

ENEMIES OF ENGLAND: JOHN CLARE AND  
THE DEFENCE OF THE REALM.

by

Helen Mary Ward

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APPROVAL

NAME: Helen Mary Ward  
DEGREE: Master of Arts (English)  
TITLE OF THESIS: Enemies of England: John Clare  
and the Defence of the Realm.

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

CHAIR: C. BANERJEE

DR. C.I. DYCK  
SENIOR CO-SUPERVISOR  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

DR. LEITH DAVIS  
SENIOR CO-SUPERVISOR  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

DR. J.P. HUZEL  
EXTERNAL EXAMINER  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

DATE APPROVED: 6 April 1992

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ENEMIES OF ENGLAND : JOHN CLARE AND

THE DEFENCE OF THE REALM.

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

(signature)

HELEN . M. WARD

(name)

6<sup>th</sup> APRIL 1992

(date)

## ABSTRACT

The English nation has traditionally been portrayed as a changeless rural realm, governed by politically conservative authoritarians invested with superior military power. In the nineteenth century, these imagined characteristics of "Englishness" were under threat from forces located both within and without the nation. The timeless Edenic ideal was jeopardised by the advent of agricultural enclosures which recreated the English landscape, and by the coming of industrialisation which heralded the end of the centrality of agrarian living to English life. Native conservatism was simultaneously threatened by the ascendance of radicalism, and military pre-eminence was beleaguered by increasing European opposition to British foreign policy.

In his series of poems, prose meditations and letters, John Clare (1793-1864) participated in the contemporary debate over "Englishness". He saw his role as one of conservation. He strove to preserve the English myth of international supremacy through concerted support both of the war effort and of tacticians such as Nelson and Wellington. His poetry celebrates and honours older forms of legitimacy as bulwarks against the tide of reformism, and he disseminated fear of revolution by evoking the Reign of

Terror as a premonition of the fate of England. Through his extensive collection of ballads and commemoration of the rites of folk custom, he extolled the virtues of an ancient rural Golden Age which belied the genuine hardships of his own people, solemnizing a myth of England which continues to impoverish and misrepresent English society. His work is therefore central to an understanding of the twentieth century conservative appropriation of England as an entrenched cultural symbol of tradition and dominance.

In the context of recent theories of English nationalism and patriotism, this thesis explores Clare's defence of "Englishness" in his prose writings, poetry and personal correspondence. Clare was one of the first writers to perceive of the island nation under siege, and among the first to attempt to relocate traditional "English" values in a fractured country.

**DEDICATION**

**This thesis is dedicated to my parents.**

What do they know of England,  
Who only England know?<sup>1</sup>

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank Professors Ian Dyck and Leith Davis for all their advice and encouragement, and my fellow graduate students (especially Carole Sweeney) for preserving my sanity. I would also like to thank Ross MacKenzie for his unwavering faith in me.

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## INTRODUCTION

National identity is created from a self-reflexive and highly subjective assimilation of historical data.<sup>2</sup> Hence "Englishness" comprises what the accepted history of England demonstrates about its people and reliance on the past becomes the foundation for formulations on the future. For England, this dependence involves an ideal "Golden Age", which may be recaptured in the future, but is misplaced in the present. The "Golden Age" involves both an exemplar of rural bliss, and an Anglocentric vision of the world arena, with England safeguarding the liberties of defenceless subordinate nations. "Englishness" is a form of nationwide escapism, evading contemporary reality by the cerebral re-enactment of a legend. Today, this ideal of Englishness is manifestly inaccurate, since England is no longer an agricultural nation: studies show that less than three per cent of the English populace is currently employed by the farming industry and census statistics demonstrate that from 1851 onwards town dwellers have outnumbered those living in the English countryside, and that by 1881 English towns could boast twice as many people as the countryside.<sup>3</sup> Contemporary England is also no longer a leading world power, either economically or strategically, but this ideal is still popularly accepted and actively promoted as a

deflection of inarguable realities in present-day England. A romanticized realm that long since ceased to exist has become emblematic of modern English society, holding it in thrall. This act of falsification is not, however, a peculiarly English truth, for "Getting its history wrong is part of being a nation" argued Ernest Renan.<sup>4</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century, the paradigm of English life was the countryside, nurtured by "that most abiding of cultural myths - the timeless rural culture within living memory engulfed by urbanization".<sup>5</sup> The Industrial Revolution was a divisive ordeal, for the "real" Englishman was at home in his rural "castle", and the city symbolised non-English qualities of economic rivalries, isolationist self-reliance and constraints upon elemental freedoms: "It is in the country that the Englishman gives scope to his natural feelings", wrote Washington Irving, "He breaks loose gladly from the cold formalities and negative civilities of the town; throws off his habit of shy reserve and becomes joyous and free-hearted".<sup>6</sup> A century later, Ronald Blythe articulated the same sentiment: "The townsman envies the villager his certainties and . . . has always regarded urban life as just a temporary necessity. One day he will find a cottage on the green and 'real values'" (qtd. in Fussell 232). Rural life epitomised quintessential Englishness. It represented "a simplicity of existence, innocence and a

feeling of community . . . changing little since the memory of man" (Lessa 61). This was the England for which the industrial worker yearned, and which the militia-man fought to safeguard. The coming of industrialism, and - earlier - enclosures, to the gentle English countryside had fostered the need for an ancient England to be revived as an imaginative haven from reality:

Often this need for an imaginative resting place was reconciled with the facts of present change by a kind of catastrophism: a changeless rural order had only very recently been invaded by destructive forces from without. Pastoral retreatism then blended with nostalgic lament.

(Wiener 52)

The nineteenth century Englishman subscribed to an impression of his people which persists today as "a richly pastoral image of a community that is customary, wholesome, peaceful and rooted in the earth" (Moynahan 21). For the English, as Paul Fussell avows, the settled rural landscape remains a "stay" against the "chaos of industrial life" (235).

Purveyors of the English literary tradition have long been engaged in the business of nostalgically recollecting a hopelessly idealised rural past in a futile attempt to arrest technological progress. John Clare joined the chorus

of "nostalgic lament" when he was personally affected by what he perceived as the ruination of his natural environment - enclosure. He inherited this retro-culture of "pastoral retreatism" through his acquaintance with the work of Thompson, Cowper, and Grey, and took his place on the 'ladder' of nostalgia, as identified by Raymond Williams in The Country and the City. Clare was one of the first artists to perceive a genuine threat to the stability of an English countryside which had remained virtually unchanged through all the phases of the "good old days", from Spenser on. His nostalgia was not for a far-distant, hopelessly idealised past, but rather for a recent, more realistically charted memory. The object of his nostalgia existed within his own life-time: pre-enclosure Helpston, and is valued as personal experience, more acutely missed for its immediacy. Whereas for many of his fellow climbers, nostalgia involved evoking an image of an unknown past where one instinctively felt that things must have been better, for Clare the nostalgia is for a time he *knows* was better. He desires to revivify "a certain kind of mythicised countryside: pastoral, timeless, fruitful, fecund, a world in which people, animals, objects and the manifestations of the natural order are indissolubly linked" (Street 69). The function of his verse is to provide asylum for the ideal of England that he subjectively associated with the golden days of his youth.

The English national identity has repeatedly been sustained by such conservationist art, when "the value of the shaping power of landscape, the notion of the organic community and the sense of connectedness and common identity among the English has been celebrated" (Chase and Shaw 12). During such times as the mid-nineteenth century, when the central stability of the nation was placed in jeopardy:

Englishness has had to be constantly reproduced, and the phases of its most intense reproduction - borne as its finest moments - have simultaneously been phases of threat to its existence from within and without.

(Colls 29)

*industrialism  
enclosure  
fascination with  
french revolution*

Clare, writing from 1809 to his death in 1864, perceived threats to England originating from three sources. From within, the threats he perceives are the destruction of the rural idyll, occasioned largely by enclosure and industrialism, and the alarming rise in radical political activity. From without, he sees England's European enemies as the threat, since the early nineteenth century in particular was a time of turbulent European relations. Clare perpetuated the "myth of an England essentially rural and essentially unchanging" (Wiener 55), to detract from genuine contemporary concerns over national defence and civil disobedience. Like other conservative thinkers of his

generation, he "drew comfort from a picture of an unchanging England in the countryside to set against rising social unrest and foreign threats" (Wiener 55).

This thesis will examine, through a close reading of largely non-poetic material, the problematic nature of Clare's relationship with England and the English. He endeavoured to maintain a debilitating rural stasis which kept England fettered in a fictitious Golden Age, but also promoted expansionism in the international sphere. He strove to preserve the folk customs of the rural English as community ties, yet he had no loyalty to individual Englanders, and frequently spoke out against their appeals for democratic reform. Hence, his love was for an increasingly anachronistic vision of Old England, but not for her people.

In the first chapter I will explore the origins of the traditional depiction of rural England and place Clare in the vital historical context of the Industrial Revolution and the agrarian enclosures movement, which prompted him to perpetuate this false idyll. His recreation of "real" England through the conservation of the folk ballad and celebration of communal rites led to his appropriation as a cultural conservative, which his patrons attempted to translate into political conservatism through the censorship of radical elements in his work.

The second chapter evaluates Clare's international politics and response to English engagement in European militarism, focussing on a close reading of the "England Poems". These poems demonstrate a contradiction in Clare's national ideology between the active preservation of an unchanging rural realm, and the promotion of early Victorian imperialism. Yet even his endorsement of aggressive military manoeuvres is inconsistent, since he also expresses great sympathy for the guiltless victims of war, as unwitting martyrs to English supremacy.

In the final chapter, I will address Clare's attitude to the English people, and the threats to national security posed by the English fascination with the French Revolution. Clare's response to the reform movement is explainable by an analysis of his feelings towards both the agitants and the landless labourers who sought some amelioration in their living conditions. He desired to uphold ancient hierarchical social structures which placed the populace in the same stasis in which the country was placed by his Arcadian myth-making. Clare's notions of England were, therefore, paradoxically both progressive and reactionary - desiring both to protect England from corrupting innovation and to project England into a century of ultranationalism.

CHAPTER I  
ONE FOOT IN EDEN<sup>7</sup>

"Real" English countryside . . . is only located in the minds of those engaged in the search for it. (Newby Green & Pleasant Land? 14)

The term 'Golden Age' in English literature is an ambivalent nomenclature. It has been used to describe the early days before the Fall - exploiting the "cultural symbol of England as a garden" (Wiener 10) - as well as ancient or Medieval England, and the personal past of the individual. Through all these transitive periods, fixed only in the collective or individual consciousness, the English rural realm in that Golden Age of "bucolic 'Merrie England'... situated somewhere between Agincourt and Shakespeare" (Chambers 26) is seen as a place of stability and permanence, where time-honoured values and customs remain intact, in an era of "true community spirit and mutual aid" (Robinson The Parish 15). In the desire to protect and preserve this unchallenging stasis, "a conventional structure of retrospect" has been established, enabling recreation of the Golden Age through "the literature of rural loss and memory" (Williams 61, 270). However, whenever the rural is artistically celebrated, it is a uniformly

regressive celebration, inhibiting the rural realm from progressing towards a new era, by asserting the supereminence of the past. The nation's identity is focussed specifically, not on realistic contemporary rural imagery, but on distorted popular reminiscences on the distant past: "Well may the past warm in the peasants praise / And dwell with memory as the golden days" (The Parish lines 1676-7).

These "golden days" unite a number of symbolic notions of the past - personal, cultural or social histories - by providing a common point of convergence for a previous, illusory time, inimitable by the present. The past, because of the manipulative nature of human memory, "functions as a kind of reverse image of the present, a time when 'everyone was neighbours' and life was more secure" (Samuel and Thompson 8). It is important to stress the mythical dimension of this representation of the past, particularly when such a typification adopts the idiom of an elusive Golden Age, or seeks sanctuary in the speculative domain of Biblical phraseology as a 'lost Eden'<sup>8</sup>, for, as Robert Hayden has mourned, "Alas, there is / no Eden without its Serpent"<sup>9</sup>, and an unquantifiable and unverifiable past is susceptible to unscrupulous romanticists, who would make the mythic appear authentic in the interests of perpetuating an entrenched conservative model. Which ever mythology of the past is authenticated - be it "the writer's childhood, or

... man's childhood, in Eden and the Golden Age" (Williams qtd. in The Rural Tradition 62) - it is the past which is held to be both the individual's and the nation's bedrock, because Time and change no longer have any jurisdiction over it.

The realists of nineteenth century rural society had no time for Arcadian panegyrics on the beautiful tranquility of rural England, but their community was largely incapacitated by being idealised by the urban community, hungry for "a traditional nostalgic Golden Age which never existed" (Robinson The Parish 15). The urban population commonly held the village to be "an organic community, in which all men lived intimately with nature" (Wiener 61), and in which very little actual work was done. This "saccharine countryside of the old English" (Nairn 26) thus became the focal point for the national identity, embodying all the virtues which best typified the Utopian Englishman: honesty; strength; moral fibre; indefatigability. Indeed, "Rural life was the repository of the moral character of the nation. It could not change, or England itself would be in mortal danger" (Wiener 56). Even when the cataclysmic surge of the Industrial Revolution drew the attention of England's populace away from the rural heartland and into the heart of sordid capitalism, quintessential England still lay outside the cities in 'deep', often Southern, England: "The truly

typical England was usually seen to reside in the historic and comfortably domesticated rusticality of the South" (Wiener 50). As most heavy industry was concentrated further North during the early thrust of industrialism, the rural South naturally became a sanctuary for more 'respectable' strains of Englishness:

An "English way of life" was defined and widely accepted; it stressed nonindustrial, noninnovative and nonmaterial qualities, best encapsulated in rustic imagery ... This countryside of the mind was everything industrial society was not - ancient, slow-moving, stable, cozy, and "spiritual". The English genius, it declared, was (despite appearances) not economic or technical, but social and spiritual; it did not lie in inventing, producing, or selling, but in preserving, harmonizing, and moralizing.

(Wiener 6)

The inviolate English character thus drew sustenance from prolonged and close contact with the land and the "emphasis on the English village as a knowable, organic, and vanishing community certainly reflected unease at urban growth" (Chase 143). Raymond Williams alluded to the irony of an increasingly urban populace paying continued homage to a heritage and a way of life they had abandoned:

English attitudes to the country, and to ideas of rural life, persisted with extraordinary power, so that even after the society was predominantly urban its literature, for a generation, was still predominantly rural. (2)

"Real" England was not to be found in the smog and congestion of industrial England, but in the undisturbed "weekend landscape" (Nairn 261) that came to represent 'Home' for the post-Industrial Revolution Englishman. Despite the well-documented hardships of rural life, Simon Pugh contends that - even today - "the rural world and its landscape idyll still connote peace, health, utopia, community" (1). Rural life is consistently seen as "a serene, idyllic existence, enjoyed by blameless Arcadians happy in their communion with Nature" (Newby Green & Pleasant Land 13). The reality was far from a Utopian ideal, yet impoverishment was conveniently overlooked when it interfered with the cant of nostalgia and "The repressions and privations of old England were forgotten in a welter of nostalgia for the mythical, lost paternalistic community" (Newby The Deferential Worker 14). The image of a second Eden in rural England was pure fantasy, manufactured and swallowed by urban denizens, eager for Arcadia. As the product appealed universally to all sectors of the growing

urban citizenry, particularly the proletariat, who looked upon the country as a haven from the travail of squalid industrialism, it became the most popular theory of rural life, even though it is conspicuously evident that "the pastoral ideal of rural life is an evasion of the reality of life as it is in the country" (Lessa 65).

Simon Pugh has suggested that "the reframing of the functions of landscape is especially prevalent during the passage from one economic order to another" (1). This is borne out by the history of mid-nineteenth century rural 'publicity', designed to detract from the realities of rural existence and provide a remote focus to placate discontented city-dwellers with "an image of an unchanging and timeless English countryside, worked by methods that had not changed for generations" (Street 76). Just as militaristic patriotism was being used as a tool of suppression, the "comforting stability of the rural ideal" was set against "the unnatural city" (Chambers 28) as an ideal worth working to conserve. Concurrently, "the myth of the changeless country supported a fervent utopian radicalism" (Wiener 58), in which the "hated present" could be challenged, and the new economic order imaginatively dismantled. Landscape at this time functioned as a cynosure for the ill-defined English national identity, as the English nation was passing from an agrarian-based economy to an industrialised society.

Ironically, the enclosure movement<sup>10</sup>, which Raymond Williams has referred to as the first decisive step in destroying this second Eden, and the enshrinement of the rural idyll as quintessentially English, occurred virtually contemporaneously.

With the advent of enclosures and the Industrial Revolution, the geographical distribution of the English populace altered dramatically. There was notable rural depopulation to the urban centres, although recent studies suggest that a mixed economy, where some industrial workers were freed to return to the land at peak seasonal periods, persisted for some years after urbanisation.<sup>11</sup> The people of England experienced an enormous social upheaval, in which the only tangible stability appeared to be their national culture - the fixed hegemony of rural England as national symbol - since Britons, as Paul Gilroy has recently hypothesized: "cling to the nation all the more tightly because the order of certainty with which it is associated is currently being torn away" (118). Yet even this "order of certainty" - the Paradise myth of a sequestered rural community - was being created and controlled externally. The English physically deserted their rural roots, and the nation became an effectually commercial entity, but the people remained emotionally fixated on the rural realm, for "The country was to be all that modern life was not, a

psychic balance and refuge" (Wiener 51). The migrant trend corresponded exactly with a new cultural trend - the locating of true Englishness in rural society, confirming the "age-old perception of the countryside as the repository of what was natural and good" (Chase 142). This refugee mentality originated as a reaction to the ugliness and privations of industrialism. England as industrial terrain was completely at variance with the image of England as a tranquil green Paradise:

Industrialism and the industrial spirit could be seen as not truly English, and, indeed, as a profound menace to the survival of "Englishness". A cultural polarity gradually emerged between Englishness, identified with the pastoral vision (the "green and pleasant land"), and industrialism (the "dark Satanic mills"). The vision was felt to be precarious, being eroded bit by bit by the advance of industry. The power of the Machine was invading and blighting the Shire.

(Wiener 81)

Faith in the "primacy of agricultural production" emphasised the tension between these poles of Englishness for countryfolk, who "did not accept the idea . . . that England's greatness came from her manufacture and commercial

achievements" (Howkins and Dyck 33). In the mid-nineteenth century, the English were made aware of the precarious fragility of their rustic national identity, and applied themselves diligently to its preservation. With the rapid urbanisation of England, security, permanence and beauty were only to be found in the elusive rural Eden. England had to be shielded from the disfiguring influence of industrialism since "real" England lay in the fields and not the factories:

Ever since England became a predominantly urban country, rural England has been regarded as the principal repository of quintessential English values. Culturally, English society has never adapted itself to urban living, has never adopted an urban way of life. REAL England has never been represented by the town, but by the village, and the English countryside has been converted into a vast arcadian rural idyll in the mind of the average Englishman.

(Newby The Deferential Worker 11)

The hold of this paradisial legend has been perpetuated even to the present. The real, and perfect, England is still in the forests of the country estate, not in the workshops, and "the ideology of England and Englishness is to a remarkable degree rural. Most importantly, a large part of the English

ideal is rural" (Howkins "The Discovery of Rural England" 62). This self-delusion is all the more remarkable since England was the envied early world leader in the urban-centric machine age. Ian Chambers describes how the evolving metropolitan experience coincided with the promotion of England as an essentially pastoral nation:

Earlier criticisms of industrial society and the unbalancing effect of city life - ... were now married to the recalled traditions of the land and a common, down-to-earth wisdom of the rural eternal ... a stable referent in a rapidly changing world. (26)

The sponsors of the rural England project had effected a highly successful marketing campaign. Indeed, "the vision of a tranquilly rustic and traditional national way of life permeated English life" (Wiener 81).

The ubiquitous image of English existence is still couched in the language and visual incarnations of Arcadia. The effect of this duplicity now extends far beyond "the mind of the average Englishman" to other nations, whose people assume they recognise in rural England the typification of the English, verifying Stanley Baldwin's axiom that "England is the country, and the country is England" (qtd. in Lowenthal 205). Internationally, the "approved and dominant images of Deep England are pastoral

and green" (Wright 87). Through the largely "literary construction of a myth of England" (Brooker and Widdowson 118), the myth-makers have manipulated national feeling into a series of symbols designed to stir automatic patriotism in the "average Englishman", and prompt him to grieve the passing of such an inveterate environment, which never truly existed, by promoting "a nostalgic evocation of a vanished rural order" (Street 71). Today, the "English national identity sags with the accumulated weight of its symbols and traditions" (Nairn 270), which have been consciously formulated to evade reality.

More alarmingly, this myth of England also implies a moral hierarchy, in which the rural realm nurtures a purer form of the national ideal:

In its blending of the natural and the social (the cottage, the farm, village life), this rustic vision permitted the possibility of stepping outside the competitive turmoil of industrial time into the moral order of 'Englishness', where, beneath open skies, land and blood entwined in a subconscious nationalism and the implicit appeals of race.

(Chambers 26)

The English 'Master-class' is rooted in rural soil, from which will germinate the future salvation of a 'healthy' England. This version of the wholesome rural community: a haven from industry, deeply rooted in the past, is a pre-eminently conservative vision, bolstering an immutable past in order to ward off the threat of modernisation, depicting what Tom Nairn has characterised as "a conservative dream-world founded on an insular vein of English romanticism" (261). Rural England's "stable layers of historical accretion" (Cosgrove and Daniels 8), cherished by reactionaries, served to insulate it from the advances of radicalised innovation, and the inevitable passage of time, for "Just as the city embodied change, the countryside seemed to offer release from the tyranny of time's movement" (Wiener 51).

This characteristic timelessness was actively sustained through the localised preservation of traditions and customs, which nourished the myth of rural England as democratic model, while denying the very genuine hardships of agricultural subsistence. Indigenous literature - most commonly the ballad - was selectively preserved both as a panacea for rural ills, and as evidence that life in the English countryside remained unchanged, and unchangeable, for it "was clearly of great importance that rural change be denied" (Wiener 56). The national equilibrium could not

sustain any blows to the convention of rural retreatism, and both ballads and other communal rituals formed an eternal sanctuary from England's rapid descent into modernity. Rural life was immune to the machine-driven evolutionary cycle, and was thus feted as the cradle of "real" England by eulogising advocates of the evergreen rural realm.

John Clare began his literary career during the very years in which the agricultural enclosure movement was changing forever the supposedly immutable open face of the English countryside. His first extant poem, "Helpstone", was penned in 1809 - the same year that the Act of Enclosure for his home parish of Helpston was passed. In his subsequent work, Clare speaks on behalf of two mute victims of enclosure - past customs which could not survive the restructuring of the village community, and the English rural ideal itself. In their biography of Clare, J.W. and A. Tibble devote much time to berating the intangible changes wrought by enclosure, "which altered the structure of [Clare's] village, and radically affected the lives of its people, obliterating traditions which had survived since the thirteenth century" (25), yet - ironically - neither tradition nor idyll appear in the statistical breakdown of the effects of Parliamentary enclosure.

Clare mourned the passing of communal tradition and folk customs as much as the premature passing of the unenclosed perennial natural order. For him, "Pre-Enclosure England was ... a society whose population was in touch with the land, and in harmony with nature" (Chase 139). The stabilising factors of the human realm were vanishing as rapidly as the constancy of nature, and Clare documented all with a regretful resignation: "it used to be a day of busy note with the villages but inclosure has spoiled all" (Journals Tuesday 26th April 1824 236).

Time-honoured customs - part of the very fabric of village life and the national ideal - had survived centuries of sedate progress, only to be swiftly and ruthlessly eradicated by an agricultural revolution which changed the countenance of the English countryside forever, and replaced one rustic ideal with another: the 'patchwork quilt' of English fields, which has become the twentieth century object of concerted conservationism.<sup>12</sup> Under enclosure, village festivals lost their significance, and reasons for rural celebration became fewer. With the advent of new technology in farming methods, efficacious agrarian living made former fetes anachronistic and enclosure was ultimately characterised as a "rupture of the traditional integument of village custom" (Thompson The Making of the English Working Class 238). With enclosure came a new race of rural dwellers

despised by Clare - rapacious farmers concerned far more with profit than with antiquarian preservation, "a new breed of farmers who paid little respect to the traditions of the past" (Edward Storey 90). In The Parish, this class "represented the decay of an older and healthier tradition" (Robinson The Parish 15), which belonged to the ancient vision of a salutary rural society, fostered in the early nineteenth century.

In his poetry, Clare grieves the passing of rural customs rendered obsolete by the re-ordering of agrestic life. The whole composition of country life altered, both for the village populace and for the beleaguered land. As E.P. Thompson has attested, Clare "was not writing about man here and nature there, but lamenting a threatened equilibrium in which both were involved" (Customs in Common 180). Festivals such as the May Day celebrations with their covenant of Spring were swallowed up by the enclosure movement. Clare charts the disintegration of important elements in the pattern of agrarian social existence, by showing the debilitating effects of enclosure on traditional collective practices: "By utterly disrupting village communities it inhibited or destroyed the customs which had hitherto played such an important part in people's lives" (Deacon 12).

In nineteenth century rural England, folk-song was a vital locus for community feeling and, for Clare, folk-song was to become a medium for retaining his ideal of interconnectedness between those who drew their livelihood from the land.<sup>13</sup> Through the preservation of song, the cooperative community could unite against the pernicious influence of enclosure. In The Shepherd's calendar, Clare celebrates the durability of the ballad, and its gift for unifying the rural workforce in literal and metaphorical harmony. In "May" he hears "merry peals / Of ancient tunes from happy tongues" (lines 211-2), as the labourers sing together as respite from the drudgery of their monotonous - but *shared* - daily toil. Yet the "ancient tunes" which have survived the centuries to become intrinsic staples of the community ethic are not resilient enough to resist the coming of enclosure. The ballads and rituals which Clare joyfully celebrates in stanzas 85 through 95 of "The Village Minstrel" (Early Poems II 123) become the subject of dispirited lamentation later in The Shepherd's calendar. Clare saw song as a unifying integrant in village life, and as a way of preserving a nostalgia-bound past through a living art form. Benedict Anderson has observed this same cohesive potential in the common knowledge of a national hymn, or anthem, for "there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity . . . a special kind of contemporaneous

community which language alone suggests" (145). For Clare, folk-song drew upon the same simultaneity of language and sense of universal communion which Raymond Williams also alludes to when he describes "its strength in its connecting feelings of human warmth and community, in a time of real dispossession, eviction and social division" (140). Clare inherited his love of folk-singing from his father - an "illiterate to the last degree" (Autobiographical Writings 2) - who bequeathed to his son a sense of human solidarity through shared lyricism, since "he could sing or recite above a hundred [ballads] he had a tolerable good voice and was often called upon to sing at those convivals of bacchanalian merry makings" (Autobiographical Writings 2). Clare bewails the demise of these observances, which had been "a continual reminder that he was a village man" (Deacon 74). His nostalgic vision of rural life was fuelled by the immutable power of song to endure change and continue to connect the village populace in a loved collective tradition:

The only tune he knows still whistling oer

& humming scraps his father sung before

As 'wantly dragon' & the 'magic rose'

The whole of music which his village knows

That wild remembrance in each little town

From mouth to mouth thro ages handles down

("Rural Morning" Early Poems II 612 lines 9-14)

Clare emphasises the extent of musical communality "which his village knows", and dwells on the vitality of the oral tradition, while forging for himself "a literary style which was genuinely appropriate to his experience" (Vincent 40). Village songs, which "his father sung before" are bequeathed in trust to antecedent generations and the legacy is essentially past/oral both in the sense of its oral typification of the past, and in the manner in which such oral history is passed from father to son.

In "The Songs of Our Land" (Later Poems II 1000), Clare relies upon the hold of the ballad on a wider national psyche. The poem is an appeal to common experience in an oratorical incitement to national unity, during the European Wars, protesting the decimation of the ballad as an art form, and urging its resuscitation, "The Songs of our land are they not worth reviving" (line 1). Songs are the "ancient landmarks" (17) which indicate the way to true Englishness. Music - offered as the common denominator and unifying element in English cultural life - offers solace to those reaching for established stability. Folksong has become - for Clare - the vital locus of patriotic feeling, and ballads constitute "national links" (3). The poem presents a comfortable domestic scene of an "English fire side" (2), with its cozy "settles or chairs" (14), and an image of the idealised unification which community singing

can tender. The songs must endure, and they can only be preserved through their transmission to the "child o'er its horn book" (6), learning patriotism "Thro reading & singing the songs of his land" (8). Respecting time-worn tradition is seen as the most important and effective means to preserve and propagate the English ideal. Through ballads and folk-song, the lies told to the fathers are sung by the sons, and England is held in willing stasis. Because of his commercial appeal as 'The Northamptonshire Peasant Poet', Clare shared a vested interest in "perpetuating the myth that England was, and always had been, a green and pleasant land populated by quaint, folksie, down-home peasants" (Sales "The Politics of Pastoral" 92).

Both song and custom fall victim to the disruptive and unnatural act of enclosure, which threatened the very fabric of bucolic English life. Clare mourns the cessation of village feast days, with their rituals of dance and song, and speaks regretfully of the lost rites. Since May Day has lost its significance as an important ceremonial occasion, the holiday goes unnoticed in the newly revised shepherd's almanac:

Yet one day mid thy many joys  
 Is dead to all its sport and noise  
 Old may day where's thy glorys gone  
 All fled and left thee everyone

Thou comst to thy old haunts and homes  
 Unnoticed as a stranger comes

(The Shepherd's calendar 428-433)

Clare's allocation of blame here is quite explicit: it is the enclosure movement which is wholly culpable for the "merry song" (446) being "gone and dead and silent now" (449). Enclosure is responsible for the loss of something more than the common grazing lands and open public fields. It has cast a blight over the whole ethos of communal village life, and simple rustic pleasures:

Alls ended as they ne'er began  
 While the new thing that took thy place  
 Wears faded smiles upon its face  
 And where enclosure has its birth  
 It spreads a mildew oer her mirth  
 The herd no longer one by one  
 Goes plodding on her morning way  
 And garlands lost and sports gone high  
 Leaves her like thee a common day

(The Shepherd's calendar 457-465)

Clare's additional complaint with enclosure is that it reduces all things to a sameness, which allows for no spontaneity or creativity. The fields are regulated and reduced to a uniform size and festivals vanish so that all days seem indistinguishable from one another. In Clare's

conservative national ideal, the upheaval engendered by  
enclosure and its role in the eradication of time-honoured  
rural English traditions, cannot be passively endured. Much  
of his work is an attempt to relocate himself in stable pre-  
enclosure England, by reaching backwards through the related  
media of music and tradition: "It is a poetry of  
reclamation, and it constantly strikes backwards and  
downwards, in a kind of imaginative atavism, towards ancient  
essences, elemental aspects of work" (Chilcott "A Real World  
& Doubting Mind" 251). Clare endeavours to reclaim essential  
 Englishness by sustaining the communal links of custom and  
 song as they reflect the most primal connections between  
 individuals, and between man and nature. The loss of the  
 ballad and the rite confirmed his "sense that traditional  
 values had fragmented, that the very identity of an age-old  
 rural experience was being fast destroyed" (Chilcott "A Real  
World & Doubting Mind" 71). All communal traditions and  
 customary practices associated with village feast days have  
 "vanished like a dream of good" (The Parish line 117), and  
 left countrymen as fundamentally disconnected in their own  
 society as their dispossessed urban counterparts. Clare  
 feels intense regret for "The lingering breathings of  
 departed days" (1715), for the customs and revelries which  
 characterised his own infancy and confirmed him in his

powerful sense of local identity have come to this piteous ruination:

Old customs usage daily disappears  
 And wash to nothing in the stream of years  
 The very churchyard and its ramping grass  
 And hollow trees remain not as it was  
 Far different scenes its nakedness displays  
 To those familiar with its guardians days  
 (The Parish 1726-1732)

Clare's preservationist ideal connects this desire to retain "Old customs usage" with the need to conserve the flawless "familiar" setting of a past age. "His strongest objection to enclosure", June Wilson argues, "was the grief it caused him to see the familiar landscape so drastically changed. It was always his desire that the loved haunts of his boyhood should remain exactly as they were" (39). This is also true of his grief at seeing the familiar psychological "landscape", and his childhood "haunts" of music and revels so drastically changed. Keeping faith with the past was his attempt at validating a secure existence and identity. He invoked "The trace of days that never come again" (The Parish 1745) as what John Lucas has termed, "an attempt to stabilise a destabilised set of social arrangements" (England and Englishness 151), at a time when the only security lay in memory. Clare's nostalgia is for a

remembered and favoured pre-enclosure lifetime, when everyone knew his place and respected traditional values, and "he turned to a time that he could look back on as better than the present" (Lessa 60). He relied upon the past to impose reason on a dislocated present and faced "the problem that all poets of the countryside faced - the need somehow to come to terms with the notion that the present time seems never to be as satisfactory as past times" (Lessa 60).

For Clare, the present was marred by the genesis of localised enclosures, which he conceived of as prisons, both for the land and for himself. For the land it was a literal internment: fencing and hedging the open fields and commons increased the agricultural profit margin through more efficient and increasingly mechanised methods, but also alienated man from the land. For Clare, enclosure was a figurative immurement: it destroyed the known and loved environment and the blessed communion with nature, while heralding the end of a network of communal activities which had shaped the lives of the peasantry and bound them together: "The private appropriation of the natural world which enclosure symbolised was (for Clare) an offence to both 'nature' and human community" (Thompson Customs in Common 182). The people were imprisoned by the confinement of nature and the denial of common access; enclosure

restricted their freedom to roam at will, to earn a living wage, or to own their own land and property. They were forced into dependent status, often relying on the charity of the inadequate poor relief system. Clare engaged himself in the debate at the most immediate level - the restriction of mobility. He unequivocally claimed, in 1844, "I am an advocate for open fields" (Journals 202) and passionately opposed the enforced containment of nature within man-made bounds. In a customarily nostalgic tone, Clare frequently recollected the days before enclosure came to cage nature:

Unbounded freedom ruled the wandering scene  
 Nor fence of ownership crept in between  
 To hide the prospect of the following eye  
 Its only bondage was the circling sky

("The Mores" John Clare: The Oxford Authors 167, 7-10)

Ownership implied, for Clare, a peculiarly legitimized bondage, which threatened the common freedom enjoyed by generations of "free-born" Englishmen. The truncating of rights of way was the denial of the fundamental primal freedom to wander at liberty. Clare urged the drivers of "the tearing plough" not to "Root up and steal the Forest from the poor", for the ideally non-hierarchical natural world has a democratic desire for open access, "leave to freedom all she loves, untamed / The Forest walk enjoyed and

loved by all!" ("London vs. Epping Forest" Later Poems I 28 lines 11-14).

Enclosure denied Clare both his relationship with nature and with his past: "I lovd the lonly nooks in the fields and woods and many favourite spots had lasting places in my Memory . . . before inclosure destroyd them" (Autobiographical Writings 61). He associated the liberty of free access with the attendant liberties of his childhood, when he enjoyed unimpeded solitary excursions through the fields of his native parish.<sup>14</sup> The newly erected impediments to the exercise of freedom - the fences and hedges that circumscribed the enclosed commons, which were paradoxically no longer 'common' - destroyed the landscape of memory for Clare by physically denying him admission to the scenes of his infancy, and thus forging barriers between his adult self and the retrospective of his childhood self, causing "a loss of childhood through a loss of its immediate landscape" (Williams 138). Hence, he was distanced from all remembrances of the past by the "rude philistines" who parcelled up the land for mercenary use and constructed obstacles to his physical and psychical freedom:

These paths are stopt-the rude philistines thrall  
 Is laid upon them and destroyed them all  
 Each little tyrant with his little sign  
 Shows where man claims earth glows no more divine

On paths to freedom and to childhood dear  
 A board sticks up to notice 'no road here'  
 ("The Mores" 65-70)

Both present "freedom" and recollections of "childhood dear" are out of bounds for Clare. Enclosure changed his stable relationship with the past in much the same way that it challenged England's own relationship with its rural past. For Clare, there was only tragedy. Both Edward Storey and David Constantine report the cruel irony that he was forced, through economic necessity, to work at enclosing his own natal fields, despite being bitterly opposed to the enclosure ethic. For him, enclosure was the end of a whole order of existence. For England, enclosure helped - in much the same manner as the Industrial Revolution had helped - to define and hone the rural ideal, enshrined in a bygone age of happy leisured peasants and fallow open fields. The advent of enclosure legitimated the creation of a 'pre-enclosure' fantasy world, where "the Saxon ploughs his fields and the sun sets to strains by Vaughan Williams" (Nairn 262).

Clare was in harmony with the perpetuation of an English ideal of pastoral tranquility, which "provided him with an entranced link with the past" (Schultz 150). From the cataclysms of the nineteenth century - the Industrial Revolution and widespread agrarian enclosures - a clearer

vision of 'Old England' was being fashioned, and it was a vision which Clare helped sustain by his reverence for the traditional practices and social configurations that bolstered the Eden myth. This rural England was an impediment to the future since, as David Lowenthal affirms, "[t]o be rural sanctions stasis" (218), and this stasis denied the present reality of nineteenth century Britain. Clare strove to ground England in the "vast museumised ruin" (Lowenthal 217) of national heritage, typified by the immutable Arcadian ideal of English landscape.

It was this conservative agenda which made Clare so attractive to the reactionary establishment, while his lowly social status and consequent disempowerment forced him to rely upon the patronisation (both definitions of the word are implicit) of reactionary social superiors. Concerns over patronage must persistently affect readings of his political doctrine as his work had either to be mediated through such conservative patrons as John Taylor, Edward Drury, Lord Radstock and Eliza Emmerson, or swallowed up in poetic obscurity, since these patrons provided Clare with necessary social acceptance and material sustenance. However, patronage furnished him not only with a public and a profit, but also with prohibition, and although his editors and patrons rarely insisted on actually vetoing his poetry, the

virtues of strict circumscription were often made very clear.

The frequent editorial complaints of Clare's patrons centred on a concern to shield susceptible minds from the insidious rise of social awareness which occasionally crept uninvited into Clare's verse. Clare was potentially a dangerous political figure because of the extent of his public profile, but the demands of patronage effectively emasculated him, in much the same fashion as Stephen Duck had earlier been disarmed.<sup>15</sup> Any political influence Clare may have had over the minds of his admirers was hurriedly nullified by the liberal amendments of his cautious editors. Clare's attitude to these adjustments was equivocal. In most cases he bowed to the higher learning of his "superiors", respecting their knowledge of the middle-class market, although this is tempered with some token resistance to change:

You rogue you, the pruning hook has been  
 over me agen . . . friend I believe you  
 are a caterer of profound wisdom in these  
 matters you know what sort of dish will  
 suit the publics appetite better then I<sup>16</sup>

He was completely at the mercy of this advice, often counter to his own best interests, and usually trusted his editors

to anticipate the tastes of his audience - both artistically and politically.

Although Clare was certainly classifiable as a natural conservative, much of his work reflected an awareness of the contemporary rural unrest from which his patrons desired to defend their patrons. In "Helpstone" (Early Poems I 156), he attacks the monied classes behind the enclosure movement, for pauperising the peasantry, and Lord Radstock consequently secured an unenviable position in Clare's biography, for insisting on the omission of these crucial, and radical, lines:

Accursed wealth oer bounding human laws  
 Of every evil thou remains the cause  
 Victims of want those wretches such as me  
 Too truly lay their wretchedness to thee  
 Thou art the bar that keeps from being fed  
 & thine our loss of labour & of bread  
 Thou art the cause that levels every tree  
 & woods bow down to clear a way for thee  
 (127-134)

Clare, too, was forced to "bow down" before a stronger force, which he accuses of being responsible for the loss of work, and consequent starvation of the rural poor, yet he is still circumspect enough to lay the blame at the feet of disembodied "wealth". Radstock feared the unchecked

radicalism of this remonstrance, and John Lucas concurs with his anxious evaluation of the subversive element in this specific enclosure protest, and the potential danger inherent in publishing such democratic propaganda: "Radstock was quite right to recognise Clare's 'radical slang', for the account of the woods as ideally non-subservient implies a vision of society as essentially republican, egalitarian" (England and Englishness 142). Radstock, conscious of the dangers of encouraging any resistance to burgeoning rural capitalism made manifest in the enclosure movement, or support for the plebian cause, demanded that the lines be cut from the first edition of Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery, considering them too inflammatory for inclusion. Clare complied largely because the nature of patronage held him accountable for Radstock's paranoia. Thus, patronage interferes with any certain knowledge of Clare, since he submitted so readily to all politic ammendments and kept few copies of original drafts, and so the depth of his commitment to protesting the cause of the labouring classes is ultimately unknowable.

In concert with his editors, even close friends were prompted to advise Clare against an agenda that was too overtly political. Thomas Henderson was a personal friend to Clare, and a regular correspondent. Upon perusal of the first draft of The Parish, Henderson warily protested "I

think the poem would be equally effectual, gain more readers, & more admirers, if it were less pointed & less severe" (qtd. in Clare: The Critical Heritage 192). Clare's caustic social commentary was a liability, and fear of provocation seemed universal during a time characterised by the spirit of revolution. Patrons and friends alike feared that Clare would incite a multitude of the rural poor (who were far from being Clare's target audience) to revolt, through uncodified criticism of his "betters". Hence he was restrained; forbidden to criticise the class which had discovered and nurtured him as the native genius of the moment. His patrons' political agenda was resolutely conservative, and he was co-opted as a grateful peasant poet, designed to appeal to a "conservative, counter-revolutionary audience" (Sales "The Politics of Pastoral" 98). Clare was to be seen as a bulwark against radicalism, untainted by the disease of his class for, in Clare, his patrons had found a champion of working-class conservatism. Lord Radstock and his compatriots "wanted to pressgang Clare into a manly, muscular crusade against radicalism" (Sales "The Politics of Pastoral" 100), for - as Roger Sales observes - "the reading public would only patronise a poet like Clare if his politics could be shown to be meritorious as well" (English Literature in History 89). He was marketed as a sustainer of the status quo, content with his lot, and

keeping "references to his condition as an agricultural labourer down to a minimum" (Sales English Literature in History 100). The urban public had to be protected and feel secure in their benighted existence, and Clare's patrons were anxious that he did nothing to challenge comfortable conceptions of the rural idyll, and the lie of the 'happy peasant'. They were taking part in a phenomenal evasion of reality, in which the highly selective pampering of one member of an oppressed class is seen as adequate recompense for the pitiful state of an entire people:

If you just want to paper over the cracks of social injustice, this is what you do. You select very carefully one victim of the system and then reward him with concern and attention. This costs less than money. You then use this microcosm of gratitude to evade wider questions about society as a whole.

(Sales English Literature in History 94)

In Clare, Taylor and his coterie had selected a victim of the system who could be depended upon to legitmate their own political prejudices and vision of England, since Clare's 'radical' protests were both infrequent and easily suppressed. Thus, through Clare, the price of censorship was exacted from the class which he betrayed with his

instinctual reactionary mindset and his quiescent acceptance of silence.

Clare's much-vaunted conservatism, insisted upon by reactionaries like Radstock, was firmly rooted in tradition and the cherished English soil, yet, although he can be designated a cultural conservative in his relationship to the unenclosed rural realm, Clare's concurrent critique of England's station internationally denotes a more aggressive patriotism; dissatisfied with stasis and contrary to complacency, which differentiates him from most committed rural disciples.

CHAPTER II  
TRUE-BLUE BRITONS<sup>17</sup>

John Clare's perspective on the English experience has resulted in his posthumous and justifiable assimilation as an eloquent spokesman for the values of a conservative vision of rural England, coupled with his reactionary repudiation of the progressive, and thus 'anti-English', trend of agricultural enclosures. Yet Clare did not support a wholly insular and localised iconography of England at the expense of a more complete world vision. The patriotic fervour of his nationalistic "England Poems" implies an increasing involvement in influencing international perceptions of Englishness, and a greater understanding of the motivational forces of the patriotic spirit. Beyond the essentially rural home front, England is honour-bound to protect its dominions and uphold its innate superiority. The "England Poems" are another form of patriotic propaganda, as insidious as the Paradise myth, used by Clare to reinforce stereotypical representations of the English national identity, and the exemplary English character.

In many of these rallying poems, Clare applauds England's intervention in recent European conflicts, which - as Linda Colley testifies - was a time-consuming practice, since "Britain was at war from 1756 to 1763, from 1775 to

1783, from 1793 to 1802 and again from 1803 to 1815" (100). The final defeat of Napoleon in 1815, marked the end of a long and bitter struggle with France, which had "extended over 126 years, of which more than half were years of open warfare" (Hertz 364). Clare even enlisted in the ineffectual local volunteer guard, to defend England's heartland against hypothetical attack by the marauding French ("March to Oundle in the Local Militia" Autobiographical Writings 78). In a sonnet dedicated to England, dated on or before 18th August 1821, Clare extolled his country's previous glories and proclaimed himself proud to succeed to such a noble heritage:

England with pride I name thee - & with pride  
 I boast thee as my birth place - where is one  
 That thou hast given life to breathes beside  
 Nor feels the honour to be calld thy son -  
 Who reads the pages of thy glorys won  
 Victorious stripling on this jiant earth  
 Who keeps in memory what thy valours done  
 Nor feels the value of such noble birth -  
 Hast thou one heart that dwells amidst thy fame  
 Thy heroes living & thy heroes gone  
 That from thy soil a brothers right can claim  
 Nor warms in triumph to be counted one -

If such there is tho nourishd with the free  
 Tis bastard breed - & not a stain to thee  
 (Early Poems II 599)

Patriotism is acknowledged as an honourable sentiment of filial respect, and the "noble birth" which Clare celebrates in this simplistic sonnet affiliates him with past and present "heroes", upon whom rests the international reputation of England. His ideological precept of deep attachment to the nation, and steadfast belief in a national identity which the "free" espouse, and the "bastard breed" forswears, reaches beyond the confines of Edenic idealisation, into the obverse realm of conservative patriotism and expansionism.

In a host of similar eulogies, Clare immortalises the honourable birthright of the English. "The Songs of Our Land" imbues the medium of song with the power to unite the disparate elements of the whole United Kingdom in a bond of patriotism which smacks of exclusionist anglo-ethnocentricity. In this late work, Clare intimates that the shared knowledge of communal music will draw together England, Scotland and Ireland (Wales is conspicuously absent) into an organic whole - to defend the common British legacy of liberty. It has a markedly Anglo-centric appeal, and it is only in the final line of the poem that the Scots

and Irish are invited to join in defence of primarily English values, against the unnamed "foe" of line 23, "Rose, Thistle and Shamrock united are true" (24). Even here, the Rose has primacy over its fellow flora, and England is still viewed as the parent nation, not as a sibling.

At the conclusion of the second stanza, Clare openly attacks European Catholicism, which he juxtaposes unfavourably with the "Englishmans freedom" (9), which involves the right to choose a religion, or to refute religious faith altogether, a liberty not afforded to the offspring of "priest-ridden" (16) nations. Freedom - be it moral or physical - is portrayed as a peculiarly English characteristic, and the nation's most valuable export.

"The Songs of Our Land", like the earlier sonnet, lauds England's war-like history, and revels in the land "which great heroes have bled for" (5). Clare despises the "curs'd traitor" (18) with the same venom as he upbraided the "bastard breed" of his sonnet. This paranoid fear of anti-English elements suggests what Benedict Anderson has interpreted as "the near-pathological character of nationalism, its roots in fear and hatred of the Other, and its affinities with racism" (141). To a fearful Clare, the enemies of England are the enemies of freedom, and deserve violent castigation for their failure to "warm[s] in triumph to be counted one" with the "free".

Some of Clare's early rabble-rousing patriotic poetry (including: "The Battle" Early Poems I 539; "Death of the Brave" Early Poems I 248; "Death or Victory" Early Poems I 301 and "Impromptu" Early Poems I 461) suggests that his emotion prevailed considerably over his talent. These puerile verses often address specific instances of war-mongering, and invoke the spirits of real historical figures as emblems of nationhood, and champions of English world supremacy. In "Lines on Wellington" (Early Poems I 54), Clare summons the phantom of Horatio Nelson - also evoked in the lyrics of "Nelson & the Nile"<sup>18</sup> - as a precursor of the new enemy of France: the Duke of Wellington, who was later to become one of the staunchest opponents of Parliamentary reform during his Prime Ministership. The poem is a panegyric, asserting that Nelson's indomitable descendant will be the salvation of England against Napoleon, disparaged by the diminutive "poor Nap" in line 19. Here, Clare's invocation to the English populace is clear: "rather than his [Nelson's] fate bewail / Praise his unerring choice [of Wellington]" (5-6). Clare demands that the public sees Wellington as Nelson's chosen legate, "as skilful and as brave" (13), and accords him the requisite respect and support. Wellington is the "Morning Sun" (21) to "Nelson's night" (20), and - Phoenix-like - Wellington arises from "Nelson's pregnant Clay" (27). This eternal cycle of

legendary warriors embodies the immortal protection of England. They are national heroes, whose example feeds Clare's possessive need to belong to a nation in which he can glory. Similarly, in "Waterloo" (Early Poems I 208), Clare addresses himself to two other English worthies: the poets Robert Southey and Robert Bloomfield, whose heroic role is to elegise "Britton's sons" (9).<sup>19</sup> Clare calls upon the nation's bards to commemorate in verse the English victory at Waterloo. Clare requests the honour of being allowed to "play a tune to celebrate the day" (14), although he accounts himself, in characteristically modest fashion, only a "lowly brother" (13) among England's "great Bards" (3). His patriotic fervour reaches its highest pitch of intensity in the second stanza, which indicates the degree to which he believes the British should go in order to defend their ancient prestige:

The lucky day when Brittons sons  
 Had chance to prove with Swords and Guns  
 Their british courage british breed  
 How they could fight how they could bleed  
 For their own right and others too  
 So nobly prov'd at Waterloo (15-20)

Clare's selection of the words "lucky" and "chance" suggests a belief that Fate, rather than God, is on the side of the British, and his assessment of the soldiers' motivation is

echoed by Benedict Anderson: "nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love" (129). In battling both for their own English right, and for the rights of frailer nations, the fighting men are fortunate to have the opportunity to prove themselves worthy - like "Brave Grenville" (4) in "Ocean Glories"<sup>20</sup> - of their birthright, and to "bleed" for their "Countreys fame" (23), corroborating Anderson's contention that "Dying for one's country . . . assumes a moral grandeur" (144). The dead are compared to "flowers" (44) - hinting at an association between the natural world and the unnatural state of warfare, which was to become commonplace in the poetry of the First World War. Clare's fatalistic desire to see blood spilt in the name of Britain's reputation is fulfilled by his imagined depiction of the carnage of Waterloo: "Britons wounded - glorious sight!" (51). The gallant survivors are later hailed as national heroes: "True-blue britons prov'd and try'd" (74).

Innate English superiority was also seen to extend to the furthest corners of the world, where lesser nations could depend upon English charity in times of siege, in complete contravention of William Cobbett's "Little Englander" counsel to the nation: "It is my business, and the business of every Englishman, to take care of England, and England alone . . . It is not our business to run about

the world to look after people to set free; it is our business to look after ourselves".<sup>21</sup> In the final stanza of "The Labourers Hymn" (Early Poems II 590), Clare commissions the English to remember their obligations to their weaker allies. When European neighbours need protection from the knavery of the enemies of liberty, the English can be relied upon to provide philanthropic (if not entirely selfless), armed assistance:

Our countrys our home & well haste to the call  
 For the friends of the honest are the friends of  
us all  
 When our neighbours in danger the dangers our own  
 & knaves they will wish they had left us alone

(73-76)

Clare sees England as a parent realm, superintending the custody of beleaguered nations. As Hugh Cunningham has correctly distinguished: "England, as the home of freedom, had a peculiar right and duty to spread its benefits to less fortunate nations" (19). Any unsolicited attack on the freedom of a fraternal nation is tantamount to an attack on English standards and standing; an assault on the very essence of English imperium. Cunningham illustrates this prevailing sentiment with an extract from C. Sheard's 1849 song, "Sound, Britons, Sound!",<sup>22</sup> which proclaims English responsibility towards the tyrannically oppressed:



"freedom", by neutralising the threat of internationalism through protracted war-mongering.

However, Clare's positive attitude towards English participation in European conflict and protection of pregnable states was qualified by his concern for the individual victims of militarism. The honour of England was purchased at the expense of unnumbered and unacknowledged lives. For Clare, the greatest injustice was the treatment of returning servicemen, both at the hands of the government and the civilian populace. These deserving veterans, often maimed and unable to work, received no fiscal compensation for their services beyond short-term parish relief, and thereafter were spurned and shamed by the wealthy individuals at whose doors they were obliged to beg.<sup>24</sup> In his early poetry, Clare illustrates the plight of these men, as an emphatic contrast to his colourful jingoistic verses of loyalist enlistment propaganda. In his first volume, Clare dedicates a vitriolic lament to "The Wounded Soldier" (Early Poems I 91), explicitly accusing the privileged classes of denying their indebtedness to one of the nation's "saviours":

But O in vain (it grieves me to relate)  
 These wooden stumps & this poor armless side  
 Attracts the pity of the rich & great  
 They deem my sorrows far beneath their pride

Yon house that shows its owners wealth & power  
 Lur'd me to ask relief but ask'd in vain  
 A scornful proudling drove me from the door  
 To crave a morsel from the needy swain

(37-44)

Those "rich & great" who are in a position to alleviate the sufferings of the returning soldier are too proud to receive him with the deserved hero's welcome, leaving him to the limited charity resources of the "needy swain". This wounded soldier, a "Poor shatter'd fragment" (17) of an Englishman, has devoted his whole (both entire and perfect) life to the cause of upholding the English ideals of liberty and righteousness, and feels no bitterness for the years spent in national defence:

These sixty years & heavens knows it true  
 Ive fought my countrys freedom to mentain  
 And spite of all the dangers Ive gone through  
 It was my fortune to come home again  
 But little thought I Land I dearly prize  
 That I should stump thy plains without a leg

(53-58)

The land that he so dearly prizes seems to account him nothing. He returns - disabled and useless - to beg on the streets of the land for which he would gladly have died. Clare's caustic attack on the hypocrisy of the situation is

far from subtle; when the soldier has done his expected duty, as Nelson had prescribed, England should do hers. The verse is a diatribe against both the deliberate ostracization of the veteran, and the iniquity of militarism. The poem opens with an eidetic account of war - far removed from the "glorious sight" (51) of "Waterloo:

O cruel War when will thy horrors cease  
 And all thy slaughtering of poor men give oer  
 O sheath O sheath thy bloody blade in peace  
 Nor stain thy hand with human blood no more  
 (1-4)

The reference to "poor men" in the second line suggests both the unfortunate, and the poverty-stricken, drawn from the lowest orders of society - Clare's own people. The most vulnerable class in civilian life has become cannon-fodder at the front, and the glory of war ultimately leaves them lame, impotent and prematurely aged: "Thou'st left him nothing but a single arm / Both legs are gone & he is old in years" (7-8). The soldiers once received respect and awe when they were cheered to their deaths; now they can expect only grudging compassion, condescension and the mocking jibes of children.

In Clare's successive volume, he relates the tale of another "Poor Soldier" (Early Poems II 396), driven to entreat support because of the absence of an adequate

governmental remuneration policy. This veteran has also traded glory for pity, and lives with the agonising knowledge that he has outlived his usefulness to his country:

O long I have fought for my country & king  
 & now am returnd for to beg  
 Robd of the fruits which my labour did bring  
 By the loss of a arm & a leg  
 In pity dont turn me away from your door  
 Nor linger my tale to believe  
 A crust will but little diminish your store  
 A crust hunger'll gladly receive

(1-8)

The ignominy of starvation, coupled with the absolute necessity of dependence, excites Clare's most intense sensitivity to injustice. The soldier "Robd of the fruits" of his patriotic endeavours discovers that he cannot expect to reap the rewards of his country's victories because of his handicap, which renders him redundant. His "country & king" have betrayed him, since what he protected now rejects him. All the veteran can expect to return to is an inglorious begging bowl and the patronage of the self-righteous. In the final stanza the soldier wishes for death, implying that a hero's end on the battlefields of Europe is preferable to a half-life amongst his unappreciative

compatriots. He would rather die than continue to survive with those who sent him into combat: "O Life thourt a burthen I wish thee away / A cripple & loaded wi years" (17-18). He can offer nothing to England now, since he is too old and afflicted to work on the land or take up arms. He has come to ask England for some recompense, and has been unequivocally shunned. The England that Clare represents in these virulent verses is a merciless and opportunistic nation, sacrificing willing martyrs (usually the poor) for its own greater glory and international prestige.

In "The Village Minstrel", Clare focusses on a battle-scarred sailor, bringing a note of melancholy to a jubilatory annual village festival:

While the poor sailor wi his hat in hand  
 Hops thro the crowd that wonerfully stares  
 To hear him talk of things in foreign land  
 Bout thundering cannons & most bloody wars  
 & as he stops to show his seamy scars  
 Pity soon meets the ploughmans penny then  
 The sailor heartfelt thankfulness declares  
 'God blesses' all & stiles em gentlemen  
 & fobs his money up well pleasd & gins his tale agen  
 (708-716)

Once again it is the poor man - the ploughman - who must pay for these injustices, since the "real" gentlemen, like the

"proudling" in "The Wounded Soldier", will not accept the responsibility. There is a pathos in the gentle humour of the old sailor, spinning his yarn for every gullible ploughman, and pocketing the pennies. He is obliged to tender "heartfelt thankfulness" for anything with which his wretchedness is rewarded. It is a humiliating subjection and although Clare treats the veteran sailor with affable humour, there is a strong undercurrent of the same acrimony which characterised his accounts of the alienated, penniless soldiers. Those unfortunate enough to return from the 'fight for right' enjoy a brief popularity and notoriety, and are then forgotten forever. Clare must have empathised with their plight after his own experiences as an out-moded peasant poet, catching the last wave of poetic fashion, and enjoying a similarly short-lived novelty value. For the soldiers, there is no glory on the home front, and they become little more than an embarrassment to the ruling elite.

Clare's cynical portraiture of the returning "hero" is reinforced by evidence amassed by George Deacon, indicating that Clare's expansive collection of folk-ballads included verses of protest and frank anti-war sentiment. In "The Disconsolate Soldier" (Deacon 240), the speaker bemoans the fate of the fighting man, and the ingratitude of the English:

When my money was gone that I gain'd in the wars,  
 And the world 'gan to frown at my fate,  
 What matter'd my zeal, or my honour'd scars,  
 When indifference stood at each gate.

The face that would smile, when my purse was well  
lin'd

Shew'd a different aspect to me. (1-6)

The soldier's "honour'd scars", incurred for the glory of his homeland, now meet with "indifference". When the inadequately pensioned soldier is no longer self-sufficient, he becomes a liability, and a possible threat to the equilibrium of the English political ideal, since "ex-soldiers in early nineteenth century Britain were potent symbols of the potential violence of the mob" (Hichberger 50). The theme is paralleled in another manuscript, "The disabled Soldier, or british Loyalty" (Deacon 52), a petitional ballad damning Britain's leaders, which Deacon argues was probably composed by a circumspect Clare, preserving his anonymity. The ballad entreats the wealthy to pay a personal debt to the "True Blue Britton" (36), who has given his limbs to the cause. There is a vein of wicked humour in his melodramatic willingness, in lines 29-32, to leap again to the defence of his homeland, even though he only has "pegles stumps" (18) to carry him to the front:

And should my country, ever stand in need  
 Of men, again, their freedom to maintain;  
 Away I'd hop with more than willing speed  
 To take the field, or brave the watry main.

The irony only serves to emphasise the injustice and compound the horror. In Clare's warring England, freedom only means the freedom to beg and starve. The civilian does not want to be reminded of the reality of warfare by confronting disability and suffering, and the soldier has endured losses for which he can never be compensated.

In the work of Clare, the inconsistencies of patriotic loyalty are made manifest. How can the desire for a nation that epitomises freedom and justice be reconciled with the necessity of suffering to achieve liberation? Clare divorces his support of English military intervention from the individual circumstance, enabling him to both praise military success and decry the predicament of the returning service-man. In the propagandist "England Poems", patriotic unification is employed as a mode of suppression - mobilising people of all classes in a common purpose and, concurrently, distracting them from more immediate preoccupations with the condition of England. Clare boards this patriotic bandwagon when he implicitly accepts that supporting English militarism is a way of refocussing the popular national consciousness away from difficulties at

home. He is embracing the political appropriation of patriotism as a universal salve, and mollifying his critics and his conscience by protesting the cause of the particular - but fictitious - casualty.

CHAPTER III  
FALSE PROPHETS<sup>25</sup>

John Clare's romantic conception of the honour of loyalist martyrdom and national defence is not exclusively reserved for the battle-field. The English national identity - that which distinguishes it from the homeland of "knaves" - is also under siege from any number of undeclared enemies within. The loyal Englishman is called upon to engage in a perpetual struggle to preserve his patriotic selfhood and the inherent glory of his motherland. Clare believes that the English ideal is worth fighting and dying for because of its undisputed superiority over all other cultures. The moralising and arrogant tone which he frequently adopts in the "England Poems" reveals his sense of England as the realm of the righteous. In an affiliated series of poems, letters and prose meditations, Clare addresses his fear of mutiny - the notion that England may be being sabotaged from the inside while her resources are being deployed to counter foreign threats.

Clare prefaces his poem "England" (Early Poems II 69) with a few lines from Cowper, intimating that "where english minds and manners may be found",<sup>26</sup> there allegiance and patriotic love are due. The poem expresses concern for the safety of England, which Clare sees as being under threat,

not only from easily identifiable external forces, but also - more insidiously - from native radicals whose bids for freedom are seen by him as a means to spread dissent:

"England my country theres villains woud crush thee / Thats shouting out freedom dissention to sow" (5-6). Here, Clare is betraying his anti-revolutionary feelings, distrustful of appeals to reform as methods to divide the people with the promise of freedom. England is fundamentally dishonoured by such mercenary "villains". He calls upon his faithful compatriots to deal harshly with such traitors: "may thy base natives their mother land wounding / Meet the resentment of those that are true" (11-12). The heinous crime of maiming the motherland is viewed as a natural by-product of unchecked oppositional radicalism, and Clare favours the conservative alternative to revolution, choosing the right of law over the potential catastrophe of anarchy: "Better keep laws that have ages confind thee / Then loose them to wolves & be instant devourd" (13-16).

The treacherous home-grown enemies of Britain are the targets for Clare's most bitter assaults, and he names them: "pretenders" (17); "false prophets" (18); "spys" (19); "cut throat assasins" (21); "rebel hypocrites" (27) and "the basest of savages" (31). In the fourth stanza, Clare urges England to "return to past days for a caution" (25), invoking his respect for the archaic, and enlisting the aid

of biased historical paradigms to support his contention. He addresses the issues of illegality and regicide, dismissing such extreme lawless means as a route to "freedom". For Clare, "freedom" lay in the restraints of the law and its ability to enforce uniform behaviour patterns on a pliant English populace. He was an upholder of the rights of man, as controlled by the letter of the law. This poem is a rare example of Clare's didacticism, as he chides persuasively, "Look at whats past as a caution for thee" (40). However confining the bonds of England are, contends Clare, they will always be preferable to the only other alternatives - civil war, or invasion by another country, and exile for the English:

England be patient your chains may be tiring  
 Still better slaves in a land of your own  
 Then yield up to traitors to vainness aspiring  
 & banishd as slaves into deserts unknown

(41-44)

Clare envisions the salvation of England coming through the intervention of great men, and tenders patience as a balm to the restless populace: "Wait & there doubtless may heroes be born thee" (55). His hope for the future lies in the international tactical manoeuvres of Nelson and Wellington, not in the ardent band of reforming radicals who sought conversion at the grass-roots level. Change had to take

place at the top - in conquests orchestrated by the upper  
 eschelons of society - before any revolution could be  
 effected 'below stairs'. Clare desired to see England as a  
strong and stable world power, internationally revered for  
her reputation as a guardian of essential antique human  
rights. Clare hoped - as did all purveyors of patriotism -  
 that this would please everyone, and eliminate the need for  
 any civil disquiet. He wanted to protect England from evil  
forces within and without, but - feeling himself  
 intrinsically inadequate - he appoints himself advocate of  
 such legendary figures as Nelson and Wellington, the  
custodians of English prestige.

A slightly later piece, "The Labourers Hymn", opens  
 with a call-to-arms, provoking the people to stand up for  
 the ancient English values of honesty and courage, and  
 deplore the vices of those same anti-patriotic enemies of  
 England whom he inveigled against in "England":

Reforming men of England support your hardy name  
 Nor leagued with cunning knaves grow infamous in  
 fame  
 Dishonour not the soil where our fathers they were  
 born  
 Nor let their boast of honesty be lost in utter  
 scorn  
 Stand up & join the honest both in courage & in mind



discord. His chosen images are of a full-scale sea-battle, with the King at the helm; the "traitors" are pronounced guilty of "mutiny" (56). Clare places a particular emphasis on the traditional symbols of the lion and the Union Jack, extending his sea-faring metaphor by encouraging his fellow "sailors" not to shame the "red white & blue" (15). A most proficient demagogue, Clare selects two emblems as a folklore focus for patriotic fervour to channel the emotions of his audience. He establishes these emblems through tautology; the lion appears nine times, the colours six. The flag stirs up feelings of national pride and obligation; the lion is the English national symbol, embodying strength and fearlessness. Both were immediately recognisable symbols in contemporary parlance. There can be no ambiguity in Clare's intent. He is appealing to the fundamental basis of Englishness in order to stimulate a primal instinct to defend one's own territory against alien and native malignancy. Even as the lion in its natural habitat will safeguard its territory, so the English lion must protect its environment and its young.

In the third stanza, Clare echoes a Biblical parable which juxtaposes the scenes of his metaphoric battle with an image of nature, as he had done in "Waterloo": "We look upon the mischievous with sorrow & with scorn / But the tares & the thistles will be weeded from the corn" (17-18). Again he

adopts an easily recognisable symbolic scenario which would be understood by all and which would unite all in a common experience. Clare parallels the extermination (the 'weeding-out') of undesirable elements - such as reformers - with a wholly natural process, which promotes the healthiness of the crop/nation. There are connotations of a harvest, with the rewards reaped in from an uncorrupted stock. The purgation of the land (both Country and country) implies an ethno-centricity not far removed from the supremacist ethic, with the English as a pure breed, with no venal dissenters.

The sixth stanza declares Clare's willingness to leap to the defence of his embattled nation in its hour of need, and trusts in the complicity of his fellow patriots to join him in the endeavour to maintain traditional English prerogatives:

For freedom is our birthright & ere the sneaky knave  
 Shall force us into mischief our freedom to enslave  
 Our firesides shall grow parliments our cottages be  
towers  
 For wrong shall never claim the right that all  
acknowledge ours

(43-46)

Clare juxtaposes the domestic realm with the sphere of governments and armies: administrating parliaments and the towers of national defence. The traditional feminine symbols

of firesides and cottages are appropriated to the male when the nation - popularly seen as a female "motherland" - cries for help. Hearth and home - the domestic havens of England honoured in "The Songs of Our Land" as the receptacles for essential Englishness - need to be protected by machoistic militarism and adversarial politics on the world stage. The arrogance of Clare assuming a right "that all acknowledge ours" implies an enforced sense of national superiority. Clare's "sentimental love of the mother-country" (Brooker and Widdowson 117) is uncomplicated because he believes so unequivocally in the natural seniority of the English, with the innate assurance of the committed nationalist.

Clare proceeds to align himself with the champions of rationality and legality: "For reason is our birthright & her law it is our power" (68). This declaration explicitly disassociates him from the clamour of revolution, and the reformers' need to break the law in order to rebuild the nation. For Clare, the nation's salvation is in its constitution, statutes, and its distillation of pragmatic level-headedness. He advocates the sort of systems of control that contemporary radicals were fighting to dismantle. Equilibrium must be achieved for the public good and it can only be achieved through authoritarian constraints. This illustrates a dichotomy in Clare's personal philosophy. He rejected all forms of repression in

nature (specifically the enclosure movement) and in his private life (as evidenced by his flight from High Beech Asylum), yet he appears here to embrace the subordination of the individual will to state control.

In a concomitant verse, "The Reformers Hymn" (Early Poems II 593), Clare explores the same themes, and advocates moderation in the reformers' zealotry, declaring that "The sun itself doth blush at deeds that some reformers do" (6). Clare again betrays a pronounced conservatism, clearly fearful of the possible effects of sweeping reform. The poem is a caveat - united we stand, divided we fall. If there are any petty dissensions within the populace - for Clare this includes the labours of peripetatic reformers, stirring up unrest wherever they roamed - then the heart of the nation will be affected. The subversive reform movement is analogised with a disease destroying the wholeness of England, by attacking its besieged heart - the Paradisial countryside where itinerant reformers run amok.

This hymn shares with its sibling verse the declaration of loyalist impulse, prophesising a time when "honesty & loyalty will rally round the throne" (32). In his respect and adulation of the monarchy, Clare evinces an allegiance which aligns him again with traditionally conservative mores. This idolatry of his king suggests his tacit acceptance of the old order - with a rigidly stratified pro-

monarchist society, in which all know their place, except the "traitors" who peddle reform. Such knaves desire to destroy the hallowed status quo, and upset the absolute authority of divine right. In the final stanza, Clare even declares fidelity to the nation's parliamentarians, proffering a "health to ministers for noble men they be" (41). He seems intent here upon indiscriminately glorifying the long-established balance of political power and procuring the support of a unified people. Reform is acceptable only if it confirms and strengthens the power of the establishment.

Clare was certainly advocating some degree of political reform at this time, yet he wanted not to bring a new world order into painful existence, but rather to revive an old domain, which deified established political practices: "In politics I never dabbled to understand them thoroughly with the old dish that was served to my forefathers I am content" (Autobiographical Writings 26). The present was unsatisfactory, and he would rather resuscitate a safe, past life than venture into an unknown future. He spoke reverently of his "love for old times and . . . veneration for antiquity",<sup>27</sup> and he rejected the call-to-arms of the new radicals, who desired to destroy all ancient institutions and deliver a new era, unhindered by repressive tradition.

Clare's book-length satire, The Parish charts the untimely end of established eschelons and ranks and in it lies the "recognition that social relations between the component classes of rural society had been transformed. No longer were they regulated by tradition and custom, nor even a benevolent sense of social obligation, but by the impersonal, and increasingly harsh, reality of the market" (Newby Country Life 32). The illusive "Golden Age" of society was affectionately recollected as "a time of order and structure 'when masters lived as masters ought' and when, in consequence, they treated the servants and labourers well" (Howkins and Dyck 28). Clare, like William Cobbett, believed in a Burkean ideal of natural aristocracy, where those of 'good-breeding' held dominion over those who knew their place, and stayed in it. Cobbett's sense of England was anchored in the knowledge of strict class stratification which had made the English "the finest race of people the world ever saw" (Political Register April 1821, qtd. in Schweizer and Osbourne 147). The old order remained unequalled and "To this the nation owed its excellent habits. All was in order here. Every one was in his place" (Political Register April 1821). In the Political Register, Cobbett preached his faith in the moral rectitude of entrenched rural hierarchies, for "When Master and Man were the terms, everyone was in his place, and all were

free" (14th April 1821). In December 1819, a Mr. Stuart Wortley, responding to the restructuring of established scales, had spoken of a chain of being which defined man's 'proper' place:

the peasant looked up to the farmer, the farmer to his landlord, the proprietor to the peer, and the peer to the Crown, thus forming a connected chain which bound the highest and lowest classes of society together.

(qtd. in Thomis 117)

Today, E.P.Thompson proffers an interpretation of the appeal of these paternalistic social structures in English society:

Paternalism as myth or as ideology is nearly always backward-looking. It offers itself in English history less as actuality than as a model of an antique, recently passed, golden age from which present modes and manners are a degeneration.

(Customs in Common 23)

The freedom which comes with this "tradition of mutual aid"<sup>28</sup> is also celebrated by Clare, and treasured by him as a fundamental English right. Traditional class segregation is as reassuring to the disenfranchised peasantry as the knowledge of maintainable community customs, yet the new

order has imperilled even their subordinate position. In The Parish, the new entrepreneurial farmers show scant respect for the old order and "view old customs with disdainful eyes" (154). Clare yearned for the days before self-appointed orators disrupted the remnants of this bygone society. He often commented caustically on the contemporary tendency of village dwellers to hold reform meetings, and dabble in petty politicking, a trend which he regarded as entirely self-centred:

What do you think by the bustle & bother of this country meeting mania when every village is metamorphosed into a Forum & every Giles into an Orator . . . Are these the signs of better times I much fear it - yet it is strange to turn round for a moment & see these proteus assemblages ... self being the only thing that sticks to its own colours<sup>29</sup>

Clare's contempt for this mockery of procedure is presented through his acerbic terminology: "bustle"; "bother" and "mania". He fears "better times" if they are to be the product of this self-interested infatuation with country meetings and political proselytizing. Clare repudiates democratic representation and freedom of speech as means of acquisitive self-advancement:

The times as you say are bad & the worst is that I fear all this bother about 'country meetings' & other rigmarole pretentions will not better them - tho there are many voices mixed up in the cry commonsense is seldom among them for self-interests & individual prosperitys are the universal spirits that stir up these assemblages of reformers<sup>30</sup>

Clare's conservative craving for common sense to prevail over proceedings is coupled with his lack of faith in the whole egalitarian process of free expression, and freedom of assembly. Clare has nothing but contempt for the egocentric aspect of the reforming spirit, with its enthusiasm for "prosperitys". The "pretentions" and "self-interests" of his fellow Englishmen saddened and angered Clare, as well as providing him with an easy target for his most venomous satire:

How the times have altered the opinions & views of the people even here we have our villages mustering into parliaments & our farmers puffing themselves up into orators & there is scarcely a clown in the village but what has the asumption to act the politician<sup>31</sup>

The language is again both patronising and cynical: the "puffing" farmers and the village "clown" are ridiculed for

their sense of self-importance. Clare's sentiments are reactionary as he regards the events of the reform movement with a derisive, distrustful eye. His pronounced conservatism conveys again his taste for the "old dish that was served" to his ancestors. He has no patience with the debate between pro- and anti-reformers, whose ideals he saw as foundationally self-serving. In a letter to John Taylor in May 1831, he spoke dismissively of the polarising of village political life: "we have clamorous meetings of reformers & anti reformers are swearing that black is white & another that white is black & of this there is no end" (Letters 540). Clare interpreted this growing political awareness in rural regions as an unproductive and illogical complication of a simple truth: that the ancient feudal hierarchies of country life that epitomised "Merrie England" are historically proven models which should endure. He was contemptuous of the flourishing selfish interest in provincial political reformation and had expressed his disdain for the self-consumed commercial farmers, with their corrupt and possessive concern for "country meetings" in which to assert themselves, in a much earlier letter to Taylor:

if I had an enemey I coud wish to torture I  
woud not wish him hung nor yet at the devil

my worst wish should be a weeks confinement in  
 . . . a company of marketing farmers thrumming  
 over politics in an alehouse<sup>32</sup>

For Clare, the solution clearly lay outside the "proteus assemblages" and unstructured alehouse forums of the unqualified farming classes. Politics, Clare protested in the accent of Edmund Burke, is not the prerogative of all people. He had very little faith in the process of popular political reform, believing that to be the task of England's "natural" leaders. He spoke disparagingly of the supposedly educated farming classes and their susceptibility to an egoistic reforming spirit in an 1832 letter to Marianne Marsh: "I am sorry to see it now & then verging into the middle classes of society whose knowledge ought to teach them commonsense & humanity for if they have it they never let it get into their speeches" (Letters 560). Clare also decried the self-assumed rights of his reform-minded neighbours in Helpston:

Every farmer is growing into an orator and every village into a Forum of speech making and political squabbles - the general good is the universal out cry of these speakers and peti[tion]ers but self interest is the undoubted spirit that puts all in motion<sup>33</sup>

Hence, self-interest subjugates the vulnerable cottager to the unscrupulous merchants of reform. Clare was concerned that the poor man was being victimized by the duplicities of reformist politics, and feared that the volcanic emotions of the oppressed would erupt and cause mass bloodshed:

God forbid that I should live to see a  
 revolution it is bad enough to be under  
 the apprehensions of such a matter but  
 every day convinces us that a hazardous  
 change of calm or tempest is approaching  
 I am uneasy . . . in these freebooting  
 calamitys<sup>34</sup>

Clare sought nothing more dramatic than a peaceful embracing of former values and traditions. He advocated retreat over advance. If he demanded any revolution, it was a paradoxically conservative revolution - promoting change by reasserting the 'good old days' as an alternative to present woe. He embraced a philosophy of retroactive revolution - a backward step towards the secure and stable virtues of his own youth. He was fearful of the excesses of extremism from which this retro-revolutionary mentality protected him.

Clare's dread of the 'mob' and his animosity towards extreme radicalism can be traced back to an incident which he recorded in his autobiography:

I believe the reading a small pamphlet on the murder of the french King many years ago with other inhuman butcheries cured me very early from thinking favourably of radicalism the words 'revolution and reform' so much in fashion with sneering arch infidels thrills me with terror when ever I see them - there was a Robspiere . . . a most indefatigable butcher in the cause of the french levellers, and if the account of him be true, hell has never reeked juster revenge on a villian . . . may the foes of my country ever find their hopes blasted by dissappointments and the silent prayers of the honest man to a power that governs with justice for their destruction meet always with success

(Autobiographical Writings 26)

There is no equivocation in Clare's attitude: the "honest" Englishman must be shielded from the "sneering" traitors by legitimated authoritarians. Clare considers revolutionaries and reformers to be the "foes" of England, and supports the right of the "power that governs with justice" to suppress such "arch infidels", whom he equates with the 'sans cullottes', radicalised and manipulated by Robespierre in the previous century. He fears the appeal of charismatic

radical leaders in England, and prays for "their destruction". Robespierre, the "indefatigable butcher" guilty of "inhuman butcheries" of his own people, is transmuted into a focus for Clare's worst fears about radicalism. His concern was not unique. Indeed, "[t]he French Revolution and the threat of Napoleonic invasion intensified francophobic self-esteem" (Lowenthal 211) throughout England. In the wake of the Jacobin Reign of Terror in Paris, a national paranoia swept through England<sup>35</sup> and prompted the monarch to raise an ad hoc militia for national defence, which Clare joined, against the French 'disease' of revolutionary mutation. The French Revolution had a profound effect on national accord since "The British, already territorially unified and not without patriotism when the Revolution hit them, became more nationalist" (Shafer 137).

Clare's innate conservatism made him fiercely defensive of the values he associated with his natal land, and desirous of jealously protecting them from native subversives as well as foreign influences. His resentment of the 'mob' as a revolutionary force, and inquietude over the amount of popular power at the disposal of reformers is rooted in his lifelong obsession with the French Revolution. Even in his final years, as Geoffrey Grigson has attested, Clare referred to the asylum as a "bastille", and spoke of

his fear that the inmates were all being turned into Frenchmen (Grigson 35). His fear is testament to Shafer's theory that "the French threat united the British in defense of and pride in the British way of life" (136). Clare used his ability to recreate a stable, conservative England as a bastion against alien subversive elements seen to originate from the French experience. His abject terror of the mob mentality originates from memories of the propaganda surrounding the Reign of Terror - an event which had received much publicity in England during Clare's most impressionable years. The menace of the 'mob' lay in its tendency to lose control, and be driven by instinct over reason. This directly contravenes Clare's precept of the English, that "reason is our birthright". Clare was even afraid that his personal safety was in jeopardy in the previously secure haven of the English countryside:

in the winter it was dangerous for any lone person to go even a journey to Peterbro -  
. . . mischief became so predominant & daring as to threaten the peaceable even in their cottages . . . the universal wish of such ignorance is 'that henceforward all things shall be in common' & surely when such a desperate flood gathers into strength - the mind must feel terror at its threatening destruction -

their passions are not softened by reason or guided by common sense - the mob impulse of the moment kindles their minds into mischevious intentions & reflection never stays their course for a moment brute strength is all they possess & it is as dangerous monopoly in the hands of a mob as it is in that of so many savages & I may say I never saw so terrible a threatening of rev[ol]utionary forbodings as there was in the maschine breaking & grain destroying mania of last winter<sup>36</sup>

Clare's fear of these "rev[ol]utionary forbodings" is intense. He is in awe of the mob's "brute strength" and decisiveness, yet he does not applaud their measures to implement reform. They are "savages", with "mischevious intentions" who are metamorphosed into a "desparate flood" of unthinking unity when passion triumphs over reason, as it inevitably must do among the ignorant. Clare's conclusions are fundamentally undemocratic. The people's wish that "henceforward all things shall be in common" is dismissed as "ignorance", while Clare endeavors to promote "peaceable" conservatism in the rural realm. He clearly rejects the principle of the greatest good for the greatest number, because of his elitist belief in the inequitable distribution of power among the 'natural aristocracy'. He

protests "the reform of mobs where the bettering of the many is only an apology for injuring the few". His cognizance that "mobs never were remembered for a good action"<sup>37</sup> completely contradicts one popularly advocated hypothesis that his allegiance to the common rabble was a personal affiliation borne out of positive life experiences.

Clare shared little common ground or sympathy with the class into which he was born. Throughout his poetry, journals and letters there are repeated references to his uncharitable disposition towards his fellow villagers, "that useful but ignorant class of people our peasantry".<sup>38</sup> Clare was not a forgiving man. Where he had been persecuted by his neighbours because of his poetry writing and love of solitude, he answered with barbed poetic satire, and angry railing at the "vulgar" and "ignorant". The nature of his craft and fame removed him socially from other landless labourers, but he was still condemned to live among them and submit to their scorn. His fate is strikingly similar to that of Lubin, the largely autobiographical and melancholic 'hero' of "The Village Minstrel":

Folks much may wonder how the thing may be  
 That lubins taste shoud seek refined joys  
 & court the 'chanting smiles of poesy  
 Bred in a village full of strife and noise  
 Old senseless gossips & blackguarding boys

Ploughmen & threshers whose discourses led  
 To nothing more then labourers rude employs

(Stanza 40 lines 385-391)

Clare despised his neighbours for their coarseness, incivility, and lack of education. In his work there are a number of references to individual members of the Helpston community and he reserved his most caustic attacks for those in his nearest social enclave.

Edward Storey notes that Clare's specialised education "isolated him among his own kind" (97). In childhood and early adolescence Clare received privileged tutelage and was allowed unsupervised access to the libraries of his educators. This effectively separated him from those receiving the most basic form of education necessary for survival in the agrarian community. Even as a young child, Clare celebrated this perceptual distinction: "I now began to value my abilitys as superior to my companions and exalted over it in secret" (Autobiographical Writings 14). He became increasingly arrogant in his self-perceived superiority from the rest of his class, separating himself from their domestic concerns and, later, their politics. His early fondness for literature and cerebral pursuits kept him detached from his peers, and his isolationism was interpreted locally as a form of madness:

I grew so fond of being alone at last that

my mother was feign to force me into company  
for the neighbours had assured her mind into  
the fact that I was no better then crazy

(Autobiographical Writings 53)

Clare met with widespread derision when he elected to embrace the ascetic life over the validated career of the 'honest' labourer: "it is common in villages", he wryly observed, "to pass judgement on a lover of books as a sure indication of laziness" (Autobiographical Writings 5). He openly disparaged the narrow aspirations and limited horizons of his Helpston neighbours:

the laughs and jeers of those around me when they found out I was a poet was present death to my ambitious apprehensions for in our unletterd villages the best of the inhabitants have little more knowledge in reading then what can be gleaned from a weekly Newspaper,

Old Moors Almanack, and a Prayer Book on Sundays, while the labouring classes remain as blind in such matters as the Slaves in Africa  
(Autobiographical Writings 15)

Intellectual elitism is at the root of Clare's distrust and devaluation of the labouring classes. He felt distinctly different from his natural fellows, and implied that their "laughs and jeers" arose from a fear of someone beyond their limited comprehension. Clare saw himself as a persecuted artist, suffering the barbs of an uncultured mob, while the Tibbles earnestly protest in their appraisal of Clare, "How ruthless an unlettered community can be towards any tendency to difference from the herd is by now a commonplace" (17). In lines 6-12 of "Helpstone", Clare chides the philistine villagers for their absolute resignation to destiny, and intellectual retardation. Equating himself with the "low genius" of line nine, Clare condemns the populace as petty-minded and envious, motivated only by the exigencies of constant, mindless toil:

Where bustling labour drives the hours along  
 Where dawning genius never met the day  
 Where useless ign'rance slumbers life away  
 Unknown nor heeded where low genius tries  
 Above the vulgar & the vain to rise  
 Whose low opinions rising thoughts subdues  
 Whose railing envy damps each humble view

As the labouring class "slumbers life away" in a sleep-walk of field-work, untroubled by wider philosophical concerns because of the poverty of their intellect rather than their

exoteric condition, Clare feels artistically stifled. He confided the extent of his alienation from his own class in two letters to his publisher, John Taylor, describing Helpston as "a land overflowing with obscurity & vulgarity",<sup>39</sup> populated by "ignorant . . . silent neighbours who are insensible to every thing but toiling & talking of it & that to no purpose".<sup>40</sup>

This strident and unequivocal condemnation surely abrogates Edward Storey's sentimental contention that, although Clare "could often be annoyed by his neighbours' narrow-mindedness and ignorance, he rarely lost sympathy for them" (99). In none of Clare's work is there much evidence of his sympathies being drawn to his unfortunate Helpston neighbours. Indeed, in "Rural Morning" he refers to "Young hodge the horse boy" as "A senseless lump of animated clay" (18). He wholly disassociated himself socially from his own kind and had little respect for their demands for reform.

Clare's treatment of indigent farmworkers - as exemplified by his proselytizing on the poor inhabitants of Helpston - completely repudiates the belief that he wanted to see the lowly rise above their ignominy on the wings of parliamentary reform. He saw them as little better than beasts, and treated their claims in accordance with this judgement. Clare's attitude to the labouring class confirms his identity as reactionary social legislator, strengthening

the hierarchical forms which continued to keep the lower orders 'in their place'.

It is indubitably conservative to desire the maintenance and perpetuation of the existing order - be it cultural, social or political. Tom Nairn has remarked upon constitutionalism's "obsession with the safe, fossilized forms of past authority and legitimacy" (272), and the same can be maintained for conservatism. Conservatives uphold the rights of the monarchy and the power of the established elite, and opposition to revolutionary change in existing institutions is a typically conservative tendency. Conservatism also implies respect for entrenched traditions, and espouses the ideology of class domination and its attendant acceptance of intellectual elitism, which education affords to the higher classes. This hypothesis was elucidated by Edmund Burke, whose conservative faith in the 'natural aristocracy' implies that egalitarianism is the greatest social evil, and whose antiquated views on suffrage included the conservation of a system of representation handed down from the Middle Ages (Strauss and Cropsey 659-679). John Clare's political vision incorporates certain characteristics which make him easily co-optable by the conservatives. He retained aristocratic notions of social hierarchies, despite his own humble origins, and lauded the feudal system in community relations, which oppressed his

own class, fearing the onset of "the new reality of class relations" with "its symbol - the newly prosperous, socially aspirant farmer".<sup>41</sup>

The conservative appropriation of Clare was originally instigated by his publishers and patrons, who recognised that his natural conservatism could be adopted as a stringent defence against the contemporary national predisposition towards radicalism and reform that Clare distrusted: "His conservatism was what appealed to counter-revolutionary image builders" (Sales English Literature in History 91). Clare was to be used as an authoritative model, to enforce traditional conservative values and uphold established rule, as a bulwark against the radical dissension of his time. His poetry functioned didactically, to preserve the status quo and promote the image of the 'happy peasant' as a deflection of the reform movement's concerns. Clare's organic conservatism was co-opted to the cause of a repressive totalitarianism manufactured by a politically right-wing governing class, advocating a false idyll of stability in a time of cataclysm and dissent.

## CONCLUSION

In their appraisal of patriotic English literature, Peter Brooker and Peter Widdowson have defined a "distinction between forms of declamatory, cajoling and uplifting patriotism and a non-aggressive, sometimes non-militaristic, patriotism invested in ideas of the national character, its traditions, and a unifying love of country" (117). In John Clare, these two seemingly irreconcilable sides of patriotism are coalesced. His personal patriotism had two distinct manifestations: in the war-mongering "England Poems", designed to reconfirm an innate sense of national superiority, and in the tranquil love of English traditionalism bound up with the "immemorial rural roots" (Moynahan 20) of his people. He unites the extremes of patriotic feeling, by bolstering both the realm of "Little England", safe from such external forces as enclosure, industrialism, and parochial democracy, and the realm of "Great Britain", which implies an embracing of externalism.

Clare's patriotic conservatism cannot justifiably be denied. His nostalgic vision of England's glorious past; his reverence for old customs; his fervent militaristic nationalism, and his attitude towards the reform movement evince a strong conservatism in his political perspective. His personal nostalgia was for an anachronistic tableau of

ancient and quiescent rural England. In the enclosure movement, industrial advance and his own transition from infancy to maturity, he was forced to acknowledge that this nostalgic ideality of England was not inviolate and, hence, his writing became both a way of preserving the past, and preserving a place for himself there. He was, as Roger Sales confirms, "concerned not only to take refuge in the past, but also to provide a refuge for the past" (English Literature in History 105). In the same manner that the perpetuation of village customs and folk music could metaphorically arrest the march of progress, so Clare felt he could resuscitate primitive rural culture through his preservation of the ballad and his own poetry. His conservative ideology, which pays court to "the inexhaustible, unregenerate energies of primary nature" (Moynahan 34), is concentrated on the conservation of a now fallacious notion of England, rooted in a remembered Golden Age.

Clare also pledged allegiance to the high Tory precept of reflexive patriotism as a means of suppressing the call for democracy, by playing on the English fear that "the sea is laden with rootless transients envying our home" (Lowenthal 214). The poor were thus drawn into supporting "a patriotic war of counter-revolution which reinforced the conservative social structure" (Nairn qtd. in Colley 103),

by which they were to be placated and distracted by the concept of 'one nation', united behind the revered monarchy, and duty-bound to protect traditional English values under siege from minatory foreign and native subversives.

For Clare, the salvation of England was to be achieved through patriotic allegiance, which functioned, as Hugh Cunningham has suggested, on two levels, "not only to justify a backward looking escape from industrialism, but also to combat head-on the threats to liberty which an industrialising civilisation increasingly posed" (16). Clare preserved his paradigm of England as "a mythic moment of paradise enshrined in literary convention" (Schultz 147), which resisted the advent of a new era, and offered an attractive alternative to contemporary social unrest in the countryside, since "this gently undulating, green, and unsevere landscape dominated the conception of ideal England" (Chase 143).

In Clare's lifetime, the countryside, which typified the best of England, was losing its pragmatic relevance and some of its fragile beauty, necessitating the recreation of an English Eden as a haven from truth. The mid-nineteenth century, was "a time of great social change, when the countryside was changing not only its appearance and function, but also its meanings and ideological significance for the urban bourgeoisie", leading to the fabrication of

"an imaginary past constructed to ward off the anguish of the present".<sup>42</sup> Clare used this microcosm of benign rural society to discourage reflection upon contemporary concerns over industrialism, radical activism and international discord through his intimate vision of England.

The English national identity is a deceptive one, manufactured and controlled to distort reality. The legend of England as eternal Arcadia has reached into the twentieth century as "a testimony to the emotive hold the myth still ha[s]" (Schultz 150) on the national psyche. John Clare was consciously implicated in the cultivation of this myth as a conservative propagandist, peddling the Paradise fantasy of pre-enclosure England to assert some stability in national crisis. The impassioned words of Arthur Gardner in 1942 suggest a compelling connection between Clare's conscious self-delusion and the willing suspension of belief of a whole nation through centuries of technical advance and both local and international dissidence:

When we think of England we do not picture crowded factories or rows of suburban villas, but our thoughts turn to rolling hills, green fields and stately trees, to cottage homes, picturesquely grouped round the village green beside the church and manor house. It is a green and pleasant land.<sup>43</sup>

This trusted "green and pleasant land" - a long-standing mythology of English life - was commemorated by Clare as a fragile reality requiring relentless reinforcement. His England, reconstructed from treasured memories of pre-enclosure Helpston, needed to be insulated against the perils of modern life; particularly enclosure, industrialism and reformism, and sustained in perpetuity. In defence of this realm, Clare offered a disciplined nostalgia, a natural conservatism and an intense patriotic loyalty.

## Notes.

1. Billy Bragg. "The Few". Don't Try This at Home. 1991.
2. For recent studies of the theories of nationalism, refer to: Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. (London: Verso, 1983); J. Armstrong, Nations Before Nationalism. (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1982); J. Breuilly, Nationalism and the State. (London: Manchester UP, 1982); J.C.D. Clark, "National Identity, State Formation and Patriotism: the Role of History in the Public Mind." History Workshop Journal 29(1990) 95-102; Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983) and E.J. Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism Since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990).
3. Paul Street. "Painting Deepest England: the late landscapes of John Linnell and the uses of nostalgia." The Imagined Past. History and Nostalgia. Eds. Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase. (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989) 77, and The Victorian Countryside. Vol.1. Ed.G.E. Mingay. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) 3.
4. Ernest Renan, qtd. in Hobsbawm 12.
5. Stan Smith. "Singular Men: Edward Thomas and Richard Jefferies." Delta. A Literary Review from Cambridge. 59 (1979): 20-24.
6. Washington Irving. Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. (1865). Quoted in: J.T. Ward, The Age of Change 1770-1870. Documents in Social History. (London: A.& C. Black Ltd., 1975) 49.
7. Edwin Muir. "One Foot in Eden". Modern Poems : A Norton Introduction. 2nd ed. Eds. Richard Ellman and Robert O'Clair. (New York: Norton, 1989) 255.
8. For a fuller discussion of the role of Eden in Romantic literature, with especial reference to Clare, see J. Armstrong, The Paradise Myth (London: Oxford U P, 1969); David Constantine, "Outside Eden : John Clare's Descriptive Poetry" in An Infinite Complexity : Essays in Romanticism, ed. J.R. Watson (Edinburgh: U of Edinburgh P, 1983); Margaret Drabble, A Writer's Britain. Landscape in Literature. (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1979); J.C. Garrett, Utopias In Literature Since the

- Romantic Period (Christchurch, New Zealand: U of Canterbury P, 1968); M.F. Schultz, Paradise Preserved. Recreations Of Eden in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century England. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985) and Janet Todd, In Adam's Garden : A Study of John Clare's Pre-Asylum Poetry. (Gainesville: U of Florida P, 1973) and "'Very Copys of nature': John Clare's Descriptive Poetry." Philological Quarterly 53 (Jan 1974): 84-99.
9. Robert Hayden. "A Letter from Phillis Wheatley". Modern Poems : A Norton Introduction. 2nd ed. Eds. Richard Ellman and Robert O'Clair. (New York: Norton, 1989) 489.
10. For a detailed discussion of the nineteenth century enclosures movement, refer to : J.L. and B. Hammond, The Village Labourer. 6th ed. (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1978); J.F.C. Harrison, The Common People. A History from the Norman Conquest to the Present. (London: Croom Helm, 1984); K.D.M. Snell, Annals of the Labouring Poor. Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985); W.E. Tate, The English Village Community and the Enclosure Movements. (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1967); M. Turner, Enclosures in Britain, 1750-1830. (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1984); J.T. Ward, The Age of Change 1770-1870 : Documents in Social History. (London: A. & C. Black Ltd., 1975) and J.A. Yelling, Common Field and Enclosure in England 1450-1850. (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1977). For an analysis of the effects of enclosures on Clare, see : John Barrell, The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840 : An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1972) and Johanne Clare, John Clare and the Bounds of Circumstance. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens UP, 1974).
11. Malcolm I. Thomis, Responses to Industrialisation. The British Experience 1780-1850. (Vancouver BC: David & Charles (Publishers) Ltd., 1976) 118.
12. David Lowenthal, "British National Identity and the English Landscape" Rural History 2,2 (1991) 213:

The now hallowed visual cliché - the patchwork of meadowland pasture, the hedgerows and copses, the immaculate villages nestling among small tilled fields - is in fact quite recent; only after the pre-Raphaelites did the recognisably 'English' landscape become an idealised medieval vision, all fertile, secure, small-scale, seamed with associations.

13. For an overview of the role of folksong in rural popular culture, consult: Frank Howes, Folk Music of Britain and Beyond. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1969) and Cecil J. Sharp, English Folk Song. Some Conclusions. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co. Inc., 1965).
14. See John Clare's Autobiographical Writings. Ed. Eric Robinson. (Oxford : Oxford UP, 1986) 27, 31-36.
15. See Michael Paffard, "Stephen Duck, The Thresher Poet." History Today Volume XXVII (July 1977) 467-473.
16. John Clare. Letter to John Taylor, qtd. in Mark Storey ed. Clare: The Critical Heritage. 127.
17. John Clare. "Waterloo". The Early Poems of John Clare. 1804-1822. Volume I. Eds. Eric Robinson and David Powell. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) 208.
18. John Clare. "Nelson & the Nile" The Midsummer Cushion. Ed. Anne Tibble. (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1979) 351.
19. In a 1916 essay, Sir Walter Raleigh (Merton Professor of English at Oxford from 1904) claimed that "half an Englishman's national pride derives from 'his fellowship with Drake, Sidney, Bacon and Raleigh, Spenser and Shakespeare'" whose "example had been a source of . . . unity in the past", suggesting a connection with Clare's invocation of Southey and Bloomfield as national unifiers through their literature. [From Peter Brooker and Peter Widdowson. "A Literature for England". Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-1920. Eds. Robert Colls and Philip Dodd. (London: Croom Helm, 1986) 119].
20. John Clare. "Ocean Glories - Tune "Old Benbow" A Beautiful Melodie" The Midsummer Cushion. 349.  
 Bold Grenville met a shot & was brought to the ground  
 & courage for a while forced to bow  
 They dressed his wounded head  
 & sorrow quickly fled  
 When they the laurel saw springing up from the wound  
 & glory weaving wreaths for his brow  
 (lines 31-36).
21. William Cobbett, Reasons for War against Russia in defence of Turkey, qtd. in A.J.P. Taylor, The Trouble Makers. Dissent over Foreign Policy, 1792-1939. (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1954), qtd. in Richard Gott, "Little Englanders". Patriotism. The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity. Volume 1. (London: Routledge, 1989) 90-102. 94.

22. "Sound, Britons, Sound! The Song of Progress" Marylebone 1849, Enthoven Collection, qtd. in Cunningham 19.
23. Edmund Burke, Reflections on the French Revolution. Vol. 2. Ed. Bohn. (London, 1864) 306. Qtd. in Boyd C. Shafer, Nationalism. Myth and Reality. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1955) 136.
24. Joany Hichberger describes this phenomenon:  
 In 1815, at the close of the Waterloo campaign, thousands of British soldiers were shipped back to their homeland and disbanded. Only a fraction of these veterans, the maimed or severely diseased, were entitled to a pension from the state, and all veterans were expected to return to their families and friends for care. However, the dislocation caused by years of military service and the stigma attached to joining the army meant that few veterans were able to blend back into their pre-service lives. A large majority of the returning veterans were unable to find work. Unemployment had been an important factor in their initial enlistment and their position as older men, unskilled and unhealthy, was even worse.  
 From "Old Soldiers." Patriotism. Volume 3. 51.
25. John Clare. "England". The Early Poems of John Clare. 1804-1822. Volume II. Eds. Eric Robinson and David Powell. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) 69.
26. William Cowper. "The Task", Book II, line 208. Qtd. in The Early Poems of John Clare. Volume II. 69.
27. John Clare. Letter to Sir John Trollope, 1831-2? The Letters of John Clare. Ed. Mark Storey. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) 553.
28. J.M. Neeson, "Parliamentary Enclosure and the Disappearance of the English Peasantry, Revisited." Agrarian Organisation in the Century of Industrialisation: Europe, Russia and North America. Research in Economic History. Suppl.5 (1989) 89-120. 113.
29. John Clare. Letter to William Robertson. Friday 29th January 1830. The Letters of John Clare. 497.
30. John Clare. Letter to John Taylor. Monday 1st February 1830. The Letters of John Clare. 498.
31. John Clare. Letter to George Darley. January-February? 1830. The Letters of John Clare. 501.

32. John Clare. Letter to John Taylor. Sunday 7th January 1821. The Letters of John Clare. 137.
33. John Clare, qtd. in John Clare: The Oxford Authors Series. Eds. Eric Robinson and David Powell. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984) 448.
34. John Clare. Letter to John Taylor. Monday 24th January 1831. The Letters of John Clare. 533.
35. Boyd C. Shafer paraphrases Alfred Cobban on this point: In Britain the "French scare" of 1792-1793 brought war against France. The war and the "scare" led to resolutions for "Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers", to royal proclamations against seditious writings, to trials for treason of agitators like Muir, Hardy, and Tooke who, favouring the French Revolution, desired constitutional reform in Britain, and to the hardening of "Toryism" in all aspects of British life.  
Nationalism. 136.
36. John Clare. Letter to Marianne Marsh. Wednesday 6th July 1831. The Letters of John Clare. 543.
37. John Clare. Letter to Marianne Marsh. Early January 1832. The Letters of John Clare. 560.
38. John Clare. Letter to Marianne Marsh. Wednesday 6th July 1831. The Letters of John Clare. 543.
39. John Clare. Letter to John Taylor. Early? October 1831. The Letters of John Clare. 550.
40. John Clare. Letter to John Taylor. Friday 8th February 1822. The Letters of John Clare. 230.
41. J.M. Neeson, "Opponents of Enclosure", qtd. in E.P. Thompson, Customs in Common. (London: The Merlin Press Ltd., 1991) 180.
42. Paul Street. "Painting Deepest England: the late landscapes of John Linnell and the uses of nostalgia." The Imagined Past. 79.
43. Arthur Gardner, qtd. by Malcolm Chase. "This is no claptrap: this is our heritage." The Imagined Past. 128.

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