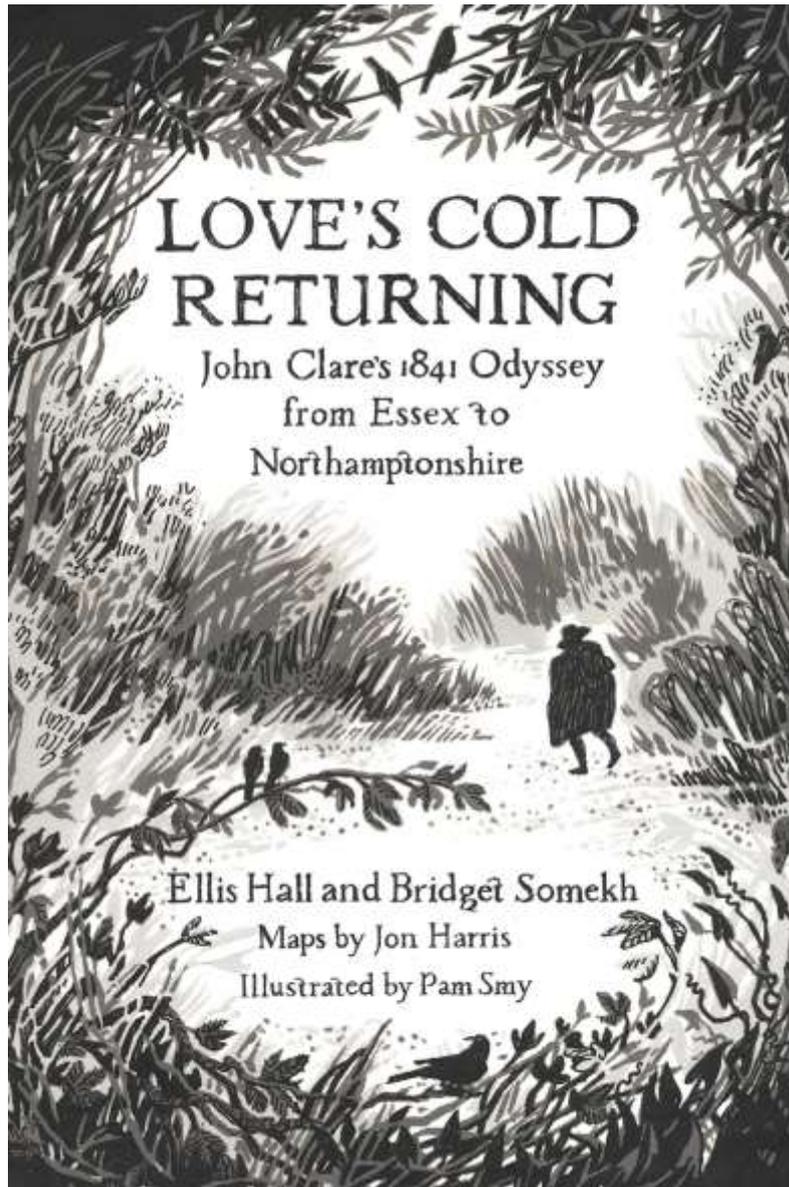


John Clare Discussion Group 20/10/2020

# **CALLING CLARE'S BLUFF:** Pursuing his Psyche on the Road



Ellis Hall and Bridget Somekh



## Clare and Eliza Emmerson: The 'Invitation' and the 'Echo'

| <p><b>'Invitation to Emma'</b><br/><b>John Clare</b></p>   | <p><b>'Answer to the Invitation' or 'The Echo'</b><br/><b>Eliza Emmerson</b></p>   |
|--|--|
| <p>Emma leave the dinsome city<br/>Where the coaches bustle down<br/>Where trade yells its daily ditty<br/>Wend wi me to country town<br/>From the noise that taste abuses<br/>Bid a summer days adieu<br/>Where thro moss the fountain oozes<br/>Sit wi me &amp; nature view</p>                                | <p>Could "Emma" fly the noisy city<br/>Where folly dwells, with riot rude<br/>How pleased, she'd list, thy Rural ditty<br/>Sung in sweetest solitude; -<br/>To all, which now her heart refuses<br/>She would bid a glad Adieu!<br/>And where purling fountain oozes<br/>Sit with thee, and Nature view!</p>                 |
| <p>Song of birds &amp; clowns at labour<br/>Where theyre all the noises made<br/>Where sweet bends the rosey arbour<br/>Oer its silence &amp; its shade<br/>While the bubbles breezes meeting<br/>From the spring head float &amp; flee<br/>Warning us that pleasures fleeting<br/>Emma share the hour wi me</p> | <p>Chant of birds, and swains at labour,<br/>There, the only sound, that's made:<br/>We would seek the silent arbour,<br/>And, enjoy its sweetest shade:<br/>While the passing breezes greeting,<br/>Fan'd our cheek, then quickly flee;<br/>We would talk, o'er joys as fleeting:<br/>Thus, I'd pass my hour with thee!</p> |
| <p>There well walk the meadows gaily<br/>Marking scenes that please the eye<br/>&amp; as sunbeams waxeth paley<br/>Ah--well greet 'em with a sigh<br/>here well wander flowers to gather<br/>Clover bottles on the lea<br/>Emma now tis summer weather<br/>Natures beautys trace wi me</p>                       | <p>Then, o'er meadows tripping gaily,<br/>Viewing all, with gladsome eye ;—<br/>But, when moonbeams, shineth paley—<br/>Ah! We'd heave, the pensive sigh!<br/>Thus, we'd pass our time together;<br/>Emma's heart, as nature free;<br/>Thus, I'd taste sweet summer weather,<br/>And enjoy each scene with thee!</p>         |
| <p>&amp; as even dulling dreary<br/>Chills her moister on the flower<br/>Parting us before were weary<br/>Emma--thens the gloomy hour<br/>--Fare thee well &amp; at thy leisure<br/>Gen while noise environs thee<br/>Think when ye, in guiless pleasure<br/>Spent a summers day wi me</p>                       | <p>But, when night with silence dreary,<br/>Closes up each tender flower,<br/>We, with days delights, grown weary,<br/>Would invoke, kind "Morpheus" power!<br/>Bid Farewel! Till morrows leisure,<br/>Should restore its charms to me;<br/>Then, again, in guileless pleasure,<br/>Spend another day with thee.</p>         |
| <p><i>Letter to Eliza Emmerson, 1820, date<br/>unknown but before 24<sup>th</sup> July.<br/>Clarendon Early Poems II, 445</i></p>  | <p><i>Letter to Clare, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1820,<br/>quoted Emma Trehane, 'Epistolary Poetics',<br/>126-7</i></p>   |

## 'The Vow'

### THE VOW

If feelings that fond bosoms move  
In sympathy our thoughts could prove  
Then might thou know my only love  
That both our hearts agree  
If there's a power exists below  
That secrets of the soul could show  
Soon beautiful Emma shouldst thou know  
That I was born for thee

& if there's aught beneath to dread  
& if a heaven's o'er my head  
Then strike the rash deluder dead  
If falsity is mine  
May heaven deny its bliss to me  
& all to take revenge be free  
If ere a beauty face I see  
Seems half so sweet as thine

Upon the dewy wings of even  
From lovers hearts there ne'er was given  
A vow more worthy room in heaven  
Then this I've breathed the while  
& how ere favoured in thy sight  
If true love there can give delight  
I know ere now my vows to night  
Has met an angel's smile

*Composed before 9<sup>th</sup> May 1820*  
*Clarendon Early Poems II, 93*

## Canto of 'Don Juan' for Eliza Phillips

I love good fellowship & wit & punning  
 I love 'true love' & God my taste defend  
 I hate most damnably all sorts of cunning —  
 I love the Moor & Marsh & Ponders end —  
 I do not like the song of 'cease your funning'  
 I love a modest wife & trusty friend  
 — Bricklayers want lime as I want rhyme for fillups  
 — So here's a health to sweet Eliza Phillips

### SONG

Eliza now the summer tells  
 Of spots where love & beauty dwells  
 Come & spend a day with me  
 Underneath the forest tree  
 Where the restless water flushes  
 Over mosses mounds & rushes  
 & where love & freedom dwells  
 With orchis flowers & fox glove bells  
 Come dear Eliza set me free  
 & oer the forest roam with me

Here I see the morning sun  
 Among the beachtree's shadows run  
 That into gold the short sward turns  
 Where each bright yellow blossom burns  
 With hues that would his beams out shine  
 Yet nought can match those smiles of thine  
 I try to find them all the day  
 But none are nigh when thou'rt away  
 Though flowers bloom now on every hill  
 Eliza is the fairest still

The sun wakes up the pleasant mom  
 & finds me lonely & forlorn  
 Then wears away to sunny noon  
 The flowers in bloom the birds in tune  
 While dull & dowie all the year  
 No smiles to see no voice to hear  
 I in this forest prison lie  
 With none to heed my silent sigh  
 & underneath this beachen tree  
 With none to sigh for Love but thee

Now this new poem is entirely new  
 As wedding gowns or money from the mint  
 For all I know it is entirely true  
 For I would scorn to put a lie in print  
 — I scorn to lie for princes — so would you  
 & ere I shoot I try my pistol flint  
 — The cattle salesman — knows the way in trying  
 & feels his bullocks ere he thinks of buying

## Emma and Johnny

After Madame Vestris sang 'The Meeting' at Drury Lane  
he was the talk of the town: small of stature  
but of startling physical allure with blue eyes  
and a sunburst smile, she thought him like the robin  
in his poem singing of lost golden days.

In *The Vow* he expressed palpable delight  
in an educated woman's sympathy of thought;  
declaring with tremulous joy that 'I was born for thee'  
and arguing ... if and if ... against heaven's rules of trespass;  
and around that time she gave him her picture.

She was a woman of style and independent mind,  
who shared his writer's passion, herself a poet.  
At her townhouse in Stratford Place, Clare  
enjoyed flirtation and his own Skylight room –  
when decorum allowed, her husband being at home.

Later, he wrote a song enticing her  
to leave the drowsy city to enjoy  
the exquisite pleasure of meadows  
and bubbling springs, and take home memories  
to treasure of a summer's day together.

She understood his penury and loved  
to send him gifts: after that first London visit  
Patty's wedding gown; and later  
two neckerchiefs of Indian silk shot through  
with woven light to set off his ardent eyes.

Emma and Johnny to each other, theirs  
was the trusted love of intimates. In letters  
written over twenty years she was his confidante  
and poetry advisor, buoying his spirit  
with unfailing reassurance of his genius.

*Bridget Somekh*



## Milestone, Gamlingay Great Heath

