**Amoretti 30**

My Love is like to ice, and I to fire:

How comes it then that this her cold so great

Is not dissolved through my so hot desire,

But harder grows the more I her entreat?

Or how comes it that my exceeding heat

Is not allayed by her heart-frozen cold,

But that I burn much more in boiling sweat,

And feel my flames augmented manifold?

What more miraculous thing may be told,

That fire, which all things melts, should harden ice,

And ice, which is congeal’d with senseless cold,

Should kindle fire by wonderful device?

Such is the power of love in gentle mind,

That it can alter all the course of kind.

—Edmund Spenser

**That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection**

Cloud-puffball, torn tufts, tossed pillows | flaunt forth, then chevy on an air–

Built thoroughfare: heaven-roysterers, in gay-gangs | they throng; they glitter in marches.

Down roughcast, down dazzling whitewash, | wherever an elm arches,

Shivelights and shadowtackle in long | lashes lace, lance, and pair.

Delightfully the bright wind boisterous | ropes, wrestles, beats earth bare

Of yestertempest’s creases; in pool and rut peel parches

Squandering ooze to squeezed | dough, crust, dust; stanches, starches

Squadroned masks and manmarks | treadmire toil there

Footfretted in it. Million-fuelèd, | nature’s bonfire burns on.

But quench her bonniest, dearest | to her, her clearest-selvèd spark

Man, how fast his firedint, | his mark on mind, is gone!

Both are in an unfathomable, all is in an enormous dark

Drowned. O pity and indig | nation! Manshape, that shone

Sheer off, disseveral, a star, | death blots black out; nor mark

                            Is any of him at all so stark

But vastness blurs and time | beats level. Enough! the Resurrection,

A heart’s-clarion! Away grief’s gasping, | joyless days, dejection.

                            Across my foundering deck shone

A beacon, an eternal beam. | Flesh fade, and mortal trash

Fall to the residuary worm; | world’s wildfire, leave but ash:

                            In a flash, at a trumpet crash,

I am all at once what Christ is, | since he was what I am, and

This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, | patch, matchwood, immortal diamond,

                            Is immortal diamond.

—Gerard Manley Hopkins

**Brother Fire**

When our brother Fire was having his dog’s day

Jumping the London streets with millions of tin cans

Clanking at his tail, we heard some shadow say

‘Give the dog a bone’ — and so we gave him ours;

Night after night we watched him slaver and crunch away

The beams of human life, the tops of topless towers.

Which gluttony of his for us was Lenten fare

Who mother-naked, suckled with sparks, were chill

Though cotted in a grille of sizzling air

Striped like a convict — black, yellow and red;

Thus we were weaned to knowledge of the Will

That wills the natural world but wills us dead.

O delicate walker, babbler, dialectician Fire,

O enemy and image of ourselves,

Did we not on those mornings after the All Clear,

When you were looting shops in elemental joy

And singing as you swarmed up city block and spire;

Echo your thought in ours? ‘Destroy! Destroy!’

—Louis MacNeice

**Charles on Fire**

Another evening we sprawled about discussing

Appearances. And it was the consensus

That while uncommon physical good looks

Continued to launch one, as before, in life

(Among its vaporous eddies and false calms),

Still, as one of us said into his beard,

“Without your intellectual and spiritual

Values, man, you are sunk.” No one but squared

The shoulders of his own unloveliness.

Long-suffering Charles, having cooked and served the meal,

Now brought out little tumblers finely etched

He filled with amber liquor and then passed.

“Say,” said the same young man, “in Paris, France,

They do it this way” —bounding to his feet

And touching a lit match to our host’s full glass.

A blue flame, gentle, beautiful, came, went

Above the surface. In a hush that fell

We heard the vessel crack. The contents drained

As who should step down from a crystal coach.

Steward of spirits, Charles’s glistening hand

All at once gloved itself in eeriness.

The moment passed. He made two quick sweeps and

Was flesh again. “It couldn't matter less,”

He said, but with a shocked, unconscious glance

Into the mirror. Finding nothing changed,

He filled a fresh glass and sank down among us.

—James Merrill