

# I Am Really Sick

of having my withers wrung by  
In distant countries I have been  
grown men crying on television  
And yet I have not often seen  
in front of the camera old men young  
A healthy man, a man full grown  
men breaking down in tears  
Weep in the public roads alone.  
“all the slog over so many years...”  
But such a one, on English ground  
“me granddad began our herd...”  
And in the broad high-way, I met;  
“spent all me life on the farm...”  
Along the broad high-way he came,  
“can’t replace that special stock...”  
His cheeks with tears were wet.  
“don’t want your money” the big man blubbed  
Sturdy he seemed, though he was sad;  
“give me back my animals”  
And in his arms a lamb he had.  
some claim it is the farmers’ fault  
He saw me, and he turned aside,  
the fields crawl with flocks of sheep  
As if he wished himself to hide:  
spreading disease like wildfire  
Then with his coat he made essay  
why should they whine when told to cull  
To wipe those briny tears away.  
what nonsense to pretend to care  
I followed him, and said, “My friend  
they only fatten for the chop  
What ails you? Wherefore weep you so?”  
compensation’s there on cue  
“Shame on me, Sir! This lusty lamb,  
for those that lambed at midnight  
He makes my tears to flow.  
out on the bitter hillside  
To-day I fetched him from the rock;  
for the slaughterer at dawn  
He is the last of all my flock.”

## An ‘interpolated text’ Performance Poem for 2 Voices or 2 Groups of Voices

Voice 1 reads Paula Claire’s lines; then Voice 2 reads Wordsworth’s lines;  
then the title is spoken in unison; followed by the lines, spoken alternately by Voice 1 and 2  
*Paula Claire’s words in inverted commas are taken from TV interviews at the time*  
*The lines in italics are the opening 2 verses of The Last of the Flock William Wordsworth Lyrical Ballads 1798*

**Visual Poem Design for large Sandblasted Glass Window Panel looking out on a traditional sheep-rearing hillside. The A1 colour version shown at Spacex II, Exeter, in an exhibition dedicated to the Crisis in the Countryside.**

from **ABORTED SPRING** (Cat No 580) © Paula Claire 2001  
A Poem Series and Artists Book Commemorating the Crisis in the Countryside 2001