



John Clare: A Biography

Jonathan Bate

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The long-awaited literary biography of the supreme "poets' poet"

John Clare (1793-1864) is the greatest labouring-class poet that England has ever produced. No one has ever written more powerfully of nature, of a rural childhood, and of the alienated and unstable self, but until now he has never been the subject of a comprehensive literary biography.

Here at last is his full story told by the light of his voluminous work: his birth in poverty, his work as an agricultural labourer, his burgeoning promise as a writer--cultivated under the gaze of rival patrons--then his moment of fame in the company of John Keats and the toast of literary London, and finally his decline into mental illness and his last years confined in asylums. Clare's ringing voice--quick-witted, passionate, vulnerable, courageous--emerges in generous quotation from his letters, journals, autobiographical writings, and his poems, as Jonathan Bate, the celebrated scholar of Shakespeare, brings the complex man, his beloved work, and his ribald world vividly to life.

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