

Burn, Baby, Burn (2006)

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The Adventure

I tried to imagine what fire would be like written down, tongues of words leaping to form meaning, Some words hotter than others, remaining in place long enough to keep the conflagration alive. I imagined what would be the right kind of fuel for a pyre of words, what would provide heat in the mind, I thought of all of these and wrote.

We Have Means . . .

Fire is going to be treated specifically as the combination of flame, heat, and light caused by something burning, I have settled on this definition to remove any confusion that would inevitably arise from the many understandings of what fire is. There are many things that burn, but they will not constitute fire for this essay. As we now have relatively cold light sources, illumination no longer necessarily signifies heated combustion. Hence the presence of, flame, heat, and light, caused by burning however is a fair way of describing what fire is.

. . . And We Sing Too

The roof, the roof, the roof is on fire
We don't need no water let the motherfucker burn
Burn motherfucker burn¹

A secular hymn given to the world by the Bloodhouse Gang, it now functions as a rallying cry for rioters and routers everywhere. It has even been known as a mantra for psyching up soldiers as they roll into battle. The realisation of mortality built into the presence of fire is not accidental, and for many the pain associated with burning will be worst pain they ever suffer. Unlike other impositions, fire retains its ability to consume even after the source has been extinguished, and when the victim lives to tell of their ordeal, they retain identifiable marks of evidence. It is no surprise that religion has appropriated fire as a metaphor for both good and evil. Religious texts have accounts of fire existing as a cleansing presence (where fire does not consume); and as eternal damnation (where paradoxically fire does not consume either). The prophetic burning bush, the guiding pillar of fire, the depths of Hell are all familiar instances. That the fire does not consume its fuel places holy fire outside the reach of mortals or demons. For these two consumption

¹ Bloodhound Gang Fire Water Burn 1997.