of the ecological sense, in which living creatures rely on nature. The other concept that matches this case is anthropomorphism, in which the poet bestows human attributes on the ant, such as 'laboring' and 'fame.' This affinity between the ant and man sheds light on the interrelatedness of people to their environment. Along with that, the capitalized word 'Insect' signifies more than merely a little object in the environment. Because 'she' has laboring talents, it may represent the trodden laborers in the fields, thus, the choice of the word 'laboring' is intentional and purposeful: "To raise such monstrous hills along the plain/Larger than mountains, when compard with thee" (5,6).

In the later stanza, the comparison takes on a new dimension. As the ant pulls the morsel dropped by the rural 'swain,' the scope of the parallel is expanded to include man. A smaller object is compared to a larger entity; 'Huge size to thine.' The observer considers her normal behavior 'strange' although ants often carry enormous objects through her mouth. Under the concept of commensalism, the tiny insect benefits from the human by picking up his food. The beauty of the ecosystem is exemplified by the harmless symbiosis that combines living organisms together. The poet, then, turns away from the concrete analogy toward the abstract comparison. In the ninth line, Clare compares a 'great instinct' as an abstraction to the real (physical) world in a way that is relatively equivalent. This line is very informative since it

notifies us about a scientifically proven fact: tiny little ants forecast the arrival of 'cold' and rain. When ants hide in burrows, it is thought to be a warning that rain is to be expected. This fact reminds us of Clare's chronicling of the manner of species in his immediate surroundings, particularly at Helpstone:

> To drag the crumb droppd by the village swain
> Huge size to thine is strange, indeed to me
> But that great instinct which foretels the cold
> And bids to guard 'gainst winters wasteful power(7-10)

Furthermore, the greater analogy is drown between what the speaker has witnessed and his interpretation of the observed action. The mite's 'cheerfulness' is judged by the watcher's subjective judgment. Richard L. Gillin, in his dissertation (1971), tackles the last two lines of this stanza. Amid his speculations on the 'cheerfulness' and 'toiling labours' of the ant, insightfully, he muses about the 'great' impulse that invigorates it. His reaction to the behavior of the ant has shifted from a very close portrayal of an insect and its physical ability to interact in the universe to a ruminative and extremely speculative one: "Endues this mite with cheerfulness to hold/Its toiling labours through the sultry hour" (11,2) (58).

The deeper analysis of the couplet suggests that the lively detailed inspection of an ant might reflect variable humans situations. The watcher takes a step farther in which establishing a new parallel between the 'strong instinct' of ant and man's 'soothing' ability combined with 'misery' condition: "So that same soothing power, in misery/Cheers the poor pilgrim to eternity" (13-4).

One can say that the concept of non-anthropocentric brilliantly stands out in this sonnet. Clare as a supporter of nature, prioritize the notion of nature over man. So, after the meticulous observation and description of the insect, he places this hardworking ant, albeit on a hot day, above the man who is depicted as receiving everything from nature and God on a silver platter. Actually, the image of Man conveyed here is that of the less energetic organism on the planet. In short, nature wins once more in this game of comparison.

Concluding, we can confidently state that the existence of ecological concerns in John Clare's earliest texts is undeniable. The selected poems have illustrated the meaning of a variety of keys and secondary concepts in ecocritical theory; apocalypse, cornucopia, commensalism, stratification, interdependence, canopy, the earth, anthropomorphism, human competition and decomposition.

2. 2. Clare: The Fiddler, Folk Songs and Ballads Records

The second division of *Poems Descriptive* contains 'Songs and Ballads.' Derek B. Scott presented a paper at the University of Leeds' entitles “Clare Study Day and Concert,” tracing the origins of Clare's folksongs. Scott clarifies that when it pertains to 1820s and 1830s collectors of national and regional songs, it surprisingly expose that Clare was seeking songs in Northamptonshire; in the field. Without Clare's collection, there would have no clue what Northamptonshire's rural music sounded. Scott adds that Clare records them just before their vanishing in the 1860s. His active collecting period began around 1820 and lasted no more than ten years. These years were centered on Helpstone and the surrounding region. He did his research on foot.

However, Clare got many of the song lyrics from his illiterate parents, the rest came from the peasants around his hometown or from the Gipsy families with whom he spent time (2).

It should not be forgotten that Clare was a fiddler, which implies he has a good ear for music and melodies. According to the basic feature of ballads that are fully examined by the author of the book *Poetry For All Seasons:* Paterika Hengreaves, Clare uses them in a traditional way as the ballad has fundamental characteristic with a single tale. One episode in which the subject is frequently melancholy and depressing, hard to be enthusiastic about a long narrative explanation of a single topic, starts and ends with a sudden address to a listener, with no background information provided. When background information is included, it is usually in a nostalgic look back without details. Clare's ballad has a simple language and phrasing. In the manner of creating dramatic suspense, the poem also employs a conversation that includes a supernatural aspect in the shape of evil influence. Besides, each stanza ends with a specific repetition of a phrase or sentence (4).

'Songs and Ballads' has twelve poems: two ballads and ten songs. The songs cover a wide range of topics, including four love poems, one about his friend Lubin, two about women, and one about an animal. In this category, the primary topic is 'love.' Initially, the opening poem in 'Songs and ballads' is a ballad with a subtitle 'A ballad' called "Upon the Plain," which is followed by ten songs.

Right from the first ballad "Upon the Plain," Clare is tempted to expose the issue of industry and trade in this poem. It may come to mind why a poet like him, interested only in the environment and nature, would deal with such

a topic. The answer can be found in McKusick's book *Green Writing Romanticism and Ecology* (2000). McKusick outlines the situation of the industry and its environmental impact by stating that since the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815), the rapid growth of industries required large amounts of raw materials. This may be seen in Clare's time. The metalworking industry increased to satisfy an urgent need for military weapons, including some alarming new technologies for mass disasters. McKusick notes that this growth is harmful to the environment, particularly open farmland, as well as the suffering and humiliation of the human spirit that heavy industry brought urban areas. It is clearly evident that Clare foresighted this harmfully environmental transformation as a result of large-scale industrial poisoning. The brightest scientists of the early nineteenth century, however, lessened the environmental pollution as a mere local issue and a minor annoyance. Then, the author concludes that it seemed unimaginable that human industry could have such a terrible influence on the global environment (100-3).

In this relation, Clare was close to the business or industry as he helped his impoverished family and his wage-worker father through working in different occupations as a gardener and a shoemaker. Moreover, in the field of business he was also tricked by the morals of the publishing world. Clare was most severely exploited by John Taylor, who imposed his authority over the literary collections that appeared during Clare's life. In *John Clare By Himself,* Clare talks a lot about his early contact with trade and the business world. He provides us with countless sayings and details about his various attempts at work: ‟I am … a jack of all trades and master of none″ (44). Whereas in another situation from the same previous book, he says: ‟I was such a silly, shanny boy that I dreaded leaving home were l had been coddled up so tenderly and so long and my mother was determind if I was [i.e. bound to] a

trade that I shoud have my choice″ and ‟at length my school days was to be at an end as I was thought learned enough for my intended trade which was to be a shoe maker″ (8,64).

It is important to note that the word 'plain' in the title of the poem "Upon the Plain" appears in other poems in this collection, such as "Helpstone;" "sweetest flowers upon the plain" (87), and in many other subsequent collections, such as the sonnet "Night;" "Night spreads upon the plain …" (1). In fact, it is repeated in more than one occasion but with a different meaning. The 'plain,' for example, is a metaphor for Clare's hometown's open lands as the latter were in danger of becoming extinct because the industry devours everything in its path. Additionally, the 'swain,' as well as the plain, is a symbol of the new world of wilderness where the villager feels carefree, happy, content and healthy like the environment which was full of energy, joy and vitality at that time before the uncontrolled expansion of technological advancements. Conspicuously, the introductory mood of the poem suggests a place remote from human civilization. Such words as a 'plain,' 'swain,' 'flock,' 'love,' and 'joy' refer to the pastoral atmosphere/concept. As is customary in this style of the poem, the character is anonymously identified:

> Upon the plain there livd a swain
> A flock his whole employ
> Unknown loves cares and all its snares
> To damp his humble joy.(1-4)

Clare's voice, or his concern as an ecological poet, is heard in the second stanza. 'Industry' and 'trade' are two keywords in the poem that explain the poet's worries. He is concerned about the negative impact of heavy industries

on peasants, their land, and as a result the environment. Then, the term 'Fortune,' like the word 'Love,' is only capitalized in reference to Cupid, the god of love. Cupid's image in this poem is to show the working of a destiny in people's life. Back to this stanza, Clare wants to emphasize the importance of luck since the naïve peasants blindly trust it. They may base their entire lives on a myth, a superstition, or fable they heard somewhere. The peasant poet is no exception, he may also believe in luck and opportunity. The stanza ends with the most ecological significant aspects, 'health' and 'peace,' to complete the swain's 'Contentment,' which is also capitalized for emphasis:

> Industry toils while Fortune smiles
> To bless him with increase
> Contentment made his humble trade
> A scene of health and peace.(5-8)

Cupid's metaphor is extremely crucial since the god of love has great influence over the lovers' hearts. In a traditional manner, Clare portrays this god using his 'darts and subtle arts' to torment the lovers. Here, Cupid can be identified as a supernatural character that plays an evil influence on the swain as in any ballad. The dialogue of the poem between the two primary characters is outlined to create a dramatic suspension and attract the reader as well. Logically, while 'Cupid' stands for the Industrial Revolution, the swain represents farmers and Greenland. So, the industry has thrown its arrows on nature to ruin it as Cupid, if not more. Cupid, in the life of a shepherd, is a fatal figure as progress and modern technology are inevitable; the eventual effect will be catastrophe and 'distress:'

> But Cupid sly whose jealous eye

Envied his happiness
With pointed darts and subtle arts
Resolvd on his distress.(9-12)

As sometimes appearances deceive, Swain believes Cupid is a 'shepherd' when he is dressed so. So does the industry to the entire peasantry as many see it as a source of luxury and advancement at first glance. The peasants are oblivious to the dangers that awaited them. Traps and snares are set up easily for farmers who are dazzled by the lights of the factories:

A shepherds form he's taen
With crook and song he hums along
And thus accosts the swain
"Go friend" he cried "to yonder side
…
Intent to start his tender heart
O'erlooks the subtle snare
The swains beguild pleasd Cupid smild.(18-21,5-7)

Since the hunter is the god of love and the prey is the shepherd, the bait will certainly be a lovely female who will easily ensnare anyone fall into her trap. Possibly, the 'Fair Florimel' might be the tempting offers made by factory owners to farmers to give up their lands, as would happen with the shepherd. In addition, nature's presence in the poetry should not be overlooked; 'lily white' and 'red roses' were mentioned in every appraisal of the lovely young lady. Nature continues to reveal itself in the form of a shady 'shade,' a bright 'sun,' and a vast 'plain' in full sight. Nature gives shelter 'from the sun' to 'the

lovely maid' who lays 'beneath the shade.' Nature is always very generous and kind to Man; a condition that proves the concept of 'canopy:'

Fair Florimel was there
The roses red her cheeks bespread
Her bosoms lily white
To view her charms each bosom warms
Enrapturd at the sight
Her heaving breast her slender waist
Her shape genteel and tall
Her charms divine unrivalld shine
Alike confessd by all
Beneath the shade the lovely maid
Lay shelterd from the sun
O luckless swain!go fly the plain
Or stay and be undone.(28-40)

In the last stanza Cupid's plan works, and the shepherd falls into the beautiful girl's trap. 'His heart' is no longer 'his own,' but rather a symbol of the transfer of land from farmers' hands to industrialists' hands. The peasants sell their land at low prices for factory employment, believing it is invaluable opportunity to improve their living conditions. But they end up working too many hours for pay that is insufficient to compensate for their efforts. Besides, working in unsanitary surroundings is no match for nature's healthful and refreshing environment. To drive the main point home, the poet is more than just a poet of nature, as critics have claimed for the last two centuries. Even though Clare feels that progress and technology are inescapable, he must have

attempted actively to warn society about an impending global environmental disaster since then:

> She meets his view sweet Peace adieu!
> And pleasures known before
> He sighs approves admires and loves
> His hearts his own no more.(49-52)

In the third division of *Poems Descriptive*, there are a total of twenty-one sonnets about Helpstone. Clare's sonnets indicate his ongoing pursuit of boundedness and unboundedness in the landscape through poetry form, as well as the underlying negotiation between open and closed space. On the other hand, Clare's sonnets, frequently aim for a more flexible attitude to the landscape of form. The sonnet itself is floating between a feeling of completed and unfinished thinking, unitary identity, being within a continual and infinite chain of viewpoints possibly. Couplet sonnets were popularized by Robert Herrick, whom Clare respected much, and other early writers that he admired. But by the nineteenth century, sonnets were universally regarded as illegitimate models: they were not sonnets at all. Clare's use of couplet form in many of his sonnets is regarded today as a bold choice which expresses his belief in the validity of early poetic styles linked with the English countryside, with which he associates. During Clare's day, the Petrarchan sonnet was considered the peak of the sonnet form. In this division of sonnets, however, John Clare does not accept the Petrarchan sonnet form as the better whereas the Shakespearean form is preferred above the Petrarchan in all of them. Actually, Clare was an active supporter of what is now known as sonnet sequences, as part of the nineteenth-century sonnet revival (Lodge 101-3).

Regardless of the fact that sonnets are a reputable literary form that many of them were seen as padding by Taylor, Clare continued to adopt the sonnet form throughout his life, including his asylum poetry. He starts to write about things that could only happen in Helpstone in these sonnets of the 1820s. Several sonnets composed between 1819 and 1821 express a sense of delight in nature. Clare employs the sonnet form to enact out the conflict between man and beast, which reflects his attitude toward nature. This viewpoint becomes an obsession in his poetry. There is almost a twist in the end, no matter how carelessly and cheerfully a poem begins. Clare does have romantic beliefs about nature, even though the world is frequently a harsh and brutal environment. As a consequence, the intentional tension in the sonnet and the sense of antithesis are revived. Clare runs freely within his limits unwilling to be tied to the traditions of sonnet, so octave and sestet are not always contradictory. Furthermore, the movement of each sonnet seems to have its unique personality (Storey, *Critical Introduction* 39- 46).

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, several communities in England practiced May parties on the first of May and Helpstone is one of those places (Bushaway 265). For that, Clare celebrates the spring season with a bunch of spring's poems particularly the poem that follows, "The First of May," which is about the first day of the season. The celebrations of the first of May are generally associated with the coming of spring where traditional stories and songs, as well as observations of folk rituals, are given space by Clare. Moreover, May celebrations include going to nature, garlanding, gathering of wildflowers and green branches, camp fire, crowning of a May king and queen and placement of a decorated May tree in the midst of which people dancing. The poet also has another poem about the same issue in another collection, titled "May Day." Clare is interested in reviving memories

from his childhood and youth in the pre-enclosure of Helpstone. The significance of place in his writing is an unquestionable. Indeed, the representations of individual rural regions may also include representations of the city, the nation, and the rest of the civilized world (Timbs 61).

Like most of Clare's seasons poems "The First of May," starts in the spring and ends with an allusion to winter. It has forty lines. Clare paints with words a beautiful rural landscape of a 'green' plain, flowers, clear 'skies,' shining 'sun,' and an implied reference to the sound of a 'lark' welcoming the sweet season. All of the elements of nature are integrated to meet the standards of ecopoetry; 'wilderness' and 'pastoral' concepts:

> Fair blooms the rose upon the green
> Pretending to excel
> But who another rose has seen
> A different tale can tell
> The morning smiles the larks begun
> To welcome in the May
> Be cloudless skies! look out bright sun!
> And haste my love away.(1-8)

The second stanza contrasts with the first, in which the interdependence concept between man and animal is missing. The 'shepherdess' is late and careless, and the wailing of the 'lambs' persists. Yet, the lark in the previous stanza and the 'lambs' in this stanza are all under mutual protection:

> Though graceful round the maidens move
> That join the rural ball

Soon shall they own my absent love
The rival of them all
Go wake your shepherdess, ye lambs
And murmur her delay
Chide her neglect ye hoarser dams
And call my love away.(9-16)

The humans in the following stanza are humiliated while 'birds' and the 'lark' are singing in a cheerful mood; the sound here is explicit 'sing.' Clare promotes nature and its creatures over the 'maids' who are 'slighted,' 'despair'd and sigh'd.' In his ecopoetry, the poet constantly posits the idea that man is either outside of the ideal image of nature or distorts it:

While slighted maids despaird and sighd
Youd court th' unequalld fair
Dry up ye dews! nor threatning hing
To soil her best array
Ye birds! with double vigour sing
And urge my love away
Welcome sun! the dews are fled
The lark has raisd his song.(19-26)

As much as Clare embraces the idealistic picture of nature, he does not ignore the biological end of every living thing, which is demise, putrefaction and decomposition. Eventually, this decay is a transitional phase to the advent of another season, which is winter 'showers may come.' The poet transitions from the perfection of spring to the realism of winter to show that his poetry is not intended to sing about the aesthetics of nature around him, as critics tend

to categorize him as a 'descriptive nature poet.' However, there is a profound ecological message that acquires a bigger and deeper meaning by evaluating minute details in its surroundings:

> As flowrets fade the pleasures bloom
> All hastening to decay
> The day steals on and showers may come
> This instant haste away.(29-32)

The poem also bears autobiographical side as the final four lines are addressed to his future bride, Martha Turner or 'Patty.' Clare married Martha on 16 March 1820. The marriage happened before the publishing of *Pomes Descriptive* which was in June. The volume relates other poems to Martha like "Patty of the Vale" in the same division of "The First of May" that matches the last line of the latter. Undoubtedly, the crisis of the two wives (his imaginary wife (Mary) and real wife (Martha)) did not exist until now. As for the vale, here, is a Walkherd lodge in Rutland in the English East Midlands where he met Martha for the first time:

> No ladies tread our humble green
> Ah! welcome wonders hail
> I witness your mistaken queen
> Is Patty of the Vale.(37-40)

Ultimately, the 'territoriality' concept sheds a veil over the poem. Clare honors the place and time in their better forms; the natural beauty of a springtime day in the countryside. As in any ecological writing, Clare highlights the significance of nature and place; May, colors, flowers, lambs,

birds, skies, and sun. He is known for emphasizing his affinity to the local environment, especially Helpstone. All of this is made possible by his compassion of feeling, clarity of language and sentiment. Not to mention that nature and women are two halves of the same coin, requiring equal amounts of attention and care to be pure together.

2. 3. Gypsies as a Model of Man in Nature

One of his significant poems is his sonnet in the last division of this volume, which is called "The Gipsies' Evening Blaze." John Clare is a nineteenth-century writer who was well recognized for chronicling gypsy cultures. In her book *Gypsies & the British Imagination, 1807–1930*, Deborah Epstein Nord (Professor of Victorian literature and culture) provides a brief overview of Clare and his relationship with the gypsies. She states that in many of his poems, John Clare utilizes gypsies as icons of both liberty and safety. They appear to him to live free of societal constraints and safe from potential attacks. Explicitly, gypsies have much with common with pastoral figures to Clare. For him, gypsies are loved and celebrated figures duo to their truly isolated state of being (10). They are also objects of empathy and identification. Clare is motivated by the gypsy on a political and a psychological level, and the two are closely intertwined with nature. Gypsies are often seen as relevant to historical, political, and psychological changes which are frequently closely related to Clare's sociopolitical sympathies as well as his competence to see all the Gypsies as both real and literary beings. (48,72). The governments control the moving and the staying of the gypsies on their lands through enacting laws which restrict their residence. So, the gypsies subjugate to the law and the political state of any nation.

The sonnet is dated 1809 and it subscribes to Clare's initial encounter with the sonnet form. Clare, as a big fan of gypsies, passed days and nights with them sharing their habits. As an instance, he learned how to play the fiddle acoustically from them. So, it is not unexpected that he writes poems about them. Clare's words in his book *John Clare's Autobiographical Writings*, sums up his relationship with them: "I usd to spend my sundays and summer evenings among them learning to play the fiddle in their manner by the ear and joining in their pastimes of jumping dancing and other amusements"(69).

However, gypsies are not only a source of a muse for Clare; as they played a role in the latter part of his life, namely, in his most fragile condition. It is recounted that in 1841 Clare later fled from the asylum to return home powerless, then a gypsy kid appeared in his way to offer companionship and a guide along the way (Clare, *Autobiographical* 153).

Perfectly and plainly, the peasant poet in the first quatrain of "The Gipsies' Evening Blaze," confesses his obvious and disclosed admiration for the gypsies camping that he sees in front of him in a sheltered and 'warm' corner of the village 'green' at dusk. The poet's inclination and fondness for nature in all its forms and with its diverse aspects cannot be hidden even if it is in the form of wandering gypsies and complete darkness; 'evening's dusky hour.' Salman Dawood Alwasiti (a scholar in Leicester University) in his dissertation titled *The Poetry of John Clare: A Critical Study* diagnoses the language of Clare in this sonnet. The scholar says that Clare occasionally confronts his illiterate rank to prove his culture and expertise, as he borrows literary expressions such as 'wildly pleasing,' 'some warm nook,' and the

purple-winged god 'Boreas' as a reference to the north wind, which indicate his linguistic and literary competence to use in the deification of nature (39):

> To me how wildly pleasing is that scene
> Which doth present in evenings dusky hour
> A group of Gipsies centred on the green
> In some warm nook where Boreas has no powr.(1-4)

In the second quatrain, the scene turns over there, 'wind,' 'short' grasses barely gnawed by 'sheep,' and lit but faint fire flame. At this stage, Clare is well aware of the negative side of the glamorous world as hunger, poverty, and devastation are forcibly present. This image has a hint of a rhetoric apocalypse concept, which relates to the fear of scarcity, lack of resources, and malnutrition. Yet, the interdependence concept between the 'bushes' and the hungry 'sheep,' reminds us of the generosity of nature in its driest scenes. In other words, despite the famine and the poor landscape, a source of food is still provided there under the name of cornucopia concept which states that the globe has enough substance and energy to feed the whole world's population:

> Where sudden starts the quivering blaze behind
> Short shrubby bushes nibbled by the sheep
> That mostly on these short sward pastures keep
> Now lost now seen now bending with the wind.(5-8)

In the last quatrain, Clare enters the scene and sets his gaze on 'the swarthy Sybil.' The gypsy is shown by him as an object of aspiration and sympathy, as well as a subject to change in the course of history. The life of gypsies is not simple. Though were part of the English landscape between

1783 and 1830, they were always considered a pitiful pastoral figures who were suffering from the wealthier classes and government indifference. Thus, 'Sybil' challenges the class solidarity of nature by 'forcing' the sole source of fire from the bushes to rekindle after being nearly extinguished:

> And now the swarthy Sybil kneels reclind
> With proggling stick she still renews the blaze
> Forcing bright sparks to twinkle from the flaze
> When this I view the all-attentive mind.(9-12)

In the couplet of the sonnet which sums Clare's emotional response to the sight. He proclaims his yearning to share the nomadic carefree lifestyles and he craves to be a part of this wonderful 'scene' of those wanderers in a frame of Romantic idyllic countryside picture: "Will oft exclaim (so strong the scene pervades)/"Grant me this life, thou spirit of the shades!" (13,4).

In this poem, the peasant poet, distinctly values the tribes of gypsies. He is looking at them as natural trespassers. Because they are part of nature, they have every right to trespass on it. It makes sense to say that the figure of the gypsy represents what the human model should be in nature under the concept of 'dwelling;' which bears a feeling of relatedness between people and the land. In addition, Clare's treatment of gypsies in his poems is a natural reflection of his purely humanistic attitudes in life. So, he is against the harsh anti-vagrancy legislation that was intended for them in the early nineteenth century.

2. 4. Religion through Lenses of Ecology

The next sonnet's discussion will shed light on Clare's unique understanding of religion and see how Clare wraps his religious views in a natural and/or ecological insight. Thence, it is not possible to say that John Clare was not a churchgoing Christian. In fact, he was not even baptized in the church since he got an emergency baptism, possibly at the family cottage, due to his sickness at birth. However, on March 16, 1820, he married Martha Turner at Great Casterton Church, and on May 25, 1864, he was buried at Helpston Church (Dixon 47). Clare's religious creed and practices may be traced back to a mix of seemingly orthodox and non-orthodox religious rituals, social awareness, personal spirituality, private schooling, extremely sophisticated thinking, and the interaction of these and other variables. His religious faith encompasses more than church and chapel considerably (Walker 2).

Clare recalls this fact in his book *The Letters* and how his first Bible reading was ‟tho I read it with the customary reverence instilled into my mind by my parents I read it with a lack of reflection & rather more for amusement then profit″ (516). In another occasion in the same book, he admits that ‟tho I am at heart a protestant, perhaps like many more I have been to church [more] often then I have been seriously inclined to recieve benefit or put its wholsome and reasonable admonitions into practice″ (414).

Importantly, in an excerpt from *A Descriptive Catalogue of the John Clare Collection in Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery:* by compilation editor Margaret Grainger of an 'Essay on Religion,' Clare writes about the strength of his beliefs on Christianity:

> Religion upon earth deserves the epithet of divine so well as the Christian; it has 'nothing to record but prayers for mercy;' 'its beautiful instruction was peace on earth & good will towards men;' … 'Religion properly defined is the grand aspiration to live well & die happy.(75)

Clare reimagines Christianity, his most recognizable faith, via the natural environment, such that church towers are transformed to trees and church bells summoning followers into the fields. Clare is, by no means, a pagan or a pantheist; he practices an ecological consciousness in which existence appears as an 'integrated fabric' of connection and caring (Batesons 200). The church hierarchy, a most repulsive notion for Clare, is filled with hypocrites. In this context, Clare criticizes the issues like oppression, tyranny, hypocrisy that he normally associates with religious characters (Walker 18).

Upon this argument, Clare describes how such 'weekly church goers' accuse him of 'forsaking' the 'church going bell' for 'the religion of the fields,' yet those exact bells have summoned him to a profound religious sense based on meditation over time (*By Himself* 78). In his book *A Champion for the Poor:* Clare asserts that "Religion is not only nessesary for the interests of the individual but useful for the better order & government of the community at large." Undoubtedly, he instills in his children the need of showing respect to clergymen: "Look upon the Clergy with reverence for they are Gods servants" (290,8). These quotes prove his affection for the Prayer Book and the Bible, but also suggest that his interaction with Scripture is complicated (Walker 113). Yet, in the book *By Himself*, Clare contradicts himself by saying: "I have often absentet my self the whole Sunday at this time nor coud the chiming bells draw me from my hiding place to go to church, tho at night I was sure to

pay for my abscence from it by a strong snubbing,″ or he brags: ‟On sundays I usd to feel a pleasure to hide in the woods instead of going to church″(7,73).

By browsing through his writings, one may examine this religious topic in the published *Poems Descriptive* up to Clare's last poem. The sonnets "what is life", "The Setting Sun," "Christian Faith," "The Moon," and "To Religion" bear witness to the purely religious aspect in his early poetry (Dixon 48). Ultimately, Edmund Blunden mentions a phrase from Clare's *Sketches* (1931), that was written by Clare for Dr. Nesbitt at Northampton: ‟Where flowers are, God is, and I am free.″ Seemingly, Dr. Nesbitt is already rebuked for limiting Clare to the Asylum grounds to enforce tougher discipline on him (41). In many forms, Clare's involvement with faith is crucial in his development as a poet (Walker 4). In his book *The Prose of John Clare* there is a prose phrase that expresses the relationship between religion and ecology both in his prose and even before his poetry: "we heard the bells chime but the fields was our church" (12).

"The Setting Sun" (in the last division of this volume) seems to be a good example of Clare's comingling of religion and ecology. First and foremost, Clare associates the sun with a variety of sensations. Gregory Dixon Crossan (scholar at the University of Canterbury) in his dissertation (1975) elucidates the imagery of the sun in Clare's poetry. Crossan finds the sun in Clare's poems are more than just a faraway source of heat and light; tarnishing the planet with its own complexion. Thereby, Clare's references to the sun are mostly positive in that they praise the fondness for its energizing warmth and brightness along with its enormous power. Naturally, Clare embraces the sun as a metaphor or presence of optimism, joy, love and rebirth, as well as a symbol of his feelings that accompany man's relationship with God. In the

view of ecology, nature emphasizes and affects the relationship between man and God. The scholar regards the sun as the 'king-image' in Clare's poetry (149-52).

The beginning of the sonnet is a very ordinary and repetitious manner where the natural sight 'Sun sweet setting' in front of the speaker fascinates him. However, this fascination must lead to something. The premise of the first lines is to draw attention to the beauty, function, and straight course of the sun 'far hills behind.' Clare realizes that he must admire its brilliance and sparkling beams. Logically, the reason that the word 'Sun' starts with a capital letter suggests that it refers to something more than the cosmic sun. It is conceivable what is addressed or adored here is Christ or religion in general. So, to affirm this possibility, he hires explicit pronouns in the fourth and fifth lines; 'his' and 'him.' In this manner, the religious poet alludes to the truth that the Christian religion, through its regular missions, goes all over the world. However, even with all of the beauty shown in the first stanza, there is still offered a sense of ephemerality; 'swift slides.' The sonnet here pinpoints the idea of transiency as an inevitable aspect of nature. In effect, the natural decline, as unavoidable process, conflicts with ecological aesthetic point of view, but rather as a component that completes the overall image. In reality, the sonnet is offering in its full a genuine image of rural life (pastoral concept) and scenes that the author is most familiar with them:

> This scene how beauteous to a musing mind
> That now swift slides from my enchanting view
> The Sun sweet setting yon far hills behind
> In other worlds his visits to renew
> What spangled glories all around him shine
> What nameless colours cloudless and serene.(1-6)

As immediately as the sestet starts, the sonneteer grants the sun a higher mission and exploits it as an equivalent object to handle his religious concerns. Clare ties the natural phenomenon of the setting 'sun' to the notion of a 'Christian's' death. In doing so, the parallel between them is established and the subtleties of their relationship are outlined. Candidly speaking, the high value of the sun among the agricultural farmers, and their entire reliance on it, even in telling the time, is what inspired Clare to such a comparison in this sonnet. The Christian's sunset varies from the cosmic sunset. The Christian, in his death, is the 'brightest' and surrounds by 'glories.' At this point of time, the poet elevates the 'decline,' assuring that decay (decomposition concept) is a positive thing when it is related to nature. Similarly, death here does not cause 'fears' or provokes any disturbance in the soul. It is a 'heavenly' death in which the soul is raised to its Creator, rather than to dust, annihilation, and worms. Nonetheless, the vividly religious content of the sestet is revealed through words such as 'heav'nly' and 'forgiven,' but nature is still there in the forms of 'sun,' clouds, and mist. This proves the harmony in Clare's poetry with respect to his diverse themes and images:

(A heavnly prospect brightest in decline)
Attend his exit from this lovely scene
So sets the Christians sun in glories clear
So shines his soul at his departure here
No clouding doubts, nor misty fears arise
To dim Hope's golden rays of being forgiven.(7-12)

In the couplet of the sonnet, the analogy between the sunset and the Christian soul's ascension to paradise after death is distinctly apparent. The

mixing of natural elements and religious elements creates a kind of harmony in Clare's ecological surroundings. In Clare's mind, nature, poetry, and God or religion are all intimately interlinked. More specifically, nature in all its phenomena is in tune with the poet's beliefs. God is active in nature, and He may also be heard through it. Clare emphatically states that he met God in nature, not in places of worship or among their priests. As a result, it is not unusual that he combines theology (nature of God) with the nature of the world (ecology). Thus, in line thirteen, 'the clearest skies' refer to the peace of mind and heart that the believer feels after death. Because religion offers a 'safe' sense and a sureness to him, he will be taken to a better place than this one on earth. Clare's intimate bond with both suns unmasks his profound connection with the all-powerful Creator who made the ecosystem he always defends. One can only deduce that the theory goes until the penultimate line. The 'clearest skies' embrace the believer's 'sweet' sunset, implying that there is no separation between religion and ecology. In reality, in his poetic lines specifically, these are the two most forceful coincided themes: "His Sun, sweet setting in the clearest skies/In safe assurance wings the soul to heaven" (13,4).

The essential traits of this sonnet can be summed up as follows: natural observation, sensitivity of feeling, and descriptive fidelity combined with an acutely moral and religious attitude. Regularly, all of these take place in the shadows of the presence of nature through the 'king-image' of the Sun.

CHAPTER THREE

JOHN CLARE'S MIDDLE POETRY: THE LOCAL OF ECOSYSTEM

Clare's mid-poetry (1824 to 1836) stands as a cultural sign of the early nineteenth-century commons confiscation and limitation of common rights. Clare's 'enclosure elegies,' as they are known, record the most public kinds of farmland dispossession. On the whole, the situation in the countryside was changing at that time due to a series of violations, which are characterized by the following: the removal of old trees, reduction of pasture gaps between fields, erected offenses and putting no-trespassing markers (Castellano 157).

Remarkably, this mid-period was eminent for its division into five volumes. They were not gathered and printed together until very late in the nineties of the past century and this is credit to Eric Robinson and David Powell. In a rapid review, the titles of the first three volumes are listed respectively: *The Shepherd's Calendar; with Village Stories and Other Poems* (1996), *Poems in Order of Manuscript* (1996) and *The Midsummer Cushion* (1998). While *The Midsummer Cushion (Continued), Poems in Other Manuscripts, Peterborough Manuscript A40, Northampton Manuscript 18, and Miscellaneous Manuscript 196* are engraved on the cover of the fourth book (1998). The fifth and final one is *The Northborough Sonnets* (2003). All these books are together titled *John Clare: Poems of the Middle Period, 1822-1837* (Banton iv). Nonetheless, two separate volumes appeared during Clare's day under similar titles of those five contemporary books.

3. 1. *The Shepherd's Calendar*: "January:" Outside and Inside Cottage

During Clare's day, a book titled *The Shepherd's Calendar* published in the (Spring, 1827). But before that date, Clare was hard at work preparing the publication of this book for approximately four years (Alwasiti 94). The book had another title that was suggested by Clare; 'The Wilderness' or 'Pastorals Summer Walks & Sonnets.' However, as it is usual, the publishers' opinion prevailed, and Clare consented. *The Shepherd's Calendar* was the title given by Taylor and Hessey. This book is divided into three sections: the first section with fourteen poems under the title 'The Shepherd's Calendar,' the second section –that is titled as 'The Village Stories'– comprises three lengthy tales and a pastoral debate. The central topic of these stories is love in its forms. In addition, nine poems are incorporated in the third section about different themes which are related to nature and man (Alwasiti 120-3).

Eric Robinson in his preface to *The Shepherd's Calendar* in the second edition (1993), gives a brief overview about: it will interest anybody who knows nothing about the British nature of rural life. The editor explains that in the nineteenth century, this genre has appeared like common literature to the normative reader. However, it also symbolizes the nostalgia experienced in a country when agriculture began to lose its dominance in comparison with industry and commerce (x). Robinson then goes on to comment on the book's contents, saying: it is an almanac of some sort. Plowing in February, calving in March, pruning in May, hay gathering in June, and so forth are examples of activities carried out in agriculture throughout the year. Moreover, it focuses on the flowers, birds, and animals that may be found in a hidey-hole. May Day sports, sheep-shearing meals, Harvest Day, and Christmas are among the

festivities commemorated. In general, it lists all of the main dates that must be observed during the farmers' year and the accuracy of depiction months in vivid details (ix, viii). The editor finishes his presentation by saying this: "I recommended *The Shepherd's Calendar* to you, not only as the best almanac ever created, but as the truest poem of English country life ever written" (xviii).

Regarding this book, there is still an essential piece of information that has to be shared. One might wonder why there are fourteen poems in the first section rather than twelve poems to correspond to all the months of the year?. The reply also may be found in the same preface. First, there are two poems with distinct subtitles concerning the first month of the year, Second, Taylor compelled Clare to rewrite the July poem and place it at the bottom of the collection; July (second version). As a result, the number becomes fourteen, rather than twelve. So this was Taylor's tendency for constant interference, which was compared in the introduction to the enclosure law; it violated local customs. In this respect, Robinson conveys Clare's justification: Taylor represented the authoritarian classes that had to be pleased (xi, xii).

The two poems of "January," in *Shepherd's Calendar* book, have two different subtitles: "A Winters Tale" and "A Cottage Evening." As the former contains two hundred and twenty-five lines and it is only integrated with the following "A Cottage Evening," which has 320 verses, it is necessary to take excerpts from both poems and treat them as one long poem. The first represents a winter day in a cruelest month, while the second shows an evening in a hut in the same season.

Over centuries, the shepherd remains the most prevalent pastoral figure. Clare composes thirty-six sonnets on him, or what he alludes to, either implicitly or explicitly, such as the references of his dog in six sonnets (Pyott 74). Typical of Clare's poetry which is based on a pastoral vision, the shepherd figure brings into prominence as the major character of such a view. Occasionally, the shepherd is neither a symbol nor an allegory of the Christ as in "January." However, the shepherd represents only himself; he is only a sheep keeper in the literal sense (Marinelli 4). The 'shepherd' appears five times in the two poems on different occasions. The first reference, in the first poem, is the shepherd's physical appearance and condition in the cold weather, while the second reference concerns the accompanying with the 'dog' who seeks for the preservation of the shepherd from the high 'wind.' The third time, the poet sheds light on the shepherd and his dog on their way home:

> 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
> …
> And paces thro the snow together.(A Winters Tale 49-52,4)

Actually, the shepherd may serve as a link between man and nature. He is the key for humans to appreciate nature as well as pinpoint the sins did against it and its creatures. The dog, for example, is frequently there with the shepherd and thus its escorting is bound to the master's behavior and level of affection toward him. Clare utilizes the shepherd's figure as a motif or substance to show the interaction with the environment and this is the core of ecocriticism. This engagement with nature can be seen in the most harshest moments such

as freezing and violent winds. While a gentle sort of man's dealing with environment can be examined in his companionship of a dog or a horse later:

The shepherd seeks his cottage warm
And tucks his hock beneath his arm
And weary in the cold to roam
Scenting the track that leadeth home
His dog wi swifter pace proceed
And barks to urge his masters speed
Then turns and looks him in the face
And trots before wi mending pace
Till out of whistle from the swain
He sits him down and barks again
Anxious to greet the opend door
And meet the cottage fire once more.(A Winters Tale 181,92)

The fourth appearance of the shepherd in "A Cottage Evening" is picturized as coming home from work inside the hut with his children. Contrary to the outer reality, these verses are full of comfort, warmth, and merriment within the home. Nature is a source of joy that provides him with delight via the 'sloe boughs' sip. By all means, in any scenario, happy or sad, man and nature are nearly inseparable:

The shepherd from labour free
Dances his children on his knee
Or toasting sloe boughs sputtering ripe
Or smoking glad his puthering pipe.(3-6)

Then, the fifth mentioning of the shepherd is at the pub. The latter is another interior location where the 'farmer shepherd' ponder and contemplate his situation amidst stormy thoughts concerning master's 'woods,' master's 'sheep,' and his 'horse:'

A farmers shepherd oer his glass
Forgot that he had woods to pass
And having sold his masters sheep
Who overtook by darkness deep
Had been to sell his masters sheep
Till coming wi his startld horse.(89-94)

The canopy concept is prevalent in "A Winters Tale" through the cottage abundantly, serving as a source of shelter and safety for the shepherd and other domesticated animals; including insects and mammals. Due to the chilly weather, the shepherd seeks for warmth inside his hut, which has a fire place. This shepherd-hut interaction is a practical application of the concept of dwelling as the shelter, privacy and security are all purposes of this idea. Aside from providing shelter, the house also offers food, since the grass of the cottage serves a good feast for the birds:

The ickles from the cottage eaves
…
As cottage chimneys sooty nook
…
The shepherd seeks his cottage warm
…
And meet the cottage fire once more.(163,72,81,92)

Furthermore, the cottage is even plainly stated in the title of the second poem; "A Cottage Evening." In the fields, every part of the cabin is valuable for example its walls proffer comfort in the night for all, including shepherds and other beings whether in and out of it; 'sparrow' finds 'rest' at 'eaves.' Another advantage of the 'walls' is that they are used to hang necessities, such as household utensils, hunting tools, and other stuff. Inside the hut is a 'farm' that enables holes for animals to hide and dwell in:

> And things wi out the cottage walls
> Meet comfort as the evening falls
> …
> The sparrow too their daily guest
> Is in the cottage eaves at rest
> …
> Searching thro the cottage walls
> Then quaking from the cottage fire
> …
> In cottage small and larger farm
> …
> Round poles the height of cottage eaves.(19,20,37,8,66,7,135,302)

The two-part of the poem "January" is characterized by complete and scattered poetic imagery of diverse species, both domestic and wild, in open fields and within the cottage. These images depict the routine life of every creature in minute detail, even their sufferings at times, in a smooth, attractive and skillfully drawn manner. All with a keen observation that the poet, the owner of the micro eye, is familiar with. Sometimes, poetic imagery may be unfinished with successive lines, but they are completed afterward.

In the second passage, Matthew Smith in his thesis, *The Representation of Popular Culture in the Work of John Clare 1815-1827* (2000) diagnoses Clare's creative style. The latter is marked by two dialect keywords that he chooses to depict the activity of the bird and the animal: 'Glegs' (= quick) for robin and 'sliveth' (= live) for the cat. Actually, one can find this scene is buzzing with activity (200):

> The robin that wi nimble eye
> Glegs round a danger to espy
> Now pops from out the opend door
> From crumbs half left upon the floor
> Nor wips his bill on perching chair
> Nor stays to clean a feather there
> Scard at the cat that sliveth in.(193-9)

Clare's poetic images also include humans. The women, not the shepherd or the thresher, are highlighted in sporadic beautiful pictures within the hut in "A Cottage Evening." In general, home is treated and evaluated as a kingdom of tranquility and pleasure by Clare. So, the queen of this domain (hut) is the shepherd's wife who has a significant influence inside, especially with their kids. She is portrayed as 'busy' all 'day' and 'night:'

> The hus wife busy night and day
> Clearth the supper things away
> …
> Tongues bright wi hus wifes rubbing toil
> Whod sooner burn her hands then soil.(45,6,53,4)

After the meal is over, the mother narrates traditional stories of horror, the magic of spirits and fairies, exorcisms and bewitching to her children in a frame of a lovely and congenial homely environment. These stories mimic folktales that Clare collected throughout the course of his life as pieces for his fiddle or material for his poems. The roots of these bedtime 'tales' may be traced back to Clare's efforts to maintain its heritage and culture in numerous ways: his melancholy stems from the loss of storytelling traditions. In this connection, Robinson in his preface of *The Shepherd's Calendar* states: "Clare thought of himself as belonging to a tradition of English pastoral" (xii):

Things cleared away then down she sits
And tells her tales by starts and fits
Not willing to lose time or toil
She knits or sews and talks the while
Something as may be warnings found
To the young listeners gaping round
Of boys who in her early day
Strolld to the meadow lake to play
…
And from her memory oft repeats
Witches dread powers and fairy feats.(73-80,110,1)

The housewife's role is not just focused on her husband and children, she engages with 'thieves' (mice) from the vermin of the earth, who are afraid of her looks. Ecologically, the symbiotic relationship is flourishing between the 'swarm' of ants and the food in a human's household:

To feast on what the cotter leaves

For mice ant reckond bigger thieves
They take away as well as
And still the hos wifes eye they cheat
Nothing to miss as other thieves
Alls left the same as she perceives
In spite of all the crowds that swarm.(128-134)

Lastly, the mother may occasionally recite her stories in the lap of nature. However, to make suspense, she may keep the narrative going till the following night, or the youngsters may fall asleep before hearing the whole of it. "She then her half told tales will leave/To finish on tomorrows eve" (216,7).

A further dimension is shown in a another personage within this successive poetic imagery evoked by the image of a 'schoolboy' on a snowy day in "A Winters Tale." Clare has examined the interaction between man and nature through the student's image, which exhibits activities that the boy performs during extreme cold. "The schoolboy still, with dithering joys/Pastime in leisure hours employs" (101,2).

In Clare's work, man's actions in nature are regularly compared to or contrasted with creatures; the tamed animal world coexists with the reckless man. In other words, schoolboys are pictured frightening the moorhens and the snipe from her hiding. In terms of ecology, man is a major offender of nature. Men are depicted by the poet as 'foes' to moorhens, who are battling to get away 'and scarly flies more fast:'

The moor hen too wi fear opprest
Starts from her reedy shelterd nest

Bustling to get from foes away
And scarly flies more fast then they.(128-31)

Clare's vast knowledge of bird is not concealed from anyone. He is familiar with all their sorts and names, and can easily recognize between them. In "Winters Tale," he details in a poetic image three different kinds of ravens with various names; rook, crow, and jackdaw. Their unsteady flight, as the poet may allude to, is well known that almost all beings are out of the usual under extreme cold, as seen by the odd behavior of birds who 'fly too and fro' by 'flopping on heavy wings.' Here, the telescope of Clare is focused on the relationship between nature and organisms. Nature is the key theme in this volume undisputedly:

And many a mingled swarthy crowd
Rook crow and jackdaw noising loud
Fly too and fro to dreary fen
Dull Winters weary flight agen
Flopping on heavy wings away
As soon as morning wakens grey
And when the sun sets round and red
Returns to naked woods to bed.(149-56)

The successive poetic images end with the character of the 'hedger' which is the final poetic imagery in "A Winters Tale." The first line in the depiction of this hedger is shocking to the fact that the 'coat' made of animal skin and this can be interpreted as a direct rebuke from the poet, who is a strong proponent of animal rights. Actually, nature and man have always been in a

partnership that the 'snow,' along the Hedger's way to his hut, nocking his 'shoes' serves as Clare's signal in which they are inseparable:

The hedger now in leather coat
From land wilds and fields remote
After a journey far and slow
Knocks from his shoes the caking snow.(209-12)

As time passes, the day is nearly done, and he is returning home with a bundle of 'faggot' to light the 'fire' in the cottage. Nature, once again, is a source of comfort for him. 'The hazel bands' are then 'cut' by using a natural tool also:

And opes the welcome creaking door
Throwing his faggot on the floor
And at his listning wifes desire
To eke afresh the blazing fire
Wi sharp bill cuts the hazel bands.(213-7)

After all, the homely image in the rural house is completed with a 'blazing fire,' the smell of dinner, a boiling pot of 'tea,' and in the middle of this ambience, the hedger gleefully recounts his day:

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 thinking cups are set for tea.(218-24)

Clare eventually concludes "A Winters Day" tragically and sad to say: "Thus doth the winters dreary day/From morn to evening wear away" (225-6).

This narrative of the whole poem is a profoundly intimate perspective of what it entails in terms of difficulties and a personal battle against nature. Tomorrow is the beginning of another frigid day with its associated hardship. All these depicted images are intended to represent nature in its diverse forms. While "A Cottage Evening" completes the day cycle, offering a new angle on the very same season, contrastingly, "A Winters Day," is typified by the warmth of the hut, the merriment of the children, and the mother's narrating of horror tales, among other things.

3. 2. The Manuscripts: 'Enclosure Elegies'

To tackle the next transitional stage in Clare's life and poetic career, it requires studying his manuscripts even if they were not published in a single volume or collection but distributed among his books released throughout his lifetime. As the name broadcast it, these poems were in handwritten form rather than printed form, which made them unique. Precisely, they were spanning the years 1823-1832. Bridget Keegan in her review of the second volume *Poems in Order of Manuscript* (1996), mentions that the editors named this medieval period's volume, which includes numerous poems created around the same period of *The Shepherd's Calendar*. Parts and pieces from manuscripts were later altered and rewritten for use in other poems. As a

consequence, they comprises in-process works as well as epigrams or brief imagistic elements that predict futuristic aesthetics. Clare's misspellings and acronyms are included in the poems, as true to his style, they indicate his tendency of ignoring conventional punctuation marks and capitalization.

Arguing that it was his editor's responsibility to handle this deficiency. Thus, supplementary information was given by the editors, on the pages, in the handy footnotes and glossary after each volume. Keegan clarifies that Robinson's honesty can be seen in his removing the authorial interference of Taylor (and other editors) from Clare's poetry (272). Aside from the manuscripts, 'the enclosure elegies' are another factor that distinguishes those scattered manuscripts where Clare started a rhetorical war against the law of enclosure in a series of successive poems.

Historically speaking, during the French Wars, the aristocracy had completed the last and most violent episode of enclosures by stealing the commons. The severe outcomes of the enclosure had turned the poor into outsiders in their land (Thompson 159). So, the disappearance of common land (natural landscape) had provoked a striking reaction in Clare. His sense of isolation and dislocation was heightened by his relocation from his previous residence (Helpstone), even though he moved three miles away only (Northborough) (Casaliggi and Fermanis 145). In this regard, some of the poems' lines became the headings of many articles, and some of its words grow into quoted examples, especially of his masterpiece "The Mores" like: 'lawless laws' and "Its only bondage was the circling sky" (Line10). John Goodridge in his book *John Clare and Community* (2013) frames this poem by saying that Clare obviously applies all rhetorical skills in this beautifully constructed poem, establishing his local fears about enclosure, transgression

and widening the conversation to the broader themes of human rights, possession, and authority (125). Clare has written "The Mores" at the beginning of the 1831s, which is composed of eighty lines. Since Clare's principal focus is the moors' common lands, several American poets believe the title should be the moors. However, for reasons that will be shown later, some editors refer to it as 'the enclosure.' This case is vividly shown up in the opening lines of the poem, as the poet recalls well about scenery before the enclosure. The open moor stands in contrast to the constructions of enclosure and thus it is inherently connected to the poor's liberty.

The moors had 'never felt the rage of a blundering plough' before; 'plains that stretched them far away.' Close reading suggests that Clare in this poem makes an advantageous use of the verbs in the past tense to refer to the past in the pre-enclosure period like: 'felt,' 'wreathed,' 'stretched,' 'ruled,' 'crept' and 'seemed.' He remembers the openness of the plains where the 'uncheckt shadows of green' and 'unbounded freedom ruled the wandering' landscape with regret. Indeed, Clare expresses the comfort and mobility with which all of the natural residents of the moorlands_ 'plains,' 'sky,' 'bush,' 'tree,' 'mist,' and 'orisons' (= horizon)_ interact amusingly in the lap of nature:

Far spread the moorey ground a level scene
Bespread with rush and one eternal green
That never felt the rage of blundering plough
Though centurys wreathed springs blossoms on its brow
Still meeting plains that stretched them far away
In uncheckt shadows of green brown and grey
Unbounded freedom ruled the wandering scene
Nor fence of ownership crept in between

…

Its only bondage was the circling sky
One mighty flat undwarfed by bush and tree
Spread its faint shadow of immensity

…

In the blue mist the orisons edge surrounds.(1-8,10-2,4)

Then the nostalgic tone is intensified by the most influential word in this context which is 'unbounded.' Given that nothing in nature is under our control, the poet wants to stress the meaning of bounded, other than unbounded. He can use another word, but he employs the antithesis to give an immense impression of man's ambition to rule over nature. Clare keeps reminiscing, saying, where there is 'nor fence of ownership,' and semantically, Clare uses the unusual verb creep to serve as a reference to the serpent whose personified Satan who 'crept' into the Garden of Eden to whisper to Adam and Eve. Thus, the enclosure for Clare is inevitably a demon.

Clare returns to past tense in the subsequent lines, implying that he retrieves memories of 'sweet vision;' 'were,' 'felt,' 'went and came,' 'unfolded,' 'shout and felt,' 'heard,' 'won,' 'tracked,' 'met,' 'drank and roamed,' 'dribbled,' 'hid' and 'traced.' Thematically, freedom is of great concern for Clare, so, the exact words like 'free' and 'freedom' are repeated in this text to show how this unjust legislation restricts liberties by putting fences across the lands. Animals were once able to walk freely without being bothered, enjoying fun and drinking from the unfenced river. They are as free as birds, and all of this is within one of their rights, as they are part of nature, but the enclosure has taken away all of their rights anyway:

The sheep and cows were free to range as then
Where change might prompt nor felt the bonds of men
Cows went and came with evening morn and night
To the wild pasture as their common right
And sheep unfolded with the rising sun
Heard the swains shout and felt their freedom won
Tracked the red fallow field and heath and plain
Then met the brook and drank and roamed again
The brook that dribbled on as clear as glass
Beneath the roots they hid among the grass.(23-32)

To summarize the scene, the herd is free, the swains are happy, the shepherd is 'glad,' and 'the lark' is likewise unfettered and sings merrily: "While the glad shepherd traced their tracks along/Free as the lark and happy as her song" (33,4)

Then, to implement the vision of ecology, the protection idea is precisely applied between the animals and elements of nature when the 'sheep' seek safety among the 'grass.' Another concept is the horizontal stratification among the 'shepherd,' 'the sheep,' 'cows' and 'the swains,' while vertical stratification is likely to be observed between 'the lark' and all the other beings upon this moor.

The word now appears for the second time with its connotation as the poet says: 'but now' and 'now' depicting the current situation as a dismal one from his perspective. The 'moors' have disappeared, the plover is nowhere to be found and the lovely harmonious image of nature has perished. Still, the poet may be able to see the beauty of nature in his 'visions' only:

But now alls fled and flats of many a dye
That seemed to lengthen with the following eye
Moors loosing from the sight far smooth and blea
Where swopt the plover in its pleasure free
Are vanished now with commons wild and gay
As poets visions of lifes early day.(35-40)

The windmill of ideas occupies the perception of the present to describe the law of enclosure through 'fence now meets fence' in a magnificently pejorative way and thus makes the adjective 'little' seem diminutive; 'little bounds,' 'little parcels to please little minds,' 'little path,' and 'little flowers.' Man, animal, and plant all suffer under the shadow of enclosure law; 'imprisoned ill at ease.' The present-day nature is not the same as its past that the fences make a difference on the entire sight. To be accurate, Clare is vexed with how enclosure altered the environment and endangered the natural inhabitants of the land:

Fence now meets fence in owners little bounds
Of field and meadow large as garden grounds
In little parcels little minds to please
With men and flocks imprisoned ill at ease
Each little path that led its pleasant way
As sweet as morning leading night astray
Where little flowers bloomed round a varied host.(47-53)

The word 'little' is used once more to devalue the representations of unjust act again; 'little tyrant with his little sign.' It is worth mentioning that

the phrase 'little tyrant' is adopted from Gray's 'Elegy,' according to Merryn and Raymond Williams in *John Clare: Selected Poetry and Prose* (1986) (232). The tyrants put up a 'little sign' prohibiting open public entry to the 'mores' just like 'the rude philistines' divide the land for mercenary purposes or lust to acquire property and build barriers to bodily and mental freedom. Passionately, Clare condemns those in charge to be 'rude,' 'philistines,' tyrants, and as the poem progresses, the poet goes on to describe them 'vulgar:'

> These paths are stopt – the rude philistines thrall
> Is laid upon them and destroyed them all
> Each little tyrant with his little sign.(65-7)

Hence, Clare extends to criminalize this law and its consequences in several poems, and seeks to bring attention to the abuses of this law at every opportunity, which subsequently caused him a mental and psychological crisis.

Taking into account, "Ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies" (Glotfelty xviii). Besides, the destruction of the 'earth' is an outcome of human behavior such as environmental exploitation and colonization, the Earth concept in Clare's poetry 'glows no more divine.' This attitude owes to his unrestricted youth, which he spent in the unfettered countryside of Helpstone, free of economic and industrial barriers. Furthermore, the earth might be a replica of the lost Eden. Once more the enclosure is notified by the private owner's 'hated sign,' which instructs workmen (as any passersby) not to break the laws of their property. The disliked 'sign by vulgar taste' is hanging, the speaker complains, alluding to a sign that reads 'no road here,' restricting movement and public freedoms. Intentionally, Clare's uses punctuation here concerning what the sign bears, as

he wants to draw attention to the subject. In addition to limiting human freedom, other beings' freedom is restricted too. Clare speaks over enclosure with sarcasm as he argues that even all the birds must soon learn to understand or interpret the signs that are already posted, to stay within the fenced territory's boundaries and not outside. Birds are regarded as prisoners of those 'little minds' in the same way as the poor are. Also, it is possible that the phrase 'birds should learn' refers to children and their need to study, as Clare is one of the children who were deprived of access to education. Suspiciously, there is some dispute about line seventy-five whether the word 'scared' refers to poverty or freedom. Honestly, Clare's nightmare is that the enclosure has stolen the identities of the 'mores; 'birds and trees and flowers without a name:'

> Shows where man claims earth glows no more divine
> A board sticks up to notice 'no road here'
> And on the tree with ivy overhung
> The hated sign by vulgar taste is hung
> As tho the very birds should learn to know
> When they go there they must no further go
> This with the poor scared freedom bade good bye
> And much the[y] feel it in the smothered sigh
> And birds and trees and flowers without a name.(69-77)

The poem is concluded with a harsh realization. The poet makes it clear that the actual and imaginary enclosure of freedom has not benefited both the poor, who are deprived of their privileges, and the landowners who seek to profit from the project. In truth, all have suffered from losses of this landscape-altering process; 'all sighed.' As a result, the whole ecosystem is already confined and corrupted by civilization 'when lawless laws enclosure

came.' Again the ambiguity is repeated that no one knows who these 'dreams of plunder' people are:

> All sighed when lawless laws enclosure came
> And dreams of plunder in such rebel schemes
> Have found too truly that they were but dreams.(78-80)

In this poem, Clare draws photographs from his early childhood that seem to be clear of the enclosure to demonstrate the freedom he had as a youngster is inaccessible to modern humans. Thus, this parliament act conflicts with the notion of freedom and wildness that are overwhelmed his memory. Precisely, Clare's sociopolitical message is clear: enclosure and capitalist philosophy mean catastrophe for farm laborers and the rural poor. Subsequently, his ecological point is also understandable: the terrain has dramatically changed since he was a youngster. After all, Clare's profound personal resentment about 'lawless laws' and the elimination of common rights is reasonable that it should not be interpreted in sentimental terms and described only as a nostalgia for a past era. The matter is more complicated than that. It is worth looking into further.

3. 3. *The Rural Muse*: 'Poems' and 'Sonnets'

This middle phase also tops two chief titles: *The Midsummer Cushion* and *The Rural Muse*. As Clare's ambition to be remembered more than the peasant poet, the refined diction and conceptual announcement of *The Midsummer Cushion* poems set them apart. It is his first collection of self-selected verses (Weiner 385). In fact, Clare gathered his unpublished poems during the years 1823-1832 for inclusion in *The Midsummer Cushion*, as well

as any poetry regarded as poor, unfinished, or unpublishable. Though, most of it can be viewed as shabby, yet, it is to be noted for its rich value. The title page reads: 'The Midsummer Cushion, or Cottage Poems' (Peterborough 19,20). In a prefacing note of this book, Clare clarified the connotation of the title as:

> It is a very old custom among villagers in summer time to place a piece of green sward full of field flowers and place it as an ornament in their cottages, which ornaments are called Midsummer cushions … by so doing I consider these poems in the light of flowers that can even ornament a cottage by their presence —.(20)

Clare completed the manuscript for *The Midsummer Cushion* around 1833, but the volume was edited down by his close friend Mrs. Eliza Emmerson because she thought *The Midsummer Cushion* needed quite so much explanation (Sales 60). So the less impressive and readable collection was issued and released in July of 1835 as *The Rural Muse* after she coined the title (Helsinger 511) Actually, *The Midsummer Cushion* published in 1978 posthumously (Alwasiti 187).

First of all, *The Rural Muse* is Clare's final poetry collection that was collected and printed during his lifetime. It is composed of over eighty sonnets, autobiographical poems and more than forty ballads and songs. However, at this stage, the volume was arranged into only two sections: 'Poems' and 'Sonnets,' with a total of 159 pieces. Critically, there is no better constructive criticism of *The Rural Muse* than the author's presentation of it when the book was first released May 9th,1835, which reads:

> They are selected from a great many, written at different times and under very different feelings … They were written to please my own mind; but it will be a most grati fying addition to find that my old friends are as warm as usual, and waiting to cheer me with the welcome praises that encouraged me in the beginning, though ill health has almost rendered me incapable of doing any thing.(iii, iv)

The collection also receives the most notable praises from Ian Jack in his book *English Literature,1815-1832* (1963), who comments: ‟Instead of concentrating on his true vein description he seems here to be striving to show his capacity for variety and his competence in traditional poetic forms″ (136). Given that the sonnets are the most prominent feature of this book, Gillin in his dissertation *In That So Gentle Sky:*(1971), delves considerably in their analysis. Gillin also asserts that the sonnets of *The Rural Muse* have shown to be distinct fourteen-line poetic units of perfectly depicted of the natural environment. In fact, this distinctive quality can be ascribed to Clare's progressing poetic skills that enabled him to employ the sonnet type with the more dominating issues at his time. The sonnets of *The Rural Muse*, are contrasted with the conformity of the standard sonnet patterns (ii). In other words, Clare's depiction of nature in his earlier poems might be less objective as the verses are sometimes tainted by emotional contemplation and controlling ego, while Clare's slightly more mature poems are characterized by the separation between the depiction of natural surroundings and his inner self. Specifically, individuality and views are repressed or denied to express the most delicate perception. On top of that, the volume is esteemed of the excellently verses in comparison to Clare's earlier works, as well as it gains a relatively warm commendation provided by the scholars (139,48). The motif of nature is the major focus of the dissertation, Gillin continues, *The Rural*

Muse's sonnets blend colloquial language with a familiar tone to describe nature. His mind is drawn to nature that has not been sabotaged by man, thus in the mid of nature he feels liberated and full of life energies (183).

Clare's bond with nature, which is the subject of the following poem, is explored simply and effortlessly by Mohan R. Gouli in his article “Nature as Source of Inspiration and Peace for John Clare.” The latter has positioned himself as a nature poet, and his relation with nature is based on an understanding of the importance of the natural world to human well-being. The professor says when Clare capitulates himself to nature as he finds calmness and power. Thus, he ever since turns to nature that might gently endow him with solution and consolation in the most distressing moments of agony. Clare attempts to keep this cordial relationship with nature (99). So, particularly, the division of 'Poems' of *The Rural Muse,* "Nature's Hymn to the Deity" is our upcoming poem which is consisted of twenty-four lines (three stanzas). The poem seems to be shorter than its predecessors from this middle period, yet it has all of the meanings of ecopoetry. Precisely, all the constituents of nature are there, as if the poem were a catalog or map delineating the landscape as a whole: 'sun,' 'moon,' 'daylight,' 'darkness,' 'stars,' 'moonlight seas,' 'waves,' 'winds,' 'storms,' 'thunders,' 'earth,' 'air,' 'ocean,' 'sky,' 'insect,' 'bird,' 'tree,' and 'flower.' Nature even makes an appearance in the title of the poem. Furthermore, through the inception of the poem, Clare's enthusiasm or devotion for nature and defence of the natural world seems intelligible via his excessive praise of it; 'All Nature owns.' It is a declaration by the poet known as the poet of nature that nature has everything and there is no way to compete with her in that domain. Actually, the glorifying of nature marks this stage of his life and this specific volume as well. Accordingly, nature is capitalized to give the impression of its majesty. This poem is only

one of several verses that permeates *The Rural Muse* in which the poet desperately defends against any threat that could endanger the ecosystem as it would be explained in the progression of the subsequent lines. Fraser Watts, in chapter five of the book *The Psychology of Religion and Place,* indicates that these two first lines of the poem echo two verses of Psalm "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (New Revised Standard Version, 19.1)(86). This realization deepens Clare's interconnectedness and correlation between religion and ecology. "All Nature owns, with one accord/The great and universal Lord" (1,2).

Still, the veneration of nature is revealed within the initial capital letters that refer to the elements of nature; 'Sun,' 'Moon,' and 'Darkness' in the following lines with the same first stanza. Notably, God is presented two times explicitly and one time implicitly; 'him.' Actually, Clare epitomizes his uncommon understanding of religion in his statement 'God is there!' that he sees God through nature. As is well known, Clare spent his sweetest childhood in the lap of nature, hence, he wrote poetry in the wild field. He looks at nature with one eye and at God with the other. In a supportive statement, Clare says that as long as the sun shines, it calls hymns to the lord's lordship, and the waves of the sea extol His presence and recognition of His being; "God is with us!." In the middle of the stanza, the concept of anthropomorphism emerges in the shape of the smiling of the 'darkness,' as well as when it wears 'the stars.' Clare aims to give nature its full vitality by linking it to human attributes and activities, which in turn raise its status:

> The Sun proclaims him through the day
> The Moon when daylight drops away
> The very Darkness smiles to wear

The stars that show us God is there!
On moonlight seas soft gleams the sky
And "God is with us!" waves reply.(3-8)

Creatures of nature still emerge in the poem as 'witnesses' to the Creator's grandeur, however, this time in the shape of an 'insect,' a 'tree,' and a 'bird.' All in one tuneful voice repeating that ‘"God is with us."’ Upon this depiction, one might judge that for Clare, the non-humans believe in God surpasses the ungrateful man. This idea is the primary motivation for this poem. Clare is not a Christian; he was not even baptized, and he did not adhere to Sundays, as most sources claimed. Nonetheless, his instinct is pure; he believes in God and his existence, as manifested through scenes of nature and its inhabitants. Last but not least, in the penultimate line, perhaps the poet touches on the theory of Great Chain of Being by referring to it with the phrase 'first link in the mighty plan,' implying that everything we see is the work of the Almighty Creator. Then, the poem is concluded with the advent of 'man' in the scene to complete the divine chain of being, but with the assumption that nature, rather all nature, is superior to this man; 'all nature upbraids man.' As a custom, Clare assigns nature to a higher status than humans in all of his poetry. Since nature is innocent and non-destructive, she bestows her qualities on a man without expecting anything in return:

All Nature owns with one accord
The great and universal Lord
Insect and Bird and Tree and Flower
Are witnesses of every hour
Respondent to the common cry
For "God is with us!" these reply

The first link in the mighty plan
Is mute - All Nature upbraids Man.(17-24)

Reading the three stanzas clarifies perfectly the concept of stratification: there are eight vertical and four horizontal strata to explain the interrelatedness of all the entities in nature.

Finally, it may be stated that nature is not divine in itself. The existence of God and Nature is overlapped. The proof for this is that whenever nature is mentioned, the Lord is addressed as well. To Clare, nature has the potential to be equivalent to God. So, this poem might be an indirect message from Clare, asserting that religion, for him, is represented in the forming of nature and its creatures rather than in the walls of parishes. The poem elevates the grandeur of the natural world over religious and mundane formations. Nature, for Clare, is a provider of serenity and motivation. Such a believing in nature allows individuals to assess the value of nature to them or enhancing the great attachment that exists between nature and humans. The poet strives to create a tight relationship between humans and environment. He skillfully outlines settings that reflect how appropriate connections between humans and environment might be developed. Clearly, his eagerness to explore the wild and natural life reinforces his passion for the environment and ecological tendencies. Clare's robust call for connecting together man and nature without blatant preaching is seen in this poem. Man and nature solidify and dignify each other now and then.

The Rural Muse's sonnets can be considered a sequel to the second half of Clare's final volume *The Rural Muse*. Notably, the division of 'Sonnets' is conducted according to their distinctive form and themes as well. This

distinction among the sonnets is identified by commentators like Gillin, who excels at discussing more of these sonnets. He says that Clare's appreciable work is in the form of short poems. Clare's sonnets express his anxieties and reveal the level of his growth as a lyric poet. Gillin asserts that in the earliest ones, there may be a gap between the theme matter and the speaker's attitude. Here, at this stage, Clare manages control the topics and the shape of his sonnets wherein he perfectly reports observations of nature as contrasted to the regular standard forms. The poet keeps his emotions under control, thus nature is represented rationally and authentically. *The Rural Muse's* sonnets have rural sights and peaceful contemplations that are taken to produce in the shape of a sonnet (ii,152). It is important to mention that the responsibility of numbering the sonnets with Roman numerals has not yet identified if it was done by Clare or the editors, which has never happened before in any of his previous synthesizers, and this adds a further uniqueness to them. Another fascinating feature is that they might well be classified into four groups based on their titles and contents. Initially, the group of sonnets that are dedicated to a particular individual like "To Napoleon," "To the Memory of Bloomfield," "Lord Byron," "To Charles Lamb," and "Izaak Walton." The second can be referred to abstraction sonnets that comprises "Honesty," "Memory," "Antiquity," "Decay," and "Merit." Next and the third group is known as the sonnets of nature; "Beans in Blossom," "Evening Primrose," "The Crab-tree," and "The Flood." The last and the forth group is confined to sonnets that revolve around rustic life experiences; the most notable ones "The Milking Shed" and "Hay-making."

For the first time in this mid-poetry period, Clare brakes the conventional type of sonnet. The sonnets of this stage are not about love in the traditional sense. So, his sonnet "An Idle Hour" may be placed within the abstraction

group of sonnets since it connects nature with an intangible and invisible, yet conceptual idea, namely idleness. It is written in a flash of insight and revelation by the poet, exactly depicting what he sees in front of him, including Clare's sentiments and reflecting them back on his surroundings, which is known as the pathetic fallacy. Actually, the precise portrayal of the whole environment implies an idle mood. Still, the poet opens the octave of the poem with the word 'love,' which is the most fitting expression for defining his relationship with nature. In reality, Clare's relationship with his natural and environmental surroundings is infused with love, so he appreciates everything he sees. The peasant poet is the genuine inhabitant of nature's lap; thus, his upbringing in nature has an everlasting impact on him. Therefore, Clare starts describing the scene in the style of the pathetic fallacy. For example, he is joyful, from his own perspective, through the 'ripples' of 'flood' which are like 'happy' chatty 'travelers' on their journey, the 'sunshine dancing,' and 'the merry waves.' So, through these celebrating expressions, the poet accentuates the lovely parts about what he notices during his idleness. However, it seems that for Clare, the sceneries of nature cannot be perfect without the entrance of man or the projection of human qualities into them; 'Like happy travellers chatter.' Clearly, this lovely sketch of man's communion with nature is intended to signify two things. Firstly, nature and humanity are congenial to each other and of one origin. In consequence, the second thing points out that man, through his connection with nature, may attain perfection:

> Sauntering at ease I often love to lean
> O'er old bridge walls and mark the flood below
> Whose ripples through the weeds of oily green
> Like happy travellers chatter as they go
> And view the sunshine dancing on the arch

Time keeping to the merry waves beneath.(1-6)

In the sestet, the poet proceeds to impose his feelings on the setting: the image of the 'drooping blossoms' are 'right glad of mud-drops,' and then the water-flowers celebrate drinking. But somewhere between those two lovely pictures, the concept of cornucopia and the apocalypse are fulfilled in this second stanza that they are in contrast with each other. Flowers that have been dropped from their branches are in urgent need of water; 'some drooping blossoms parch thirsting for water.' This is a reference to the scarcity of water in the context of the apocalypse concept. Possibly, he further depicts how water flowers get their fair 'share' and 'more,' as a nod to the bounty of nature (cornucopia concept) and what she bestows on its inhabitants, human and non-human. Furthermore, more gloomy facets of the very same sight are presented; 'thirsting' of the flowers and 'plunging' of the 'cattle:'

While on the banks some drooping blossoms parch
Thirsting for water in the day's hot breath
Right glad of mud-drops splashed upon their leaves
By cattle plunging from the steepy brink
Each water-flower more than its share receives
And revels to its very cups in drink.(7-12)

In this regard, in his commentary on the couplet Gillin says that the content of the couplet of the earlier sonnets is irrelevant to that of its octave and sestet. In contrast to this sonnet, the same content persists in its octave, sestet and couplet. The presenter (Clare) explains both his natural observations as well as abstract thoughts or ideas. Actually, Clare keeps up to be objective in "An Idle Hour." Truly, there are no emotional impulses, and he shows

nature's neutrality and fairness (158). To bolster his view point, the last two lines conclude with a completely different setting in that he discusses humankind's world in which justice is lacking, as opposed to the natural world where each 'water-flower' 'receives' an equal and even richer portion of water. In fact, the individuals work harder for a little and nasty payoff or no benefit at all. On the other side, 'others' who lead evil get good and 'plenty' rewards. Thus, for the thousandth time, Clare prioritizes nature over man. Nature is a refuge place, solitary and convivial in his idle hour. Moreover, Clare is unwilling to let anything go without tying it firmly to his natural world: "So in the world, some strive, and fare but ill/While others riot, and have plenty still" (13-4).

3. 4. 'The Northborough Poems:' ''The Flitting''

In the same period, another form of poetry emerges, which is related to Clare's forced migration to a location different than his homeland of Helpstone. Clare produced poetry called Northborough poems after the place he moved to in May 1832. Those poems, however, were not published in one book; instead, they were dispersed throughout *The Rural Muse* collection, much like *The Manuscripts* poems before them. The Northborough period spans from 1832 to 1837. Lately, Eric Robinson and other editors compiled them in a separate volume called *The Northborough Sonnets* in 2005, eliminating those that appeared during Clare's lifetime. Some critics like John Barrell in his book *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840:*, remarks on Clare's moving: ‟At about the time of his removal to Northborough Clare wrote three remarkable poems, which between them reflect the ambiguous feelings towards the move … Clare's poetry was to change during the next few years at Northborough.″ Barrell also adds that ‟his

task is now to write about nature as abstract and not as a local; and as a result his poetry changes very considerably″ (174,7). In addition, Clare himself bewails the scenery in Northborough that it was not similar to Helpstone in a letter addressed his cousin John Taylor: ‟there is neither wood nor heath furze bush molehill or oak tree about it″ (*Letters, 1951* 258).

Whereas another critic such as Simon J. White in his article “John Clare's Sonnets and the Northborough Fens,” elucidates about Northborough poems; in that there is a lot within those ones that suggests Clare has new feelings of seclusion and estrangement from his local natural surrounds. But his emotions were rooted in Northborough's concrete reality. To put it another way, his relocation was in parallel in intense feeling of dissociation with this foreign and different environment (56). So, Clare's letter to Taylor accurately asserts that he began to experience the darkest days of his life and his pain is expressed in a trio poems "Remembrances," "Decay," and "The Flitting" that respond to the event of his departure there or before that a little while. As a result of his rapid deteriorating psychological state according to this forceful removal from hometown, he was confined later to sanatoriums till the end of his life, as will be covered in the last fourth chapter.

Concerning moving in to Northborough, which is only three miles from Helpstone, Maurice Hewlett in his article “Clare's Derivations” (1921), states that Clare was relocating ‟Out of a small and crowded cottage in a village street to a roomy, romantic farm-house standing in its own grounds″ by Lord Milton; Clare's well-to-do friend. Yet, he got stuck in Helpstone and had to be pulled out (275). So, Clare documents this painful experience of dislocation after being evacuated from Helpston in the spring of 1832 through "The Flitting," which is considered a rebellious nostalgia poem. The latter is one of

the lengthy three poems that recounts Clare's loss of place in Northborough for the first time in his life. It was written exactly in June 20th of 1832 as it appeared in *The Rural Muse.* The poem is arranged into twenty-seven stanzas, which amounts 216 verses. As to the title, every footnote of all sources explains exactly the word 'flitting' implies the meaning of (departing or moving house). However, "On Leaving the Cottage of My Birth" is the genuine illustrative title given to an incomplete version of "The Flitting" in *The Rural Muse*.

Remarkably, Clare's home at Helpstone was sketched at the beginning of the poem under the title, and that was the first time a picture was included in a set of his poetry collections from inside. When the reader gets through to the introductory line of the poem, he will find a brief articulation of agony by contemporary words that the reader will comprehend throughout the ages; 'Ive left my … Home.' Then, any meticulous reader senses a considerable quantity of elegance and pride about the past; 'my own old Home of Homes,' which refers to Clare's house in Helpstone. After that, the poet informs us that he misses nature scenes of 'green fields,' 'every pleasant' area, 'the blue-bells' roses and 'the hazels happy green.' But his nostalgia does not stop there, he also misses the 'eye' of love and the 'tongue of' goodness, so that there is no envy, 'malice,' and evil in his motherland; this is a harsh condemnation of mankind in Northborough. Generally, in this stanza the poet touches upon most essential issue in the poem, alienation, which will be repeated throughout the poem, each time sending a different message to the reader.

Clare is estranged in the new place that he unites himself with 'the summer like a stranger comes.' Hence, while the displaced poet and the summer are strangers now, and this is the first message. In addition, he is

incapable of identifying himself with the image of nature around him; 'hardly know her face.' As the stanza proceeds from the countryside to the city, it is impossible to miss the concept of pastoralism that pervades the passage. He portrays the countryside of Helpstone, in contrast to the new city, both geographically and socially:

> Ive left my own old Home of Homes
> Green fields and every pleasant place
> The Summer like a stranger comes
> I pause and hardly know her face
> I miss the hazels happy green
> The blue-bells quiet hanging blooms
> Where envys eye was never seen
> Where tongue of malice never comes.(1-8)

In the third stanza, the poet invokes sensory images in the reader like tactile (feel) and auditory poetic-imagery across loneliness feelings and music sound respectively; 'feel … alone,' 'find music,' 'I hear' (two times) and 'sweeter tune.' Clare does that to insight the reader to see, feel, and hear what is going on—and, may be to identify himself with the poet or his topic as in this situation. Ryan Haas, in his dissertation *Sound and Vision: sonic experience in Wordsworth, Blake, and Clare* (2016), traces Clare's poems for such sound effect: "through sound, Clare experiences the landscape in a more essential way than mere provision of its visual re-description. An active, creative presence in the landscape must do something other than reinscribe whatever meets its eye" (113).

For more demonstration, Barry Truax in his book *Acoustic Communication*, clarifies the relationship between sound and nature; "listening is the key issue in communication via sound because it is the primary interface between the individual and the environment" (xviii). Thus, that is the reason behind Clare emphasis on the sensation of estrangement by noting how known 'bird' sounds seem weird to him now. Outstandingly, this stanza contains three central words in the poem, which constitute the meaning and content; 'new,' 'strange' and 'alone.' The poet repeatedly reflects his sense of alienation in a variety of ways, and in this passage, through the message of making everything odd to him; 'all is strange and new.' In the sequence of the past and present, memories of the former collide with the latter. The past is recalled linguistically in the simple past of the verb 'sat,' 'old bench' and 'last June,' while represent the present by simple present tense 'sit,' 'hear,' and 'feel.' Furthermore, unlike the unfamiliar present, everything in the past is known to him by its proper names purposefully such as 'Royce-wood.' In a nutshell, Clare's literature attempts to maintain, revive, or reconstruct a past he has no longer contact to:

I sit me in my corner chair
That seems to feel itself alone
I hear bird-music here and there
From hawthorn-hedge and orchard come
I hear but all is strange and new
I sat on my old bench *last June*
The sailing puddocks shrill "pee-lew"
Oer Royce-wood seemed a sweeter tune.(17-24)

The central theme of the sixteenth stanza is 'friendship.' Clare reveals why he has bereaved since he lacks his former friends; 'pasture molehills,' 'glad sheep,' 'summer,' 'pleasant' places, 'every weed and blossom,' who are ready to get in touch with him in a way that most people could not. For Clare, this bereavement is framed by the criticism of humanity; therefore friends and friendship are found in nature not in community. In this context, Clare projects human attribute to the creatures and elements of nature as an instance mimicking the human greeting phrase "How do ye do:"

No--pasture molehills used to lie
And talk to me of sunny days
And then the glad sheep resting bye
All still in ruminating praise
Of summer and the pleasant place
And every weed and blossom too
Was looking upward in my face
With friendship welcome "how do ye do."(121-8)

The entirety of the twenty-fourth stanza seems to be based on Clare's repeating an echoing confession of his affection for nature, and this confession echoes loudly through all the following lines without exception; 'love for every simple weed,' and "I feel at times a love and joy/For every weed and every thing"(189,190). Following this straightforward declaration, Clare revives memories of his green past through the diction of 'feel' 'love and joy' for 'everything' that nature bestows to its inhabitants. In addition to, highlighting on a sensory image to prohibit himself from uprooting any 'little' or 'simple' plant out due to an excessive love towards nature; 'Grieves me to cut it up.' Of fact, the word 'weed' have no biological meaning. They are

merely plants that have sprouted in the wrong spot. As a result, they must be removed. But Clare utilizes the metaphorical, rather than the literal, meaning and interprets it as a symbol. Also, within the same sensorial impact, the derivative of the word 'feel' is repeated four times to indicate the intensity of his attachment to nature and to direct the reader's feelings. Then, commenting on Clare's microscopic eye, Mina Gorji, in his article “John Clare and the Triumph of Little Things,” remarks out that Clare's usage of 'littleness' or 'small things' has a variety of complicated implications in that 'littleness' and a carefully orchestrated attention to detail is not just a celebration of simplicity. But also a way of asserting his refined sensibility, creating and expressing a familiar intimacy with the world around him; 'simple weed' and 'little "shepherds purse [plant]"' (92). Here, Clare also through underling the value of 'littleness' might refers to the lowliness and humility of displaced farmers like him:

> Een here my simple feelings nurse
> A love for every simple weed
> And een this little "shepherds purse"
> Grieves me to cut it up—Indeed
> I feel at times a love and joy
> For every weed and every thing
> A feeling kindred from a boy
> A feeling brought with every spring.(185-92)

The final stanza (twenty-seventh), in particular the last two lines, does not conclude in a negative sense. The lines show the benevolent nature, albeit the less lovely appearance in Northborough, but promise to give newfound comfort and fellowship in the future. The stanza closes on a sensation of relief

that man's existence in nature may remain but his accomplishments fade and are buried; 'castles stood and grandeur died.' However, nature defeats man physically because 'the grass' will generate again while man will die forever. Pathetically, the speaker has none memories linked to his current place that causes him to feel alienated, yet the remembrance of the stuff that surrounded his prior house makes the new one acceptable; 'old marble citys.' He connects his memories of Helpstone to such plants and shrubs he finds in Northborough. The idea of accepting and leaving his previous belief of Helpstone's distinctiveness becomes a reality. The frustrated poet substitutes his lost passion of nature at hometown with an affection of nature everywhere:

> So where old marble citys stood
>
> …
>
> And still the grass eternal springs
> Where castles stood and grandeur died.(211,5,6)

Consequently, "The Flitting" is a revolutionary poem in which Clare's societal critique covers by defending commons' rights and advocating for freedom of nature. His affection for his hometown is accompanied by a serious feeling of loss with terrible nostalgia that appears unrepairable. Thus, the alienated poet attempts to chronicle his experience of dislocation and isolation in a far place from his hometown. His sorrow and feeling of forcing displacement are expressed more strongly in this poem because eight of the twenty-seven stanzas start with 'I' emphasizing the amount of his personal loss. Equally important, authoritarian dispossession is the focus of "The Flitting." It is an expressive assertion of a disallowed possession of everything that one thinks to be his since it is necessary to his self-identity. Skillfully, Clare makes the loss of his familiar location in line with the loss of his self-

identity to deliver a message that his identity is bound up with the open field system.

Concluding chapter three, Clare's mid poetry proves that he adores nature in whatsoever way he can. The mature writings about nature indicate that his poetic skill is influenced and motivated by her. This maturity is one of the most prominent factors that drew critics' attention to this specific stage of Clare's poetry. In addition to the emotional penetration into nature which is more influenced by the legislation of enclosure and its effects. Besides, the style differs from the previous one and stable unlike his health status. So, since the poet has grown intellectually, psychologically, emotionally, and literarily, the poems of this stage has more merit to study individually than those of the first and last volumes of his career. Actually, William James Howard in his thesis *John Clare and The Poetic Process* (1967), summarizes Clare's situation in the late middle of his life as the poet's brain health began to deteriorate. His psychological and mental condition was unwell during the time that preceded and followed the release of *The Rural Muse*, yet he kept writing poems in the hope of creating another collection. Clare's mental instability worsens as a result of debts and the growth of his family, while his books have not earned a decent financial return. Another reason of his terrible disorder is the relocation to Northborough seemed to be more damaging than beneficial since Clare felt dissociation from many locations he was deeply familiar with. So, he frequently lost his balance. His doctor advised him to seek treatment at an institution (61,2).

CHAPTER FOUR

JOHN CLARE'S LATE POETRY: THE ECOLOGICAL LOVE

Preface to Clare's Mental State in His Fifth Decade: 'The Journey Out of Essex' and Fatality

Tackling the last phase of the poet's life must provide a detailed explanation of this stage (1837-1864), its pressures, and how it ended. But before that, one can remember what Wordsworth says in his poem "Resolution and Independence"(1802): "We poets in our youth begin in gladness;/But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness'"(48,9). Then, initially and sadly, Clare's later collections, *The Shepherd's Calendar* and *The Rural Muse*, were less well-received. Besides, the future sales of his books were not enough to maintain Clare with his entire family alive. This stressful burden of supporting himself, his spouse, and his seven kids, along with his growing disappointment with the way he was treated by London publishing houses, led him into experiencing phases of illness and melancholy (Paul 24,5). Thus, in the early summer of 1837, his insanity was formally recognized. Mr. Taylor, along with some of Clare's old London acquaintances, started the process of transporting him to Dr. Allen's private sanatorium at 'High Beech' in the 'Epping Forest' as a free-will patient. Clare was treated by Dr. Mathew Allen for four years. During his residence, he was permitted to work inside the asylum's garden and to go for daily walks. He was free to roam in the woods or outside the country's asylum. Clare was quite calm, occasionally engaging in sensible discourse, but it usually ended with phrases that did not always make sense (Cherry and Foster 123,4).

It is more likely that Clare entered the institution in a state closer to mental fatigue than insanity, so claimed Dr. Allen. Nonetheless, his delusions became increasingly apparent throughout his stay (Bate, *Biography* 432,3). While Mark Storey in his book *The Poetry of John Clare:*(1974), ascribes to insanity confinement of Clare's own village, unanticipated fame, indifference, a wedding to a girl that made her get pregnant, and the loss of his lifelong love (Mary Joyce). The biggest reason is the relocating house in 1832 (just three miles away, still too remote for Clare) (9).

Upon this account, Clare was labeled a 'mad poet' in incarceration after he was sent to the asylum owing to his troubled mind. Despite his greatest efforts during his life to overcome the load of forcefully multiple identities, Clare is recognized as a poor poet who began his career as a writer as just a laborer poet till he turned insane. Albeit closer investigation of his cleverly poetic outcomes reveals that most of the asylum poetry hardly offers any proof of his intellectual disturbance and madness. Yet, a few of them cast doubt on generally shared notions of insanity and sanity (Chatterjee 427,8).

At that point in time of asylum, it seems to be no question that he was seized with the illusion of having two spouses (Cherry and Foster 124). So it is one of the obvious symptoms of his mental breakdown. However, he never ceased admiring and adoring her. So, Clare saw his incarceration as a penalty for spousal infidelity (Chatterjee 431). Moreover, Clare was afflicted by many other delusions, as well as solitude and erotic pressures. He felt bitter animosity toward those who confined him in the sanatorium, apart from his relatives and friends (Gordon107). In this regard, Clare's imprisonment in High Beach mental hospital represents an emblem of the consequences of enclosure's social and political changes by force.

Day after day, the confined poet recalled home and wrote about his agitated phobia of captivity in a letter addressed to Patty on March 17th, 1841, penned in the big forcible capital letters that marked the days of his lunacy (Storey, *Letters* xxxii): "Yet To Me 'There Is No Place Like Home' - … - For What Reason They Keep Me Here I Cannot Tell" (Clare, *Letters* 643).

In another letter, but this time to Mary Joyce in May 1841, Clare re-expressed his dissatisfaction with his captivity once more: "a prisoner under a bad government ... this is the English Bastile a government where harmless people are trapped & tortured till they die" (*Letters* 646).

Actually, all these letters prove that Clare believed he was imprisoned at both 'High Beech and Northampton Asylums,' even though he was decently treated and granted freedom in both institutions, at least till 1854, when Dr. Nesbit arrived and restricted the poet's stay (Robinson and Summerfield 143): "what is the use of shutting me up from women in a … place as this merely because I am a married man and I dare say though I have two wives … "(*Letters* 290).

One day, when Clare went on his regular Sunday lunchtime roaming in the woods and in overwhelming moments of melancholy, he encountered a group of gypsies. The latter promised to aid him in escaping and hiding, but they arranged to flee in less than a week once Clare gave them fifty pounds. They were away till the following Sunday. He resumed his trip home towards Northborough by following the gypsy path out of the woodland that the gypsies informed him previously about, and he wore a Gypsy cap as a mark of identification and hiding (Blackmore 212).

This happened in the earliest time of 1841, as the lonesome poet actually made previously a few failed attempts to flee. Still, on July 20th of this year, he managed to elude the observers and pursuers of the asylum and came to Peterborough after days and nights on the road. Sadly, the poor inmate was left penniless upon being tricked by gypsies. His misery was so intense that he suffered from starvation, obliging him to eat grass (Cherry and Foster 124,5). The following quote narrates Clare's journey and his story with the deceptive gypsies (July 1841):

> [W]ent a walk on the forest in the afternoon – fell in with some gipseys one of whom offered to assist in my escape from the mad house by hideing me in his camp … but told him I had no money … but if he would do so I would promise him fifty pounds and he agreed … on friday I went again but he did not seem … On sunday I went and they were all gone. (*Sketches* 153)

The astray poet was heading home to Patty and their seven kids and he believed he went back to rejoin Mary Joyce; his old love and the object of his passion in the subsequent years. He was unaware that Mary (a single woman without children) died in a strange accident a year following his joining the institution in 1838 (Bate, *Biography* 15).

The journey's final sentence by Clare on July 24th, 1841: "Returned home out of Essex and found no Mary – her and her family are as nothing to me now, though she herself was once the dearest of all – and how can I forget" (*By Himself,* 265). Ultimately, when Clare ended the journey disappointedly, he returned to write to Mary (July 27th, 1841). He had not seen her in Essex because she had passed away, and, surprisingly, he did not trust her relatives

when they informed him she already had perished in a home fire three years earlier:

> I have written an account of my journey or rather escape from Essex for your amusement … I got here to Northborough last friday night but not being able to see you or to hear where you was I soon began to feel homeless at home and … feel nearly hopeless but not so lonely as I did in Essex- … my home is no home to me my hopes are not entirely hopeless.(*By Himself* 265)

A year after Clare's death, Frederick Martin released *The Life of John Clare* (1865), which revealed additional information, including the fact that when Clare escaped to Essex: a wagon drove into him, ejecting a woman who picked him up in her hands. Patty had arrived in pursuit of her husband after hearing from the friendly Helpston residents that he was lying on the street. In fact, Clare was so totally unfamiliar with her that he would not even sit next to her before he learned that this woman was his really second wife. Then, under the edge of delirium and very fatigue, he agreed to be transferred to Northborough, whence he got on the afternoon of July twenty-third (282).

Unfortunately, he was not permitted to stay at home for long, but only for five months before he was shortly sent to the 'The General Lunatic Asylum,' or the district mental institution in Northampton on December 29th, 1841, lately renamed as St. Andrew's. He stayed there for twenty-three years till his death, and during that time it is said that none of his great or minor pals ever paid him a visit. His entire family remained distant, all the world had abandoned him, but the abandonment had left its mark on him. However, he was served with the utmost respect and kindness (Hood 53,4).

Remarkably, from the standpoint of critic Ian Sinclair (2005):

> John Clare was launched on one of the great English journeys, … , 20–24 July 1841. Hungry, hobbled, deluded. An expedition to recover a self he had no use for, a wife he did not recognize, a cottage he loathed. He would confirm the validity of a double consciousness: London and Helpston, poet and laborer, Patty and Mary.(*Edge of the Orison:*115)

In a contrasting statement, Prichard, the administrator of 'The Northampton County Asylum' in 1845, stated that Clare: "enjoys perfect liberty here and passes all his time out of doors in the field or town, returning home only to his meals and bed" (Brandon 10). On the other hand, in another letter dedicated to his spouse Patty in that year, Clare contradicts Prichard's statement: "This is an English Bastille ... where harmless people are trapped and tortured till they die - English bondage more severe than the slavery of Egypt and Africa" (Tibbies 421). Also, on (July19,1848) in a letter to his wife, he described the 'Northampton Asylum' as "the purgatoriall hell & French Bastile of English liberty" and "I am very weary of being here. You might come and fetch me away for I think I have been here long enough …"(*Letters* 657). However, nobody really responded to his aid. Continually, Clare's prose is filled with complaints and resentment about staying in the sanatorium. Thus, in March of 1860, he said: "I have nothing to communicate or tell of & why I am shut up I don't know I have nothing to say so I conclude" (*Letters* 20).

Beside writing letters, Clare amused himself at the asylum by reading and writing continuously. In point of fact, he greatly contributed some lines to Miss Anne Elizabeth Baker's *Glossary of Northamptonshire Words and*

Phrases in 1854 by delivering her all of his asylum writings and some poems on "May-day" traditions (Blunden and Porter 41). What is more, Clare had access to newspapers and journals at the institution that he read about 10,000 books from the institution's library (McKusick 130).

Clare's physical abilities decreased over time to the extent that he eventually needed to be pushed around the asylum property in a 'bathroom chair' (Cherry and Foster 128). His current capacity to hear natural noises appears to have deteriorated significantly during his incarceration, despite the fact that he had contact with nature in the neighborhood of the sanatorium. His mental condition had changed so quickly that he was sometimes unresponsive to bird sounds, and the scope of his perceptions had greatly reduced (Diakantoniou 101,13). In a letter sent to Charles (his youngest son), on July 8th, 1850: Clare says "I would write you a long Letter only I have nothing to write about … for I see nothing and hear nothing" (Bate 511). As he approached death, he regularly said, "I have lived too long," as well as "I want to go home." (Cherry and Foster 128).

On the evening of May 20, 1864, the moment happened. Clare died and finally found a resting place at the old age of seventy-one after a stroke. His soul passed away without a sigh. The lifeless remains of the peasant poet were placed at the graveyard of Helpstone on May 25th, alongside his parents, beneath the shadow of a sycamore tree, according to his request (Gale xli). An arched memorial was built over Clare's grave later. It has the following inscription on it: "Sacred to the Memory of John Clare, the Northamptonshire Peasant Poet. Born July 13, 1793. Died May 20, 1864. A poet is born, not made" (Cherry and Foster 128).

Whitaker (Who holds the copyright to Clare's poems) sold the whole of Clare's documents to 'Peterborough Museum' in 1893. They are the focal point of a significant exhibition commemorating Clare's centenary, as well as the world's biggest archive of the poet's papers, which is still housed at the 'Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery' (Bate 576). In that case, Clare is no longer just a peasant poet, but rather a brilliant, insane poet (Storey, *Critical Heritage* 2). As Day and Smith remark: "There is a belief that creative people have a significant flaw in their character and that this is an integral part of their creativity" (90).

4. 2. The Poetic Characteristics of the Late Poetry (The Insane Poet)

Clare's asylum poetry seems to be deliberate attempts on his behalf to reflect a grounding for his chaotic self. It is possible he wrote poetry to pass the time, or maybe he composed verses while he was shattered and splintered in anguish. In both cases, the poems serve as a chronicle of his ongoing emotional turmoil. Clare was undoubtedly a helpless victim, although it is possible to argue that it was Clare's inner suffering that gave him a profound poetic vision. The ordeal of mental suffering heightened the mood of misery in his poems, giving it additional strength and vitality. Clare became a great genius as a result of his hardship and loss (Chatterjee 435). While committed at the 'Northampton Country Hospital Asylum,' Clare produced nearly 3,500 pieces. A nobleman who occupied a responsible position in that institute from 1845 to 1850 was such a caring and compassionate companion of the sorrowful poet, Mr. William F. Knight, carefully kept Clare's pieces. Then, from this bundle of papers, the editors chose the poems that appeared with the title 'Asylum Poems' (Hooker and Hunt 190,1).

'High Beech' and 'Northampton' poetry for Johanne Clare is a reflection on the remains of the past, as Clare is haunted by remorse and/or failure and was still unable to detach from his societal class (194). Knight transcribed around 800 pieces from the original versions, so without his efforts, many of Clare's later compositions would be lost. After that, he was sent to another asylum in 1850. Clare's literally production was forgotten after Knight's departure (Trick 36-8).

Actually, Clare wrote tremendous pieces of poetry between 1837 and 1864, and the current volumes encompass everything that is documented about his work during that time period. All of Clare's poetry were printed exactly as he penned them, using the same spelling, capitalization, punctuation, syntax, vocabulary and diction; this is a technique that previous editors did not always follow. There are notes for each poem, as well as an appendix with a lexicon of regional words, biological and ornithological terminology, and uncommon expressions. His new poetry includes harsh satire, storytelling, natural observation, and notably folk melodies and ballads, as well as melodies that reminisce the lost purity of youth as he becomes ever more estranged from friends and family (Brett 278,9).

In these asylum verses, the resocialization implies a societal vision of utopia. Even so, Clare's focus seems to be on the total loss of the old days and humanity's iniquity especially seen in comparison to primitive childhood innocence of nature as well as Edenic glamour (Gordon 37). The peasant poet paints an idyllic environment in virtually the whole of the asylum lyrics, where love grows in pleasant surroundings. The verse is frequently reinforced by the melody, which is sentimental and love does not at all rely on the past. Generally, his work is characterized by a strong focus on the old days, particularly childhood; a time of spiritual and moral power covered by

innocence. Clare's most exquisite asylum poems are based on this topic (Storey, *Critical Introduction* 176,83).

Thematically, the poems are about outcasts and marginalized people, and they powerfully depict the sight of a man abandoned by his family members and friends, alone in anguish and solitude. Clare's asylum poetry are dominated by the topic of isolation. The asylum poems are enduring records from his years of conflict, providing insights into his difficult life, which was marked by popularity, neglect, relocation, marginalization, and confinement. However, curiously, it was during his stay inside the asylum that he composed some of his incredible poems. Paradoxically, Clare's most painful, anguished, and disturbing times were also his most productive artistic years. It seemed to be at the institution that the solitary poet discovered his own voice. Clare indulged in significant literary inventiveness and composed several of his other memorable poems when separated from relatives and friends (Chatterjee 428-34).

It is to be noted, that involvement in religious themes is more visible in asylum poems than in pre-asylum poetry, but its late dominance shows that Clare's thinking had firmly formed in the past time of theological learning, which was already profoundly implanted in his consciousness. To prove this, one may recall Clare's statement about religion, "I have reflected long on the subject" (Walker 16,195). Further, young love, human weakness, ecology, literature, memory, and the desire for spiritual growth are all themes explored in this period of imprisonment in one asylum after another (Gordon 4).

In their book, *John Clare:*(1986), Merryn Williams and Raymond Williams have pointed out that the poet at this stage:

> By any ordinary comparative standard, Clare was a remarkably productive poet, for all the difficult and changing circumstances of his life. Through all the phases of physical and mental illness, the poet went on doing what was always most important to him: writing poems. Through all the neglect and the suffering, Clare's works mark a special kind of triumph. … Clare made his way in his most essential activity, however much he and others might see his life as a failure.(12,3)

Along with the same line, Hugh Walker in his article "The Enigma of Genius," (1914), evaluates the asylum's poetry: "I am very certain that Clare, in his days of sanity, was a better poet than Smart; I am not so certain … that, in his period of madness he was a worse one" (87). Critically, Clare's asylum poetry has a sense of loss and bereavement, as well as imagery of captivity and an obsessive preoccupation with the troublesome nature of human identity, all of which may be linked directly to the trauma of his communal activity. As a result, one may claim that Clare's 1820s and 1830s poetry differs from asylum poetry in terms of themes and structures. In other words, it is a bundle of the seeker of rural liberty, the protector of laborers' rights, the specialist on classes' brutalities, the country child and the opponent of bias, as Johanna Clare claims (Xi,194).

Clare was a prolific writer who continued to write till he died. He clearly did not let the restrictions of the sanatorium restrict his ability to interact. Some of his greatest works, as well as some of his worst, may be found in anything he composed in this last dismal quarter of his career because the amount of doggerel increases as poetry matures into verse, giving him a form of therapy during those lonely hours. In a substantial number of pieces

composed between 1841 and 1851, Clare achieved a new level of awareness (Storey, *Critical Introduction* 175).

In the view of Jonathan Bate, Clare evolved a literary voice typified by detachment in his asylum poetry, sometimes failing to capture any aspect of his inner predicament. The critic assures that "the customary voice of the asylum poems is more impersonal, almost disembodied. Clare was withdrawing into non-identity." He also claims that Clare's poetry shifted in subject matter as a response to being separated from his natural fields; barely a few bird verses were composed during the asylum time (Bate *Biography* 494,5). Other critics like Robert Shaw represents Clare's asylum poetry as a 'Falling' from paradise and lacking liberty, while the folks and scenery of his boyhood come to represent the child's innocence that he had totally lost (202). During his time in the asylum, he managed to describe himself in detail with such clarity in poetry, despite the fact that his voice had become practically incoherent (Gordon 104). Especially through Clare's relocation to the sanitariums of 'Epping and Northampton' which raises new anxieties, and he turns to define themes of goodness and wickedness of women, religion, and personal identity (Walker 187).

In addition, Robinson in his article "John Clare's Words and Their Survival in America," assumes that the poems Clare appears to be writing lately, which are devoid of any vowels, are not certainly the product of an increasingly troubled mind. But it might be an effort to mimic Hebrew writing styles, as the old Hebrew language did not have any vowels (94). From another point of view, Keegan in her book *British Laboring-Class Nature Poetry, 1730-1837* (2008), notes that Clare's got fascinated during the asylum years with the sea as a symbol of the self-adrift (146,7). While others list other

symbols like Mary Joyce, the sun, sailor boy and fens. Besides, the poems are full of joy—one of his favorite words in the asylum poems. For instance, 'joy' and 'joys' appear almost forty-six times in "Child Harold," 1841 (Sales xvi).

One might argue that Clare's insanity is appropriately defined in *Edge of the Orison* (2005) by Iain Sinclair as though haunted by his 'phantom wife' and a 'possession by the spirit of Lord Byron' (5,30). Clare took on the voices of others. He pretended to be the boxer Jack Randall and penned poems of Lord Byron as well as William Cowper. This use of poets' voices might be or might not be motivated by a presumption that he held in common with their identities. Several visitors to the Northampton asylum believed that Clare was hallucinating (Fulford 165). Prior to his incarceration years, Clare informed G. J. De Wilde (the journalist): ‟I 'm John Clare now. I was Byron and Shakespeare formerly. At different times you know I'm different people—that is the same person with different names″ (Tibbles 372,3). In more explanation, Clare claimed, ‟I coud almost fancy that my identity as well as my occupations had changd that I was not the same John Clare but that some stranger soul had jumpd into my skin″ (*By Himself* 134). He said also in the same line: ‟but sometimes they called me Shakespeare and sometimes Byron and sometimes Clare″ (Bate, *Biography* 474,5).

Storey, in his book *A Right to Song:*(1982), quotes from Clare: ‟It's all the same. I'm John Clare now. I was Byron and Shakespeare formerly. I'm the same man … but sometimes they called me Shakespeare sometimes Byron and sometimes Clare″ (288,9). That is why, during his time in the institution, he remade two noted Byronic pieces, "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" and "Don Juan." In sum, the majority of the asylum poetry is sometimes personalized and introspective, but at other times impersonal (Chatterjee 429).

As long as a landscape is devaluated by the majority of other poets, Clare was one of several working-class poets who spoke about nature throughout the lengthy eighteenth-century. He established himself as one of the perceptive and talented poets of the working-class heritage, as well as of British literature in general (Keegan 170,1). Clare confessed that he missed his world, but he made it clear that he did not substitute it with another one. He, unlike most of his peers, was not driven by travel to learn about other locations or to relate his natural surroundings to those of others. Instead, it resulted in discomfort, alienation, disorientation, and, eventually, homelessness. In Bate's book *John Clare: A Biography* (2003), this is what Clare stated upon his tongue: "When I got back into my own fieldds … I did not know them everything lookd so different" (13). Clare ignored nature and place mobilization not because he could not move or did not comprehend mobility, but rather because he was all too aware of the sociological and ecological ramifications (Bewell 551,4).

Subsequently, Clare's latter poetry is significant because he signifies the fact that nature is in his words now, rather than on the ground in front of him as it was previously. So, Clare thought that nature might protect his poems from extinction (Ibid 571,2). Clare's years of confinement in the institution made nature even more meaningful to him. The liberty that he always sought, is embedded in the profoundly connotative aspects of nature (Gillin 185). Ultimately, Clare realizes that the natural world he cherished would never return, as in "Hereafter" (1835) from *The Village Minstrel*, "The past is past/the present is distress" (8).

When we conclude our discussion of nature in asylum's poetry, it is important to mention that nature diminished to a faint veil over the speaker's

underlying goals as it is shown in previous poems. Nature is not so much an effective weapon but it comes to symbolize falsehood and often old clichés that Clare might well have experienced throughout his ballads and songs in his youth (Kövesi, *2017* 89). Clare's poetry explores the ecological and societal consequences of this transformation in the regard of the English farm laborers' livelihoods. During this time, it was not just English country workers who lost touch with their roots. Clare's poems indeed help us understand what it signifies to other individuals in different regions of the globe who still deal with the devastating losses of their own regional natures. Precisely, Clare's poetry exemplifies his awareness of that lost landscape of lost land through his free voice in his writings, which strive a kind of societal and ecological resistance poetry. His poetry explores the societal and ecological costs of capitalism and modernity by confronting the disorientation generated by the demise of a profoundly linked English rustic nature, with English countryside life's customs. Clare's idea that employees and the regional English environment were struggling under an emerging economic regime which rendered them landless by removing their ancient residency rights bring ecology and socioeconomic opposition next to each other; the defender poet of nature is actually trying to make a political and ecological criticism of his day (Bewell 552,63).

Speaking in ecological terms, Clare kept writing sonnets on ecological concerns after being sent to the asylum, and his time in asylums appears to have created an introspective tendency, meaning of identity in connection to the environmental world (Reno70). Thus, the divergence is very clear between his initial (pre-asylum) poetry, which is strictly descriptive and the late (post-asylum) one, which is more contemplative and subjective.

4. 3. *The Later Poems of John Clare:1837-1864*

Clare's latest work (asylum poetry) appeared in two volumes, both edited by Erick Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield under the title *The Later Poems of John Clare* (1964). Almost all of the poetry in these two volumes can only be found in W. F. Knight's transcriptions. The current volumes cover everything known about his work from 1841 to 1864 (Brett 278).

The question of Clare's insanity has naturally brought critical attention to his late poetry. Because there is no such idea like a sane or mad poem; poems might be good or poorly written. Clare's late writings should be viewed as the product of his experimenting with new literary forms and genres, rather than inner obsessions or sickness (Dawson 179).

Timothy Morton in his book *Ecology Without Nature:*(2007), reveres the latter poetry, seeing in it higher ecological possibilities more than his former works. The critic points out that:

> The poetry of the Northborough and asylum periods attests to a loss of home and the resulting instability in Clare's world. The tone of these later periods starkly contrasts with the more confident tone often found in the Helpston period … Helpston seemed a paradise for Clare, a permanent and perfect source of stability, … such as in "Emmonsales Heath"–"Creations steps ones wandering meets/Untouched by those of man."(25,6) (197)

The Later Poems of John Clare is 1113 pages in length, with 800 poems divided into two volumes. As is customary, the editors prepared an

introduction to the book, after which it is divided among long, short poems and manuscripts, with a glossary attached to an index of poetry opening lines. "Child Harold" and "Don Juan," as well as "Manuscript 110," are amidst the most notable lengthy poems on which the book is based. Notes are also included with these poems.

The man who was abandoned by his relatives and friends isolated in pain during the time of asylum, began to rewrite a pair of Byron's most renowned masterpieces, but this time under the titles "Child Harold" and "Don Juan" in 1841 (the year he fled from Dr. Allen's institution in Essex) (Chatterjee 419,20). Clare began composing it in the springtime and he resumed following his escape to Northborough in July of that year. Then, by December 1841, it was most likely completed (Harrison 466). It is noteworthy, that early in his readings of Byron in 1819, Clare appreciated "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" so much that he asked for a copy of more Byron's books (Kövesi, *2017* 37).

So, in his solitary imagination, Clare used Byron's voyage narrative to compose a poem of spiritual progress and consciousness. He was striving to get through the specific strain of exile that he was experiencing via the literature of the famed poet of exile (Lord Byron) (Bewell 550). Clare's affection for Byron predates this period and Byron's popularity among the common people stirred him especially, when, in 1824, he watched Byron's funeral procession in London, so that he composed a sonnet entitled "Lord Byron" in his honor (Gordon 45).

Thus, Clare penned "Child Harold" while emulating Lord Byron; it is Clare's fragmented and modified version. Yet, strangely, a man who had only traveled three miles in his whole life opted to recreate a traveling narrative. It

is possible that the spirit of the Byronic protagonist and adventure captivated him and that reworking Byron's pieces was an outlet for him to express his hidden and suppressed desires. "Child Harold" is more of a collection of verses focusing on themes such as nature, homelessness, love (Mary Joyce), longing, bereavement, sorrow, disappointment, depression, exile, freedom and desire, composed over a very long time. In fact, the lengthy and unfinished work chronicles an extended spiritual journey (Chatterjee 430). Still, the manuscripts for "Child Harold" are so disorganized and fragmented, that no two current copies of it display the stanzas in about the same sequence (Bate, *Biography* 606).

"Child Harold" is divided into twenty-four 'ballads' and 'songs' scattered between seventy-eight stanzas. The purpose of the songs is to lessen the introspective or bombastic tone of the formal stanzas (Gordon 115). It is a challenging poem to comprehend, not just because of the many shifts in tone and direction, but also because it exposes Clare's agony in an unpleasant direct way at times: "My Mind Is Dark & Fathomless & Wears/The Hues Of Hopeless Agony & Hell" (1011-2). Stylistically, Clare's capitalization, which appears throughout the poem and becomes more prominent in later stanzas, requires careful attention (Hodgson 142).

At the outset, specifically, in the second and third stanzas of the first song of "Child Harold," Clare shares a distinct view of nature, seeing her as a teacher and guide of 'truth.' He does not say what kind of truth he is referring to. However, the readers' imaginations are permitted to fly free. Then, as is common and a repeating theme in this particular poem and stage of his life, he blends nature and Mary together to the point where the reader is unsure if the poet is talking about nature or his absent beloved. Yet, in the last two lines, he

makes a straightforward reference to Mary saying: 'her name' and 'her memory' have a unique place in his heart in that her 'absence' is parallel to a harsh 'winter' without the delights of spring. This idea of Mary's name or memory still recurs in the next two stanzas as he states: "Her memory will shine like a sun on my grave" (32) and "Mary thy name loved long still keeps me free" (40). Grounded on this, the canopy concept is there throughout his veneration of nature, where the poet himself finds 'rest on her bosom' of nature and the 'wild' flowers 'slumber' under the bushes of 'beeches:'

> She in the Lowlands and I in the glen
> Of these forest beeches — by nature we're guided
> And I shall find rest on her bosom agen
> How soft the dew falls on the leaves of the beeches
> How fresh the wild flower seems to slumber below
> How sweet are the lessons that nature still teaches
> For truth is her tidings wherever I go
> From school days of boyhood her image was cherished
> In manhood sweet Mary was fairer then flowers
> Nor yet has her name or her memory perished
> Though absence like winter oer happiness lowers.(14-24)

The songs of "Child Harold" have some nice lyrics for Mary. For instance, in the fifth "song," Clare usually associates Mary well with 'fens' as he keeps writing poetry on the fens after he was committed to the asylum in 1837. Primarily, the lover poet almost does so in his writings on Mary Joyce, whom he turned into a legendary emblem of lost delight in his poems. As a result, the fens stay as a 'landscape of love,' just like they are in his early writings. Clare also associates Mary's 'absence' with the fens, which become

unseen surroundings in the Epping Forest. In agreement with this point and according to Shalon Noble in her dissertation (2013), Clare sees Mary in the same light that he beholds nature; both are lost. As a consequence, Mary becomes an integral part of his quest to reunite with nature (144).

Within this amazing comparison, the poet laments the loss of woods and orchards, as well as the absence of his lover; 'I mourn her abscence.' He aspires to be a part of the natural world and identifies with it. Clare, then, draws another analogy between 'the race of women' and that of doves. This is how nature coalesces with humans in his poetry.

In the light of this analysis, one can draw an immediate suggestion to the concept of an apocalypse. Since there is no 'wood nor grove,' this implies that the world without landscapes becomes like a desert, and the poet secretly aspires to dwell among green environments. In sum, Clare's enthusiasm for wetlands is unaffected by his changing geographic and psychological circumstances:

> I love thee nature in my inmost heart
> Go where I will thy truth seems from above
> Go where I will thy landscape forms a part
> Of heaven e'en these fens where wood nor grove
> Are seen their very nakedness I love
> For one dwells nigh that secret hopes prefer
> Above the race of women like the dove
> I mourn her abscence — .(34-41)

The representation of a man in this poem is not confined to Mary's figure. Two further characters, 'the shepherd boy' and 'the cowboys,' appear in the following lines of the autumnal eleventh song, inside a vision that revolves around man intertwined with nature. Actually, man is an integral part of nature, which is what the ecocriticism theory is founded on. In a poetic aesthetic image by Clare, the shepherd lad surprises 'the hare' on the path in a natural image to underline the easiness of the pastoral concept. After the stillness, at the beginning of the poem, the cowboys begin to move the set around, where the horizontal stratification concept between the shepherd boy and the cowboys is very noticeable:

> Nature lifes sweet companion cheers alone —
> The hare starts up before the shepherd boy
> And partridge coveys wir on russet wings of joy
> The meadow flags now rustle bleached and dank
> And misted oer with down as fine as dew
> The sloe and dewberry shine along the bank
> Where weeds in blooms luxuriance lately grew
> Red rose the sun and up the morehen flew
> From bank to bank the meadow arches stride
> Where foamy floods in winter tumbles through
> And spread a restless ocean foaming wide
> Where now the cowboys sleep nor fear the coming tide.(46-57)

The last four lines of the same song show clearly a connection that links the poet's fondness for Mary with his respect for the old days. Moreover, from a religious standpoint, Clare regards Mary as Eve's successor, who is playing the character of "the flower of Eden;" this is akin to a woman's divinization,

which he excelled in these relevant topics. Continuously, Clare proceeds to describe this 'flower,' informing the reader that it is an 'evergreen' one which means there may be a strong connection between flawless nature and flawless woman. The last and most critical point in these lines is the dwelling concept which includes in its meaning humans' long overlapping in a place of 'memory' where Clare still resides; "on her my memory forever dwells:"

> On her my memory forever dwells
> The flower of Eden evergreen of song
> Truth in my heart the same love story tells
> I love the music of those village bells.(81-4)

The fourteenth song of "Child Harold" expresses and summarizes the theme of the poem in its last stanza. As it is a love poem, Clare declares that separation and distance in 'love' is a 'fate worse' than death. Of course, he is talking about Mary's absence, which has left a bloody wound in his heart that has continued to bleed till his death. Then, after presenting the essence of the poem, the poet returns to express his dissatisfaction with the loss of 'hope,' 'joy,' and inspiration. That in turn is reflected in his surroundings. Here, 'nature' is drowning, 'birds sing' without passion and on another point, the 'solitude,' which is a recurring theme, fills the 'ruined city' with people moving 'like' the 'living' dead. Respectively, in the middle of the stanza, both joy and hope are ecocritically anthropomorphized by Clare to die and retire; 'joy dies and hope retires.' Moreover, the stanza is full of contrasts such as 'love' and hatred, motion and stillness, as well as 'death' and 'life;' all of which are used to convey his feelings of betrayal and bewilderment:

> Abscence in love is worse then any fate

Summer is winters desert and the spring
Is like a ruined city desolate
Joy dies and hope retires on feeble wing
Nature sinks heedless birds unheeded sing
Tis solitude in citys crowds all move
Like living death though all to life still cling
The strongest bitterest thing that life can prove
Is womans undisguise of hate and love.(25-33)

The last stanza of the fifteenth song of "Child Harold," evokes hope and recalls the 'comfort' as well as the warmth of 'winter.' Clare recounts a winter scenario in a field that is complete with desolation, bitter cold, 'clouds,' 'storms,' ice, and a 'frozen lake.' Yet, in the middle of this familiar picture of this season, he reclaims the notion of 'friendship' with 'nature,' which he considers his 'true love' and a splendid 'religion.'

The first line of this stanza, Clare continues to criticize the law of the enclosure until the last phase of his life. The fields are turned into wastelands and barren squares not only from the effect of winter _because there are green trees all year and almost no field is devoid of them _but also for the reason that the law has made the beautiful rural scene into an ugly one. For the rest of his life, Clare is careful to include complete passages in all of his poems to show the charm of the countryside and reaffirm his 'friendship of nature.' The elements of nature are all present here: 'frost,' 'air,' daylight, 'clouds,' 'suns,' and 'lake,' but all of them, in their depiction, reflect the concept of the apocalypse; "Bare fields the frozen lake and leafless grove:"

Tis winter and the fields are bare and waste

The air one mass of 'vapour clouds and storms'
The suns broad beams are buried and oercast
And chilly glooms the midday light deforms
Yet comfort now the social bosom warms
Friendship of nature which I hourly prove
Even in this winter scene of frost and storms
Bare fields the frozen lake and leafless grove
Are natures grand religion and true love.(29-37)

It is worth mentioning that during this time, Clare usually capitalizes the first letter of every word. Robinson and Summerfield assure that numerous lines of "Child Harold" were produced in this manner. As Clare was known to be concerned with spelling, grammar, and capitalization during his quest to educate himself, this concern may have reappeared under the pressure of mental turmoil (140); as in the following stanza.

Clare is overcome by nostalgia that can be observed in the happy scene of stanza number eleven (some of the stanzas were numbered by Clare). He sees couples of 'sweet rural' giggling 'maids' going about their labor in the woodland. 'The happy milk maid's' tableau reminds him of the delights of his childhood in his homeland. As long as they are laughing and healthy, man is happy in nature. Unlike the sad queens in their palaces; 'Queens Might Sigh.' Storey specifically explains in his *Critical Heritage* that the people and landscapes of Clare's boyhood came to represent the simplicity and innocence he had totally lost (439).

According to the sources, his wife Patty was known as 'the maid of Walkherd,' which might be an indirect allusion to his wife's memory and his yearning to interact with her because they were separated since Clare's joining

the sanatorium, which she never visited once. Another essential point in stanza numbered eleven, the untainted nature by modernity marks the spot here with the wilderness concept, where man's freedom and the pure ancient world occupy a large space:

> Sweet Rural Maids Made Beautifull By Health
> Brought Up Where Natures Calm Encircles All
> Where Simple Love Remains As Sterling Wealth
> Where Simple Habits Early Joys Recall
> Of Youthfull Feelings Which No Wiles Enthrall
> The Happy Milk Maid In Her Mean Array
> Fresh As The New Blown Rose Outblooms Them All
> Een Queens Might Sigh To Be As Blest As They
> While Milkmaids Laugh And Sing Their Cares Away.(1-9)

The stanza numbered fifteen seems to convey a distinct sense that, honestly, 'love' and 'nature' are tightly connected forever. Clare does that by using the image of the sun to emphasize the stability and holiness of both (love and nature) by connecting the permanence of love with 'Every Kind Of Weather,' 'Heat And Cold' and 'In Sunshine And In Gloom.' The pressing point to posit, the pastoral natural scene, exemplifies the force of the wilderness concept:

> Yet Love Lives On In Every Kind Of Weather
> In Heat And Cold In Sunshine And In Gloom
> Winter May Blight And Stormy Clouds May Gather
> Nature Invigorates And Love Will Bloom
> It Fears No Sorrow In A Life To Come

But Lives Within Itself From Year To Year
As Doth The Wild Flower In Its Own Perfume
As In The Lapland Snows Springs Blooms Appear
So True Love Blooms And Blossoms Every Where.(1-9)

For a review of this epic-like long poem, Clare, for relief, as a peasant poet resorts to nature. The poem's two main interests, nature and Mary seem to be rivals at times and merge into one desired object at other moments; a strong link and equation between them. Frequently, Clare sees nature as an alternative for human interaction, providing him with such a sense of peace that he hardly obtains in the community; he asserts this in line three of stanza ten of "Child Harold:" "Nature Our Kindest Mother Void Of Harm."

Pleasingly, Clare associates Mary's love with a variety of essential terms, including home, comfort, peace, reality, hope, and happiness. Clare's attachment to Mary as his Muse is most evident. Moreover, throughout the poem, images such as imprisonment, sunrise, storm, death, and Eden appear, are interspersed among themes like truth, loss of place and identity, idealization of nature and Mary, poets, beauties of nature, true love and 'homeless at home.' In a few poems like this, one perceives a remarkable linkage between nature, love, poetry, and Mary via the fusion of exquisite lyric poetry.

In "The Sailor-Boy" poem, Clare leaves the landscape and heads to the seascape, where he assumes the role of a sailor boy image to engage with the aquamarine life. The sailor boy is one of the most recognizable images from the asylum era. The poet composed a number of 'sailor ballads'/poems with

titles like "My true love is a Sailor," "The Sailor's Return," "The Sailor," "The Wounded Sailor," and "A Seaboy on the Giddy Mast."

Clare was enamored with the sailor-boy personage and this is confirmed by Bridget Keegan in her book *British Laboring-class Nature Poetry, 1730-1837*, that during his time in the institution, Clare writes about the sea very much, which might be crucial. Quite often, in Clare's late sea poems even in the mass of working-class literature concerning the sea, the author reflects on sailors' involvement with the massive failure of the international commercial activities. The sea seems to be a big cemetery, not a place of possibility, a domain of enormous loss rather than a reward (146).

Actually, Clare was a peasant. So, if one usually inhabits the affluence of technology, his connection with nature is indeed aesthetic; but if one resides in the peasantry or as a sailor, his connection with it really be matched up with survival instinct. Gradually, the poet who spends his entire life in contact with nature is aware of ‟sailors know the power of the weather in ways that scientists and politicians do not. Romanticism listens to the wisdom of sailors and peasants″ (Bate, *Song* 102,24).

Harry Jones is one of Clare's metempsychosis characters; ‟I was but a Lord to patronize Jones the Sailor Boy who took my fancy″ (*Autobiographical* 153). He had seen him in 'The Fives Court' in 1824 and admired Jones as one of his favorite boxers throughout his decades of insanity (Sales 133). Even Byron, whom Clare believed to be him, was renowned among sailors as 'a traveler, not a poet' (Robinson and Powell 65).

Critically speaking:

> laboring-class poems of the sea enable us to hear sometimes the terrified voices of the hewers of wood and drawers of water who have been neglected by historians and literary critics, but whose sacrifices provided the material infrastructure for British imperialism and Enlightenment and Romantic cultural cosmopolitanism (Keegan 147).

"The Sailor-Boy" poem is written three years following Clare's departure from Helpstone, about 1845; "Tis three years and a quarter since I left my own fireside" (1). It has twenty-eight lines and appears in the second volume of *The Later Poems of John Clare*. The poem is written entirely in the past tense to ensure an early experience; 'crossed,' 'greeted,' 'passed,' 'started up and barked.' From an ecological standpoint, a man emerges in each stanza to highlight his interaction with nature, such as 'neighbors' in the first two stanzas, 'shepherds,' 'friends,' and 'maid' in the following two stanzas, 'milkmaid' in the fifth stanza, 'British squadron' in the penultimate stanza, and 'the lads,' 'lasses,' and the 'sailor-boy' at the last seventh stanza.

Incipiently, "The Sailor-Boy" poem vividly evokes a picture of 'groundlark,' the sounds of 'pigeons' and crows. In reference to the forced abandonment of the property, Clare claims that the lark is forced to leave its 'nest,' just like his 'dear old neighbours,' whom he likens to a migratory lark at times and a flock of crows at other times, where he never sees them again. Additionally, the interdependence concept is exemplified typically by the dependence of 'the crow flocks' over 'the grain:'

> And the groundlark left his nest like a neighbour which I knew
> The pigeons from the dove cote cooed over the old lane

The crow flocks from the oakwood went flopping oer the grain
Like lots of dear old neighbours whom I shall see no more.(4-7)

Within Clare's poetry, nature is both a shelter and a safe place for man. For this reason, he presents examples to support this truth, as is obvious here in this stanza, where 'the shepherds' 'with their dogs' relax in the shade of the gigantic 'shadows' made by the glow of 'the sun' covering the ground of the forest. As a result, the canopy concept is successfully utilized; man and animal under the shadows:

The sun was just a-rising above the heath of furze
And the shadows grow to giants that bright ball never stirs
There the shepherds lay with their dogs by their side
And they started up and barked as my shadow they espied.(9-12)

As the speaker travels across the ocean, the poet informs his readers formerly; 'To go aboard a ship … plough the ocean.' Clare continues to praise nature, describing the view as a delight to stand on the bank of the glorious and venerable 'sea,' where its waves roll on their path and the sea air makes 'the British' flag ('English colours') flutter on its shores. The anthropomorphic concept is achieved by imbuing the sea with the human trait of being 'mighty' and 'glorious.' While the presence of 'the British squadron' in the middle of the sea symbolizes the human competition concept because man and aquatic organisms share the same water:

At last I saw the ocean a pleasing sight to me
I stood upon the shore of a mighty glorious sea

The waves in easy motion went rolling on their way
English colours were a flying where the British squadron lay.(21-4)

Clare comes to an end of the poem with a sweeping estrangement that falls within a succession of farewells and abandonments that he begins with the separation of the homeland; 'I left the English shore' and then friends; "My friends I left behind me for other places new" (15). Here, he continues with further breakups that encompass 'honest parents,' companions, 'church clock,' countryside and farming. Eventually, he shows how the scenario leads him to be a sad and 'lonely sailor' lad who sits amid 'the shrouds' reciting lamentations, implying that the sea is nothing more than a cemetery for the poor sailors. Nature may be cruel to man at times:

I left my honest parents the church clock and the village
I left the lads and lasses the labour and the tillage
To plough the briny ocean which soon became my joy
I sat and sang among the shrouds, a lonely sailor-boy.(25-8)

In conclusion, this late phase is marked by the poet's compass of interests has shifted from nature as a major interest to a minor and secondary one, for nature does not have the same wide echo in his last poems as it had at the onset of his career; it could nearly be counted on the fingers of a hand. This factual statement was not exactly pointed out by the majority of sources that failed to offer any logical explanation behind it. He ends up talking about topics that began to occupy his already exhausted thinking in the late decades of his life, such as freedom (certainly while he was forcibly residing not voluntarily in a sanatorium), the unframed truth (a general truth), and

friendship that vanished in the absence of friends and family, in the delayed years of his life, which were not easy at all. Mary, on the other hand, retained his focus on good and bad health as well as on despair and joy. Because they (Mary and nature) are inseparable, their relationship remained untouched by the value and sustainability of nature.

Almost all of the poet's remoteness from nature, despite the fact that it is his everlasting passion, is due to a variety of factors, including the premise that his original home, the Helpstone, that was already replaced by walls in a mental institution. Thus, the poet perhaps was sincere in demarcating nature and the landscape as something that should not be violated at all. This coupled with his struggle against the enclosure legislation. Despite all these obstacles and hardship, nature has remained its sacredness that cannot be overlooked in John Clare's poetry, and unequivocally he was the first to sow the seeds of ecocriticism, albeit the word was not linguistically coined at his time.

CONCLUSION

The English poet John Clare is labeled with numerous titles, including, 'Romantic poet,' 'Northampton peasant poet,' 'insane poet' and 'nature poet.' But what is often ignored is that he is an ecological poet, in which ecological pieces of evidence have been recently recognized in his poetry but have never been explicitly and directly investigated. His ecological poetry is inspired by the rural life and the natural surroundings in which he was living. Additionally, his ecological vision is deeply formulated by the terrible environmental and ecological damage caused by the intrusion of man. The label of ecocriticism which is a modern neologism that endeavors explain how culture and the natural world are related, thus discovering new cultural bridges between both man and nature. Its primary goal is to enhance public awareness of the planet and how human conduct impacts it.

Accordingly, because of the rich ecological implications in his poetic lines, ecocritics seeing him as one of the first precursors to call the attention to the ecological issues. Clare's early poetry is thematically quite diverse. It is rich with nature, colorful, rural locales, protesting against enclosure, calling for freedom and carefreeness. Clare wrote poems that cover every aspect of the natural world as well as specific ecological concepts. For instance, "The Robin" illustrates the 'dwelling' concept through the struggle of the unfortunate bird with its nature and "A Lost Greyhound" is a typical example of the 'animal' key concept that revolves around sympathy towards animals. "The Ant," is a poem, addressing the 'anthropomorphic' concept by drawing comparisons between man and a small insect, by giving the ant some human

traits. In "The Gipsy's Evening Blaze," Clare introduces man, represented by the positive image of the gipsy as part of the natural world.

Clare's middle poetry depicts the poet's exiled condition and the related themes that of his personal depression, such as loss, displacement and changeability. This fact is evidenced in such a poem as "Fleeting," whose title is an expression of a dissatisfied and sad poet's new circumstances. It serves as a pathetic illustration of the poet's feeling of estrangement. Furthermore, the key concept of 'wilderness' runs through the whole poem through the recurring idyllic pastoral scenes. In "The Mores" poem, the poet lashes at the enclosure law. He criminalizes this vicious, harmful law as the peasants were forcibly evicted from their land. However, the bounty of the natural world is expressed in this poem, which in turn hints at the 'cornucopia' concept in which nature becomes generous to all living things.

Clare's late poetry reveals a keen awareness of how humans may influence the natural environment. In this meaning, comes "The Sailor-boy," where the 'human competition' concept controls the conflict between man and sea creatures. Whereas in the "Child Harold," the concept of 'horizontal stratification' between humans like 'the shepherd boy' and 'the cowboys' is quite prominent when they share the same horizontal layer in nature. Nature, in Clare's late poetry steps aside a little. Other themes take the lead in this period, such as solitude, self-identity and nostalgia for (home, Mary and the past). This was due to his stay in the sanitarium for the last two decades of his life, away from his hometown Helpstone, natural landscapes and all of his relatives.

In the light of the poems discussed we can safely acknowledge John Clare the 'Northamptonshire peasant' as a forerunner in the field of ecocriticism. His poetry sets the stage for the recently rising ecocritics to join the ranks of environmental defenders from a new literary perspective. Gradually, ecocriticism or a new critical approach arose to complete the job that John Clare launched centuries ago to assess the relationships between man and environment which has been affected to a large extent by development and technology.

Even though they differ in how they depict nature and how they incorporate themes that represent each stage of the poet's life, it is clear that the poetry of the beginnings and the endings are connected in that they both contain the cornerstones of ecocriticism. The ecocritical theory's underpinning concepts, such as those of 'the earth,' 'the wilderness,' 'the apocalypse,' 'the ecocentrism,' 'dwelling,' 'commensalism,' 'canopy,' 'animals,' 'old-growth,' 'stratification,' 'cornucopia,' 'interdependence,' 'anthropomorphism,' and 'the decomposition,' the end of life and simultaneously its beginning, are almost widely available in all 3500 poems of John Clare.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

As a poet coming from the working class and his poetry showing his hostility to the Enclosure Act and the inner empiricism, capitalism and feudal society Clare may indeed be analyzed in the context of Marxism theory.

Scholars may also be interested in another study concerning John Clare's interactions with women. Many women went through his life, and he mentioned them in many poems. So it will be a rich study, beginning with his first love, Mary Joyce, and progressing down to those who were with him in the sanatorium; only their names were stated about them, like (Liza).

Alongside his poetry, Clare also penned hundreds of letters in prose, in particular in letters form, throughout the course of his lifetime. Since these papers provide accurate and reliable information that paints a vivid picture of what Clare experienced, students of linguistic branch must study them.

Also, because Clare was subjected to medical services and placed in several mental health facilities for over two decades, it is entirely plausible that it will be examined from a psychoanalytic theory, especially in the asylum period.

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اَلْمُسْتَخْلَصُ

فِي اَلْوَقْتِ اَلْحَاضِرِ، اَلْقَضِيَّةُ اَلْعَالَمِيَّةُ اَلْبِيئِيَّةُ لَا تَشْغَلُ بَال خُبَرَاءِ اَلْبِيئَةِ وَالسِّيَاسِيِّينَ فَحَسْب، بَلْ يَتِمُّ تَنَاوُلُهَا أَيْضًا فِي اَلْمَجَالَاتِ اَلثَّقَافِيَّةِ وَالْأَدَبِيَّةِ مِنْهَا عَلَى وَجْهِ اَلْخُصُوصِ. لَقَدْ تَمَّ وَضْعُ تَصَوُّرٍ لِلنَّزْعَةِ اَلْإِيكُولُوجِيَّةِ سَوَاءٌ فِي اَلْمَجَالِ اَلْبِيئِيِّ أَوْ اَلدِّرَاسَاتِ اَلثَّقَافِيَّةِ كَاسْتِجَابَةٍ لِلْوَعْيِ اَلْعَامِّ اَلْمُتَزَايِدِ تُجَاهَ اَلْعَدِيدِ مِنْ اَلْأَزَمَاتِ اَلْبِيئِيَّةِ. اِعْتَبَرَ مُعْظَمُ عُلَمَاءِ اَلْبِيئَةِ اَلشَّاعِرُ اَلْبِرِيطَانِيُّ جُونْ كِلِيرْ (١٧٩٣-١٨٦٤)" بُدَائِيًّا بِيئِيًّا " لِأَنَّ شِعْرَهُ يَتَضَمَّنُ قَضَايَا بِيئِيَّةً لَمْ يَتِمْ تَصْنِيفُهَا آنَذَاكَ كَمَا هِيَ اَلْآنَ.

تُقَدِّمَ هَذِهِ اَلدِّرَاسَةِ إِيضَاحَاتٍ دَقِيقَةً لِلنَّزْعَةِ اَلْبِيئِيَّةِ مُقْتَرِنَةً بِعَدَدٍ مِنْ أَهَمِّ اَلْمَفَاهِيمِ اَلْبِيئِيَّةِ اَلْمُثَبَّتَةِ فِي قَصَائِدَ مُخْتَارَةٍ لِجُونْ كِلِيرْ. تَسْتَنِدَ اَلْقِرَاءَةُ اَلبيئِيَّةُ لِشِعْرِ كِلِيرْ بِشَكْلٍ أَسَاسِيٍّ عَلَى اَلْمَنْظَرِ اَلْبِيئِيِّ اَلرَّائِدِ، جرَيْجْ كَارَارْدْ. تُحَاوِلَ اَلدِّرَاسَةُ تَطْبِيقَ أَهَمِّ اَلْمَفَاهِيمِ اَلْبِيئِيَّةِ مِثْلٌ: ("اَلرَّعَوِيَّةِ" و "اَلْبَرِّيَّةِ" و"نِهَايَةِ اَلْعَالَمِ اَلْمَجَازِيَّةِ" و "اَلْمَسْكَنِ" و "اَلْحَيَوَانَ" و "اَلْأَرْضَ") واَلَّتِي تَمَّ تَقْدِيمُهَا فِي كِتَابِهِ اَلْأَسَاسِيِّ النظرية البيئية (٢٠٠٤). بِالْإِضَافَةِ إِلَى ذَلِكَ، تَوَجَّهَ نَظَرِيَّةَ جُونْ كُولِيتَا اَلْبِيئِيَّةَ اَلْأَرْضِيَّةِ اَلنَّظَرِيَّةِ لِهَذِهِ اَلدِّرَاسَةِ مِنْ خِلَالِ مَفَاهِيمَ مِثْلٍ " اَلنُّمُوّ اَلْقَدِيمِ " و " التجَسَّمُ " و " اَلْمِظَلَّةِ " و " اَلِاعْتِمَادُ اَلْمُتَبَادَلُ " و " اَلتَّحَلُّلُ " و " اَلْإِقْلِيمِيَّةُ " و " اَلْمُنَافَسَةُ اَلْبَشَرِيَّةُ " و " اَلتَّقْسِيمَ اَلطَّبَقِيَّ " و "اَلتَّعَايُشَ".

اَلْهَدَف مِنْ هَذِهِ اَلْأُطْرُوحَةِ هُوَ إِثْبَاتٌ أَنَّ اَلثَّقَافَةَ اَلْبَشَرِيَّةَ لَهَا عَلَاقَةٌ وَثِيقَةٌ بِالْبِيئَةِ اَلْمَادِّيَّةِ وَأَنَّ جَمِيعَ أَشْكَالِ اَلْحَيَاةِ عَلَى اَلْأَرْضِ مُتَرَابِطَةً جَوْهَرِيًّا. كَمَا أَنَّهَا تَعْتَزِمُ تَوْسِيعَ مَفْهُومِ "اَلْعَالَمِ" لِيَشْمَلَ اَلْمُحِيطُ اَلْبِيئِيُّ بِأَكْمَلِهِ.

تُؤَكِّدَ نَتَائِجَ اَلدِّرَاسَةِ بِشَكْلٍ مُبَرَّرٍ أَنْ شعَرَ جُونْ كِلِيرْ زَرْعُ بَذُورَ اَلنَظَرِيَّة اَلْبِيئِيَّةَ. وَالْأَهَمَّ مِنْ ذَلِكَ، أَنَّ رُؤْيَتَهُ اَلشِّعْرِيَّةَ لَا تَقْتَصِرُ عَلَى اِهْتِمَامَاتٍ اَلرُّومَانْسِيِّينَ، كَمَا اِرْتَبَطَتْ بِهِ دَوْمًا. وَمِنْ خِلَالِ تَطْبِيقِ اَلنَّظَرِيَّةِ اَلْبِيئِيَّةِ عَلَى قَصَائِدَ مُخْتَارَةٍ كَتَبَهَا اَلشَّاعِرُ، تَوَصَّلَتْ اَلدِّرَاسَةُ إِلَى اِسْتِنْتَاجٍ مُفَادَهُ أَنَّهُ يُمْكِنُ اِعْتِبَارَ كِلِيرْ رَائِدًا لِلشِّعْرِ اَلْبِيئِيِّ فِي اَلْأَدَبِ اَلْإِنْجِلِيزِيِّ. كَمَا يَعْتَبِرُ شِعْرَ كِلِيرْ نُقْطَةَ اِنْطِلَاقٍ لِلشِّعْرِ اَلْبِيئِيِّ فِي اَلْحَضَارَةِ اَلْغَرْبِيَّةِ أَيْضًا.

أَخِيرًا، تَنْتَهِي اَلدِّرَاسَةُ بِخَاتِمَةٍ تَلِيهَا قَائِمَةٌ بِالْمَرَاجِعِ اَلَّتِي تَمَّ اَلرُّجُوعُ إِلَيْهَا وَالنُّسْخَةِ اَلْعَرَبِيَّةِ مِنْ اَلْمُلَخَّصِ وَصَفْحَةِ اَلْعُنْوَانِ.

كَلِمَات مِفْتَاحِيَّةٍ : اَلنَّظَرِيَّةُ اَلْبِيئِيَّةُ، كِلِيرْ.

جمهورية العراق

وزارة التعليم العالي و البحث العلمي

جامعة بغداد

كلية التربية (ابن رشد) للعلوم الإنسانية

قسم اللغة الإنكليزية

جذور النقد البيئي: دراسة في شعر جون كلير

رسالة ماجستير مقدمة إلى مجلس كلية التربية (ابن رشد) كجزء من متطلبات نيل شهادة الماجستير في الأدب الإنكليزي

مقدمة من

نبراس نهاد كمال

بأشراف

الأستاذ الدكتور

سعد نجم عبد الخفاجي

١٤٤٤ هجري **٢٠٢٢ ميلادي**