

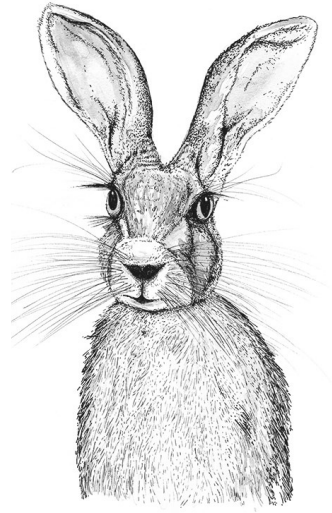
Hares at Play

The birds are gone to bed, the cows are still,
And sheep lie panting on each old mole-hill;
And underneath the willow's gray-green bough,
Like toil a-resting, lies the fallow plough.

The timid hares throw daylight fears away
On the lane's road to dust and dance and play,
Then dabble in the grain by naught deterred
To lick the dew-fall from the barley's beard;
Then out they sturt again and round the hill
Like happy thoughts dance, squat, and loiter still,
Till milking maidens in the early morn
Jingle their yokes and sturt them in the corn;
Through well-known beaten paths each nimbling hare
Sturts quick as fear, and seeks its hidden lair.

sturt: to move suddenly, start

John Clare



“In my boyhood Solitude was the most talkative vision I met with. Birds bees trees flowers all talked to me incessantly louder than the busy hum of men.”

John Clare (1793-1864) was the son of a labourer, and worked as a hedge-setter in Helpstone, Northamptonshire. He was also one of the most observant and finest nature poets in the English language. He spent the last 27 years of his life in a lunatic asylum, but continued to write about his life and the natural world to the very end.

Largely ignored in his lifetime, he is now recognised as one of our greatest poets.