

Prose extract: 'I hunted curious flowers...'

I hunted curious flowers in raptures and muttered thoughts in their praise I lov'd the pasture with its rushes and thistles and sheep tracks I adord the wild marshy fen with its solitary hernshaw sweeing along in its mellan[c]holy sky I wandered the heath in raptures among the rabbit burrows and golden blossomd furze I dropt down on a thymy mole hill or mossy eminence to survey the summer landscape as full of raptures as now I markd the varied colors in flat spreading fields checkerd with closes of different tinted grain like the colors in a map the copper tinted colors of clover in blossom the sun tand green of the ripening hay the lighter hues of wheat and barley intermixd with the sunny glare of the yellow c[h]arlock and the sunset imitation of the scarlet head aches with the blue corn bottles crowding thier splendid colors in large sheets over the lands and 'troubling the corn fields' with destroying beauty the different greens of the woodland trees the dark oak the paler ash the mellow Lime the white poplar peeping above the rest like leafy steeples the grey willow shining chilly in the sun as if the morning mist still lingerd in its cool green I felt the beauty of these with eager delight the gad flyes noon day hum the fainter murmer of the bee flye 'spirng in the evening ray' the dragon flyes in their spangld coats darting like 'winged arrows down the stream' the swallow darting through its one arched brig the shepherd hiding from a thunder shower in an hollow dotterel the wild geese scudding along and making all the letters of the Alphabet as they flew the motley clouds the whispering wind that muttered to the leaves and summer grass as it flutterd among them like things at play I observd all this with the same raptures as I have done since but I knew nothing of poetry it was felt and not utterd most of my sundays was spent in this manner about the fields with such merry company I heard the black and the brown beetle sing their evening songs with rapture and lov'd to see the black snail steal out upon its dewy baulks I saw the humble horse bee at noon 'spirng' on wanton wing I lov'd to meet the woodman whistling away to his toils and to see the shepherd bending oer his hook on the thistly green chatting love storys to the listening maiden while she milkd her brindld cow the first primrose in spring was as delightful as it is now the copper color'd clouds morning was watchd and the little ups and downs and roly poly child mountains of the broken heath with their brown mossy crowns and little green bottoms were the sheep feed and hide from the sun the stone quarry with its magnified precipic[e]s the wind mills sweeing idly to the sum[m]er wind the steeples peeping among the trees round the orisons circle

I noticed the cracking of the stubbs to the increasing sun while I gleand among them I lov'd to see the heavey grassopper in his coat of delicate green bounce from stub to stub I listened the hedge cricket with raptures

the evening call of the patridge the misterious spring sound of the land rail that cometh with the green corn

I lov'd the meadow lake with its fl[a]gs andlong purples crowding the waters edge I listend with delights to hear the wind whisper among the feather topt reeds and to see the taper bulrush nodding in gentle curves to the rippling water and I watchd with delight on haymaking evenings the setting sun drop behind the brigs and peep again thro the half circle of the arches as if he longs to stay

Clare wrote most of his prose autobiographical sketches in the early 1820s.

See *John Clare By Himself*. Edited by Eric Robinson and David Powell. Ashington and Manchester: MidNAG/Carc Janet, 1996. 38–9.

