Brush Pile

By Chard deNiord

For Soren and Rayna

It was hard to keep from walking into the fire
that burned in the meadow where I had piled
hundreds of branches and twigs on top of each
other and then ignited them with a couple of rags
soaked in oil that caught and flared in flames
that waved like hands to clouds, as if to bid good-bye
to the meadow in the cracking, hoarse voice
of brush, which I would say is the myth for the way
fire speaks in its vatic voice about just what
it's disappearing, but why not believe it's godly
and holy instead of just "natural"? Why not
even believe that its smoke is a ghost that floats
like a cloud to join the other clouds in their myriad
forms for appearing and then disappearing
like Rorschach that trigger "things" in the mind
that would otherwise never occur to someone
if he or she weren't there to watch the fire
that I set with the terrible power to either control
or abuse it? So, if I weren't there to witness it
disappear as smoke in the air like a thought
that I forgot, then who else, I wonder with the same
vain wonder that I entertain in watching it lift off
into forms that seem designed by some artist in the air
and then the breeze that cleans it to blue in the sky,
which, alas, is the color of Nothing in disguise
for its beauty alone that mystifies, and the fact
that we breathe it in the same way the Deity did
at the Start into the soil and then us with the Power

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to vivify dirt into a being who can think and feel,
but back to the fire and smoke in the pile
and the air into which it turns and I misprize
as spirits en masse that I have lost, then Nothing
when it transfigures back to where it started
which I wish I could understand as *something*,
but know I can't because the emptiness that prevails
each time in the place where the fire and its smoke
had been is suddenly so immaculate and clear
that I can only hear the echo of Everything in
the absence it leaves behind as the silent song
of *all things* on the stage of the meadow as the pile
that no longer is—each branch and limb having been
consumed on the hearth of the world inside
the *via negativa* of a fire that close to a star.

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