



Clare's Lyric: John Clare and Three Modern Poets

Stephanie Kuduk Weiner

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This book considers the lyric poems written by John Clare and three twentieth-century poets--Arthur Symons, Edmund Blunden, and John Ashbery--who turned to him at pivotal moments in their own development. These writers crafted a distinctive mode of lyric, "Clare's lyric," that emphatically grounds its truth claims in mimetic accuracy. For these writers, accurate representation involves not only words that name objects, describe scenes, and create images pointing to a shared reality but also patterns of sound, the syntactic organization of lines, and the shapes of whole poems and collections of poems. Their works masterfully investigate how poetic language and form can refer to the world, word by word, line by line, and poem by poem.

Written in a lively and accessible style, *Clare's Lyric* sheds light on a richly diverse body of poems and on enduring questions about how literature represents reality. Weiner's attentive close readings bring the writings of Clare, Symons, Blunden, and Ashbery to life by revealing precisely how they captured a vital, arresting, and complex world in their poems. Their unique approach to lyric is traced from Clare's poems about birdsong, his sonnets, and his later poems of loss and absence to Symons's efforts to make "amends to nature" Blunden's vivid depictions of a European and English countryside scarred by the First World War, and Ashbery's unbounded and bountiful landscapes. This inventive study refines our understanding of the aesthetic of Romanticism, the genre of lyric, and the practice of literary representation, and it makes a compelling case for the ongoing importance of poems about nature and social life.

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