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Homage to John Clare

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HOMAGE TO JOHN CLARE

If John Clare gave a reading of his poetry
what show would he put on, what clothes?
He would soon be escaping to his realest world.
He would need shoes.

We would not let you alone, John-bright
Clare-lunatic, and might you like that,
not to be lonely, left, and every Mary
turning to your door?

John Clare John Clare I stole your portrait
from a library book. I put it over
my desk at Honeywell and during some night
it fell, it fell,

and the janitor swept it away. "Pastoral
poems are full of nothing but the old thread bare epithets":
we await one who loves, we bury him, we rediscover
the most intimate of poets—

too grieved to be called confessional. On pootys:
"Blackbirds and Thrushes particularly the former
feed in hard winters upon the shell snail horns
hunting them from hedge bottoms

and wood stulps taking them to a stone where they break them
in a very dextrous manner." There is no judgment
there, where birds and pootys are not people.
Simply what happens

is mad then it is sane again before you know—
you have come in smiling from the storm.
Each year in a row we were given Shelley, Clare, *Songs
of Experience*, Keats.

Then deaths of all the wild and melancholy:
when Clare dies at Northampton 1864, Yeats is born
the next year. Would this age be kinder
or would we confuse

you on what you love? You blessed your two wives.
“The man whose daughter is the queen
of England is now sitting on a stone heap
on the highway to bugden”

penniless, with gnawing stomach.
I go out into the sunshine with his green book
and sit on the stair and say with a reader’s silliness
John Clare is here.