2007

From "Closen"

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.6348
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from Closen

1  [call: Clare]

Clabbered, the sky shut
with clouds,

leaden and various, an inclement orthography
of wind and rain, suthering through the fen,
where the will-o-wisp

lights its dusky lantern,
honey fungus or ball lightning, the supposed source

of all my wonderment, what keeps me
rummaging,

 driven from field to field, among the furze-light—
your albino form and name, I would walk
forever out into, what first

caused this aurora, I would walk
forever out into,

in my brain.

Closen is a verse-drama about the life and work of the British peasant poet John Clare. In this exchange, imagined during his confinement to an asylum, Clare calls to his childhood sweetheart, Mary Joyce, who died from injuries sustained in a fire.
2  [response: Mary]

Endless pageantry,
a moth to the flame

or you—

(I tried to put it out)

another body writhing
among the straw field's burnt remains,

(I tried to put it out)

you—

the singed animal
that draws near, half consumed.

(I tried to put it out)

Your voice gutters,
so close, so near,

(I tried to put it out)

swallowing
my air.
3  [call: Clare]

That trick of light
which recedes

just as soon as I approach it—corpse candle,
*ignis fatuus*, Jenny’s burnt arse—what so flickers on and off

throughout the much thick
and marsh air,

I follow,
being led by so bright a thing as you,
my sidereal, O Mary, Mary, if you knew

how I long for you (this madness
the doctor calls

“inaquiet of the brain”), surely, you would
leave behind something other than this tumor,
this white and wan

remembering.
From such wreckage,

the estranged, unstill, stirred up
and sent forth wanderer,

    gathering yourself
    into utterance, blue-lipped

    pronouncement or covenant,
    whatsoever keeps this ache alive—

your still terrible progress,

having stepped out of a body of fire
into a world of fire—

(I would walk forever out into)

your life, to mine,
joined.
Bog and gas collision,
what might be

the earth grinding along its mill-wheel, over
and over the remnants of such a love as was once

had between us, 'til sparked,
the green-blue flare,

your body alight, your mouth open and yet
not speaking—how you die out in me, engulfed,
infamed,

your absence leaves you
still dearer,

that I will search ever after, until, my lost life
becomes a part of yours—so much elsewhere

and annul, such
finality.
White ankles in the heather,
a horse and rider

who drives it hard, drives it further.

From the east, moor-light,
a field drained of color,

and you—
my espousal, consignment,
landlord who keeps me shuttered.

Wherefore am I tenant,

put on lease, a binding
that, however shouldered,
will not break?

 Unsought, unbidden,
unknown—

but you are.