

JOSHUA KRYAH

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

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

remembering.

4 [response: Mary]

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.

5 [call: Clare]

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,  
inflamed,

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.

6 [*response: Mary*]

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.