CALLING CLARE’S BLUFF: Pursuing his Psyche on the Road

Ellis Hall and Bridget Somekh
Northampton MS 6, Flyleaf
Clare and Eliza Emmerson: The ‘Invitation’ and the ‘Echo’

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

*Letter to Eliza Emmerson, 1820, date unknown but before 24th July, Clarendon Early Poems II, 445*

*Letter to Clare, 24th July 1820, quoted Emma Trehane, ‘Epistolary Poetics’, 126-7*
‘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 thers a power exists below
That secrets of the soul could show
Soon beautious emma shoudst thou know
That I was born for thee

& if thers aught beneath to dread
& if a heavens oer 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 neer was given
A vow more worthy room in heaven
Then this I've breathd the while
& how ere favourd in thy sight
If true love there can give delight
I know ere now my vows to night
Has met an angels smile

Composed before 9th 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
& o'er 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 beechen 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

Clarendon Poems of the Middle Period 1, 95-7
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 dinsome 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.
Gamlingay Great Heath, July 21st 1841
Milestone, Gamlingay Great Heath