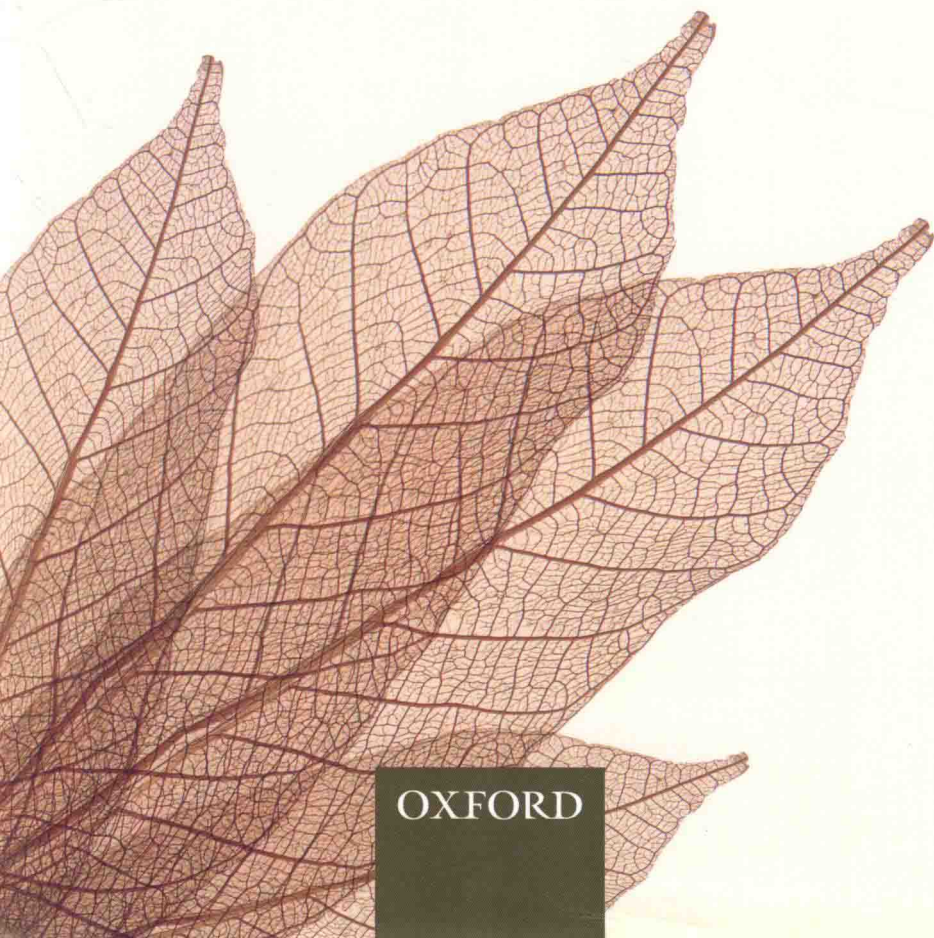


STEPHANIE KUDUK WEINER

# CLARE'S LYRIC

*John Clare and Three Modern Poets*



OXFORD

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**For Mark**

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## *List of Illustrations*

2.1	John Clare, <i>The Rural Muse</i> (1835), p. 115	59
2.2	John Clare, 'Peterborough Manuscript A54', p. 339	78
2.3	John Clare, 'Peterborough Manuscript A54', p. 340	79
2.4	John Clare, 'Peterborough Manuscript A61', p. 54	82

## *Note on Citations*

In quoting Clare's writings, and those of the many other authors I cite in this book, I have tried to strike a balance between reproducing a text faithfully and presenting it in an uncluttered way. I have also sought to adopt a uniform practice for quotation regardless of the source. I make no corrections of grammar or spelling except where necessary for grasping the sense of a passage, and I mark all such corrections with square brackets. I also indicate with brackets any changes or insertions I make to the text, with three exceptions. First and most significant, I silently introduce a full stop or a comma where the grammar of my own sentences necessitates them. Second, I indicate deletions with unbracketed ellipses. Third, I freely alter the capitalization of words, for example as they move from the beginning of a line to the middle of my sentence, or vice versa, and I mark such alterations only when they bear immediate significance upon the quoted passage. I never use the term *sic*.

# Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	xi
<i>Note on Citations</i>	xiii
Introduction	1
I. CLARE'S LYRIC TECHNIQUE	
1. Sound, Language, and the Lyric Subject: The Middle-period Poems	23
2. Form and Structure: The Sonnets	50
3. Representing Absence: Time, Space, and the Language of Poetry in the Asylum Poems	86
II. CLARE'S LYRIC IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY	
4. Arthur Symons: Mimesis after Aestheticism	125
5. Edmund Blunden: No Man's Land	143
6. John Ashbery: An Impossible Calque of Reality	161
Conclusion	179
<i>Bibliography</i>	181
<i>Index</i>	193



# Introduction

This is a book about mimesis and the medium of poetry. By examining the work of John Clare and three twentieth-century writers who looked to him at pivotal moments in the development of their own representational practice, I argue that their embrace of the ideal of mimetic referentiality goes hand in glove with a salient linguistic and formal medium. The poems I analyse ground their truth claims in the fidelity of their portraits of a world that is presented as real, as shared by the lyric subject and the reader, and as known through acts of observation, reflection, memory, and both intellectual and imaginative synthesis. As they do so, these poems draw attention to their medium. They investigate the scope and limits of the referential capacities of words, both singly and as they link together in patterns of sound, syntax, and lineation. They test the referential capacities of form itself, for instance by exploring how the boundedness of a poem might imitate the outer threshold of vision at the horizon, or by arranging elements in lists that mimic by turns the organization and the jumbling multiplicity of objects in a landscape. The verbal and formal medium of poetry is made to do new and often amazing things as these poets harness it for the 'task' of mimesis.<sup>1</sup>

The achievement of these poems arises from their writers' grappling with challenges to poetic mimesis that derive from the nature of language and from the particular contours of the worlds they seek to represent. For Clare, an acute awareness of the irresolvable disjuncture between words and things propels the poems he wrote in the late 1820s and 1830s, his middle period, while an effort to represent a world characterized above all by what it is missing directs his writing in the asylum years of the 1840s and 1850s. Arthur Symons felt that the aesthetic movements he had himself championed—impressionism and symbolism—had rendered 'the world' an undifferentiated tissue of 'colours' and 'motion', depriving it of tactile particularity and depriving him of 'the comradeship of things'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Ashbery, 'The Task' [*The Double Dream of Spring* (1970)], *The Mooring of Starting Out: The First Five Books of Poetry* (New York: Ecco Press, 1997), 227. See also 'Years of Indiscretion', where the lyric subject agrees 'to shoulder | Task and vision, vision in the form of a task' and begins by writing, 'Whatever your eye alights on this morning is yours: | ... It's all there. | These are things offered to your participation' (259). Hereafter, quotations from *The Double Dream of Spring* are cited in the notes by page number.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Symons, 'Amends to Nature', *The Fool of the World and Other Poems* (London: Heinemann, 1906), 27. Hereafter, quotations from the lyric sequence *Amends to Nature* are cited in the notes by page number.

Edmund Blunden's challenge was that the First World War had trampled nature into a no man's land and exposed poetry's inability to represent the 'sloughs of death' that defined his time and place, both on the Western Front and at home in England.<sup>3</sup> For John Ashbery, the world is resistant to representation because 'nobody can translate' things into words, yet this fact does not stop him from trying to 'hold to | An impossible "calque" of reality'.<sup>4</sup>

Clare figures significantly in these three poets' responses to these challenges, both as an author whose works they edit and discuss and as a character in their own poems. Symons's edition of *Poems by John Clare* (1908) coincides with his reconsideration of mimetic poetics in his lyric sequence *Amends to Nature* (1906). Blunden's collection *John Clare: Poems Chiefly from Manuscript* was published in 1920, the same year as his poems about the war and its aftermath, *The Waggoner*, whose crucial poem is entitled 'Clare's Ghost'. Ashbery's prose-poem 'For John Clare' anchors his experiment in translating the whole world into a book, *The Double Dream of Spring* (1970). As they assemble, read, and write about Clare's poems, Symons, Blunden, and Ashbery make critical interventions in the history of interpretation of Clare's writing. They bring unpublished poems into print and reveal previously unrecognized aspects of his work, and they make him relevant to successive generations of readers by interpreting his poetry in terms of the idiom and aesthetic ideas of their own milieus. Equally important, they also construct a 'Clare', and a version of Clare's lyric, that can help them as they forge their own mimetic poetry. In so doing, they recreate Clare's lyric for themselves. They make it their own. Clare's initial development of his distinctive and multifaceted approach to mimesis is my subject in the first part of this book. The later poets' unique reinventions of that approach, in their editions and essays and especially in their own poetry, is my subject in the second part.

The poems I examine in this study occupy a specific place in relation to the generic mode of the lyric, the aesthetic of Romanticism, and the literary phenomenon of mimesis. As I explain in the remainder of this Introduction, in each case that relation is determined by the fact that they stake their truth claims in a maximal assertion of mimetic fidelity and foreground the linguistic and formal medium of poetry.

They conform to the lyric mode by 'constituting a relation between mind and world such that each determines the other', which is the main

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Blunden, 'The Unchangeable', *The Waggoner and Other Poems* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1920), 22. Hereafter, quotations from *The Waggoner* are cited in the notes by page number.

<sup>4</sup> Ashbery, 'Summer', 234; 'The Bungalows', 284.

distinguishing feature of lyric, according to theorists such as William Elford Rogers.<sup>5</sup> More particularly, they render that lyric ‘reciprocity’ a kind of mimetic loop in which a real mind establishes and is established by a real world.<sup>6</sup> In their poems, the world is consistently a verisimilar realm of experience, paradigmatically the sphere of nature but also often the location of social life, from Clare’s village to Ashbery’s metropolis. The mind is a lyric subject who is correspondingly real, whether an explicit ‘I’, a person who has observed the world that is being represented, or the human agent of the poem’s interpretive and aesthetic work. In this way, the lyric ‘fusion of conception and image’ operates in these poems to endow both the mind and the world with mimetic attributes.<sup>7</sup> This ‘bidirectional’ mimetic gesture is always foundational to the lyric signature of the poems I discuss.<sup>8</sup>

Mimesis thus occurs not only in these poems’ representations of the world but also in their presentation of the lyric subject. Throughout this study I explore both elements of this mimetic reciprocity and how they operate together. The lyric subject of Clare’s poems is usually a straightforward ‘Clare’ whom we are invited to identify with the poet himself, although he also wrote a good many songs and ballads voiced by other speakers, and these are increasingly important in his later work. Either way, the lyric subject is personal and particular, and she or he reciprocally constitutes and is constituted by the world of the poem. (In technical terms, the lyric signature always overpowers the dramatic one.) When the lyric subject is ‘Clare’, for instance, his exceptional expertise as a naturalist, his strong and delicate emotions, and his abiding interest in seasonal and spatial patterns are all evident in and through the poems’ strategies for representing, organizing, and interpreting details. In other words, the lyric subject is made vivid and immediate as he perceives, feels, and thinks about the world—acts which in turn invest that world with vividness and immediacy.

In addition, Clare establishes a mimetic lyric reciprocity through a wide range of grammatical, structural, and thematic strategies for closely aligning the perceptual and interpretive vantage point of the lyric subject with that of the reader, as I describe in detail in Chapters 1 and 3. These strategies enable him to modulate finely the bidirectional relation between the

<sup>5</sup> William Elford Rogers, *The Three Genres and the Interpretation of Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 69.

<sup>6</sup> Rogers, *The Three Genres and the Interpretation of Lyric*, 68.

<sup>7</sup> James William Johnson, ‘Lyric’, in Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan (eds), *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 715.

<sup>8</sup> On ‘the bidirectional nature of the lyric genre’, see Jerome Mazzaro, *Transformations in the Renaissance English Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), 10.

lyric subject and the world. Sometimes he embeds an embodied 'I' in a specific landscape within which he walks, listens, and looks, whether in the *now* of the poem or in past moments whose sounds and sights the poem draws together in a *now* of meditation or composition. At other times the lyric subject enumerates various items under a heading such as 'I love' or, more covertly if the word 'I' does not appear, under a principle such as typicality or a theme such as the nesting habits of birds. In poems in which he is present only as the intelligence that interprets the world and in so doing makes the poem, where the lyric subject is least palpable, his vantage point is most fully fused with that of the reader.

All these strategies are of paramount significance to Clare's mimetic poetics, but it is his construction of a merely implied yet coherent, personalized lyric subject that Blunden and Ashbery most strongly identify with him. As Blunden writes, 'In spite of his individual manner, there is no poet who in his nature-poetry so completely subdues self and mood and deals with the topic for its own sake.'<sup>9</sup> In Ashbery's words, 'The sudden, surprising lack of distance between poet and reader is in proportion to the lack of distance between the poet and the poem; he is the shortest distance between poem and reader.'<sup>10</sup> Indeed, as I explain in the second part of this book, all three later writers experiment with a lyric subject who avoids direct commentary in order to sharpen the focus on the represented world and to locate its meanings in the details and patterns the poem describes and imitates. In Symons's best poems, the lyric subject is the source of actions such as 'I hear', of descriptive data about sensory experience, and of metaphors and other markers of correspondences and meanings. Blunden hovers like a ghost half-removed from the world he portrays, his acts of observation (and, by implication, of poetic composition) the only thing preventing the complete disintegration of his self. He tells us about the toll the war has taken on him by describing the natural world it has also nearly destroyed. Ashbery's lyric subject is the person who has heard and seen the many voices and landscapes whose elements he shapes into his collage-like poems. Whether we take his lyrics as 'imitations of consciousness' or, as I do, as fully crafted works of art whose internal orders imitate the shapes and textures of reality, a lyric subject is essential to their mimetic assertion.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Edmund Blunden, 'Biographical', *John Clare: Poems Chiefly from Manuscript*, ed. Edmund Blunden and Alan Porter (London: R. Cobden-Sanderson, 1920), 44–5.

<sup>10</sup> John Ashbery, *Other Traditions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 17.

<sup>11</sup> Alfred Corn, 'A Magma of Interiors', in Harold Bloom, ed., *John Ashbery: Modern Critical Views* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985), 82.

The mimetic reciprocity that Clare, Symons, Blunden, and Ashbery develop differentiates their poems from lyrics in which the mind and/or the world are presented as unreal or as belonging to the world of the poem at the expense of external referentiality. Such anti-mimetic claims are of great importance to the modern lyric, most evidently in symbolist pure poetry, aestheticism, and language poetry, which attempt in various ways to estrange the medium of poetry from the ordinary uses and meanings of language and to prioritize the sensuous qualities of words by removing them from a recognizable setting. Such poems offer themselves to readers as 'purely formal structures, whose intelligibility, like the intelligibility of music, is entirely of an intransitive order: these are words in which language itself speaks and so offers itself as an object for experience'.<sup>12</sup> For many theorists as well, the lyric 'seems by its very nature, the fact that it is an event purely of language, to be furthest removed from any kind of mimesis or "referential illusion"'.<sup>13</sup> 'Lyric poetry is not mimesis,' argues Mutlu Konuk Blasing; 'it is a formal practice that keeps in view the linguistic code and the otherness of the material medium of language... It offers an experience of another kind of order, a system that operates independently of the production of the meaningful discourse that it enables.'<sup>14</sup> Thus, insofar as the poems I examine by Clare, Symons, Blunden, and Ashbery centrally avow mimesis, they belong to a very different region of the genre, a region that can be delimited along the border between a super-referential and an anti-referential posture. Yet at the same time the poems in this book have much to say to their cousins across the border, in particular about the medium of poetry, and so they participate in a shared aesthetic endeavour whose generic name is the lyric. They too assert 'the priority of linguistic form in the lyric', but they do so by merging rather than opposing mimetic and aesthetic appeals.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, that co-mingling of referential and aesthetic claims also connects them to the aesthetic of Romanticism. The poems I discuss in this book participate in a characteristically Romantic dialectic within which nature and imagination are fully intertwined. In his classic essay on the 'Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image', Paul de Man identifies this

<sup>12</sup> Gerald L. Bruns, *Modern Poetry and the Idea of Language: A Critical and Historical Study* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 2.

<sup>13</sup> Hans-Robert Jauss, 'La Douceur du Foyer: The Lyric of the Year 1857 as a Pattern for the Communication of Social Norms', *Romantic Review* 65.3 (May 1974): 201.

<sup>14</sup> Mutlu Konuk Blasing, *Lyric Poetry: The Pain and the Pleasure of Words* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 2.

<sup>15</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, 'On Lyric Poetry and Society', *Notes to Literature*, 2 vols, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), vol. 1, 43.

dialectic as 'the fundamental ambiguity that characterizes the poetics of romanticism'.<sup>16</sup> According to de Man, the at once strikingly concrete and emphatically metaphoric 'texture of poetic diction' in Romantic verse corresponds to a tension within the imagery, which conveys both a 'nostalgia for the object' that makes it 'difficult to distinguish between object and image' and a 'loyalty toward . . . language' that is so strong 'the object nearly vanishes'.<sup>17</sup> Tim Milnes, similarly, defines Romanticism as the 'intensification of the question of the relation between truth and language—or to put it another way, between literal meaning, referentially grounded in the world, and figurative meaning, creating its own world'.<sup>18</sup>

The four poets in this study place persistent pressure at a particular point within this aesthetic as it emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and as it continued to develop and to interact with other ideas about art in later years. That point is the exact spot where the utmost grounding of poetic language in the world dramatically opens up the verbal and representational dialectic such that concreteness implicates metaphor and the image belongs both to nature and to the poem. For example, they use dialect words, onomatopoeia, colloquial expressions, and quoted speech to maximize the concreteness of their language. Such strategies confer substantiality and vividness upon named objects and upon whole poems; they even seem to treat words like objects, bits of the real world that can be extracted and placed in a poem, further tying it to the world. Yet these same words and phrases are also dense with figurative implications: 'old mans beard', 'stolchy ploughlands', 'noahs ark' clouds, 'Are you folks just going out for a walk[?]'.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, they participate in patterns of sound and imagery that make independent sensuous appeals to the reader: 'wood pigeons flusker—road way cows | Brouze there—'.<sup>20</sup> It is almost as though the poets systematically try to identify how far their

<sup>16</sup> Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 2.

<sup>17</sup> de Man, *Rhetoric of Romanticism*, 2, 7, 8.

<sup>18</sup> Tim Milnes, *Knowledge and Indifference in English Romantic Prose* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 11. John Whale makes a related argument in which the world dialectically connected to imagination is politics and the social sphere rather than nature. See *Imagination Under Pressure, 1789–1832: Aesthetics, Politics and Utility* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> John Clare, 'The Nightingales Nest', *John Clare: Poems of the Middle Period*, ed. Eric Robinson, David Powell, and P. M. S. Dawson, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996–2003), iii.456:8; Blunden, 'A Country God', 24; Clare, 'The Woodman', *The Early Poems of John Clare*, ed. Eric Robinson, David Powell, and Margaret Grainger, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), ii.295:201; Ashbery, 'An Outing', 273. All references to Clare poems are cited as *EP* or *MP* by volume and page, followed by line numbers.

<sup>20</sup> Clare, 'The Meadow Grass', *MP* iii.557:62–3.

diction and imagery can go in the direction of nature and still trigger this dialectic.

Previous discussions of the relation of the poets I examine to Romanticism have at times misidentified that relation as a result of defining Romanticism as only one aspect of this dialectic.<sup>21</sup> For instance, F. R. Leavis influentially associated Blunden with a 'nineteenth-century poetry . . . characteristically preoccupied with the creation of a dream-world', an assessment reiterated in recent studies.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, critics have overlooked Symons's dialectical account of *The Romantic Movement in English Poetry* (1909), a movement he defines as involving the 'imaginative transmutation of reality', focusing instead on his advocacy in *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899) of a 'turn of the soul' away from 'the visible world'.<sup>23</sup> The tendency has been especially strong within Romantic scholarship, where it has usually taken the form of an opposition between Clare's descriptive or empiricist poetics and the expressive or idealist aesthetic of Shelley, Keats, or, especially, Wordsworth. Such accounts either reduce Romanticism to a poetics of transcendence eschewing the real, a poetics to which Clare is said not to belong, or measure canonical poets' higher synthesis against his putatively 'naïve', purely descriptive poems.<sup>24</sup> While the latter assertion has become rare in studies of Romanticism, the idea that Clare resists imagination, transcendence, and a subjective union with the world remains current in work about Clare and in ecocriticism.<sup>25</sup> Such readings miss

<sup>21</sup> The exception is Ashbery, whose readers have from the start included literary historians such as Harold Bloom and Robert Pinsky, and whose complicated connections to nineteenth-century poetry have been carefully charted in recent studies by David Herd, Angus Fletcher, and Ben Hickman. Ashbery himself said in 1974, 'all my stuff is romantic poetry'. 'Craft Interview with John Ashbery', in William Packard, ed., *The Craft of Poetry: Interviews from New York Quarterly* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 129. See also the essays about Ashbery and Romantic poetry by Geoff Ward and Stephen Clark in *Romanticism and Postmodernism*, ed. Edward Larrissy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>22</sup> F. R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry: A Study of the Contemporary Situation* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932), 10; Jonathan Atkin, *A War of Individuals: Bloomsbury Attitudes to the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 122–7; Jon Silkin, *Out of Battle: The Poetry of the Great War*, 2nd edn (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998), 102–29.

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Symons, *The Romantic Movement in English Poetry* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1909), 15; *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* [1899] (London: Archibald Constable, 1908), 4.

<sup>24</sup> Juliet Sychrava, *Schiller to Derrida: Idealism in Aesthetics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 79–110.

<sup>25</sup> For recent studies of Clare that forward this claim, see Richard Cronin, 'In Place and Out of Place: Clare in *The Midsummer Cushion*', in John Goodridge and Simon Kövesi (eds), *John Clare: New Approaches* (Peterborough: The John Clare Society, 2000), 133–48; P. M. S. Dawson, 'Clare and His Romantic Contemporaries', in *John Clare: New Approaches*, 149–59; Erica McAlpine, 'Keeping Nature at Bay: John Clare's Poetry of Wonder', *Studies in Romanticism* 50.1 (Spring 2011): 79–104; Alan Vardy, *John Clare, Politics and Poetry*



the full complexity of both Clare's work and of Romanticism as a concept and practice of art, as Juliet Sychrava has persuasively demonstrated, and they are effectively countered in recent studies by Mina Gorji, Gary Harrison, and Alan Bewell, who connect Clare to a robustly conceptualized Romantic aesthetic.<sup>26</sup>

Importantly, the various elements of the Romantic aesthetic interact rather than simply coexist. Concreteness and metaphorical resonance operate jointly, in other words, and the ideal of mimetic fidelity itself produces a salient poetic medium. 'The theme of imagination [is] linked closely to the theme of nature,' de Man writes, and 'the tension between the two polarities never ceases.'<sup>27</sup> By his account, the effort to endow poetic language and imagery with 'material substantiality' prompts an awareness of the gap between word and world, just as the attempt to disincarnate poetic language gives rise to a recognition of the fact that language cannot be emptied of referential content.<sup>28</sup> For de Man, thus, the Romantic dialectic is the poetic record of a total comprehension of the essential qualities of language. Imagination and nature are intertwined in the literature of writers who engage with the Romantic aesthetic—including the poets I examine here—because they believe that language is at once immaterial and referential. Other scholars trace these dynamic interactions to other sources, but they agree that, as Milnes writes, 'Romantic writers sought to enact an aesthetic reconciliation of created meaning and objective truth by metaphoric means.'<sup>29</sup> Images characterized by inextricably aesthetic and mimetic avowals are seen as a principal locus of this

(Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 18–24. The claim appears in the first paragraph of Theresa Adams's excellent essay, 'Representing Rural Leisure: John Clare and the Politics of Popular Culture', *Studies in Romanticism* 47.3 (Fall 2008): 371–92, where it seems analytically unnecessary. In ecocriticism, see Mariaconcetta Constantini, "'Strokes of havoc': Tree-Felling and the Poetic Tradition of Ecocriticism in Manley Hopkins and Gerard Manley Hopkins', *Victorian Poetry* 46.4 (Winter 2008): 487–509; Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 44–8; Catherine E. Rigby, 'Earth, World, Text: On the (Im)possibility of Ecopoiesis', *New Literary History* 35.3 (Summer 2004): 427–42. Three important exceptions in ecocriticism are Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth* (London: Picador, 2000), 166–7; James C. McKusick, *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (New York: St Martin's, 2000), 77–94; and Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 197–205.

<sup>26</sup> This is Sychrava's core argument in *Schiller to Derrida*. See Alan Bewell, 'John Clare and the Ghosts of Natures Past', *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 65.4 (March 2011): 548–78; Mina Gorji, *John Clare and the Place of Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008); Gary Harrison, 'Hybridity, Mimicry and John Clare's *Child Harold*', *Wordsworth Circle* 34.3 (Summer 2003): 149–55; and Harrison, 'Loss and Desire in the Poetry of John Clare: "The Living Sea of Waking Dreams"', *European Romantic Review* 12.4 (Fall 2001): 457–76.

<sup>27</sup> de Man, *Rhetoric of Romanticism*, 2.

<sup>28</sup> de Man, *Rhetoric of Romanticism*, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Milnes, *Knowledge and Indifference*, 14.



broader effort. For Frederick Burwick, accordingly, the simultaneous ‘instability of images’ and the ‘remarkable persistence in their instability’ work together to ‘reveal...connections between mimetic description and poetic invention’.<sup>30</sup>

The poets in this book adopt a particular approach to the artistic ‘reconciliation of created meaning and objective truth’, one that determines their relation to the centuries-old practice of literary mimesis as well as to the still-evolving aesthetic of Romanticism. In brief, Clare, Symons, Blunden, and Ashbery assume and argue that meaning is always simultaneously made and discovered, both in the world and in their poems. They present human experiences of reality, exemplified by acts of observation, as mediated by language and by thought—as sharing a medium, that is, with poetry. For them, both experience and poetry are meaning-making events made possible by the very same linguistic and cognitive processes that hold us apart from the world in the first place. The salience of the medium of their poems derives partly from this conviction, which is also evident in their themes and poetic arguments. Their poems explore a series of paired concepts that have long formed the backbone of discussions about mimesis—human and natural truth, value and fact, mystery and knowledge, intellect and sensation, language and objects—in ways that consistently identify the linguistic and interpretive interface as the medium of meaning. Neither collapsing these dualistic pairs into one another nor aligning meaning with any one of their elements, they stake their truth claims in the correspondence between the meanings of the world and the meanings of their poems and, equally important, in the correspondence between the nature of meaning-making in the two spheres. This is what mimesis ultimately involves in their work.

This way of confronting the dilemmas neatly encapsulated in the dualistic pairs harnesses the generic resources of the lyric as well as the verbal and representational dialectic of Romanticism, as we have seen. It also draws on an ‘active, creative account of perception’ that was one of the Enlightenment’s main legacies for artists and on the special truth value associated with nature in early nineteenth-century science and religion, to which I now turn.<sup>31</sup> In the intellectual history of Enlightenment debates about perception and reality, John W. Yolton argues, ‘there is a development of one central notion from Descartes to Kant: that there are two interactive relations between perceivers and the physical world—a

<sup>30</sup> Frederick Burwick, *Mimesis and Its Romantic Reflections* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 14.

<sup>31</sup> Alan Richardson, *The Neural Sublime: Cognitive Theories and Romantic Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 47.