Thanks for a lot of these images Allan - Glover

I tried to use especially #30 in writing this poem.

August Fires

Drove all day from San Diego
up the great trail of ashes
in my rearview mirror the eyes
of truckdrivers benzedrined
a broken truck outside of Newhall
thousands of oranges spilled
a woman crying I didn't stop.
Signs everywhere in the mountains
radar towers smoke lookouts mirrors flashing
300 miles to go I keep pushing
and think "a singing bird will bring
the message" drops of oil fall
from his wings down from Santa Barbara
where the beach gasps through its coating.
Firebird over Topanga
a shower of sparks two miles high
hot winds blowing in from the deserts
the mountains purifying themselves
and no one learns.

II

There's a red dot in a scrawl
of lines on the road map.
I touch the places where my friends live
hundreds of miles away.
I was lonely once and talked
to no one. I sat in the shade next
to my trailer through the afternoons
watching a squirrel or a hawk
and did not read or write.
The sand burned my feet and the
dry stalks whispered. I killed
a rattlesnake that summer
and the white hiss struck through the air.
Part of him was smooth as glass
and the red lines crossed like diamonds.
I thought of how he mapped the ground
with his belly. Grit in the flaps
and the thick coils looped over
a stick. I oiled the rifle
showered and drove 500 miles.
Now I drive to the spot
where the red lines joint like a heart.

III

fog swirls down Golden State fenders turning
into flares the truck horns blaring past
Delano coming up snow crust above
Grapevine my breath clear as frost
at this altitude she smiled and touched
my forehead to see if I was tired
patches of ice beside the road
a smeared pine against the ridge cold blue
and metal everywhere
                L.A. far below us
in a blanket of fumes neon lights
like a glowing wind rushing toward
the sea we paused in the clear streams
of air and watched the water
burning down the stone ducts of mountains

IV

Someone is grinding the faces
of the poor. their sweat rags smoking
their brows charred a deputy
shows them the long way down into
the valley flowing with metal.
a little black dog smudges the air.
a man gnarled and tougher than a tree.
words break loose like the branches
of his life. the prayers of the poor go up
like smoke from the ghettoes 30 miles south.

Eddie brought me here one morning praising
with the eye of the painter sweeping
his arms along the valley like brush strokes
the deep greens the blond shadows sweeping in
from Malibu this is for all of us
he said I remember the swift hand
of his imagination striking
out fence posts boundaries the inked
poisons of real estate coming down
now in a rain of smoking paper.

V

Leaflets of fire along the highway
near Ft. Tejon race toward the trees.
the dial on my speedometer flutters
like a pine needle. I watch fire sparrows
stones melting oak trees blessing
the flames and far below a tract
of houses flares into dust
mesquite crackles toward the grove
and the wind turns.

smoke in my skin and hair
I pick the ashes from my collar.
I kneel in the ruined meadow
and find in a handful of earth
the three shining seeds of the poplar.
tail lights at dusk
like a thousand candles to the sun.
the cars keep coming and coming.

VI

Allan holds the book of changes
and the words change into ideograms
black lines on snow white rags steaming branches.
He says man is like a tree in the pale earth.
He holds a saucer to the light
and points to the opaque moons
two pale wings in glass.
Behind us the hills are boiling
and the almond barely stirs.
We drink our tea. He says the chinese
would have cherished these August Fires.
His eyes are like the eyes
of the sage on my tea cup glowing eyes
that miss nothing the radiant mass
of the mountains the pines explode
20 miles away. He goes on praising
a petal from an almond tree.

VII

50 houses puffed
like parchment used cars
melted into grease dogs
with a mottled thighbone
pipes chimneys twisted iron
of bedsteads wind humming
through a black refrigerator.
I touch the chalky feathers
of the pine and reach for
the cypress cup where I drank
my own breath. Blue fog
from my lungs beads the lips
of the men handloading canvas hose
pickaxe shovels and gunnysacks.
Rabbits streak from the red valleys
and the rain behind my heart
full of swords months away
from the purple heart shaped
fruit of the cactus.

VIII

There's a stained lunch sack
and a cup of coffee
in which a petal floats
but the workers sleep
in the shade until
a burning thistle drops
like a sword through their dreams.
They brush the grass
from their shirts and
take the path flung
through the heat like
a branch deflected on
the water. I watched
and dozed and read my book.
I did not see the veins
of an oak leaf in the
hide of a deer or the
butterfly who turned
white hot in a second.

IX

Let the manzanita go
like a prayer wheel tipped
with rockets a burning rag
of the seagull flutter down.
Let the butane spread
through the stained air
of California the oil slick
billow like a robe of gold
from the harbors let the
barbed wire leap from its post
the eagle and the fox return
like pieces of light.