



*Romanticism on the Net*

**Reframing “Harmony”: Humans as Functional Components  
in British Romantic Pastoral Ecosystems**

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**Abstract**

COVID-quarantine narratives of human–nonhuman “harmony” often emphasised environmental benefits of human absence from landscapes. However, nowadays, even “in lockdown,” humans affect all Earthly ecosystems. Consequently, ecocritics frequently deem depictions of “positive human absence” unhelpful to current eco-crises, “pastoral literature” being one of their main offenders. What these respective positions discount, though, is that some ecosystems depend upon human functional roles—including the semi-natural grasslands of “ecological pastoral” systems, which can suffer a variety of problematic ecological consequences upon the withdrawal of human activity. Accordingly (we propose), *truly* pastoral literature frames human–nonhuman harmony in terms not of “positive human absence,” but, rather, of “positive human presence,” “negative human presence,” and “negative human absence.” Via historico-cultural explorations of poetry’s millennia-spanning ecological roles, of humans’ developing knowledge about grasslands, and of British land-management (re)arrangements circa 1750–1860, we forge an innovative ecological-pastoral interpretative lens, which we then apply to poems by Oliver Goldsmith, John Clare, and (to a lesser extent) William Wordsworth. The resulting readings show how, if viewed through an ecological-pastoral lens, the “literary pastoral” could, in fact, help tackle Anthropogenic environmental crises by (re)educating humans about their integral, rather than dominant, ecological roles on Earth.

This paper contains four sections. First, the Prologue explores some reasons why pastoral poetry is often dismissed by ecocritics but embraced by disseminators of both traditional and scientific ecological knowledge. This exploration is conducted through considerations of “the pastoral,” “the georgic,” the nature of poetic expression, and poetry’s “ecological worth.” In the next section, “Ecological-Pastoral: The Theory,” we use recent research on grassland biomes and climate change to create an ecologically based interpretative lens through which to consider “the pastoral” within the context of literary works—an approach differing markedly from already-existing ecocritical techniques. Moving to the “Ecological-Pastoral in Practice,” current knowledge about grasslands and pastoral ecosystems is compared with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century knowledge; and our new interpretative lens is used to analyse several pastoral poems of 1770–

## *Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

1840. Finally, in the Epilogue, we introduce our “companion article,” which illustrates further how our interpretative framework can enable and encourage people to value historical literary works as relevant, useful tools in the context of tackling Earth’s current environmental emergencies.

### **Biographical Note**

This article is one of three projects forged during the past five years of fruitful collaboration between Marissa W. Kopp, an early-career PhD candidate in Ecology (Terrestrial Ecosystem Science and Management), and Suzanne E. Webster, an established scholar and Professor of English Literature (British Romanticism, especially Samuel Taylor Coleridge).

### **Prologue**

1. This paper is part of a research project that began two years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, the project aimed to try and discover why, after playing a key role in some of the earliest forays into ecocriticism, “pastoral poetry”—and, in particular, pastorals of the British Romantic era (ca. 1770–1835)—came to be viewed, by some ecocritics, as essentially irrelevant to discussions of Earth’s current ecological crises. Pinpointing reasons for this turn was not easy. However, as our research progressed throughout, and was influenced by, the pandemic, five main possibilities emerged.
2. The first two, related reasons—quite powerful ones, at least during ecocriticism’s early years—involve the influence exerted by ecocritics’ opposing positions regarding (i) which Romantic authors best represent the pastoral subgenre or mindset, and (ii) the ways in which fellow ecocritics engage with those authors and their work. Within these two contexts, assessments of pastoral poetry’s value to environmental debates can often seem founded upon factors other than the poems themselves. Re the first point, ecocritical perceptions of “the pastoral,” key pastoral texts, and even whole literary corpora, have

### *Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

suffered due to particular ecocritics' impressions of an author's "character" or "pastoral qualifications," the most obvious disavowals apparently being prompted by the conflation of "British Romantic pastoral poetry" and "William Wordsworth's background and personality."<sup>1</sup> Where the second point is concerned—the ways in which appreciation of "the pastoral," and of particular pastoral texts, has been negatively affected by ecocritics' reactions to each other's interpretations and approaches—the various antagonistic exchanges between individual ecocritics,<sup>2</sup> and between ecocritical "schools" grouped around different theories (New Historicism, "Romantic Idealism" or "Romantic Ideology," New Materialism, etc.), have been recounted and expanded many times within the past fifteen-or-so years.<sup>3</sup>

3. Another reason for the apparent ecocritical turn from British Romantic-era pastoral poetry (and from "the pastoral" in general) was the renewed interest in the literary subgenre of "the georgic." To some degree, this interest was perhaps fertilised by a desire to move on from the two related circumstances described above. More significantly, however, it was rooted in certain scholars' desire for recognition that—contrary to established critical narratives—the nature of "Nature," and humans' concordant interaction with (as opposed to "wholesale domination of") it, did actually matter to many eighteenth-century British thinkers and creative writers.<sup>4</sup> Among other types of literature, scholars located this eighteenth-century feeling in the georgic poems that proliferated between the early and mid-1700s; and, since the late 2000s, the rise of ecocritical interest in this subgenre has produced an avalanche of interesting articles and books (several of which we engage with in this essay).

### *Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

4. Unfortunately for the pastoral, though, many of these studies have sought to rethink the “pastoral status” of certain texts, arguing that, on closer consideration, not a few works that discuss “rural life and scenery”<sup>5</sup> and have been thought of—by audiences, or even their own authors—as “pastoral,” are not actually “pastoral” at all, but rather “georgic.”<sup>6</sup> It may be argued, however, that assumptions along these lines are too frequently based upon confused or faulty perceptions of which thematic and literary aspects should be seen as particular solely to “the georgic.”
  
5. A thorough evaluation of this question will ideally involve engagements with these related traditions’ originary classical texts. Where the pastoral is concerned, these are, predominantly (but not only), the eight-or-so “bucolic” poems included within Theocritus’s twenty-two-poem collection the *Idylls* (mid-third century BCE) and the *Bucolics*, or *Eclogues*, composed by Virgil around 42–37 BCE.<sup>7</sup> In terms of the georgic, the most influential source (but, again, not the sole one in antiquity) is Virgil’s *Georgics* (ca. 29 BCE). The overall tones of these texts are fairly disparate: speaking generally, the bucolics or pastorals are usually emotionally expansive, yet intimate and “personal-feeling” short monologues and dialogues (45–158 lines each); while the four, longer *Georgics* (514–566 lines each) tend to be focussed, specific, didactic, and “practical,” rather like a farming almanac. However, perhaps because they were, essentially, both “solidified” by Virgil, these classical traditions share some key aspects. Among these are included the presence of oxherds, shepherds, or goatherds; thoughts on the care of animals; references to arable agriculture; the invocation of both real and imaginary landscapes and

### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

ecosystems; allusions to contemporaneous socio-political circumstances and events; incorporation of classical mythologies; observations on the Earth's elements (oceans, seasons, astronomical entities, etc.); acknowledgements that rural life involves both work and rest; the issue of providing for future generations; accounts of both death and life; the complementary themes of "hardship, despair, tragedy" and "ease, joy, and comedy"; the ideas of past, present, and future (and change); a mixture of identified and ambiguous narrative voices; and discussions about the import and efficacy of poetry, and of "being an artist."

6. The pastoral and georgic traditions thus possess many coincident elements—and this seems to be a key reason why attempts to establish under which tradition a particular, later text should be classified, can end up tying some scholars in knots.<sup>8</sup>
  
7. However, another issue has also complicated efforts to define and distinguish "the pastoral" and "the georgic": the confused perceptions of pastoral concepts and formulae engendered by disparate engagements with the respective traditions' classical texts and (or) the respective developments of each literary tradition throughout history. By this, we mean that, sometimes, while direct readings have been made of the *Georgics* and other important originary texts in that tradition, the primary texts of the pastoral tradition have been engaged with less intensely, or opinions about them—and "the pastoral" in general—have predominantly been shaped by engagements with secondary materials. This is problematic, because a great many secondary commentaries on "the pastoral" have had their impressions about that subgenre formed not by the works of Theocritus or Virgil, but rather by post-

### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

Renaissance French, Italian, and English reimaginings of “the pastoral”—reimaginings that usually bear little-to-no relationship to the formulae of the originary classical texts.<sup>9</sup> If such disparate engagement with the primary sources occurs, then thorough and interesting accountings of the roots and developments of “the georgic” are marred by flawed, “apples-and-oranges” comparisons between the two traditions. Ultimately, this can result in flawed, frequently negative comparisons of “the georgic” and “the pastoral” that culminate either in the dismissal of “the pastoral,” or in an inaccurate relabelling of “the pastoral” as “the georgic.”<sup>10</sup>

8. Of course (as Paul Alpers recognised), the issue of establishing exactly “what *is* pastoral”—how this subgenre’s originary texts, concepts, and formulae should be considered in themselves, and in relation to the ways in which they developed over time—is also a major factor of confusion and debate where more-general impressions of and scholarship regarding “the pastoral” are concerned (i.e., those that do not also readily consider “the georgic” as a related subgenre).<sup>11</sup> Indeed, our research has suggested that limited and (or) confused assumptions about the essential nature of “the pastoral” are probably the most significant contributor to more-general reassessments of the value and worth of “the pastoral” to ecocritical studies—reassessments that involve either a turning away from “the pastoral” or complicated attempts to rethink and recharacterise it.<sup>12</sup>
  
9. Our research has also suggested that, oftentimes, confusion regarding the nature and meaning of “the pastoral,” and ensuing debates about the subgenre’s value to ecocritical discourse, involves perceptions of what this subgenre (supposedly) communicates about

*Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

the dynamics between humans and the particular ecosystems that they inhabit, and what makes those dynamics “harmonious” or not. In addition to more-evidently cultural issues, such as politics, religion, and economics, this dynamic will always involve the more fundamental matter of humans’ ecological roles and functions within specific ecosystems.

10. As it thus evidently relates to so many facets and types of textual and literary exploration, it is this ecologically based confusion about “the pastoral” that our essay is interested in examining—and in attempting to overcome.
11. Specifically, in a move to restore “the literary pastoral” to a position of relevance within and usefulness to ecocritical discourse, we propose that it needs to be re-examined, and reimagined, through a truly ecological interpretative lens. Therefore, just as other ecocritics and ecocritical schools have applied different disciplines or theories to form their interpretations of “the literary pastoral,” we have devised an innovative “ecological-pastoral” interpretative lens through which to consider “the pastoral” within the context of literary works and as a means by which to reframe and relegitimise the idea of pastoral “harmony.”
12. We forged this new lens through readings and combinations of several current areas of scientific ecological interest. For one, we invoke the theory that pastoral ecosystems are “social-ecological systems,” in which human–nonhuman interactions constitute one linked and dynamic system.<sup>13</sup> This theory has great implications for the ways in which we view and interpret humans’ functional ecological roles and effects—in the contexts of this study,

### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

their roles and effects as components of ecological pastoral systems, which (as we explain later) are complex types of grassland ecology.

13. In the formation of our interpretative approach, we also draw from a complimentary methodology which posits that human functional roles—optimal or otherwise—can be understood as, and through, a type of “traditional ecological knowledge” (TEK). Encompassing comprehensions and skills that arise from humans’ observational and experiential encounters with various ecosystems, TEK is not bound by traditional scientific constructs of evidence, such as objectively measurable facts and mathematical equations (Huntington 1270; Berkes et al. 1251–52). Rather, this empirically sourced ecological knowledge and instruction—what some cultures refer to in terms such as “the wisdom of the elders”—is collected and transmitted socially and culturally, often without the inclusion of scientifically verified data or language. This absence of “scientific affirmation” can ensue because the data has not yet been sought or accumulated (it is not “known to science”) or because the knowledge conveyor is not familiar with that data or language (e.g., Duarte et al. 169–70). Regardless of the reason, however, most scientists now acknowledge that TEK has sustained humans and their surrounding ecological systems for millennia.<sup>14</sup> Essentially, even if people do not know or understand the scientific *causes* of an ecological phenomenon, they can still experience or observe its effects; they must act within the contexts of this knowledge; and then they will likely need to communicate that empirically founded lore to others.



***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

14. Transmission of TEK happens in both formal and informal ways, including via stories, which may be disseminated orally, in writing, in visual art, or in dance. Such creative word-based “knowledge narratives” include poetry, and—as Virgil’s *Eclogues* and *Georgics* attest—this medium has long been valued as a means of conveying TEK.<sup>15</sup>
  
15. There are several reasons for this. For one, the regular rhythmic structures of virtually all pre-nineteenth-century poetry—structures prescribed by syllables’ “quantity” or duration, their number per poetic line, and (or) their “stressed” and “unstressed” patterning—make this word-based means of communication more (re)memorable than prose, especially when combined with alliteration and (or) a rhyme scheme. This memorability can be essential for the dissemination of TEK, especially in the context of predominantly illiterate audiences (e.g., Singleton et al. 396).
  
16. Interestingly, too, the use of rhythm and rhyme frequently necessitates an innovative employment of syntax, the combined effect of which is that poetic expression usually “feels different” from ordinary communications.<sup>16</sup> This artful structuring is then often enhanced by creative content, including more-commonplace types of figurative language, such as metaphors and similes. Used well, such figures of speech—important elements of storytelling, whether in poetry or in prose—can be valued aids to comprehension: creative comparisons can stimulate prior knowledge (and the emotional responses it engendered) and connect it with the poetically presented lesson(s) currently at hand. In the context of communicating ecological knowledge, clarity may be essential for the survival or well-being of a particular ecosystem, including its human elements. Therefore, if the

### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

disseminator's knowledge and messages are to be understood by and appeal to the widest possible audience, they must strike a careful balance between clearly referential or evidentiary language and images, and creative appeals to their audience's artistic and imaginative capacities and desires. Too much abstract language, or too much room for subjective interpretation, has the potential to confuse and, thus, to alienate an audience from the possibly vital information, and (or) the emotion, that the TEK-disseminator wants to convey.

17. While a communicator of TEK may thus moderate the complexity of their figurative expressions and imagery in order to reach "the masses," then, the artifice of poetic structure, and of structurally influenced syntax, can still enable an audience to feel that they are encountering a special type of word-based expression—one that a contemporary soil scientist characterises as "perfected language" (Richter). Poetry can thus prompt the sense that, even if (or because) it is usually intended to stimulate imaginative explorations as well as convey straightforwardly "real" lessons, the holistically considered message being communicated is significant—worth listening to or reading. The sense of the content's worth can also be augmented (or diminished) by the emotional responses invoked by the poem's rhythmic structuring and correspondences in sound (collectively, its "soundscapes"). Even if a reader or listener is unaware of, or cannot explain, the technicalities of a poem—if they do not know, for instance, that the verse they are encountering is shaped by iambic tetrameter, or is a sonnet, and they have no idea about the manifold, illuminating significances connected with that metre, or that form—they can

***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

still feel the effects that these poetic structures were intended to produce (a “sing-song” playfulness; solemnity; joyousness; majesty, etc.).<sup>17</sup>

18. Essentially, poetic structure and linguistic content can thus create profound connections with their recipients, even if the technicalities that make up the causes of the effect are not fully understood.<sup>18</sup> Similar connections can also be affected by a poem’s narrative voice. The omnipresence and omniscience of the traditional epic narrator can invoke complex reactions in an audience, including trust, intimidation, or even an obliviousness to the narrator’s presence. The narrative voice of lyric poetry, however—the voice that shapes most ordinary classical and British Romantic pastoral poems—is often described by readers or listeners as “approachable” or “manageable,” rather than “grand” or “vast”—a voice that they can “relate” and listen to, empathise with, learn from, or even identify with. This is especially applicable in the case of poems in which the lyric genre’s inherently ambiguous “I” is particularly vague, malleable, or unobtrusive, providing ample space for a reader or listener to relate themselves to the scenes and emotions recounted in or stimulated by the poem. Of course, this possibility is enhanced when an audience is divorced (deliberately or involuntarily) from a poem’s wider contexts, such as its historical frameworks and (or) the creator’s biography.<sup>19</sup> However, even if one is able to examine these contexts, and they lead one to conclude that the poetic voice can very probably be attributed to the poet themselves, there is always room for doubt. The expressions of the lyric narrator (“first-person” or otherwise) *could* be, but are not necessarily, identical with the poet’s, because poetry—like all forms of artistic expression—involves varying degrees of imaginative and imagined communication. Even if a poem portrays “actual, factual”

### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

circumstances, and an examination of the work's wider contexts leads the audience to view its contents as more-or-less "evidentiary" or "referential," the poetic voice does not have to be communicating the creator's actual, factual thoughts about or responses to those circumstances. The ever-possible space between the narrative voice and the voice of the creator or disseminator themselves can be the recipient's entry point into a potential understanding of, or even identification with, the observations, circumstances, and emotions recounted within the poem. Some critics may disagree with this assessment, viewing the lyric voice as a limiting and exclusive, rather than expansive and inclusive, poetic vehicle.<sup>20</sup> However, even if they know the author's contexts, many readers and listeners (especially "novices" to poetry) can experience the lyric voice as something at once particular and universal—both specific author and "everyman"—and be embraced and fulfilled by that perception and feeling.<sup>21</sup>

19. Poetry's ability to induce such impressions and perceptions of "specialness," relevance, and connection, and to stimulate understanding and action via imaginative engagement as well as instructional comprehension, is what makes this medium so important to the conveyance of ecological knowledge. Its import is maintained even in the face of "competition" presented by "poetic prose" and (or) ambiguous narrative voices within the comparatively recent contexts of novel(la)s, creative nonfiction, etc.<sup>22</sup>

20. Moreover, nowadays, poetry is increasingly valued not only by disseminators of TEK. In the vein of Erasmus Darwin (1731–1802) and Edward Jenner (1749–1823)—the scientists who, respectively, wrote *The Botanic Garden* (1791) and enlisted Robert Bloomfield

### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

(1766–1823) to disseminate his work on vaccination in *Good Tidings: Or, News From the Farm* (1804)—many contemporary scientists also see how poetry “can offer a different perspective on understanding and interpreting the natural world.”<sup>23</sup> Though perhaps unable to articulate, in discipline-specific terms, the technical reasons *why* poetry “works,” these scientists recognise that—especially, but not only, in the contexts of “lay” audiences—poetry can be a vital means of disseminating both data and general awareness about ecological systems, including (crucially) humans’ interactions with and place within them.<sup>24</sup>

21. Agreeing, with Heidi Thomson, that “[m]ere data, no matter how compelling, are ignored if they are not communicated in human terms,” James Renwick believes—just like many conveyors of TEK—that “[s]tory-telling is really where all communication begins and ends.”<sup>25</sup> Believing firmly that “[s]tories, and emotional connection, are how we communicate,” he feels that “melding scientific data and understanding with human emotion and expression, with daily realities”; “seeing the human stories behind ‘the data’”; and “[t]urning scientific knowledge into poetry or sculpture” helps us all “[to] understand and to see a path to the future” (Renwick and Thomson xx). Frequently, too (as Clay Robinson and Sam Illingworth observe), when exploring this path, “feedback loops” can arise, with poetry playing a role in furthering original scientific thought, and even, perhaps, producing new “scientist poets.”<sup>26</sup> For other ecologists (like Daniel Richter and Rose Abramoff), engaging with poetry may provide comfort and hope in the face of grief and distress at “disturbing data.”<sup>27</sup>

***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

22. In essence, then, our ecological-pastoral interpretative lens enables us to explore the potential knowledge and lessons about human–nonhuman interaction that are imbued within certain poems. This lens could (and we hope, will) be used to examine poetry of any period. However, as ecologists and other scientists are discovering, poems—like Theocritus’s and Virgil’s—that are composed amid or inspired by times of intensified ecosystem change, may harbour particularly useful knowledge for addressing, or coping with, our current eco-crises.
23. It is for this reason (along with all the others delineated in this prologue) that we have chosen to focus our attention on British Romantic pastoral poems, considering them as a kind of primarily TEK-based data that enriches our understanding of ecological change during this period.<sup>28</sup> Specifically, on historico-cultural backgrounds of British land-management (re)arrangements circa 1750–1860, including the Enclosure Acts and related eighteenth- and nineteenth-century grassland science, we apply our ecological-pastoral interpretative lens to *The Deserted Village* (1770) by Oliver Goldsmith (1728–1774); “The Mores” (1820s; 1935) and “To Wordsworth” (1841) by John Clare; and several poems by William Wordsworth.<sup>29</sup> Regarding our choice and classification of these texts, we are aware that some ecocritics may feel that they should be identified as “georgic” rather than “pastoral.”<sup>30</sup> However, while acknowledging that they do possess formulae which (while shared with “the pastoral”) may be more pronounced in or commonly associated with “the georgic,” we classify these texts as we do because they tend to accord more closely with the pastoral narrative tone described earlier in this prologue. We also heed suggestions provided by these works’ authors: for instance, while using *pastoral* over forty times in his

### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

letters, and making two references to Theocritus, Clare does not use the term *georgic*; Goldsmith apparently referred to it only a handful of times, in epigraphic one-line quotations from Virgil's poem; and, as others have noted, Wordsworth seemed keen to preserve "the pastoral" (and a classical typology of it, too).<sup>31</sup> It is also interesting to note that these authorial choices and linguistic uses occurred in the years after a century awash with self-identified georgics.

24. In our approaches to these works, we apply established ecocritical methods of reading: as already intimated, in addition to conducting close examinations of texts, we consider historical and cultural contexts such as socio-economics, politics, and literary trends. However, by focussing through our ecological-pastoral lens, we are then able to generate an original contribution to explorations of these poems, of "the pastoral," and of British Romantic poetry as a whole.<sup>32</sup> The new readings that result show how an adjusted sense of "the literary pastoral"—an ecologically rooted reconception of the formulae and signs that make a poem, or other literary work, "pastoral"—can produce new perceptions of texts. In addition to forging much-needed bonds between the sciences and humanities<sup>33</sup> and drawing attention to current debates on the ecological value of grasslands, we hope that these new perceptions might also encourage the view that—along with other historical literary texts—British Romantic pastorals are relevant, useful tools in the context of understanding and tackling our current eco-crises, not least by (re)educating humans about ecosystemic "harmony" and their integral, rather than dominant ecological roles on Earth.

### **Ecological-Pastoral: The Theory**

### *Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

25. Dolphins slip through Venetian canals; a herd of goats roams the streets of Llandudno, Wales. A tweet with over 300,000 reactions proclaims, “Wow...Earth is recovering. Air pollution is slowing down. Water pollution is clearing up. Natural wildlife returning home. Coronavirus is Earth’s vaccine. We’re the virus” (@ThomasSchulz). Such posts, circulating on social media amid coronavirus quarantine protocols, highlighted the resurrection of a misguided environmental philosophy: with humans indoors, “Nature” can “re”-balance, and return to its inherently harmonious state.
26. Admittedly, a grain of truth hides in this generalisation. The unusual reduction of human mobility during the pandemic, termed the “Anthropause” (Rutz et al.), led to localised reductions in air and noise pollution—environmental improvements that enticed some animals to “retur[n] home,” roam farther, or “rela[x]” in spaces typically dominated by humans (Tucker et al. 1062).<sup>34</sup> However, as *Anthropause* implies, these improvements will be merely temporary unless humanity takes intentional, sustainable climate action; and representations of “Nature’s recovery” that fail to emphasise this impermanence may lead humans to conclude, falsely, that their reduced activity is, in itself, climate action. Charismatic depictions of temporary wildlife-habitat expansion unhelpfully blur the crucial fact that, even when “in lockdown” and giving over streets to goats, humans are still interacting with ecosystems via their continued (and, sometimes, elevated) natural-resource consumption, with all the environmental consequences that this entails.<sup>35</sup> In reality, then, while the magnitude of the Anthropause’s environmental impact may be depicted in popular culture as excitingly “good enough,” humanity must enact substantially greater behaviour adjustments, such as dramatic reductions in fossil fuel emissions and



### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

general global population growth, to have any empirical positive impact upon the rest of the natural world.

27. As such, humanity still requires an actionable plan for harmonious post-Anthropause human–nonhuman interaction. Yet trending accounts of “Nature’s return” complicated the goals of this future interaction by perpetuating a problematic narrative: that ecosystems require human absence to achieve their “ultimate” state of stability and “harmony.”
28. This narrative causes problems in several ways. Most obviously, it seems to involve the condition of great swaths of Earth becoming permanently devoid of human habitation or, even, human existence. “[A] dream of a world without people [being] a popular idyll nowadays” (Nersessian 167), the worth or desirability of this situation may be encouraged by proof that nonhuman life can even rebound in once-peopled spaces that are unlikely to see human resettlement (e.g., the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone [“How Chernobyl”]). However, the concept of removing humans permanently from vast areas of land (or imagining a fully unpeopled world) seems—for the immediate future, at least—to be deeply unrealistic.
29. A less obvious problem with the narrative that ecosystems require human absence to achieve “ultimate stability” and “harmony,” though, is the fact that many apparently “untouched” environments (Australia’s “Outback,” for instance, or the deep ocean from whence the dolphins emerged during the Anthropause) actually conceal a history of

*Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

human–nonhuman interaction; and, sometimes, severing people from these ecosystems can have negative environmental ramifications.

30. Accentuating the idea that there are, or should be, “ecosystems with” and “ecosystems without” human influence is thus both erroneous and unconstructive. In truth, the relationship between humans and Earth’s various biomes is far more nuanced. Essentially, humans are now functional ecological components of virtually all ecosystems on the planet (O’Neill 3279, 3281–82); therefore—as with most other elements of the natural world—it is humans’ specific behaviours within these systems, rather than their presence in itself, that should inform assessments of their “positive” or “negative” effects upon those ecological communities.

31. Such assessments require examination of representative behaviours. Amid the Anthropause, quarantine restrictions amplified the frequency of both positive and negative human–nonhuman interactions within Britain’s non-urban spaces. Sometimes, the consequences of human action have been plainly detrimental to plants and other animals. For example, at many areas across the UK, the reduced presence of park rangers and conservation workers facilitated such human acts as the illegal disturbance and shooting of wildlife and increased instances of vandalism, littering, arson, and reservoir contamination (Rowe; “Love”). These behaviours epitomise the narrative of humans as ecologically destructive forces—beings that other beings are, frankly, better off without.

***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

32. In certain cases, however, human presence within and interaction with a landscape is (or may be interpreted as) beneficial, because it supports nonhuman life that would not exist or be as abundant in that environment if not for the symbiotic relationship between humans and the ecosystem which they inhabit. One such context concerns the important, arguably positive, impact of human activity upon certain types of grasslands.

33. In ecological terms, “grasslands” are a subset of open ecosystems where “non-forested” vegetation dominates, despite possessing a climate suitable for forests (Bond 2; Dixon et al. 2004). A biome representing approximately thirty-four percent of all terrestrial land (Dinerstein et al. 537), grasslands are diverse ecosystems of herbaceous plants, pollinators, and grazers. Although it is now virtually impossible to find a “natural” grassland that eludes human influence, and while no “cultural” grassland may subsist without suitable climatic conditions, in terms of their predominate originating forces grasslands can still be considered and defined as “natural,” “cultural,” and “semi-natural” (Dixon et al. 2004). Natural grasslands are non-forested spaces adapted to climatic disturbances (e.g., the Serengeti Plains [see Bond 97–120]). By contrast, cultural grasslands—the opposing extreme—involve humans intensively cultivating grasses to avoid transition to another ecosystem-state. This management occurs for economic gain (e.g., biofuels, like switchgrass plantations); safety (e.g., roadside verges); food production (e.g., cornfields); or aesthetic and spiritual reasons (e.g., cemeteries). If these areas were not regularly fertilised, mowed, and reseeded, they would cease to exist.

### *Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

34. Between these extremes lie semi-natural grasslands: pastures, meadows, foraged heathlands, harvested rush beds, and similar biotopes that are not intensively cultivated, but which do rely upon some anthropogenic disturbance to maintain native flora. These “low-intensity farming systems” are adapted to moderate human or human-influenced interactions—for example, mowing, gleaning, digging, grazing animals—which apply selective ecological pressures that stabilise one particular iteration of an ecosystem-state (Bignal and McCracken). Critics sometimes characterise this stabilisation as the “unharmonious” suppression of a natural succession to some predetermined ecological “climax” (usually old-growth forest<sup>36</sup>). This was the viewpoint of ecologist Frederic Clements (1874–1945), who argued that “in the absence of civilized man,” “nature”—which he defined as “plant communities”—will mature and self-regulate, like a single organism, towards an ultimate state of stability (256, 253). This belief is echoed in “re”-balancing narratives of the Anthropause. However, mounting critiques from other ecologists rejected Clementsian succession in favour of a “post-equilibrium” ecosystem model.<sup>37</sup> Within this model, two key counterpositions to the Clementsian paradigm are (i) that ecosystems do *not* oscillate, simply and solely, about a single determined state; and (ii) that humans are not external disturbances upon a system but rather an integral species within it (O’Neill 3282). In the specific context of grasslands, ecologist William Bond adheres to the post-equilibrium model, maintaining that “[w]e can replace the inappropriate vocabulary of succession with the jargon of alternative states maintained by positive feedbacks in each state that prevent transitions to the alternative state” (13). In semi-natural grassland systems, humans directly or indirectly maintain these “positive feedbacks” by behaviours such as dispersing seeds, opening tree canopies by lighting prescribed fires,

### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

aerating soil by digging tubers, grazing animals on a sustainable-intensity basis, and fertilising land from grazers' excretions (Bliege Bird and Nimmo). While human and nonhuman pressures stabilise one possible ecosystem-state, the state is not *static*: individuals compete, species evolve, and survival strategies emerge. Essentially, the “harmony” of semi-natural grasslands involves unextreme change, in which humans actively participate, and about which they acquire ecological knowledge that they then transmit to future generations of participants.

35. Such semi-natural grasslands are long-standing features of the British Isles. Indeed, evidence shows that in some parts of the country—including the Lake District—anthropogenic interaction with meadows and fields spans approximately 5,500 years.<sup>38</sup> A more recent example also shows that various “species-rich” grasslands in Oxfordshire developed around 100 BCE due to “a strong cultural component”: specifically, “traditions of land management and land use related to forage production” (French 594). Being thus “highly dependent” upon anthropogenic activity, these species-rich ecosystems “would disappear without human management” (596).

36. As intimated, above, by the term *forage production*, the characteristics of semi-natural grassland systems means that they are often embedded within the larger contexts of a “pastoral” landscape. As our prologue explained, it is with such landscapes that we are concerned; however, as scholars, respectively, of ecology and literature, we each came to this term with very different, mutually enriching definitions and understandings of its significations.

37. In ecological contexts, the term *pastoral* is relatively straightforward. According to Peter H. Collin, *pastoral* is an adjective “1. referring to agriculture based on grazing animals [or] 2. referring to land available for pasture” (158); and the noun *pasture* is defined (in turn) as “land covered with grass or other small plants, used by farmers as a feeding place for animals” (158). While the second of these definitions seems to emphasise a spatially concrete and particular type of semi-natural grassland, the first definition reminds us that, when considering the ecological pastoral, one must remember that any type of “agriculture based on grazing animals” requires a system that expands beyond the boundaries of palatable, safe forage.<sup>39</sup> For example, a fundamental aspect of the wider ecological pastoral context is that animals need clean water to drink. This involves ensuring that a sufficient supply and quality of water is available for consumption, not only by the animals but also (frequently) by the human, “farme[r]” component of this system. For farmers within the UK, especially ones in remote areas without public water supply, ensuring clean water for themselves and their livestock may require the creation, restoration, or maintenance of wetlands or riparian buffers. These processes often involve introducing non-invasive plantings to waterways or stream-banks—plantings that will ideally thrive of their own accord, preferably while providing food and habitat to local wildlife. In wider ecological-pastoral contexts, humans may also cultivate or manage other types of grasslands, including fern/bracken banks (for biofertiliser and animal bedding), reed beds (for thatching and floor covering), and fens and peat bogs (for foodstuffs and fuel). While expanding and, in some ways, complicating Collin’s definitions of *pastoral*, these broader contexts of the “ecological pastoral” are nonetheless still relatively straightforward for the

***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

layman to understand in terms of their logical significations and weblike connectedness. Essentially, in that they clearly represent (per Collin's definition of *ecosystem*) "a complex of plant, animal and microorganism communities[,] and the[se communities'] interactions with the environment in which they live" (69), the interwoven ecological dynamics that connect and interrelate all aspects of the pastoral situation described above mean that it can be comprehended and then considered, holistically, as a "pastoral ecosystem."

38. The aforementioned evidence of certain British grasslands' ancient connections to beneficial human interaction may explain why such pastoral ecosystems and their inhabitants have so long appeared within the island's artistic and literary traditions. However, perhaps due, in turn, to the longevity of "the pastoral" as an aesthetic genre, attempts to define its signification and bounds in the contexts of literature are far more fraught than in the case of ecology.

39. In creative genres and subgenres, "pastoral" is often characterised as "[a] form of art, music, poetry, or literature that evokes a rural way of life in which humanity and nature are in harmony" (Castree et al.); and the nature of this pastoral "harmony" is frequently interpreted as comprising "the innocent life of shepherds and shepherdesses . . . , usually in an idealized Golden Age of rustic innocence and idleness . . . [,] simplicity and virtuous frugality" (Baldick 249–50). In *this* imagining of "the pastoral," idyllic, unproblematic, virtually pristine rural landscapes seem to be inhabited by a limited number of "Nymphs and Shepherds" (Shadwell 65) who apparently "hover over" rather than interact practically with those landscapes. Narratives within such imaginings of "the pastoral" also tend to

### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

focus upon human experience of the landscapes, often to the exclusion of the experiences and conditions of those ecosystems' nonhuman elements.

40. However, as intimated in our prologue, even the most cursory reading of the Western literary-pastoral tradition's originary texts—the relevant *Idylls* of Theocritus, and Virgil's *Eclogues*—makes it plain that such idealised, simplifying, simplistic representations of the countryside and the lives of its human and nonhuman residents actually involve profound re- or misimaginings of “the literary pastoral” as it was originally conceived. Specifically, such iterations of the pastoral effectively eliminate the more complex subject matter, motivations, and goals that infused the original classical pastorals—their irony, “knowingness,” and conscious sense of artifice, and their accounts of rural labour, socio-economic hardships, dangers, tragedy, and unhappiness.<sup>40</sup> While some of these more-complex aspects were perhaps literally or figuratively “lost in translation” over the centuries, the meanings and significances of the term *pastoral* have also depended strongly upon the place, time period, and political contexts of its use. In British literature, its significations have at times involved either conscious adherences to, or deliberate overturnings of, the originary, classical Greek and Latin pastoral texts and tropes.<sup>41</sup> However (as suggested in our earlier discussion of “the georgic”), shifting significations also seem to have depended upon various authors' and critics' particular (mis)interpretations, (mis)readings, and second-hand receptions of those originary texts and tropes.<sup>42</sup>

41. Regardless of how they arose, however, the ways in which various literary meanings and ideas of “the pastoral” have evolved and been interpreted in different places and times, by



### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

different individuals, groups, or whole socio-economic classes, has created some interesting consequences. Not least of these is the strong likelihood that, through dehistoricisations and decontextualisations, certain authors, texts, and movements have been labelled—or “unlabelled”—as “pastoral” in ways that they themselves may not have deemed accurate or appropriate. The same goes for these subjects’ relationships to terms of classification that have arisen around “the pastoral” as “clarifying” concepts—terms like *counter-pastoral*, *anti-pastoral*, *post-pastoral*, *neo-pastoral*, *complex pastoral*, and *sentimental pastoral*.<sup>43</sup> To the current authors, it seems problematic to characterise as “pastoral” the overly or purely idealising divergences from the—largely, historically observed—“mixed emotion” subject matter and tone of the classically rooted or influenced literary pastoral, especially when describing the divergences in this way means that we require continual qualifications of the nonidealising (and, arguably, more accurate) texts as “counter-pastoral,” “anti-pastoral,” or any other of the “prefix pastorals” (Gifford, “Pastoral” 29, 22). This problem is compounded by the fact that, as with *pastoral*, the qualifying terms are nebulous, understood and used differently by different critics, which only adds to the ambiguity and confusion in terms of identifying and defining the “literary pastoral.”

42. Sadly—and regardless of whether the (mis)construals are their own or their literary predecessors’—as we stated earlier, the oversimplified iterations and confused literary significations of “the pastoral” have contributed strongly to making “the pastoral genre” a wholesale no-go area for some ecocritics.<sup>44</sup> In such critics’ perceptions, it has also rendered certain texts, authors, and (in dismaying overgeneralisations) whole literary movements

### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

and periods as “irrelevant,” “naïve” and essentially useless (or even “dangerous”) in terms of how much valuable ecological knowledge they can impart about, and within, twenty-first-century ecological situations.<sup>45</sup> As our prologue notes, this unhelpful confusion, and the correspondent discounting of texts, authors, and movements, seems to have had a particular impact upon poetry and poets of the British Romantic era.

43. Specifically, some ecocritics seem to feel that most British Romantic pastoral poems are “unecological” and, thus, dismissible because they represent one or more outmoded concepts of “environmental harmony” in which humans fail to play discernible or realistic ecological functional roles. For starters, if the poems represent “British Romantics’ more sublime versions of the pastoral” (Garrard 54)—texts often unspecified, but apparently ones depicting sparsely or seemingly unpeopled mountainous regions, like the English Lakes, Scottish Highlands, Welsh Eryri, or Swiss Alps—then they are deemed unhelpful to twenty-first-century eco-concerns because they can foster unrealistic expectations about, and an overvaluing of, “pristine” or “nonhuman” ecosystems (which Earth no longer has).<sup>46</sup> If ecocritics are to be believed, this fostering will happen even when, by virtue of featuring domesticised grazers or being specifically identified as “pastoral,” such landscapes are not actually being represented by their authors as “untouched” or uninfluenced by humans—and certainly not as genuine, literal wilderness. As for Romantic poems that depict less “aweful,” more-domestic grassland scenes—the “ordinary agricultural landscapes of pasture, hay-meadow and arable field” (Garrard 48)—these may be considered slightly more realistic, generally being populated by humans. However, some critics deem these representations still useless to modern concerns: in their eyes, such depictions show

### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

unrealistically unchanging, unchallenging, “merely pretty” landscapes (Morton’s and Garrard’s “pastoral kitsch”); and (or) the poems’ rural dwellers have no practical ecological effects upon these landscapes, hovering in front of them, like scenic backdrops, rather than interacting with them.<sup>47</sup> As such, some critics seem to read these landscapes (in an oversimplifying manner) as being in states of ideal, Clementsian “ultimate” stability. As Gifford observes, Wordsworth is frequently found guilty on all these counts, his poems “often [being] easily dismissed as idealizing nature.”<sup>48</sup> We find this puzzling: to our knowledge, Wordsworth never represents landscapes as untouched by human activity (not even the Alps); his rural dwellers are nearly always at work (usually in pastoral contexts); his “Nature” is rarely static (experiencing change through seasonal shifts, and events such as floods and lightning strikes); and while his pastoral landscapes frequently foster pleasure, health, and life, they also often impede, challenge, endanger, and fatally terminate human activity.<sup>49</sup>

44. It is, then, in response to these related, key problems regarding “the literary pastoral” that we have made some perhaps unusual but hopefully rational and productive decisions.

45. First, in the light of (and, frankly, in frustrated response to) the fraught and ambiguous proliferation of the term *pastoral* in much recent ecocritical debate, we will frame and discuss particular literary texts using an ecological definition of *pastoral*, rather than any sort of literary one. Thus, hereafter, when we use the term *pastoral*, we are signifying the enmeshed ecological systems and dynamics that interrelate all aspects of human and nonhuman life in the contexts of “agriculture based on grazing animals,” with a particular

### *Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

focus upon semi-natural grassland ecosystems. This decision was made in hopes of getting past the ecocritical hostility towards “the literary pastoral” (recounted by Bracke [435, 434]), and also to move beyond confusing uses of the term *pastoral*, such as when Garrard says that Clements’s climax paradigm “was essentially a version of pastoral, since it postulated a stable, harmonious state of nature in the absence of human ‘interference’” (64). This statement is misleading, because while ecologists did originally postulate a type of “balance and harmony” paradigm, they simultaneously held it applicable only in cases where humans could be considered as external forces acting upon an ecosystem. In pastoral ecosystems, however, humans invariably act *within* the system: as implied by the idea that they contain “semi-natural” grasslands, ecologically pastoral landscapes are never “ultimately stable” communities within an ecosystem, because functional humans’ actions are instrumental in creating and maintaining that stabilised but ever-changing ecosystem-state. It is, therefore, impossible for any “version of pastoral” to be devoid of “human ‘interference’”: *all* pastoral human presences “interfere” with climax processes, even if it seems (in literary or other contexts) that those humans and their livestock are “not doing very much” to the landscape. As such, it is inappropriate to apply Clementsian theory to pastoral ecosystems, unless they are being cited as examples of systems unable to reach peak stability because of man’s “destructive” presence (Clements 256).

46. Second, in an attempt to discourage misguided dismissals of “the pastoral,” and of particular authors, texts, and movements, we have decided to challenge the (faulty) notion that anything “pastoral” could involve a “harmony” in which “Man” does not “interfere” with “Nature” by exploring humans’ ecological roles within pastoral poems from the

*Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

literary period so often associated with that notion: the British Romantic era.<sup>50</sup> Essentially (as we explained in our prologue), by reading pastoral poems through the lens of “practical ecology”—ecology in its scientific form—we will show how British Romantic texts can be valued as ones that do, actually, have ecological worth and utility in the twenty-first century, because they reflect a nascent post-equilibrious sense of “harmony,” rather than a Clementsian one. Through an ecologically focussed consideration of these pastoral poems—one which applies ecological concepts and findings to the poems in literal, rather than metaphorical, “Rueckert-esque” ways—we will show how their representations of “environmental harmony” do not involve any idealised figuring of, or pining for, a single, static state of nonhuman “Nature,” one in relation to which humans hold a passive, detached, unaffektive or unaffektive role. Nor do they think of “harmony” in terms of an “ideal” nonhuman ecosystem-state, which humans then (distressingly) perturb until a threshold is crossed and the system is lost (à la Clements). Rather, in these works, “harmony” is understood as involving the active, interrelated, largely deliberate but sometimes unintentional human–nonhuman creation of a dynamic ecosystem-state, one which retains a particular, largely stabilised structure and function (e.g., semi-natural grassland) while still having the capacity to evolve, respond, and adapt to nonradical change.<sup>51</sup>

47. As stated earlier, while many Romantic-era poems could be used to illustrate this situation, we will explore Goldsmith’s *Deserted Village*, Clare’s “The Mores” and “To Wordsworth,” and (to a lesser extent) various poems by Wordsworth. In terms of providing templates for ecological “ways forward” in the twenty-first century, we believe that these

*Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

texts offer practical ways of challenging the problematic, Clementsian-inspired “COVID notion” that ecosystems require human absence if they are to “recover” and achieve their “ultimate,” stable state. Indeed, these poems illustrate the contrary by showing how specific human behaviours within these pastoral systems, rather than human presence in itself, should inform our assessments of humans’ “positive” or “negative” effects upon those ecosystems.

48. Like the many other British Romantic poems that adhere to the originary, classical literary significations of “the pastoral,” then, the texts we explore do not depict rural landscapes as idyllic, pristine natural scenes, “unimpeded” by humans that simply wander through or passively dwell within the landscape. On the contrary, these works present anecdotal evidence (and, at least in Clare’s case, traditional ecological knowledge) of human ecological functions in semi-natural grasslands, involving the presence of at least one key human being, and accounts, or practical appearances, of whole rural communities. Additionally, far from simply recounting and describing the actions and experiences of shepherds, herdsman, or milkmaids—the “exclusively anthropocentric” critique levelled at “unecological,” oversimplified “literary pastoral” texts—these poems’ representations of semi-natural grasslands involve consideration and depictions of nonhuman ecosystem entities such as plants, landforms, and other animals, appreciating them (and their experiences) in, and for, themselves. Furthermore, overturning accusations of “naïveté” and irrelevance to the present day, the human–nonhuman relationships in these poems do not involve naïve, unrealistic, purely positive representations of those relationships. Rather, within these poems—as within many other British Romantic texts—the crucial

### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

significances that *harmonious*, active human–nonhuman relationships hold for all aspects of pastoral, grassland ecosystems are recounted and celebrated through the elucidation of three contrasting states: negative human presence; positive human presence; and (perhaps most interestingly, in light of the idea that “no humans = happy Nature”) negative human absence.

#### **Ecological-Pastoral in Practice**

49. Obviously, debates about positive and negative human presence within British landscapes had existed prior to the 1700s. However, perceptions of “who plays which role” became increasingly fraught both during and after the Industrial Revolution (that is, from about 1750). Predominantly, this was because—like the “dark Satanic Mills” beginning to strain “England’s pleasant pastures” (Blake)—human-population growth was intensifying anthropogenic pressures upon natural and semi-natural ecosystems.<sup>52</sup> This growth was both a result and a necessitator of more-intense and more-efficient food production—requirements that economists and politicians saw as demanding large-scale changes in land management.

50. The perceived need for change was based upon several assumptions about contemporaneous rural land-use practices and arrangements. One, was that they caused the waste, or under-use, of potentially productive, “improvable” land. Between 1760 and 1840, this perception caused a marked increase in parliamentary decrees for grassland ecosystems such as marshes and fens—systems often commonly owned and commonly used by rural

### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

communities—to be drained in preparation for privatised arable planting or animal husbandry.<sup>53</sup> For those who did not value the originary ecosystems as flood control and habitat, or as sources of fuel, food, medicaments, and building materials, such changes created ecosystems that were economically more enticing (and, to some, also more “civilised”).<sup>54</sup> As such, “common” or “open-resource” land previously deemed unworthy of private ownership became a desired, potentially profitable commodity, worthy of excluding from common use.

51. Another negative perception that economists and politicians had about then-current land-management practices was that they placed valuable land at risk of overuse and degradation. Common land was seen as particularly endangered in this regard. A longstanding topic of debate (Fairlie 17), in 1832 it was invoked, in pastoral contexts, within a lecture by English economist William Forster Lloyd (1794–1852). According to Lloyd, open-resource grasslands were frequently overgrazed, because, given the option, people would exploit the resources on “the commons” rather than burden the land that they owned or rented. By using common land (said Lloyd), a person could continue adding to their livestock—an immediate economic gain—without causing the economically damaging degradation of their own grasslands. Thus (Lloyd concluded), humans who value their own self-interests will be compelled to maximise their short-term economic outcomes (e.g., by frequently adding cows to their herd on the common) despite any long-term, collectively borne ecological detriment. Privatising land should theoretically solve this problem, because if one landowner was faced with bearing all the burdensome consequences of overexploitation (rather than dispersing them among all land-users), this



### *Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

would encourage him to manage his ecological resources in a more sustainable manner (Lloyd 30–32).<sup>55</sup>

52. Such arguments seem quite rational; and from the 1750s to the 1860s they influenced the British government's increasingly urgent moves to rearrange common-land management. However, what these arguments failed to acknowledge was that, more often than not, commons were already being managed effectively, either by community agreements and enforcement, by "self-policing," or by virtue of the users' economic standing and status.<sup>56</sup> Where communal management systems were concerned, medieval laws, informal (noncodified) agreements, land-user meetings, and co-users' efforts to ensure others' "fair share" access to land meant that many open-resource ecosystems had been well-regulated and sustainably managed for centuries.<sup>57</sup> With regard to self-policing, the first of two main self-imposed checks upon overexploitation was motivated by familial economic interests. This restraint inducer was based upon the desire that access to uncompromised, economically viable land would apply not only to oneself but also to one's progeny. (Such prudent, forward-thinking interest in perpetuating resources for future generations is documented in Wordsworth's poem "The Brothers," where preservation of lineage takes place within the contexts of the Ewbanks' part-owned, mortgaged pastoral land [30–31, 36; n49, below].) The second voluntary control upon land exploitation involved the intervention of personal conscience—a more complicated situation, in which a land-user may act against their own short-term self-interests for the good of other, human or nonhuman, ecosystem components.<sup>58</sup> Finally, turning to curbs induced by economic standing, this relates to the fact that most agricultural labourers lacked the financial means

### *Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

to buy livestock in quantities that would result in an overgrazed common (e.g., “The Brothers,” 30–31, 36). By extension, this suggests that already-wealthy farmers and landowners may have played a key role in degrading common land—ironically, the very people who often campaigned for privatisation on the basis of Lloydian “overexploitation” theories (Fairlie 29–30, incl. n59).

53. Sadly, there will always be selfish, myopic individuals who exploit common resources “at the community’s expense”; and it has been noted that, in practice, the efficacy of land-preservation measures did vary across eighteenth-century British communities (Fairlie 29, 31). However, the above-described communal and personal restraining systems meant that, generally, the overexploitation and degradation of Britain’s semi-natural grasslands was far from commonplace or inevitable. As E. P. Thompson noted, “[C]ommoners were not without commonsense” (qtd. in Fairlie 18); and plain, empirical evidence (or TEK) told rural labourers that it was usually in their own interest, and the interests of their families and communities, to value long-term ecologically and generationally beneficial outcomes, rather than short-term (and potentially mirageous) financial ones. Of course, many of them also had significant emotional and spiritual connections to the ecosystems of which they were a part, and so did not want to see them harmed.<sup>59</sup>

54. Consequently, by the mid-1700s, rural labourers had lived in sustainable harmony with British semi-natural grasslands—both common and tenanted—for centuries, and they had accumulated a wealth of “lived knowledge” to perpetuate this harmony. However, whether motivated by sincere ideology or (rather) by the chance of benefitting personally from land

### *Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

privatisations (Fairlie 18–19), the sustainability of already-managed common resources was generally not recognised by politicians, economists, or wealthy landlords. As well as apparently failing to take into account the efficacy of the various existing land-use and land-management policies across Britain, they also did not seem to consider the beneficial functional roles that existing land-users held within their respective ecosystems, nor whether changes to those roles would have negative impacts upon particular landscapes. For them, the imperatives were to halt any potential overuse of common lands, to convert as much “waste land” as possible to agriculture, and to prevent common use of these “improved” ecosystems; and they believed that the best means to achieve these goals was a more-deliberate and more-centralised programme of land enclosure.

55. “Enclosure” involves the mandate that any land claimed to be owned must be enclosed within a fence, stone wall, or hedge. While the enclosing of formerly “open fields” had been occurring in England since the twelfth century (originally “through informal agreement[s]”), the rates of Parliamentary Act–enforced enclosure increased dramatically from the 1750s.<sup>60</sup> Between 1604 and 1914, around 6.8 million acres were enclosed (roughly one-fifth the area of England), and this was achieved through the passage of 5,265 Enclosure Acts, 3,828 of which were passed between 1750 and 1819.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, many rural poor could not afford to enclose land and, thus, could not own it, even if their family had worked that land for generations.<sup>62</sup> Wordsworth’s delineations of enclosure’s effects upon pastoral communities include “The Female Vagrant” (1798), in which a shepherdess and her father are directly displaced by enclosure (69–73; below, n49). (Where “The Brothers” is concerned, although the Ewbanks’ land was not directly enclosed, the

### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

family may have suffered enclosure-related socio-economic pressures, the financial burdens of land ownership or tenancy being amplified by the competitive “land market” created by the Enclosure Acts [see Fairlie 26–27; cf. Hess 103].) At the same time that the rural poor suffered, individuals with the means to consolidate and enclose various common and tenanted ecosystems, profited (Fairlie 26–27). The ensuing conversion of diverse landscapes into large monocultural tracts intensified agricultural production (O’Donnell 14); and, in this way, an economic definition of *productivity* carved up the landscape (“Enclosing”).

56. The Enclosure Acts of the 1750s onwards thus shaped the British landscape to match new or changing ideals regarding land management; and if we measure particular outcomes of enclosure against those ideals (e.g., specific improvements in agricultural practices and food production), then enclosure could be deemed successful—the view of Britain’s current Parliament (“Enclosing”; also Fairlie 28–29). However, if we measure the outcomes against the inherent value of semi-natural ecosystems in which rural labourers played intrinsic ecological functional roles, then enclosure disrupted the harmony of those ecosystems. Enclosure displaced the rural humans who likely fulfilled the most functional roles in those ecosystems and who had the experiential knowledge and direct socio-economic incentives to maintain those ecosystem-states, including “unproductive” states.

57. Politicians and wealthy landowners thus may not have dwelt upon the negative ecological implications of increased enclosure and drastic changes to (or severance of) long-established anthropogenic functions and human–nonhuman connectivity. Thankfully,

***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

however, such unthinkingness did not apply to other, “unacknowledged legislators of the world” (Shelley 57); and from the 1770s onwards, many writers and visual artists explored enclosure-inflected socio-economic and ecological states related to positive human presence, negative human presence, and negative human absence.

58. Where negative human presence was concerned, this was represented early on and clearly within Oliver Goldsmith’s *The Deserted Village*. Here, the blot on the landscape is “[t]he man of wealth and pride” who has profited from “trade’s unfeeling train” (15, 4).<sup>63</sup> In the vicinity of Auburn—the poem’s “village”—the “power” wielded by this “spoiler’s hand” manifests itself in newly constructed pleasure grounds that apparently rival Kubla Khan’s (5, 4; Coleridge). Goldsmith’s narrator describes how Auburn’s new “so[n]” of “[u]nwiely wealth” (or, rather, the labourers who worked for him) has fashioned the epitome of “cumbrous pomp”: a country estate that boasts not only a house, but also a lake, the “extended bounds” of a park, and more than enough “[s]pace for his horses, equipage, and hounds” (*Deserted Village* 17, 5, 15).

59. Rather than engendering a land-share arrangement with the locale’s original dwellers, however, this new landowner has achieved his goals in a manner not dissimilar to other rich, arguably “erring” men (Goldsmith, *Deserted Village* 23), such as John Hervey (1665–1751). Just as the expansion of “Ickworth,” Hervey’s stately home in Suffolk, meant that “[r]esidents of the tiny hamlet of Ickworth were rehoused in the neighbouring village of Horringer, and their former dwellings demolished to make way for pasture” (“History”), the “tyran[t]” of Goldsmith’s piece displaces the former inhabitants in order to forge his

***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

estate (*Deserted Village* 3, 5; cf. “Great Estates”). In a couplet that describes this displacement—“But times are altered; trade’s unfeeling train / Usurp the land and dispossess the swain” (Goldsmith, *Deserted Village* 4)—the image of the environmental and cultural violence effected by the new landowner is augmented in the soundscape of the lines. Just prior to the punch of the “d” in “dispossess,” the audible regularity of the poem’s predominantly perfect end rhyme is broken and dissolved by a rare instance of enjambment.<sup>64</sup> After pausing to “rev up” at the strong medial caesura, this particular member of the “unfeeling train” bulldozes through the end of the poetic line to fulfil his act of usurpation. In short order, whereas “the lawn” and the “glades” (3)—that is, the locale’s untilled, natural or semi-natural grassland spaces (“Laund”)—used to contain “scattered hamlets” (Goldsmith, *Deserted Village* 5), now the new landowner’s country seat “[i]ndignant spurns the cottage from the green” and “[t]akes up a space that many poor supplied” (16, 15). As the dismayed narrator recalls, though now inhabited by “[o]ne . . . master” who “grasps the whole domain,” the land used to support many types of pastoral workers, not least “the labouring swain,” “the milk-maid,” “the farme[r],” and “the woodma[n]” (3, 1, 7, 14). Importantly, it also supported these workers’ extended community, including a miller, a schoolmaster, a barber, a smithy, a pub landlord and barmaid, a preacher, a beggar, a discharged soldier, other men and women of all ages and marital statuses, and the children who would hopefully long-sustain this rural community’s life.<sup>65</sup>

60. According to the narrator’s recollections, the ways in which these humans interacted with the ecosystems of which they were a part were simultaneously productive and beneficial. Indeed, the poem as a whole teaches that, though marked by “toil” and being almost-

### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

constantly “busy” (Goldsmith, *Deserted Village* 2), if executed with respect for pastoral and other rural ecosystems, then—as well as building moral “states of native strength” and “self dependent power”—“[a] youth of labour” would yield “what life required” in a practical, material sense (23, 6, 4). Within this harmonious dynamic, “every rood of ground maintained its man” because, in the process of creating human-influenced spaces—not least “the cultivated farm,” with all its pastoral and arable contexts—nonhuman aspects of the environment were given space to thrive, and were engaged with by humans in a mutually beneficial way (4, 1).

61. For instance, the “blossomed furze” beside a fence, the “lingering blooms,” the “garden flower[s],” and the “flowers [and] fennel” that decorated the pub’s summertime hearth, all suggest that as well as enjoying these plants’ aesthetic benefits, the villagers preserved and augmented pollinators’ habitats, eschewing a monocultured pastoral environment (a message Goldsmith may have intended to heighten via the metrical structures of these descriptions).<sup>66</sup> Similarly, the importance of “[t]he hawthorn bush” to the village ecosystem may be intimated by the narrator’s noble personification of “yonder thorn, that lifts its head on high” (*Deserted Village* 2, 12; see also 5). While being left in a natural-enough state of growth to provide shade for people as well as primroses (2, 18), the hawthorn may have been gently pruned to encourage the supply of leaves and flowers for medicinal teas, and of berries for food, both human and nonhuman (“Hawthorn”). As indicated by the actions of the widow—Auburn’s last remaining resident—hawthorns could also yield firewood if one was desperate for fuel but lacked the services of a woodsman, the worker whose functional roles also included silvicultural acts like coppicing trees and collecting leaves

***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

within the village “copse” to provide building materials, fuel, and bedding and food for livestock.<sup>67</sup>

62. When the new landowner disposed of these villagers, they were forced to eke out an existence in the nearest, dismal city, or to depart to “torrid tracts” in which human–nonhuman relationships are, allegedly (and as spitting alliteration suggests), far less harmonious (Goldsmith, *Deserted Village* 17, 19). Either way, in the newly imposed absence of the villagers, negative impacts implicitly resulted for nonhuman animals too, both domestic and wild. Regarding the former, as the cows and geese would likely have been unable to accompany the villagers to a city or a country overseas, then they may have been sold off, disrupting the (explicitly noted) relationships between them (7). If they (like their humans) were indeed forced to “leave the land” (4), then these domestic animals’ ecosystem roles and functions would also be lost, disrupting the wider environment. For instance, the removal of the villagers’ cows and sheep would mean the absence of fertiliser and grazing functions, which could devastate local insect populations, including the pollinators that would have subsisted on the village’s aforementioned flowers. Such poetic intimations of cascading ecosystem degradation mirror real-life consequences for species in UK grasslands, as illustrated by the case of the large blue butterfly. This insect flourished in Britain until the 1900s, when urbanisation, agricultural expansion, and removal of human-influenced practices (much like Auburn’s “desolation” [3]) decimated their populations. Specifically, these butterflies have a complex life-cycle that requires a symbiosis with red ants (Thomas 243). As red ant populations depend upon the effects of regular grazing, undergrazing can degrade habitat in such a way that the butterfly–ant



### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

symbiosis decouples. Indeed, upon analysing the quality of the large blue's final habitats, researchers determined that "none [were] being grazed intensively enough" for the butterflies to survive (Thomas 244); and the last native large blue colonies were lost in 1979. Fortunately, however, several researchers and environmental groups were shocked into action by this stark, rapid loss of common biodiversity; and within a few years of the native large blue's demise, there began efforts to reintroduce the butterfly to the UK. Beginning in 1982, researchers sought out large blue habitat across the world, looking for colonies that inhabited ecosystems similar to those of Britain's "five historical [large blue] strongholds."<sup>68</sup> Eventually, "donor" larvae were transferred to the UK from large blue habitat in Sweden that could, after larvae removal, still safely maintain its own population. Over the years, larvae from this location were placed within stabilised semi-natural UK grasslands, where the "light labour" (Goldsmith, *Deserted Village* 4) of low-intensity farming practices, such as grazing and brush clearance, had been revived; and, so, both red ants and (in turn) the large blue could thrive. These sustained efforts paid off, and in August 2022 researchers documented the butterfly's "best summer in 150 years" (Rannard). However, they also pointed out that this situation remained precarious, and "[t]wo bad years or poor land management could [still] really go against the species" (Rannard). Today, then, the tale of this butterfly—from local extinction to (albeit tenuous) salvation—represents the potential outcomes for any of 247 "priority species" identified, by the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan, as dependent upon semi-natural grasslands (Bullock et al. 162) and the moderate human or human-influenced pastoral interactions that maintain them.<sup>69</sup>

***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

63. Within Goldsmith's poem, other nonhuman species threatened by the removal of human pastoral ecosystem functions include avian wildlife. Not least, one aspect of their food supply—the grain processed at the village's "busy mill" (*Deserted Village 2*)—has reportedly been much reduced under the new landowner (a loss that would, as Goldsmith intimates elsewhere, also devastate the local mice populations<sup>70</sup>). Ironically, given the idea that one governmental goal of enclosure and land redistribution was to increase food production, the narrator informs us that the new Auburn-landowner's "silken sloth" (15), and his focus upon cultivating pleasure grounds (16), means that the "ploughed land . . . under crops" ("Tillage") has been halved. Contrary to the formerly productive arable aspect of this pastoral ecosystem (which, as Bloomfield noted, would have included root crops, such as turnips, grown to supplement livestock's winter hay), "half a tillage" now "stints" Auburn's "smiling plain."<sup>71</sup> This marked departure from the former productivity and "plenty" would thus have contributed to the "famine" of "[t]he mournful peasant" and nonhuman animals (domestic and wild) alike (*Deserted Village 1, 16*).

64. In all probability, the reduction or cessation of grain production and of milling would also have had an impact upon the village's waterways, further affecting its avifauna. Indeed, the narrator recalls that, when he lived in the village, its brook was "cooling," "never failing," and "glassy" (Goldsmith, *Deserted Village 20, 2, 3*). Now, though, coming back to the deserted Auburn after "many a year" (a far-from-ideal literary-pastoral "return from retreat") he finds that the watercourse is no longer reflectively clear or free-running, but rather "spread" with "mantling cresses" and "choaked with sedges" (5, 8, 3). As Brycchan Carey observes, the description of "glassy" waters implies "a relatively low-turbulence

***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

flow” from a “clear and relatively deep channel such as a mill stream” (127); and to keep the stream and its related waterways deep enough and free-flowing, the miller would have interacted with them to keep them unobstructed. Performing a human function that was sometimes mandated by local statutes, the miller could have trampled reeds, or harvested them for thatch, matting, and animal bedding (Getzler; Ambrose and Letch 197). Along with other villagers, he may also have foraged for watercress, the plant that now provides much-needed food for Auburn’s remaining widow, but which, as indicated by the adjective “mantling” (Goldsmith, *Deserted Village* 8), has become so overabundant that it envelops or conceals the stream. Essentially, this means that, beneficial human interactions having virtually ceased since the village’s desertion, a transitional process of hydrosere succession is now underway in the stream. As seen in the context of the recent Stamford Millstream Improvement Project in Lincolnshire (2018–2021), this process will eventually transform the ecosystem. Specifically, reed roots will trap sediment, the river bed will rise, and the stream will grow “weedy” (3), impeding water flow (“Stamford”). The new ecosystem-state may be swamp, marsh, or—eventually—woodland. While this may appear to be a benign, natural Clementsian progression, some ecologists consider hydrosere succession in reed beds to be detrimental to particular birds. These include the bittern, now one of the rarest breeding birds in the UK, and one whose primary habitat preference is a reed bed that supports some cutting—that is, some human interaction—rather than none (Tyler et al. 261–63). Due to the absence of beneficial human–nonhuman interaction, Auburn’s “hollow sounding bittern” (its “disma[l],” “booming” call mimicked by the “o...oh...ow” of this phrase) is thus potentially at risk—a good reason for it to carefully “guar[d] its nest” (Goldsmith, *Deserted Village* 3).<sup>72</sup>

### *Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

65. Here, the poem is describing a destabilised ecosystem-state and some detrimental ecological consequences of human functional loss. A consequence for another (also now-endangered) bird is presented, too, when the narrator describes how he can no longer interact easily with the landscape because “[n]o busy steps the grass-grown foot-way tread” (Goldsmith, *Deserted Village* 8). With the villagers removed from the landscape, the narrator encounters “desert,” “tangling walks” and “bowers in shapeless ruin” (3, 5, 3). While (as Goldsmith knew) the village nightingale may have thrived in this scene,<sup>73</sup> such an overgrown space would be no good for the ecosystem’s lapwing (3). A grassland bird, the lapwing requires habitat with short vegetation; therefore, grass so long that it “o’ertops the mouldering wall” (3) depicts habitat too degraded for this bird to successfully nest (“Lapwing”).

66. Progressing through *Deserted Village*, then, one learns about a variety of problematic ecological consequences that arise from the (involuntary) human abandonment of a semi-natural grassland ecosystem. Auburn’s land “fares ill” not only in terms of the socio-economic destruction of its “bold peasantry”: “adorned,” merely, for the new landowner’s “pleasure,” its ecosystem has also been destabilised to a relative point of “barren[ness],” unbalanced and “ruined” by the negative absence of rural labourers’ key functional roles (4, 16, 5). What is more, Goldsmith emphasises this degradation of the ecosystem-state particularly powerfully through his description of the originally “fenceless limits” of the village common (17). The villagers having been progressively deprived of other places to graze livestock, the common has become almost devoid of grasses, yielding only a “scanty

***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

blade” (17). Nevertheless, despite the commons’ degraded state, still “[t]hose fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide, / [a]nd even the bare-worn common is denied” (17). The disruption of the former ecological and cultural harmony is emphasised wonderfully, here, by this last line’s disrupted metre.<sup>74</sup> Thus (and spurred, perhaps, by governmental presumptions that exploitative grazing could surely only be attributed to the ignorant behaviour of country bumpkins), the pastoral workers, their livestock, and all of their respective ecosystem functions are effectively erased from the picture entirely.

67. Of course, Auburn was a fictional village. Based upon Goldsmith’s empirical observations while on “country excursions, for these four or five years past” (*Deserted Village* vi), it was a composite topographical representation of the many English and Irish villages that were enduring enclosure-related depopulation. Consequently, Auburn cannot be placed within, or provide exact scientific data about, a specific ecosystem. However, this does not diminish the value of Goldsmith’s personal observations and poetic statements in terms of their ability to impart useful lessons and knowledge about real ecological systems (an assessment surely supported by the content within his *History of the Earth*<sup>75</sup>). Like many poems that disseminate TEK (including Theocritus’s *Idylls* and Virgil’s *Eclogues*), *Deserted Village* explicitly fuses real and imaginary environments; and in doing so, it exemplifies how lyric poetry’s compact representational capacities can facilitate the simultaneous consideration of multiple potential ecological effects of humans’ presence in, or absence from, an ecosystem.<sup>76</sup>

*Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

68. When considering the pastoral poems of John Clare, the question of their specific ecological value is a little more straightforward. Like Goldsmith, Clare knew and valued the power of poetic storytelling.<sup>77</sup> His expression was also undoubtedly artful: as his letters attest, he laboured hard at his craft, often reflecting upon his versification, his methods of composition, and the potential effects of his works upon others' emotions.<sup>78</sup> Simultaneously, however (as with the most effective and masterful disseminators of TEK), Clare's subject matter was usually grounded in hard empirical evidence—his lived experiences within exact and known locales.<sup>79</sup> Oftentimes, his desire for veracity emerged as intense disdain for poetic "affectations" in the context of rural life: along with the blatantly ridiculous "absurdities" of what he called "mock pastorals"—"<Sir> Lords in cocked hats piping to a flock of sheep under a awthorn & Ladys with crooks in their hands listening with the sheep to the music"<sup>80</sup>—he disliked "consiets" about "the peasantry" that were rendered by poets who knew "little or nothing" about such people's "distresses," "simple pleasures and pastoral feelings," language, or environs.<sup>81</sup> By contrast, Clare's own observed knowledge encompassed local socio-cultural circumstances, and also the ecological contexts of those situations. Regarding Northamptonshire, the county in which Clare predominantly resided and worked until 1837, one of the major contexts was enclosure. Over half of the area's parishes were enclosed between 1730 and 1830; and the enclosure of Helpston, the village where Clare lived from birth until age thirty-nine (and about which he had very interesting, mixed feelings), began in 1809 and was "largely completed" by 1816.<sup>82</sup> Clare recorded how, like many rural workers, he found employment "setting down fencing & planting quick-lines" (the new hawthorn hedges that reinforced fences, often replacing old hedgerows).<sup>83</sup> Ultimately, however, though providing necessary

***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

work, the process of enclosure fragmented Clare's ecosystem and his sense of that place. Moreover, enclosure seemed to fuel Clare's already-systemic psychological fragmentation of self-identity—a situation perhaps made worse because of his direct involvement in the process.<sup>84</sup> It is thus unsurprising that, after about 1820, many of Clare's pastoral poems contain images of both destabilised individuals and ecosystems.

69. Clare's negative experience of enclosure is exemplified in one of his poetic explorations of semi-natural grassland ecosystems: "The Mores." In some parts of England, *moorland* was a signifier applied to marshes or fens, or to former—that is, now drained—marshes or fens ("Moor," def. 1). In most areas of Britain, however, "moor" was (and still is) understood as an area of unenclosed, uncultivated land, sometimes peat-based, and frequently covered with heathers, sedge, and gorse (defs. 2a, 3). Until his mid-forties, by residing in Helpston and several other geographical locations close to Peterborough, Clare was immersed in a part of England "on the cusp of two landscapes" where both significations of "moor" would have applied.<sup>85</sup> The enclosure-prompting idea that these ecosystems somehow constitute "waste ground" that should be "improved" (usually through arable or silvicultural planting) is a concept preserved in one of the *OED*'s definitions of "moor" (2a).<sup>86</sup> However, in spite—or, perhaps, because—of the fact that it had "never felt the rage of blundering plough" and thus was not an obvious money-maker like the "corn fields" mentioned later in the poem, to Clare the moor was very far from being unproductive "waste"-land ("Mores," lines 3, 61). On the contrary: with its "[m]ulberry bushes," "hedgrow briars," "sprin[g] blossoms," and "little flowers" (including "cowslaps," "daisies," and poppies), this "immens[e]," "mighty flat" was a

*Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

highly diverse ecosystem that could provide food for humans and nonhumans alike, and habitat for wildlife such as “the plover”—a relative of Goldsmith’s lapwing.<sup>87</sup> Being “[b]espread with rush” (line 2), it could also supply covering for floors (loose or in mats), and forage and bedding for wild and domestic animals.

70. When combined with the geographic locale’s other natural and semi-natural grasslands—“wild pasture[s],” “heath[s],” “plains,” “flats,” “fields,” and “meadows”—Clare’s “[u]nbounded” moors were part of a wider lowland environment that proved ideal for the creation and maintenance of pastoral ecosystems (“Mores,” lines 26, 29, 5, 35, 58, 7). The fact that the ecosystem is “undwarfed by bush & tree” (line 11) suggests that it contains few of these particular ecosystem-components and that the grasslands are the dominant feature of the landscape. Prior to enclosure, these grassland spaces would have been either commonly owned, or agreements between various landowners and tenants would have facilitated the relatively unencumbered movement of people and livestock. This pre-enclosure situation is illustrated when Clare’s narrator describes how “[t]he sheep & cows were free to range” (line 23)—how

Cows went & came with every morn & night  
To the wild pasture as their common right  
& sheep unfolded with the rising sun  
Heard the swains shout & felt their freedom won  
Tracked the red fallow field & heath & plain  
Then met the brook & drank & roamed again



*Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

The brook that dribbled on as clear as glass  
Beneath the roots then hid among the grass  
While the glad shepherd traced their tracks along  
Free as the lark & happy as her song (lines 24–34)

The human–nonhuman dynamic is represented, here, as one of harmonious happiness for cows, swains, sheep, and shepherd, all. However, whilst feeling physical, psychological, and emotional freedom, these ecosystem components were performing important ecological functions. For one, ecologists now recognise that a critical condition for emergent sustainability in pastoralism is the ability to “track” resource heterogeneity (line 28; Moritz et al. 12861). In an ideal system, grazers feed in one patch, fertilise this patch with excrement, then move to another location. By the time grazers return to their first patch, plants have had time to regrow; and along with the now-fertilised grassland plants come invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals (see “Protecting”). A profoundly motion-based ecological process, Clare evokes that fact (and, thus, augments his TEK) via the skipping rhythm of “[t]racked the red fallow field & heath & plain”—a beautiful deviation from the poem’s iambic pentameter rhythms, the “uniform measures of tens” that, in late 1820, Clare felt he had “got used to . . . & cannot break myself of . . . .”<sup>88</sup>

71. When the negative human presence of enclosure-benefitting landowners engulfed Helpston, however, these pastoral components, processes, and ecosystems were greatly disrupted in far more negative ways. In terms of human components, as Clare’s narrator remembers it, “Inclosure came & trampled on the grave / [o]f labours rights & left the poor

### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

a slave” (“Mores,” lines 19–20). Socio-economic disruption was also accompanied by physical restrictions that detrimentally affected all aspects of the pastoral ecosystem. When the “fence of ownership crept in between” the formerly ecologically defined natural- and semi-natural-grassland boundaries of the “wandering scene,” it meant that “sky bound mores in mangled garbs [were] left / [l]ike mighty jiants of their limbs bereft” (lines 8, 7, 45–46). Unlike the hedgerows that had been a commonality in Helpston since Clare’s boyhood—property dividers that usually followed natural landforms and land-irregularities—the fences and hedges erected under the new terms of enclosure created straight boundaries distinct from the previous enclosure patterns (McDonagh and Daniels 111). Erecting the new boundaries meant that the original, mature hedgerows (which often contained flower- and fruit-bearing “briars,” “[m]ulberry bushes,” sloes, and hawthorns) were “grubbed [up] & done”—“all destroyed,” removing various human and nonhuman medicaments and food sources from the landscape (Clare, “Mores,” lines 43, 41, 42, 44). The new boundaries came with new land-access restrictions, too, which impeded humans’ use of pre-existing routeways and marred their emotionally restorative engagements with other aspects of the ecosystem (lines 51–64). However, Helpston’s wealthy “little tyrant”—the economic and cultural descendent of Auburn’s, by a couple of generations—seems oblivious to the inconvenience and harm he causes when, acting like a “rude philistine[e]” of “vulgar taste,” he plants and nails-up signs which deliver “[the] notice ‘no road here’” (lines 67, 65, 72, 70). Such acts and restrictions seem so pointlessly authoritarian and absurd that (as Clare’s narrator scoffs), when these signs are posted “[o]n paths to freedom,” it seems “[a]s tho the very birds should learn to know / [w]hen they go there

***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

they must no further go” (lines 69, 73–74). This would be bad news indeed for the poem’s explicitly “free” lark and plover (lines 34, 38).

72. In addition to humans, birds, and vegetation, the domestic animals of the pastoral ecosystem, and the functions they perform, are also disrupted by enclosure. As Clare’s narrator reports,

Fence now meets fence in owners little bounds  
Of field & meadow large as garden grounds  
In little parcels little minds to please  
With men & flocks imprisoned ill at ease (“Mores,” lines 47–50)

Through the stabbing repetition of “little,” the narrator’s voice brims with scorn for the “little tyrant[s]” (line 67). Here, stifling perfect-end-rhymed heroic couplets make palpable not only the prison within which this pastoral ecosystem has been confined but also the heroism necessary if its various components are to endure or thrive under such conditions. As well as engendering psychological discomfort within this ecosystem’s humans and livestock (an accordance of human and nonhuman emotion that echoes Theocritus’s *Idylls* 1, 4, 10, and 11<sup>89</sup>), enclosure also places its various grasslands under assault. By corralling grazers into a static area, rather than leaving them “free to range” (line 23), disturbance from mouths and hooves can occur too frequently for proper regrowth of grasses and other plants—exactly what happened to Goldsmith’s “bare-worn common” (*Deserted Village* 17). Similarly, when animals are confined within a pastoral space, stream-banks and

### *Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

riparian buffers, including “roots” and “grass” (Clare, “Mores,” line 32), can be rapidly degraded. Therefore, “[t]he brook that dribbled on as clear as glass” (line 31) may become fouled and (like Goldsmith’s “glassy brook” [*Deserted Village* 3]) lose its ecological integrity.

73. In the context of Clare’s poem, the newly imposed reduction of common grazing spaces could thus propel, rather than solve, the overexploitation and decline of a pastoral ecosystem. However, when livestock are confined to one place and (no longer free to roam) are thus removed from other places they once grazed, then these latter areas can *also* decline due to the absence of the animals’ ecological functions. Ecological consequences of under-use (as opposed to overexploitation—often two sides of the same coin) has been illustrated in the context of *Deserted Village*. However, given the repeated presence of wildflowers in “Mores,” it is worth noting some observations made, in 2020, by the UK’s *Wildlife Trusts*. Stressing the problematic repercussions of suppressed or absent human and human-related actions as a result of COVID-19 lockdowns, the organisation stated that, for “rare and historic wildflower meadows . . . [,] non-maintenance leads to deterioration[,] and this will take time to repair” (“Protecting”). Examples included wildflower meadows, and other flower-rich “diverse mosaic[s] of vegetation,” affected by pandemic-induced interruptions of various mowing and “conservation grazing” programmes managed by the Surrey, the Alderney, and the South & West Wales Trusts. At these trusts’ respective sites (which mainly include meadows, heaths, and marshes), the fact that the ecosystems could not be “grazed correctly,” or strategically pruned by humans, meant that their “floral diversity” (and that of the dependent fauna) was threatened by the rapid regrowth of brush,

### *Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)*

scrub, brambles, bracken, and other invasive plants (“Protecting”). Returning to “Mores” in this light, one wonders if the wildflowers in the post-enclosure “mores & fields & meadows” will soon disappear for similar reasons, going the way of their cousins in the grubbed-up hedgerows (line 58).

74. Ecologically speaking, “Mores” thus records changes in land management which (contrary to government intentions) seem to be shifting human–nonhuman interactions towards, rather than away from, environmental degradation.<sup>90</sup> In the combined contexts of escalating pressures on the land and new restrictions upon rural workers’ presence, movement, and actions, Clare’s narrator witnesses already-existing consequences for the pastoral ecosystem, and his observations imply that many more are to come. Like *Deserted Village*, “Mores” thus illustrates how, even if seemingly untouched by human hands, many grasslands are actually shaped and maintained—balanced, but not in stasis—by humans’ vital functional roles. Shepherds and cowherds directed their animal charges in ways which benefitted the grasslands upon which they roamed; and—as seen in *Deserted Village*—rural labourers’ beneficial ecological functions helped to stabilise British semi-natural grasslands and their wildlife.

75. The necessity and the belonging of humans within these ecosystems is reiterated by Clare in his beautiful lyric poem “To Wordsworth.” Though he was at times critical of Wordsworth’s poetic style (even parodying some of the latter’s poems “in ridicule of his affectations of simplicity”<sup>91</sup>), Clare felt that “still with his faults & abilities . . . [Wordsworth] is a poet with whom for originality of description the present day has few

***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

if any equals . . . .”<sup>92</sup> As such, the poetic form that Clare chose for “To Wordsworth” is especially appropriate, English sonnets often conveying the complex range of feelings that can characterise a close relationship.

76. Ironically, considering many ecocritics’ intimations that Wordsworth teaches us nothing except how to be a solitary poet in “idealised nature,” within “To Wordsworth” Clare recognises and values the fact that Wordsworth often wrote perceptively “ecological pastoral” poetry. Immediately, Clare’s narrator tells us that “Wordsworth I love” because “his books are like the fields,” filled with “works of human kind” (lines 1, 2). This simile demonstrates real appreciation for Wordsworth’s frequent engagement with the working, semi-natural grassland ecosystems with which Clare himself was so familiar. After extolling the beauty of these grasslands’ plants and sustaining waters, Clare’s narrator recalls an “aged huntsman grubbing up the root” (perhaps Wordsworth’s Simon Lee); then, he emphasises the ecological integrity of the huntsman and his actions via the heartening declaration, “I love them all as tenants of the earth” (lines 3–6, 7, 8). Given the preponderance of ecocritics’ negative assessments of Wordsworth’s poetry, especially when simultaneously celebrating the ecopoetic relevance of Clare,<sup>93</sup> it makes one smile to see the latter’s admiration for Wordsworth’s pastoral representations, especially when Clare’s lyric voice proclaims that “[w]hat critics throw away I love the more” (line 10).

77. In terms of Clare’s own ecological place within the landscapes that embraced him, “Mores” and “To Wordsworth” were written in very different contexts.<sup>94</sup> However, like *Deserted Village*, both poems frame human presence and behaviours as fulfilments of functional

### ***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

ecological roles. As such, like Goldsmith's poem, both of Clare's works also demonstrate that many of the apparently "untouched" ecosystems that appear in British Romantic poetry—including those in works by Wordsworth—are actually semi-natural: infused, "like the fields," with "works of human kind."

78. That said, however, these enclosure-influenced poems do not only focus upon human or anthropocentric concerns, situations, and suffering—charges which some have levelled against these texts (e.g., Rigby 69; Marx 98–100). On the contrary: in the light of an ecologically directed reading, Clare and Goldsmith give strong, clear voices to a great range of nonhuman pastoral-ecosystem components that are being affected—positively and negatively—by the presence or absence of functional human behaviours. With specific regard to "the depopulation of the country" and the Enclosure Acts that precipitated it, Goldsmith and Clare show how entire semi-natural grassland ecosystems were "disorder[ed]," displaced, disrupted, confused, and degraded by changes in human–nonhuman interactions, and lost human ecological roles and functions (Goldsmith, *Deserted Village* vi). The fates of these systems' nonhuman components—whether they be birds, cows, flowers, fields, or water—are recognised; and they are represented, simultaneously, as being influenced by, yet also an independent aspect of, the human-experienced enclosure-inflicted "miseries" that both poets wanted to "display" (vi). Consequently, suffering is not confined to humans, but, rather, is dispersed across these ecosystems. Fortunately, however, the same also goes for the mutually nurturing effects of beneficial human actions, and the harmonious human–nonhuman relationships they can engender within a wide variety of grassland ecosystems.

## **Epilogue**

79. At this point, we hope to have demonstrated how an ecological definition of “the pastoral” can yield a valuable interpretative lens through which to consider this term in the context of literature. As well as potentially offering literary studies a means by which to clarify the definitory problems that seem to plague its discussions of “the pastoral,” this lens has proved crucial to one of our multi-year project’s main goals: showing that British Romantic pastoral poems retain relevance to current debates about semi-natural grassland ecosystems, and, thus, should be valued as useful tools in tackling our planet’s ecological crises. Not least, even if every interaction and function within these poems cannot be translated to contemporary situations or “jump scales” (Harvey 102), they have worth and purpose because, by virtue of “being pastoral,” they do not involve ecosystems that are devoid of human influence. Rather, as texts that observe and record human–nonhuman interactions—positive and negative, present and absent—now, more than ever, they can be applied to Anthropocenic global realities in which humans influence every ecosystem upon Earth.

80. Thus far, we have illustrated the retained didactic relevance of these poems by assessing the real-life ecological situations and consequences of the scenes they depict, and, then, documenting correlative examples of twenty-first-century human–nonhuman interactions in some of the UK’s semi-natural grassland ecosystems. In a forthcoming companion essay, as well as providing additional encouraging examples of such correlations, we will



***Romanticism on the Net #83 (Spring 2024)***

discuss literature's role in the protection of semi-natural "cultural landscapes" within the UK; how historical poetry may help to combat the ecological problem of "shifting baseline syndrome" (Jones et al.); and further ways in which—as many ecologists would agree—British Romantic poetry can be used to help (re)educate humans about their necessarily integral, rather than dominant, ecological place in the world.

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**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> For example, Hess. For further references and information, see below, nn48–49, and corresponding in-text discussion. As noted by Davies (5–8) and Ottum and Reno (10, 20), for many years William Wordsworth (1770–1850) has been the author most frequently invoked within ecocritical explorations of “British Romanticism” and “the pastoral.” For our response to this fact, see below, n29.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Jonathan Bate, James McKusick, Raymond Williams, and John Barrell; Laurence Buell and Dana Phillips.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Hutchings; Phillips, “Ecocriticism, Ecopoetics” (esp. 41); Hess 4–9, 231; Ottum and Reno 3–10; Davies; Menely 17–20, 170–73.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Fairer, “Where” 203–04, 208–09; Drew 6–7, 10–16, 137–38.

<sup>5</sup> An allusion to *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* (1820) by John Clare (1793–1864).

<sup>6</sup> For example, see Bullard on James Rebanks’s book: “However, it turns out that *English Pastoral*’s title is a little misleading: its contents are less pastoral . . . than deeply georgic” (4); cf. Joinson 311.

<sup>7</sup> Re *Idylls*, see Hunter vii–ix, xiii–xviii. On the complexities surrounding the title “*Eclogues*,” see Goold 23, 2–3; Hunter xvi.

<sup>8</sup> For evidence of knots, see Somervell; cf. Bullard 6; Radcliffe 451; and Fairer, “Georgic” 465. See also McRae 132; Schoenberger 143–44, 150–51. For frustration at this situation, see Radford 215; see also Burchardt 96; McRae 128; Pellicer 236; Joinson 307.

<sup>9</sup> See Davis, esp. viii–ix and xiv–xv; and Hunter xvii–xviii. Cf. Burchardt 91. See also below, nn40–42, and corresponding in-text discussion.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Bullard 4; Thacker 258; and Schoenberger 149.

<sup>11</sup> Not least, confusion about “the pastoral” was, and still is, both formed and reinforced by the ecocritical contexts delineated in this prologue’s second paragraph (contexts that may also problematically influence scholars of “the georgic”).

<sup>12</sup> For discussion of recharacterisations, see below, n43, and corresponding main text.

<sup>13</sup> On social-ecological systems, see Ostrom; Fernández-Giménez. Although we prefer the term *other-than-human* (Rigby 64) to *nonhuman*, the phrase *human–other-than-human* is impractically structured; therefore, *human–nonhuman* is used with acknowledgement of its limitations. (*Human–animal relationships* [Westling 6] is avoided because humans *are* animals [primates].)

<sup>14</sup> In addition to those cited in n15, below, scientist supporters of TEK include Berkes et al.; Huntington; Reid et al.; Richter; and Singleton et al.

<sup>15</sup> For example, Duarte et al. 166: with specific reference to pastoral TEK, see Fernández-Giménez; Sharifian et al. (Re expressions of TEK in other ancient poems, Robinson finds scientifically verifiable allusions to hydrologic cycles in the Psalms and other Judeo-Christian scriptures.)

<sup>16</sup> Baldick describes it as “a more condensed medium than prose or everyday speech” (263).

<sup>17</sup> Of course, the same goes for linguistic elements: even if a person does not know what a “finny tribe” is, or that this conceit is an example of “poetic diction,” they can still react to its sound and sense (usually with a smile).

<sup>18</sup> This “appreciation without mechanistic affirmation” parallels the very knowledge that such poems may attempt to convey: the close encounters with ecosystems that are required for

acquisition of TEK can create profound connections between those systems' human and nonhuman components, even if the technicalities that cause this effect are not fully understood.

<sup>19</sup> For example, 1798 readers of *Lyrical Ballads* would not have known who was speaking in “. . . Tintern Abbey”; and even when the poem was “owned” in the 1800 edition, most readers would not have known anything about Wordsworth. This may have allowed readers to identify more, themselves, with the “I” of the poem.

<sup>20</sup> For instance, the powerful lyric “I,” or narrative voice, that characterises many British Romantic poems is sometimes viewed as exclusionary and isolating, an overly subjective presence that “binds” the poem’s content to a particular author, demographic group, and (or) historical moment, thus making the poem’s content irrelevant to audiences of different demographic, geographic, socio-economic, and historical contexts (see, e.g., Hess 2, 16, 234–35; Menely 167–73, 191; Nersessian 111, 134; Tedeschi 91). Prompted, perhaps, by the possession of extensive knowledge about a text’s author, and (or) the desire not to “suspend” that knowledge when encountering the text, this response—almost a wider critical turn against Romantic-era lyric poetry itself—seems to constitute a fifth reason for waning interest in the ecocritical value of the Romantic pastoral poem.

<sup>21</sup> In the specific context of TEK, the pastoral, and the agricultural, one such response was voiced by scientist Daniel Richter. An organiser of poetry readings at a key conference of agronomists, crop scientists, and soil scientists (Richter et al.), when exploring the *Georgics* and *Eclogues* he identifies with “Virgil’s voice . . . [as] one of incredible concern about the future of the world, and not just the natural world, but the agricultural world as well—the fragility of it, and the choices that we have to make” (Richter).

<sup>22</sup> In many cultures, poetry was the original medium through which one experienced language composed and ordered “according to some pattern of recurrence that emphasizes the relationships

between words on the basis of sound as well as sense . . .” (Baldick 263). (For Clare’s observations on the competition presented by novels in the Romantic era, see Clare, *Letters* 394, 574; also Redding 306. For thoughts on the relationship between poetry and prose in the context of twenty-first-century eco-crises, see Menely 212–14.)

<sup>23</sup> Illingworth, Personal communication; cf. Illingworth, *Science Communication* 3. Interestingly, in the “Advertisement” to Bloomfield’s *Good Tidings*, as well as acknowledging the poem’s fusion of fact and imagination (“it indulges in domestic anecdote” that “is not only poetically, but strictly true”), Bloomfield positions himself as a conveyor of both traditional *and* scientific knowledge (“The few . . . be forgiven”).

<sup>24</sup> For example, see Illingworth, *Science Communication* 11; Renwick and Thomson xvi, xx–xxi.

<sup>25</sup> Renwick and Thomson xvi–xvii, xx (also xix).

<sup>26</sup> See Illingworth on “cognitive incubation” (*Science Communication* 24–25). For Robinson, poetry can provide “the entry point into the science . . . [by] captur[ing] the imagination,” allowing one to look around and wonder “why,” with science then providing a mechanism in attempts to answer that question.

<sup>27</sup> Renwick and Thomson xix: for Richter, see above, n21; Abramoff.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Illingworth’s approach in *Science Communication* (51–80).

<sup>29</sup> As we do not have space, here, to join the larger ecocritical debate about “the worth of Wordsworth” (see above, n1), we have deliberately limited our engagement with his works; however, we intend to explore them further in a future piece.

<sup>30</sup> For example, Bullard 17; Somervell; Radcliffe 451.

<sup>31</sup> For Clare’s reference to Theocritus, made in relation to Bloomfield, see below, n81; re Wordsworth, see Wagner-McCoy 318. See also Schoenberger 150–51.

<sup>32</sup> This truly “ecological” approach was actually proposed by early ecocritic Dana Phillips (“Ecocriticism, Literary Theory”); however, in the context of British Romanticism, it seems that only Brycchan Carey ended up seriously treading this path. (For other “road[s] not taken in Romantic ecocriticism” [21], see Davies.)

<sup>33</sup> For example, Illingworth, *Science Communication* 153–70; Renwick and Thomson; Tedeschi.

<sup>34</sup> The word *Anthropause* is related to *Anthropocene*, one of several names proposed for the geological epoch in which human activity has effected pronounced influences upon Earth’s climate and ecologies. For the origins of and debates surrounding this (contested) term, see Reno, *Anthropocene and Early Anthropocene Literature* 1–5 and throughout.

<sup>35</sup> For example, while reduced anthropogenic mobility decreased global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations reached a then record high during quarantine (“Trends”). Such a discrepancy arises for several reasons, detailed in both Le Quéré et al. (“Fossil CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions” and “Temporary Reduction”) and in our forthcoming companion piece (see final page of this article, above).

<sup>36</sup> For a Romantic-era expression of this concept, see Darwin, part 1, canto 2 (70), footnote to line 116.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Gleason; Pickett et al.; O’Neill.

<sup>38</sup> Hatfield and Maher 436; cf. Reno, *Early Anthropocene Literature* 38–40.

<sup>39</sup> In literary contexts, Thomas Hardy’s *Far From The Madding Crowd* (1874) depicts the import of ensuring safe forage, when sheep are sickened or die of “pasture bloat” after eating clover (ch. 21).

<sup>40</sup> For more on this selectivity, see Gifford, “Pastoral” 18–19 and “Environmental Humanities” 160, 163, 166–68; Hirsch 448; Williams; Alpers ix–xi; above, n9. For examples of the many less-

than-ideal aspects in “the world of Theocritean bucolic” (where “song is more often than not the result of emotional distress” [Hunter xvi]), see the death, loss, and “painful grief” (line 103) of “Idyll 1,” and other Idylls’ intimations of suicide, allusions to torture, and accounts of nonhuman animals’ suffering (Theocritus, “Idyll 3,” lines 10, 25–27; “Idyll 5,” lines 149–50; “Idyll 4,” lines 12–17). For an excellent, poem-by-poem synopsis of how “the world of . . . [Virgil’s] *Eclogues* is permeated through and through with portrayals of human infelicity, catastrophic loss, and emotional turbulence” (ix), see Davis ix–xv; for an example of nonhuman animals’ distress, see “Eclogue I,” lines 11–18.

<sup>41</sup> On the conscious English neoclassical-era decisions to emphasise “pretty” aspects of the classical pastoral, and thus idealise and simplify its content (decisions rooted in contemporary French theories), see Fairer, “Persistence,” esp. 261–62, 265–66, 271, 274. For these tendencies in Italian Renaissance pastorals, and their later influence, see Davis viii–ix. (For Fairer’s own tendency to think in terms of “the golden world of pastoral,” see “Where” 206, 205, 207–08, 209, 211, 212, 214, 215.)

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Gifford, “Environmental Humanities” 159 and “Pastoral” 17. Regarding ecocritic Greg Garrard, it is unclear what motivates his “simplifying” statements about the pastoral (e.g., 77, 117, 145, 202, 172 [quoting Andrew Ross]). Garrard seems to bemoan, but then perpetuate, the interpretation of “pastoral” as “an idealisation of rural life” (37–38).

<sup>43</sup> For these terms, see, for example, Gifford, “Pastoral” and “Environmental Humanities”; Rigby 69–70; Brassley 111. Of course, as described in our prologue, such (un)labellings of “the pastoral” also extend to reidentifying works as “georgic.” Interestingly, Bullard (24) and Thacker (268) even seem to consider the terms *post-pastoral* and *georgic* to be interchangeable.

<sup>44</sup> See above, nn1–3, and corresponding in-text discussion.

<sup>45</sup> That Romantic-era texts are dangerous ideological distractions from today's Anthropocenic eco-crises is a position that Ottum and Reno (4) attribute to Morton.

<sup>46</sup> For example, Garrard 48; Goodbody 64; Alpers 27; Trombley 111; Cronon 10–11, 24.

<sup>47</sup> For “pastoral kitsch,” see Morton 5; Garrard 45, 46, 53. (Unfortunately, Garrard perpetuates the oversimplifying, kitschy perception of British Romantic pastorals when he says that Clare's “Emmonsails Heath” depicts a “filthy, freezing, un-Romantic landscape” [51]. This description—actually more appropriate for Clare's “Gipsy Camp”—suggests that, by contrast, Romantic pastoral landscapes are generally clean, sunny, “easeful, plentiful, pretty, instructive[, and] enduring” [53].)

<sup>48</sup> Gifford, “Pastoral” 20: see, for example, Garrard 48; Menely 35 (re “unproductive nature”); Hess (esp. 16–17, 19, 101–03, 228, 230). (On the limitations of Hess's interpretations, see Davies 12.)

<sup>49</sup> For example, Wordsworth, *Thirteen-Book Prelude* (comp. 1805), bk 6, lines 332–524; bk. 8, lines 10–15, 59, 84–119, 178–311, 353–90; bk. 13, lines 5–19. See also “Brothers” 24, 26–27, 33; “Simon Lee”; and “Goody Blake.” For a similar observation, see Menely 195–96. For “pleasure, health, and life,” see Burke 13. (References to poems within the 1798 and 1800 *Lyrical Ballads* cite page numbers, as there are no line numbers provided in these editions.)

<sup>50</sup> For the idea that modern-day oversimplifying perceptions of “the pastoral” are rooted in “the Romantic movement's poetic responses to the Industrial Revolution,” see Garrard (37): cf. Phillips, “Ecocriticism, Eco-poetics” 48; also Hess 17, 230. For the related—and overgeneralising—idea that “Romantic poetics” was unable to adequately address the Industrial Revolution and its consequences, see Nersessian.

<sup>51</sup> Gifford (“Pastoral” 28) and Rigby (65) suggest a similar approach.



<sup>52</sup> The population of England in 1701 is estimated to have been 5,057,790. Fifty years later, it was around 5,772,415. By 1801, however, it had risen to 8,664,490; and by 1841 (the publication date of Clare's "To Wordsworth"), it was 14,970,372 (Schofield 64).

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Parliament of Great Britain, *An Act*, "Inclosure," and "Inclosure and Drainage": also Fairlie 23, 16; "Draining."

<sup>54</sup> Fairlie 22–23, 30–31. (Fairlie is cited extensively throughout this discussion because its reliable use of many significant sources enables us to invoke those sources without lengthening our bibliography.) Re "civilising" change, see Barrell 94: cf. the observation that, via *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Adam Smith (1723–1790) "popularized a [now-disproved] notion that the natural advancement of livelihoods and land use is from hunter to pastoralist to farmer" (Reid et al. 220).

<sup>55</sup> Lloyd's use of the male pronoun within this discussion reflects the fact that while women may have performed pastoral functions (shepherdess, milkmaids, etc.), most landowners were men.

A modern iteration of Lloyd's arguments was promulgated by ecologist Garrett Hardin (1915–2003) in his highly cited article, "The Tragedy of the Commons" (1968). (Despite Hardin's 1997 admission that "The Tragedy of the Commons" is frequently misinterpreted because it should have been "written more carefully" ["Living"], in 2018 the scientific journal *Nature* named it among "100 articles every ecologist should read" [Courchamp and Bradshaw].) The idea that enclosure may actually have protected open-resource land is also posited by Garrard (53).

<sup>56</sup> For Hardin's belated acknowledgement of this fact within twentieth-century land-management contexts, see "Tragedy of the Unmanaged Commons."

<sup>57</sup> Fairlie 18; "Enclosing." Cox posits that communal land-management in England could even be a millennia-old practice (61).

<sup>58</sup> For ways in which the two aforementioned types of self-initiated limitation could relate to the religious and legal concept of “usufruct,” see Drew.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Burchardt 95–96 (re “farm diaries”); Berkes et al. 1259; Sharifian et al.

<sup>60</sup> “Enclosing.” For a good brief history of the open-field system, and of the motivations for increased enclosure, see Fairlie 17 (boxed text), 19–20, 24–26.

<sup>61</sup> “Enclosing”; “Key Dates.” For more, see Thompson; Fairlie 25.

<sup>62</sup> For histories of civil unrest surrounding such situations, see Fairlie and Thompson.

<sup>63</sup> References to the 1770 edition of *Deserted Village* cite page numbers, as no line numbers are provided.

<sup>64</sup> This is one of only twenty-seven enjambed lines in this first, 432-line version of the poem.

<sup>65</sup> See Goldsmith, *Deserted Village* 2, 11, 14, 8, 9, 2, 18, 20, 21, 7. (Although it happened for different reasons, the pastoral community’s displacement, in this poem, harks back to the displacements described in Virgil’s *Eclogues* 1 and 9.)

<sup>66</sup> See Goldsmith, *Deserted Village* 11, 1, 8, 13. Depending upon Goldsmith’s pronunciation of the words that convey this floral imagery, the rhythms of the lines could have contributed to the sense of the flowers’ thriving abundance and freedom to “do their own thing.” For instance, if for Goldsmith the fourth syllable of “unprofitably” (“[t]ab”) was unstressed, then the fourth foot of the line “With blossomed furze unprofitably gay” would be pyrrhic, enhancing the sense that—as well as existing for something other than remunerative function—the furze was allowed to be “flighty” and uncontrolled. Re the line, “And parting summer’s lingering blooms delayed,” if Goldsmith pronounced “lingering” as a dactyl rather than a trochee, then the resulting anapest in the fourth foot of that hypercatalectic line would disrupt the poem’s generally regular iambic pentameter in such a way that was not only onomatopoeic, but that also suggested the blooms’

autonomous agency, and their abundance. That the village was brimming with pollinator habitat would also be intimated structurally if the phrase “many a,” within “And still where many a garden flower grows wild,” was pronounced as a dactyl, rather than a trochee, to form an anapestic third foot. (Of course, if Goldsmith said “flower” as a trochee, rather than as a monosyllable—“flahr”—then the final foot of that line would also be anapestic, heightening the effect of a bountiful floral display.)

<sup>67</sup> Goldsmith, *Deserted Village* 8, 14, 8; “Short Rotation Coppice”; “Tree Hay”; see also Fairlie 22.

<sup>68</sup> Thomas et al. 12. These locations were “the Cotswolds, [the] Poldens (Somerset), Dartmoor, and the Atlantic coast of Devon and Cornwall” (12).

<sup>69</sup> Interestingly, in volume 8 of his eight-volume *History of the Earth, and Animated Nature* (1774), Goldsmith discusses butterflies’ egg-laying habits and habitats (7–10, 40–42); explains that some butterfly eggs, caterpillars, and aurelia (or chrysalis) spend winter “buried under ground” (8); and recounts how, “[i]n the fields of England,” ants—“some red, some black” (116)—“are seen diligently going from the ant-hill, in pursuit of food for themselves and their associates” (119). While he does not make explicit connections between ants and butterflies, these observations are applicable to the relationship between large blue butterflies and red ants.

<sup>70</sup> See Goldsmith, *History*, “The Mouse . . . attends upon mankind. . . . They are chiefly found in farmers yards and among their corn . . .” (4: 72, 73; also 74–78).

<sup>71</sup> Benedict et al.; Bloomfield, *Farmer’s Boy* 28, 78; Goldsmith, *Deserted Village* 3.

<sup>72</sup> In volume 6 of *History*, Goldsmith says that, of all waterfowl calls, “there is none so dismally hollow as the booming of the bittern” (1–2)—a bird he also calls the “Mire-drum” (1). As well as noting the “loudness and solemnity” of this “terrifying” call (2), he gives scientific and folkloric

accounts of how the “boomb” [sic] is engendered (4, 2–3), and for what purpose (2, 4–5). He also provides both scientific and personal observations upon the bittern’s appearance, habitat, nesting practices, diet, flight, additional calls, and so forth (1–5).

<sup>73</sup> Goldsmith, *Deserted Village* 8; “Nightingale”; also Goldsmith, *History*, 5: 327, 328.

<sup>74</sup> The iambs of this line’s second and third feet are replaced, respectively, by an anapest and a spondee. Goldsmith’s sparse use of metrical disruption in *Deserted Village* makes substitutions like this especially affecting, and they aid one’s “unfatigued attention to . . . [this] long poem” (vi). As a consummate artist, Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792)—the poem’s dedicatee—must surely have noted their effect, even if Goldsmith was not inclined to enquire “[h]ow far . . . [Reynolds] may be pleased with the versification and mere mechanical parts of this attempt” (vi).

<sup>75</sup> See above, nn69, 70, 72, 73; below, nn76, 83, 87.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Drew 6. In many ways (and not unlike Bloomfield’s *Good Tidings* [above, n23]), *Deserted Village* is thus a concise lyric expression of Goldsmith’s combined ecological “knowledges,” both empirical and scientific. A more extended, prose iteration of this amalgamation can be found in his *History*. This text explicitly weaves together creative TEK and science—a fact celebrated in the work’s preface (1: i and throughout). As may be seen in the example citation-references here provided, *History* explores human and nonhuman life—including their ecological interactions (5: 314–15)—via “united experience” (8: 7; 5: 335–38); personal experience and observations (1: iii, v, vi; 5: 327; 6: 4, 30, 32); poetry (5: 312); folklore (6: 2–3, 4–5); anecdotes and stories (5: 329–32); accounts of natural phenomena whose reasons for being are “as yet unknown to man” (8: 37); and the scientific observations and “experiments” (8: 115) of “ancients” (1: vi), such as “Pliny the Elder” (23/24–79 CE; 1: xiii; 5: 326–27), and at least eleven “moderns” (1: vii), not least of these being the Comte de Buffon, Georges-Louis Leclerc (1707–1788; 1: x–xii).

<sup>77</sup> For example, Clare, *Letters* 24, 31, 82, 183, 262, 288. A largely self-educated man, Clare's letters and manuscript works did not usually contain punctuation or standardised spellings: when his texts *are* punctuated and standardised—as in the poem, “To Wordsworth”—this was the work of his editors. For a hilariously wry comment on the educational status of himself and his fellow “labouring poets,” see his 1824 letter to Allan Cunningham (1784–1842), the “Nithsdale Mason” (302–03).

<sup>78</sup> For example, Clare *Letters* 70, 79, 136, 177–78, 224, 261, 293; also 5, 287, 571–73. For further observations about Clare's poetics, especially “syntax, grammar, and the order of words” (17), see Barrell. When encountering other poets' works, Clare also registered, keenly, the emotional effects of their versification and content: for example, reading *Labours of Idleness* (1826), by George Darley (1795–1846), Clare noted that “a mystical beauty hangs about their measures & expressions that creates a feeling in one something akin to musing or listening to fancys imaginary music—I feel something perhaps that I cannot express but I have explained it as well as I can” (*Letters* 371).

<sup>79</sup> Even Nersessian admits that Clare's poems “can be nakedly referential” (14). We disagree with her assessment that this happens only “in some complicated cases.”

<sup>80</sup> Clare, *Letters* 607: cf. 12, 379.

<sup>81</sup> Clare, *Letters* 137, 302, regarding George Crabbe (1754–1832); 12, regarding William Shenstone (1714–1763); 519, on John Keats (1795–1821); cf. 563, on William Browne (ca. 1590–ca. 1645). Where poetry was concerned, Clare considered Bloomfield to be “the greatest Pastoral Poet England ever gave birth too” (300), calling him “our English Theocritus” (302, 322); see also 17, 323–24, 94. Regarding visual art, Clare felt that Edward Villiers Rippingille (1790–1859) achieved a “pastoral poesy of painting” (423). Compare all with a fascinating reference to the *Discourse on Pastoral Poetry* (1704), by Alexander Pope (1688–1744) (*Letters* 293).

<sup>82</sup> McDonagh and Daniels 109; Clare, *Letters* 378–81; Barrell 212, 210. See also Barrell 98–109, which includes diagrams of the changes affected by the enclosure.

<sup>83</sup> Qtd in Barrell 212; “Quick, v.2”: see also Goldsmith, *History* 5: 337.

<sup>84</sup> Clare spent most of his final twenty-seven years in two psychiatric hospitals: a private asylum in High Beach, Epping Forest, Essex (1837–1841), and Northampton General Lunatic Asylum (1841–1864). For an interesting interpretation of enclosure’s effects upon Clare’s mental health, see Guyer 78–100.

<sup>85</sup> “Helpston”; “Geology” (where the locale’s ecologically liminal state can be clearly seen); Redding 305. In addition to Helpston (his birthplace), Clare spent time in Stamford (Burghley House), Oundle, Great Casterton, Pickworth, and Northborough.

<sup>86</sup> Unfortunately, it is also expressed by Bullard (12), especially in relation to fen-land.

<sup>87</sup> Clare, “Mores,” lines 41, 43, 4, 53, 59, 60, 61 (“the ‘head ach’”), 12, 11, 38. The plover may be a “golden” one: while most types of plover live in coastland habitats, golden plovers seasonally inhabit “upland moorlands” and “lowland fields,” often flocking “in the company of lapwings” (“Golden Plover”). Cf. Bignal and McCracken 418. For Goldsmith’s observations on the lapwing and plover—“Small Birds of the Crane Kind . . . with bills very short” (22, 23)—including their relationship, see *History* 6: 22–35.

<sup>88</sup> Clare, *Letters* 102; also 137. Cf. 12.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Hunter on “pathetic fallacy” and its importance in pastoral poetry (Theocritus 86, endnote to “Idyll 1,” line 71).

<sup>90</sup> Cf. the real-life state of Otmoor, Oxfordshire, after its drainage and enclosure (Fairlie 26).

<sup>91</sup> Clare, *Letters* 231; see also 221–22, 87.

<sup>92</sup> Clare, *Letters* 86–87; cf. 371–72.

<sup>93</sup> For example, Hess 12, 23–39, 43, 66–67; Garrard 44–53.

<sup>94</sup> While “Mores” was written in Northamptonshire, “To Wordsworth” was composed in Essex—two quite different ecosystems, of which Clare was acutely aware (Redding 305).