

little by little

julia doughty

in gratitude to: shree maa & swami satyananda saraswati, pema chodron, mamma, trees & earth,  
all my teachers & friends & the ones involved in *ensemble*.

First appeared in *ensemble jourine: art & hybrid writing by international women*, vol. 6, no. 1,  
October 2011.

little by little  
copyright © 2008 by julia doughty

2008

:

glass is for seeing through  
or breaking

wood is for support  
or heat

and all the in-between uses  
of everyday things

any little bit will do

some kind of book without covers

\*\*\*

in concentrated form  
in dispersion  
in little by little

in describable  
&  
indescribable

all together something else

other than

more or less

for every bit taken away

every part given

midday  
snake with yellow stripes—  
so not poisonous—  
appears in the garden bed  
twilight  
skink in hedge chews beetle  
morning  
black crow squawks in tree's yellow blooms

galaxy to galaxy  
vast light  
looking like  
tiny lights

for every wrong done  
another point

through sickness or health  
poverty or wealth

moths coming up from mint  
when hose water descends

all that is coming  
has already arrived

where subtle feeling tendrils creep

the place where they're cut

\*\*\*

in my recurring dream  
there is just one line  
and that is the poem  
in my life

and in this life  
there is one metaphor

\*\*\*

that route they'd taken between the two hills  
that can't be found  
so overgrown now  
and  
they're long dead now

i have to go to the mountain again

start at the cross of trails  
edge along the lake  
to the other end

or stop, sit

afternoon flitting swallow

pine standing  
in its jade coat of lichen

the story of the duck  
and lily pad

curve of hills

then the big cloud joins two small clouds

a kind of sleep where a one-line poem stays awake

all metaphor

\*\*\*



you will be pestered by flies

your digestion will unravel

winds will rise up & die down

\*

lupine & yarrow in bloom

free ranging mama cow  
coming along the lake with her calves

milkweed & penstemon

stung by horsefly  
mosquito

moth passes

each trembling a wanting  
an old rampart

five wild turkeys  
come down for a drink

what it must be like  
to go that slowly  
down for a sip  
up the slope again

and gone somewhere unseen in the trees

\*\*\*

yet for all that i forget to give  
all the more is given

here is the road of memory  
water wheels that haven't let go their store  
but will will

surf of remnant  
it's as if what i did right or wrong  
goes up on the crest

i'm lifted

\*\*\*

what will come into this field of vision & pass out

four zooming siren cars & one helicopter  
someone's in need of rescue

hang gliding

another lifeguard zipping past

i haven't been here in so long  
new signs have gone up

at long last a stairway has been built  
to access the beach where we used to walk  
along the crumbling sandstone cliff

digging sand holes

a full lagoon

pinyon putting out cones every other year

one main relationship

waves fold in on the sea of itself

never to become someone  
after all  
these jobs

sand being pulled out  
& brought in

when we've been here 10,000 years

\*\*\*

lone grey cow  
chases lakeside gathered coots  
and when she wearies & drops  
to the ground to rest,  
a black cow  
nuzzles & licks

all my beginnings  
false or true  
end here

wind as a far-off tree song  
before it arrives here

shadows of migrants  
briefly weave  
into the lake's surface

upswell of coots  
flush cows

puma, i'm told, lurks

goldenrod milkweed buckwheat aster

day's bright eats dark's lights

cow starts the valley call  
that others take up

buzz of gnat clouds

as soon as one poem is done  
another starts

pine cone in a few months to drop

the ground matted in amber needles

\*\*\*

consider virtue is the edge of the lake  
in light and shadow

where snakes are off in other  
shade, sleeping

three backpackers passing

trees do their growing  
become adept at bending

what is success

there is no end

grasses glimmer

yesterday came as the tomorrow i expected

climbing up the mountain

the book of folly  
is the book of wisdom

for every poem i looked to  
for inspiration  
another goes unseen

the child improves her ability to hold a crayon

water seeping up

they wouldn't take me

squirrel call, jay, owl, wind

nuthatch eating miniscule bug in the needles

tiny throat melodies

\*\*\*

days fire up leaves curl in

it takes going back going forward  
on the same trail  
days, seasons

to be with the day as it is

sweet airs of manzanita thickets

worlds within worlds

color insists  
goldenrod aster chuparosa

sky within sky

going up to where i've never been

by sips of water, by cooling light wind

by the paper map's lines

i don't know but go as if

because someone in me  
knows the worlds  
like the back of her hand

i could fall again & break a bone  
but i don't  
dwell in the narrows  
of fear

ageless tree turns into itself  
falls grows up & falls again

native to these mountains

\*\*\*

scrub oak & black oak putting  
forth acorn  
without trying, freestanding

leached out tannins  
for cereal for cider

city beggar scorning virtuous help

all the needs

an idea of natural beauty

\*\*\*

down through the burned  
and post-burn overgrowth

cold water pouring from the mountain's deep

shady coffeeberry  
orange primrose scarlet fuschia & monkeyflower  
lacings of clematis & grape

wind snappings grounded  
high vine weavings & thriving bracken

cliffside  
partway down, a village of juniper

through fire-sculpted standing limbs  
the sienna sierra of another edge

hot & seemingly spare  
red & grey trail  
turning to lush land alcove

great thrivings in  
these great heats, great colds

all along, the beauties

\*\*\*



look at the desert  
that was once sea

so beautiful  
so desert-like  
so like herself

\*\*\*

two months of heat-scraped clear skies  
imposter days of rain

interruptions of small clusters of cool days

dust collects

possibilities to move in any direction  
over the flatbeds of pebbles

swift-shines of boulders

the mission we built for them  
brought down by earthquake  
never rebuilt  
but some big walls  
staying three hundred years

across the ocean the poet landed on the unknown shore

here,  
we sang our poem for three days

fire  
sunlight  
made it possible

to eat

star by star stringing together  
making constellations

goldenrod beaming in hot fall day

how far, how near  
the creek doesn't ask

undeluded, undiluted  
meaning

dust worries  
worry drops

this that is not extinct  
or endangered

part museum part chapel  
the scent of frankincense  
moving some part  
back through time  
to that time  
outside this time

leaves falling, unleaving

sitting then getting blown around

photos taken on the train tracks of the couple not yet married but dressed for a wedding to-be

love doesn't die

tho they become trains  
passing in the night

rain withholding and coming  
unpredictably

\*\*\*

ford off worry with singular words

simplicity

grateful

move toward less is more

leaves that were green are yellow  
it's fall

so clear the sea can be seen  
from far off in the highland

days & nights  
what has been made of ground  
by fieldwork by seedling becoming tree

ways of seeing overturned

nothing—

devote yourself to nothing—

is fruit

\*\*\*

gleaming grey-haired man  
and young boy emerging from sumac

weed thriving in its cement crack home

puja rice grains scattered on floor

church bell ringing in eight a.m. hour

suffering asserting itself

the politician comes up  
to the stage and mouths familiar words  
making the motions  
both backwards & forwards

something about us separates

even the child becomes imperfect

difficult moments  
of screaming protests—  
clinging to the desired gun

sweet-looking face  
in the lull of sleep

ghosts do not yet visit

somebody is rising & somebody is sinking  
in the ocean of time

creek runs

sun gets through  
cold house clicks & snaps  
adjusts

lizard moves  
birds raise their voices

broken down, wholly  
alive for just two days

every crumb is given away  
and still bread comes

\*\*\*

we don't always see it  
but the moon is always full

along came the child

we'd roll down the hill  
everything a game

throw leaves into the uncertain sky

see the secret door  
in the boulder

little face clear eyes

\*\*\*

the hedge day by day overgrowing its bounds

craving that which evades craving

the structure has beams & floor  
without glue or nails

death every day  
and no hand in  
the sky art

dishes & meals  
for everyone every  
day

where was the tunnel going to

ant in & out the door  
depending on how high the outdoor heat

under the famed painting another painting

delighted to see the letter

carved courage as the lion back then

23,000 years

not quite done yet

\*\*\*



no one forgotten  
they are  
all in me

such brightness—  
unfathomable bright sky

makes a chorus  
to the long versed winter sky

\*\*\*

