

My Ideas

Hettie's Birthday

lesbian relationship that family don't know about? - mother / grandmother / aunt

in old peoples home / hospital?

mixed race? Afro-caribbean?

could be incorporated into a story?

This happened when I was in a quiet ^{work}-room in Old Building

Someone walks past singing - heard through the door - sounds like they think no-one can hear them

The soft and dulcet air - line

that came to mind on a spring day - wondered if dulcet could only refer to sound, but no! Usage is appropriate!!

Names that could be used
perhaps.

More - Swamp Thing - recommended
book.

Poster - Lifemanship

words can carry meaning beyond definitions
the novel can lead us toward the
meaning - like ^{the word} God.

Language is not separate from reality,
but part of it.

Idea that the centre of the universe can be anywhere
(Talk on Nicholas of Cusa + Meister Eckhart.)

Conversation - "Whenever I get the urge
to have kids, or actually, it's more
like wanting to have a Pokemon..."

"I really want to see her, so I think I'd better not."

Film - Leon Morin, Prêtre - Catholic priest
converts young woman to Catholicism
(Novel, The Passionate Heart) - interesting
film - main character uses the fact that women
are attracted to him to manipulate +
control them, converting them to his faith
+ always maintaining his unavailability - sensuality
A. C. Williams - confusing the distinction b/w

confession cell. Idea that came up in discussion - how do you portray / write about something entirely internal, like a religious conversion - (or falling in love)

In the film, it was shown by the character just pausing in the middle of housework sitting still. I felt I'd have liked her to be observing something at the time, but not sure. Easier if you can write about or have voiceover of thoughts.

Ideas from the Writers Workshop

~~poems~~ discussion about what makes a poem a poem after someone brought a very straightforward, everyday, narrative sort of poem - has to contain some abstraction, sense of universal or emotion - interesting use of language

- ° poems can be left open, more so than prose

Ideas for writing - write outside, in the place / location

write concretely about something that is not there, eg. absence.

listen to a piece of music & try and write a poem / story relating to that

attempt to heal rift

have coming

ending?

Hattie's Birthday

Party

or event is
party not
happening

family/relationship - mother/
daughter

conflict

event that happened is part

lack of knowledge / rift
ability to deal with event

Poem featuring imagery of barbed wire
- death/prison camp?

maybe written from point of view of a
survivor - or visitor in the liberation

wire - divider - contains
sometimes for safety/protection

barbed - inherently violent/vicious

wires also sometimes linking - means
of communicating/connecting

more innocent applications of agriculture
but here also means of containment
- keeping animals 'prisoners'

'well used' - introduces the saddle and reminds us of its past

'I believe' - reminds us of narrator's presence + viewpoint

'a pleasing slap' - vivid unusual language, links us back to horses

'quixotically' - again, unusual striking language, draws us back to world of adventures, horses, romance

Rambling tale of saddle's past leads us to the 'punch line' which universalises the anecdote into something wider - 'who... understood burdens and the need to escape them.'

'Days later under northern skies' - poetic line introduces change of circumstance very subtly

'and thinking' - could refer to mood change

Leif Enger - 'Peace Like A River'
(London: Black Swan, 2002)

p. 51 - A teenage boy gives his sister, who loves all things Wild West, a western saddle for her 11th birthday, despite the fact they don't have a horse...

"It was well used, which I believe gave all our imaginations a pleasing slap, and it had also arrived quixotically. Darry had bought it off a farmer who'd bought it off a migrant laborer who'd traded his horse for a windbroke Dodge truck on a dirt road north of Austin; the migrant had said goodbye to his loyal beast but kept the saddle out of sentiment. Days later under northern skies he understood that its presence in the pickup only made him heartsick and he unloaded it cheap to the farmer, who, though confused by Spanish, understood burdens and the need to escape them."

Peace like A River, p. 52.

watching a balloon rise into the sky - "When the balloon was a dark bug on a pale blue wall..."

I liked the originality of this metaphor for the balloon + the sky - very visual + yet simple + direct

p. 54 - an unwelcome visitor has arrived -

"From inside we could hear Dad setting out cups and opening cupboards, and also the cheerful insensibility of Luvi's opening monologue - the sounds of hope landing facedown."

loved this final image! Vivid + original - personifies hope

p. 52 "I remember it as October days
are always remembered, cloudless,
maple-flavored, the air gold and
so clear it quivers."

loved rhythms + imagery here

p. 55 - "...a single desolate cookie
lying untouched on a saucer and
lament in her eyes."

interesting sentence in which
emotions seem almost to be
attributed to the biscuit as much
as the person.

p. 65 - "...he turned and
snared my wrist."
- unusual + vivid choice of verb
adds layer of meaning + menace.

p. 348 - "'It's great, isn't it, Dad?'" I asked.
The truth is I could've wept, such
sadness hung about us. I fought
it back. My brother was returned;
exultation was called for. - PTO

P. 348 (cont.) Why couldn't we have the fatted calf and ~~tamborines~~ tamborines? A little insouciant rejoicing?"

- I like the way this passage illustrates the difference there often is between what is said and what is felt.

Also displays the Biblical imagery and rhythms the ~~author~~ author often uses, which I like.

At the end of the novel, the narrator has a 'near death experience' of heaven, or 'the next country' as he refers to it. He uses old-fashioned seeming, Biblical language and rhythms, combined with colloquialism.

"I waded ashore with measureless relief. Stay with me now. The bank was an even slope of waving knee-high grasses, and I came up onto them

and turned to look back. . . . Near the shore ~~was~~ the water appeared gold as on your favourite river at sunrise, but further out it turned to sky and cobalt and finally a kind of night in which the opposite shore lay hidden".

I like the sentence construction here, the 'as on your favorite river' is a little unusual; as well as the many 'ands' which ~~are~~ lend a rather Biblical flavour to the prose. P. 352

"At that moment I had no notion of identity. Nor of burden. I laughed in place of language." }

lovely, original, rendering of innocence. [birds] - "rose with sweet chaotic calls" like the disjunction/affinity of 'sweet' +

P. 353

"The meadow was layered
with flight."

- striking, original image that
conveys what the meadow appears
like, covered with birds + butterflies

Underlines importance of verb choice

Sally Vickers + Mr Goldworthy's
Holiday (London: Fourth Estate, 2003)
343 "a lambent midsummer sky"

Love this word, + good usage here

the devil - "the figure with destroyed
starlight for eyes."

"his eyes looked like ruined stars"

Here, description of the physicality of
a character remind us of his
past - Lucifer as star of the morning
+ fallen angel.

a dream - I am standing on top
of a skyscraper. There is somebody
with me. I jump off and fly
away - not quite sure if I turn into
bird or just fly anyway!
Idea for short story?
or poem incorporating bird / flight
imagery.

flight as metaphor for escape
— freedom

but also ~~the~~ jumping off building
contains the idea of suicide

↳ yet suicide also intended as
an escape

Poem from a member of the writers' group
Sue,
imagery of peacock feathers -

"Still I can feel my fingers
running
along the barbs mixing gold
and brown
astonishing the clove turquoise
eye".

I love the last line here -
I think it is especially good for
the choice of the word 'astonishing'
which is surprising here
seems to personify an inanimate
object.
Also clove is unusual.

E. Titus Groan, Mervyn Peake

"Barquentine went into a form of a trance, the well-heads of his eyes appearing to cloud over and become opaque like miniature sargassos of dull chalky-blue - the catawact veil - for it seemed that he was trying to remember the daedal days of his adolescence."

What drew me to this initially was the word 'daedal' which was new to me, which turned out to mean skillful and cunning.

It also echoes the word 'dandle' thereby seeming to carry additional connotations of innocence and a state of being happy and carefree.

I also love the image of his eyes as 'well-heads', which seems to contain the idea of eyes as 'windows of the soul' containing hidden depths.

Part of Gormenghast castle, remote + desolate, is described as
"an Ichabod of masonry"

presumably to invite a comparison with Ichabod Crane of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*? - of which the most remarkable thing was his tall & lanky appearance.

Again, ^{an} inanimate thing is personified + an extra dimension added

"The branches of the trees behind them clasped one another, and their leaves, like a million conspiring tongues, were busy with heresy" Gormenghast, Peake.

imputes conspiracy to leaves - whereas it is really in minds of characters

Deathfuge or Todesfuge by Paul Celan

- German original follows
the English translation

Black milk of daybreak we drink it at sundown
we drink it at noon in the morning we drink it at night
we drink and we drink it
we dig a grave in the breezes there one lies unconfined
A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents he
writes

he writes when dusk falls to Germany your golden hair
Margarete

he writes it and steps out of doors and the stars are
flashing he whistles his pack out

he whistles his Jews out in earth has them dig for a grave
he commands us strike up for the dance

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink in the morning at noon we drink you at
sundown

we drink and we drink you

A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents he
writes

he writes when dusk falls to Germany your golden hair
Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith we dig a grave in the breezes
there one lies unconfined

He calls out jab deeper into the earth you lot you others
sing now and play
he grabs at the iron in his belt he waves it his eyes are blue
jab deeper you lot with your spades you others play on
for the dance

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink you at noon in the morning we drink you at
sundown
we drink and we drink you
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith he plays with the serpents

He calls out more sweetly play death death is a master
from Germany
he calls out more darkly now stroke your strings then as
smoke you will rise into air
then a grave you will have in the clouds there one lies
unconfined

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink you at noon death is a master from Germany
we drink you at sundown and in the morning we drink
and we drink you
death is a master from Germany his eyes are blue
he strikes you with leaden bullets his aim is true
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margarete
he sets his pack onto us he grants us a grave in the air
plays with the serpents and daydreams death is a master
from Germany

your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith

PAUL CELAN, 'Todesfuge' (1952), tr. Michael Hamburger

Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken sie abends
wir trinken sie mittags und morgens wir trinken sie
nachts
wir trinken und trinken
wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liegt man nicht
eng
Ein Mann wohnt im Haus der spielt mit den Schlangen
der schreibt
der schreibt wenn es dunkelt nach Deutschland dein
goldenes Haar Margarete
er schreibt es und tritt vor das Haus und es blitzen die
Sterne er pfeift seine Rüden herbei
er pfeift seine Juden hervor läßt schaufeln ein Grab in der
Erde
er befiehlt uns spielt auf nun zum Tanz

Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken dich nachts
wir trinken dich morgens und mittags wir trinken dich
abends
wir trinken und trinken
Ein Mann wohnt im Haus der spielt mit den Schlangen
der schreibt
der schreibt wenn es dunkelt nach Deutschland dein
goldenes Haar Margarete
Dein aschenes Haar Sulamith wir schaufeln ein Grab in
den Lüften da liegt man nicht eng

Er ruft stecht tiefer ins Erdreich ihr einen ihr andern
singet und spielt
er greift nach dem Eisen im Gurt er schwingts seine
Augen sind blau
stecht tiefer die Spaten ihr einen ihr andern spielt wieter
zum Tanz auf

Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken dich nachts
wir trinken dich mittags und morgens wir trinken dich
abends
wir trinken und trinken
ein Mann wohnt im Haus dein goldenes Haar Margarete
dein aschenes Haar Sulamith er spielt mit den Schlangen

Er ruft spielt süßer den Tod der Tod ist ein Meister aus
Deutschland
er ruft streicht dunkler die Geigen dann steigt ihr als
Rauch in die Luft
dann habt ihr ein Grab in den Wolken da liegt man nicht eng

Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken dich nachts
wir trinken dich mittags der Tod ist ein Meister aus
Deutschland
wir trinken dich abends und morgens wir trinken und
trinken
der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland sein Auge ist blau
er trifft dich mit bleierner Kugel er trifft dich genau
ein Mann wohnt im Haus dein goldenes Haar Margarete
er hetzt seine Rüden auf uns er schenkt uns ein Grab in
der Luft
er spielt mit den Schlangen und träumet der Tod ist ein
Meister aus Deutschland

dein goldenes Haar Margarete
dein aschenes Haar Sulamith

I loved the repetition combined
with variation in this poem
that seem to create an intricate
rhythm like music. It gives a
sense of relentlessness to the poem

The Black Milk image that is so
central to the poem is startling

life-giving +
and ambiguous - milk, nourishment,
becomes black - negative, and ass
with death.

milk is also inextricably linked
with its white colour, so black
milk seems an oxymoron.

The repetition of 'we drink it and
drink it' gives a sense of this
act of drinking being something
involuntary, something
forced upon the 'we' of
the poem. - or of something
addictive - like death in a
state at war becomes inevitable

The references within the poem, such
as to snakes, Shulamith and
Margarete, seem ambiguous and
obscure. I like this mysteriousness
and the fact that the reader cannot
really understand what the poet
intends to convey.

Kooser, Ted.: A DRY WINTER LETTER TO FRIENDS [from
(1980), University of Pittsburgh Press]

- 1 Mid-January, and still no snow.
- 2 Out in the country, the junked cars
- 3 rust in their ditches, waiting
- 4 for beauty. Here in the city,
- 5 those toys that the children have given
- 6 to winter lie still in the leaves,
- 7 looking foolishly shiny. Each house
- 8 has a closet where huddle
- 9 the mourning galoshes, collapsing
- 10 with grief. I walk off to work
- 11 with dry feet and a zest for cold air
- 12 that's keen as a shovel.
- 13 For the past three years there's been
- 14 a blue canvas shoe in the bushes
- 15 out by the alley, a bright blue shoe
- 16 with a song in its heart. I read it as
- 17 an oracle: if we have snow this year,
- 18 it shall not bleed the color from our lives.

Ted Kooser, SURE SIGNS: NEW AND SELECTED POEMS.
University of Pittsburgh Press

Another poem I particularly like.
Again, ~~images~~ objects are
personified and given human
actions + emotions.

Cars wait, toys lie still (as if
they could do else), galoshes
'collapse with grief'.
I love the language + rhythm in 'a
zest for cold air that's keen as
a shovel'.

In contrast to the Celan poem, it is much more everyday in its situation and less opaque.

As in the story of 'The seelulle' in the novel by Leif Brage, an everyday situation - here, walking to work, is given a layer of extra significance & universalised.

'Snow' - winter, cold, affliction and depression 'will not bleed the color from our lives' - or be allowed to depress us, maybe.

The passiveness of the cars and shoes and the misery of the galoshes will not win in the end.

Like the simple, colloquial language that manages to be also quite distinctive.

'the hearn-priested shore'
line somebody quoted - I don't know where it's from - Googled it, and it's Dylan Thomas + v. famous!

True

Story of someone cycling home, aged 16, who saw ~~two~~ two moons in the sky - lots of people ~~at~~ reported on this.

Must have been an optical illusion caused by weather conditions - could this be brought into a story?

Surreal moment that the person always remembered.

Travel Alarm

Because everything still bears
the sweet iron taste of experiment,
a penny pressed to the tongue,
the boy places his mother's
little clock in the broiler.
Way back, down deep,
so she won't see when
she bakes the muffins.

Once she says, What's that smell
in here? Like truck tires
at a car lot – and he grins,
by now having forgotten,
but liking strange odors
that rise in the midst of any day,
strange bells, even the maniac
who kept roaring around their block
till his mother called the police.

Each morning he begs his parents
not to read the newspaper, knowing
how their faces go half-blank
and mad, their hands turn
and turn never finding
the right page.

But the secret woman keeps pitching
the rolled paper into their yard,
the woman called Willie or Freddie,
whom he caught a glimpse of once,
pulling away in her long arrow
of a car.

cleverly observed
- child's wish to
discover the
world, heedless
of consequences

Newspaper
delivered is
almost
mythologised
by the child

Later he asks, is it still morning?
If it's noon, why is it so dark?
Some evening when his mother pulls
the broiler wide to find
her melted ring of hours,
now crisp as a wedding collar,
and the two frozen hands,
he'll feel far away,
as if he didn't do anything
leading up to it.

But when she likes the hard new shine
glossing the puckered 3 and
sunken 8, when she says
Now we can never be late

and laughs, and laughs,
the sound of a storm coming
that lifts the air in its path,

when she hands it back to him
and he winds the little key
to hear it ring! Still –
the wild buzz that woke them up
in a hundred different towns –
he'll feel how morning and evening
run together, how bad and good can melt
into something entirely else.

They'll tell his father
when he steps from the darkroom
blinking, they'll say
We have a surprise for you,
and hold it up. It will take him
a long moment even to know
what it was.

Boy is
detached

Naomi Shihab Nye
from Tender Spot

Child + adult voice combined

NOT JUST ROADS, BUILDING A NATION

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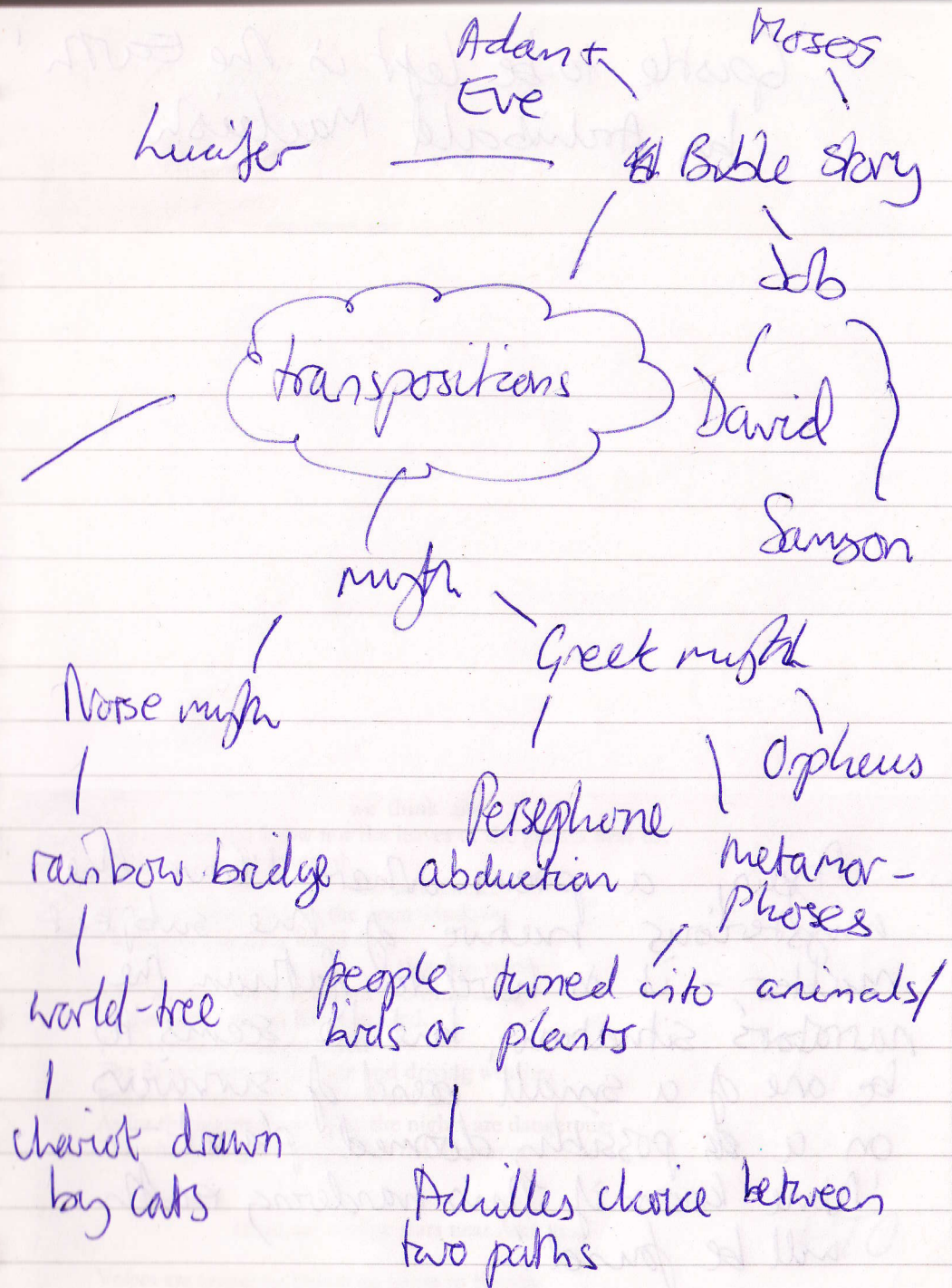
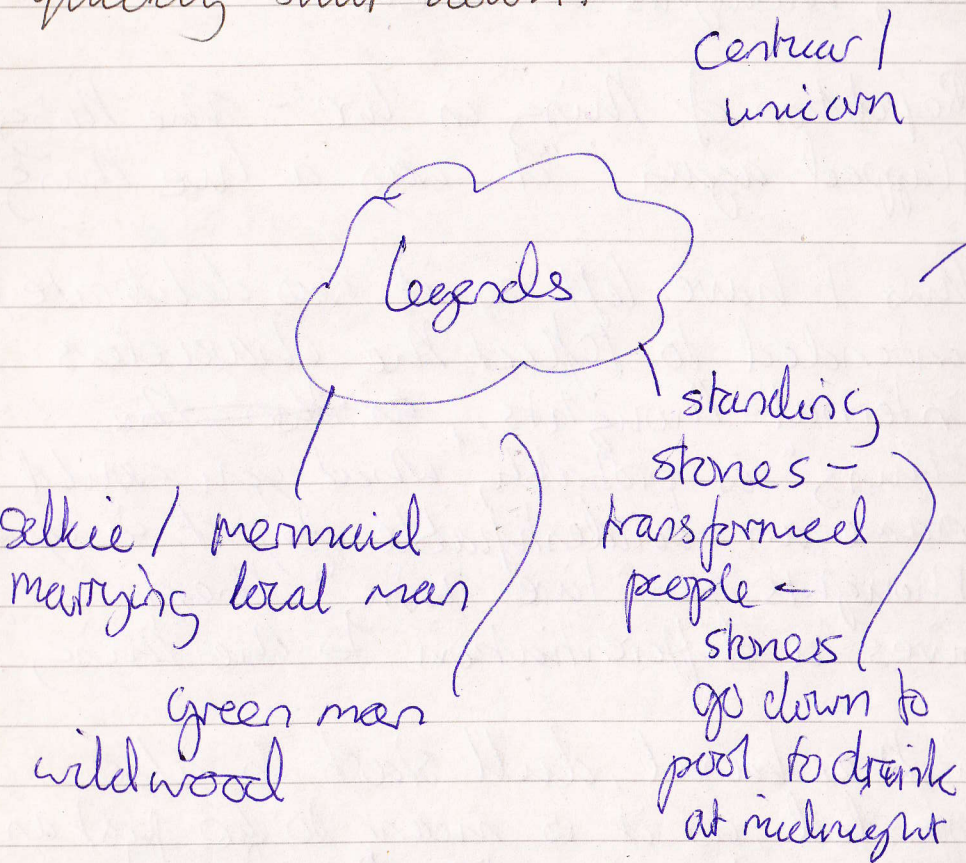
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Fruits: N
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Spices: C
Flowers:

through the suffering of the hawk,
the man is reminded of his wife's
illness - something he cannot bear to
think about. These memories are
quickly shut down.



'Epistle to be left in the Earth'
by Archibald MacLeish

is colder now,
there are many stars,
we are driven by the Great Bear,
the leaves are falling,
the water is stone in the scooped rocks,
to south

Again, a poem where I love the mysterious nature of the subject matter - it is hard to fathom the narrator's situation, but he seems to be one of a small band of survivors on a possibly doomed planet - 'None know if this wandering earth will be found.'

Red sun grey air:

the crows are
Slow on their crooked wings,
the jays have left us:

Long since we passed the flares of Orion.
Each man believes in his heart he will die.
Many have written last thoughts and last letters.
None know if our deaths are now or forever:
None know if this wandering earth will be found.

We lie down and the snow covers our garments.
I pray you,

you (if any open this writing)
Make in your mouths the words that were our names.
I will tell you all we have learned,

I will tell you everything:

The earth is round,
there are springs under the orchards,
The loam cuts with a blunt knife,
beware of

Elms in thunder,
the lights in the sky are stars —
We think they do not see,

we think also
The trees do not know nor the leaves of the grasses hear us:
The birds too are ignorant.

Do not listen.
Do not stand at dark in the open windows.
We before you have heard this:

they are voices:
They are not words at all but the wind rising.
Also none among us has seen God.

(... We have thought often
The flaws of sun in the late and driving weather
Pointed to one tree but it was not so.)
As for the nights I warn you the nights are dangerous:
The wind changes at night and the dreams come.

It is very cold,
there are strange stars near Arcturus,

Voices are crying an unknown name in the sky

PTO