

unroofing
the
batholith

julia doughty

in gratitude to: mamma, trees & earth, ann & jerry, zanne, sharman, sharon, kate, canéla, jessika, susan, hollis, mel, all my teachers & friends & the ones involved in *ensemble*.

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batholith is plutonic igneous rock formed under the earth's surface from cooled magma, uncovered by long ages of intense erosion or powerful earth plate shifts.

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“batholiths exposed at the surface are also subjected to huge pressure differences between their former homes deep in the earth and their new homes at or near the surface...a famous example is half dome.” (wikipedia)

*

when one earth plate slides under another, the rock surfaces in what's called “unroofing the batholith.”

140 million years ago a subduction plate melted, and volcanic islands formed what we now call san ysidro mountains, san miguel mountain, dictionary hill, and black mountain.

lines of plants, she says, that follow
 the lines of human migratory movement on this continent
 tip to tip, side to side
 and, before that, shore to shore

the little girls come tap-tapping in their shiny shoes down the park sidewalk in pink taffeta and shimmery red polk-a-dot dresses. they will sing and dance for their families, and will they have stage fright, the butterflied stomach, the need to flee that i had in all those stage shows and poetry readings?

meanwhile the rider in green fatigues and baseball cap, unashamed performer who daily tours the park on bike, rounds the corner--a basket in front, red, white, and blue ribboned, american flag on wire bending in wind off the tail, elvis bellowing loudly.

the aging golden-haired opera singer thinks nothing of filling a whole peaceful park square with her arias.

nor the saxophonist who, though his cup is out and is filling, is still perfecting his art.

the child is interested in what moves--the water that she can make fly into sun sparks with her hands, a willing pigeon that leads her on a run and does not fly off, orange and white carp that flash in and out of water lily hidings.

*

the child picks up a shoe
 and brings it to my hands, saying, shoe

how i wonder what you are
 up above the world so far

the woman looked into the pond (now there is water after a seven year drought), saw mountains,
 sky, herself--and fell in

must be retrieved

what we do for thirst

chard apricots olive oil

each star's a pool of water

why i don't read much fiction
my fiction strewn everywhere

the book of notes

unwritten, now written

if this were an essay

if this were a story

what do i do, run?

water snake that the two little ones watch because mom's just said it's not poisonous, and it's
small

the book unraveled
the book within the book

there, beneath the body breaking down

you want to stay alive
by savoring what's in the cup
and with tender touch

a hawk on the roof's corner
takes off with the limp sparrow in its claws

*

the child this week has found the word no--monday she said it a few times and today she said it continuously in monologue, singing, and shouting

she never got that kind of mileage out of yeah

last season's leaves clustered under scrub

creek moving along stones
lifeblood

discards are to be worn
who i am that i have loathed
sheared, mixmatched
inhabited as is
endearments in this loose life

*

whoever marked up the tree has to live with that

some pieces of spirit can't be hacked
or ridiculed away

bed of twig and oak leaves hidden mushroom

creek emerges again
remember ice we knew at edges
is going is gone

clouds collect, tell stories

red rocks fresh leaves
dominant crows small birds released to sing

mind taking another shape
when informed by sky
and earth
mind turned inside out
when outside

100 million years ago: the ocean at that time met the mountains on one side and on the other side there was a vast inland sea. the mountains were not part of the mainland. there was then a shift of the earth's plates that drained the inner sea and attached the mainland with the coastal mountains.

i grew up within the order and form of the convent, keeping my place, keeping my hands folded, knowing it's best to say less or nothing at all. i remember the nun who led us away from the field, the santa ana wind so uncontrollable it yanked her headdress off, but she was an energetic one & snatched it back--that preview of a nun's grey, short hair was followed two years later with all the nuns taking off their robes and becoming themselves in another form, in dresses.

i was too young, so i wasn't among the ones who rolled up the waist line of the uniform skirt to make it a mini, who rolled down her socks in neat circles around her ankles to show a lot of leg.

we would sneak off to the orchard, my last year there, seventh grade, to pick oranges, to run through the sprinklers. we could hardly keep a straight face--in class we did our best to keep together, us five, to not giggle ourselves apart.

but how i became this other form, uncontrollable, wasn't seen then.

According to the U.S. government's own figures, only 625 people, the vast majority of them non-American, were killed by "international terrorism" in 2003, down from 726 people worldwide in 2002: about 2 people a day, far fewer than die from dog bites. It truly is not about terrorism. (Dyer)

*

eucalyptus pulled up at their roots and tossed by the kind of rainstorms we'd forgotten could happen

windbreaks of flowers and new grasses

wind coming up the mountains
from the desert
to land at the seashore

having our babies burying our dead

they tell us the terrorists are arriving
are already among us

lentils and chard at the end of the day
morning candle's flame as a start

hiker's got a gun on his hip
and says watch that rock in the creek
it wobbles he smiles sweetly

going nowhere going down going up
creek forks and sand spits

now hundreds of squid surfacing
and squirting black

this isn't the ice age it's the water age
hot and runny

the north's melting down to here
rain clouds holding on til they get to here

finishing what was begun
and beginning again

inky water wet deck

there's no going forward there's no going back

start the record over again

the same record?

a flame to love
why bother with perfection

coming undone by age, the ages

the great door to push through
to be in sanctuary

it's the wild outside it's inside

uncontainable, let's face it
won't fit on the application

a choice to be made
thread to weave and undo
by morning

dreams
the teacher cries
the baby sits in sand, i brush her off

fall into unknown places, get up
pull nothing from the sea

50 million years ago: rivers scraped mountains, sediments traveled riverbeds, made beaches.

stealing and buying
getting what's felt is needed
missing
and it keeps on being missed
lost somewhere
where you can't put a hand on it
around here somewhere

if you fail enough then you realize how it is and you don't say,
next time i'm coming back as a bird
you learn rocks are so old it's unthinkable
you think of how they don't do a lot
in our kind of time, their work is minute

*

the trail becomes tiled with rain drops

to make her name another's
the sweetness of candy turned
to the unfixed and blowing sand
because real is libelous
and story or poem is truth
we can't get enough of

even as it comes at my legs
in an opposing wind and entangles my hair
or more gently dances in leaves

*

grey thunderclouds lie still on a bed of grey sky
some yards are overgrown then cut down
closets are being rearranged
the creek's pool breathes in and out at the edges

*

we made up out of earth
what shape would hold water
or a face mask for a feeling to put over the face
or wove pattern into blanket
thread colored from plant
habits
no matter our color or time
our traits

30 million years ago: massive erosion had occurred, the antarctica was glaciating, and the sea level lowered.

and this backcountry not the wild it once was: moist meadowlands from diverted creek and river sheds. dodder, mistletoe, and insect parasite kept in check by rotated area fires. animals came to get their eats--we maintained their fodder, the burnings helping to keep the plants delectable for deer, mountain sheep.

and the circle of homeground was swept, kept clear.

5 million years ago: plates shifted, creating the baja peninsula and the gulf of california. within the past one million years, the peninsular ranges rose up.

the car brakes don't seem to be right, but neither one of us rants and raves--the dogs are panting
in the back, kate drives slowly, tests the brakes

those scenes of the past not here--the flaring temper of the partner worse than the crisis itself

*

decay written on the beach restroom wall, there's that word again, sign for our impermanence

"the community and its poetry are not two"

jays get old, too, listen to it in their voice
this one bounces on the rain gutter
calls, takes off

*

she points to a palm in between two others in front of the house--says it was small, came out of a
pot two years ago, and look at it now! it's as tall as her two-story house

three women turn and let the stranger get the morning moment on film with their camera

black shadow furrows the sea
 dolphin circle far out
 what does the helicopter want?

full moon sleeplessness, touchiness

on the beach they've covered grandma, who's lying down, all the way to her chin with sand, now
 that's a picture and they take it

black pigtails and tiger striped beach frock, guadalupe, navel of the world, appearing up and
 down the tideline

jumping into warm water, plunging hands into deeper wet sand for fish bait

none of this is mine
 i lived here so long, walking by the sea, we'd need fire for meals but sun's heat wasn't a problem
 lifetimes later i swam the foul lagoon not knowing it was the worst place to be

strawberries get red, zucchini might not make it

if i just took my cue from the news of the world, i'd throw ashes over me and collapse in moans
 we're saved we're cut down
 a child, the hiway signs report, has been abducted
 eleven lifeguards who worked at will rogers beach came down with leukemia, the same
 beach where star trek iv's whale saving scene occurs

rain breaking one of our worst summer heats, we'd had no wind
 sage sweetening and clearing the air

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sierras 2005 journal

the sierra nevada range is a large, continuous granite formation, 16,000 square miles of revealed batholith.

the meadow boggy, mint sweet, coyote at the edge, looking back over its shoulder

this kind of day at the beginning of september
 the camp site secured
 the hike to and from the falls
 the hours to rest by river in sun

safe passage again, traveling alone
 laughing at garrison keillor's story
 living this long, coming up to where
 the flat land is oozy grassland, reedy
 from a wet winter

in the quiet lake, under the ripples, a quiet fish
 maybe all along a flower under the snow
 a brief seasoned life, a writer

less tufts of grass on the other side of the river
 as yet, no nibbling deer

clear, see-through water ripples
 warm wind
 sun-shined and shadowed-black turns

i give up my ideals

late light on river grass

one lightning deadened trunk leaning
 into another, both still standing

*

and i wasn't that, so i didn't know
 i wasn't what they were calling dyke, lesbian

having been sister outsider always
 but in my own way

the bars, the softball fields not mine

the pretty dresses, sometimes

must this river have a name

the miwuk here were expelled mid 1800s

only to be allowed back in turn of the century
only to be sent out again

they live here

she bent down to the water
and in her basket
instead of water
were snakes

she went up to the top of the falls
and a wind took her
and she came home pregnant
kept the baby covered
and when her mother
peeked under the blanket
a mighty wind
blew the whole village away
the people vanished

it is cool smoke filters up through pine, south of the valley
 a haze moves in and out of the canyons cloud-free
 jewels of granite, earth skin and blood
 revelations of its body, its timeless body

seeing in night sleep vision

the hungry bear's soft padded, heavy footed walk through camp--it's the bear i hear opening and
 closing car doors at 1 a.m., 5 a.m., rattling the bear-proof box

the bear walking up stairs of stars when
 morning light begins shading out night

i sleep on, twist in a yoga stance for sleep

what i am being shaped into is one who moves with her body, her pages, as is

half dome framed between the two folds of the valley's sides

coyote brings in provisions, tells a poem-story, and leaves down that trail to who knows where

strength from these climbs, but i go with less push, more glide, a seasoned pace

the pages i was in to get to here

9,000 feet, it's colder--the valley's hot upper eighties

ice that was once sitting on this earth, its marks in the stone of its disappearance
 a few glaciers out in the east peaks
 they have the essence of poem

granite glistens
 so active, the earth here, there's a new vent
 new breath stream just off the hiway

why is hope so persistent, action for survival so strong?

i have never been able to see a person on top of half dome, though i'm looking right across at
 them from north dome

these rock mountains are made into pebbles by the eye
 it's the mind that translates, saying they're huge, bigger than comprehension

i don't fall in love and marry this, i don't buy it and have it

there is where the ice dug in, there's where it scratched

there's those points made from when the earth,
moving about, hot, stopped, cold

someone looks at the mountain & has a bad feeling, wishes they could see the peak top, wishes
all the mist would evaporate

right now i feel the space-inside feeling and have no desire to push against the rock mountain

is this bitterness, is this the precipice, the ultimate
edge of destruction

or

is this being
shed of pretense, name

this place has been called many names

i learn this is naked buckwheat
even in its spare form, i see its resemblance to what's in the south

all the pages nearly blowing away

away from the voices of the others who are headed all the way out to the dome's edge

the good news is all the creeks and falls are full this year, the lakes up to their old highs

but as the water levels rise here, up north it gets drier, hotter, ice places vanish

old stories lose their place in a place of grandeur, wounded complaints melt

sun is about to pour over the flat face of half dome

if i had any more reason to be than to come here once a year

if the fire could renew the forest, the meadow

fire as fire

water shaping & reshaping itself in river, ice, cloud
body growing old as poet, with no lifelong job

to meander, to lie down in the sediment
eye to eye with crow

*

at the river
i'm trying not to feel too sad, too worried
about falling, falling, falling on my face

this year of unexpected ruin, discouragement

sitting by the river, sun going, some water still shiny
some grasses still glowing, a few boulders beaming
sitting in unanswerable space

bear is snoozing but soon will be out for elderberries and grubs under rock

water goes on, rasps and sings,
rattles and breathes, feelings move on

so much ice, melted, given passage by rock and slope

angst runs on, runs out
 perspective from the tip of cedar, perspective from slow stepping grouse, startled fern-hopping
 deer

*

the seven-month-old backpacker cried on the bus trip up, hungry, but refused to eat at the
 trailhead, did a five minute protest, then gave up & chowed down--when i met her, her thick
 eyelashes were wet, her cheeks salt-streaked

*

acorn, chinquapin, elderberry

she was up at the rim and fell into the mist of the fall
 we see her in the moonbows

*

i'm a bit like the guy with the bent back at the park
 who, each time i pass him, has his plastic bag open
 has pulled out a loose page of newspaper to read
 or is carefully spreading peanut butter on bread
 outdoor living, i just have to do with less

*

we would store the acorn in those tall, chimney-like granaries made of cedar wood

*

rock garden tree profusion
 a huge chip of a rock cliff has fallen out
 leaving the shape of a galloping horse

i'm lying on a cliff edge and across the chasm, down this valley, nevada falls spills and roars

*

another name for the valley: gaping mouth

*

two years to build a tunnel through the mountain
 getting there at both ends
 now years of driving in & through & back, lights on, lights off, no big deal

enter, exit
 whether we can take a walk or not
 getting inside the mountain

*

batholiths peeling off
 smoothed, exfoliating

*

ocean of ice that came and poured out
 the words they said fell, ran off
 the gravelly granite sediment ground
 mountain dynamic
 feet move down & up
 down & up trail

reside in mountain body, what i do not leave behind
 jay chatter woodpecker taps
 bear marks in thick mud
 in the gaping mouth canyon

seventh day calm seventh day inner joy

sooty where i sit in burned woods, peak's lookout
 walking with and outdistancing the worries
 unfixed--the trees and meadows tell that story
 signs etched in rock streaks
 trailhead, directions, map in mind
 walk in sand, bereft trail

it takes 7 days, it takes 46 years to justify living this way--still--to settle with the calling of the
 self

*

the valley and east, i see driving towards tuolumne this a.m., are swathed in smoke

*

yellow striped water snake rests head on pebble in sun

why did i feel compelled to conform?

osprey at mono lake

clouds can't stay wind dances
bird collectives move as one, as if wind caps
a boat left out, anchored, rocks, big tilts

violin songs of dead trees leaning into live upright ones

needles dropping
cones snapping off, colliding with each other

pops of guns up against mountain bases

tenaya lake deeper than sky's blue
tioga lake teal

twig snaps

mind chatters on
river silent in this part
thin, cloud-like moon

*

moiety--the circular, encompassing of relationships
ant to earth foxtail pine to earth
fish and dragonfly to water

ripening currants all along the trail, some sweet, some not, some that won't make it to sweet
because of fall's storms

sitting in the sun bathed cirque

at the trailhead, a flier posted, nita mayo missing, 63, a nurse from nevada, traveling the sonora
pass, her car there but she's gone--since 8/8

the lake goes black and the jays bring up a chaotic chorus across the way

up in the aspens, where there once were pines, a miner's cabin, one for summers, the logs just
chinked with mud and wood planks, old tin cans of beef stew on the table
it's gold that brought non-indians to here, hunger, dissatisfaction

it couldn't last forever, the search, the returning to summers, the claim of territory

will you marry me? she'd ask
and i'd say i am already married to you

she wanted the high to be continuous

i was going deeper through shared time

rocks show a long, slow passing, wind and sky make quick impressions each moment

surprised, when i look at my watch, to note the time at the trailhead, late morning, and i'm just setting out

*

crickets in grass calling to one another, late afternoon

mono park is on cemetery road

clouds build in what had been an empty sky
the lake ripples in places and pauses

*

a water moiety name (for a female):
deer's antlers hitting brush when deer is running

an earth moiety name (for a female):
pine cones dropping and making dust

*

the wind, the wind
restful, in its own way, when i yield to it

wind grabs at the truck, willow leans
into the camper shell roof

*

bear has many miwuk names for each of its doings and beings
bear with nice hair
bear dancing in the hills
bear flapping its ears while sitting down
bear bearing down a small tree while climbing it

fortune's long lost from that miner who had that cabin

*

and if you had the gold, then the money, would you do it differently, get a cabin, insulate yourself from the cold night, the thrashing wind, the rummaging through bags packed against each other in the truck?

mullein evening primrose
sage-pinyon mountainsides
lavender sky hovering over mono lake
wind's tune

all this muffled and unseen if i were inside
pronouncements of earth and sky, i'm taking notes

pine needles float in the shallow lake
streams pour in, debris fills in
streams pour out, draining off the sludge and there's more, i'll go back home
ok with how it goes, my nature

beaver residence has moved since last year
to the south side

summer's trading out with icy winds coming over the passes

larkspur columbine gentian
red fruit bunches of ash

where there once were foxtail and fir, now a thriving thick aspen grove

do you ever get fully grown before you die?

the meadow this year so wet
last spring the lake spilled over the dam
advanced melt-off cascades in the crevasses
before that, an off-kilter winter, ceaseless snowfalls in october
peak runoffs earlier & earlier
the sierra's coal mine canary

if i didn't eat crackers & canned lentil soup, what then?

picking pennyroyal, rosehips

my hands look so dry and crinkled, like so much of the ground i've walked

the two elder women come up the trail asking, how far to the old cabin?
i say maybe a quarter mile
good, one says, i didn't come prepared with my walking sticks
well, i say, i could be wrong, but at least it gives you something to go on

what's the use of remnant story and need?

light through the peaks brightening a desert patch
now going

there will be many stars
already the moon shows and has grown

asthenosphere

fault zones run under our feet--everywhere. "this area is currently the most geologically active and diverse in the country."

rose canyon
elsinore fault
san jacinto
la nacion fault
salton trough
san andreas fault

*

asthenosphere is the layer beneath the top zone lithosphere, a place where rock is ductile, deformable. deep-zone earthquakes occur here.

the child is changing more rapidly, she's learning the power of no, of refusal, of turning and going her own way. she pushed food away only to assert who's who--she is not me, and no, she does not want me to feed her. and if a phone call comes in, that's the time, she figures, it's best to practice talking or banshee yells

*

a cat keeps me company in my dreams
small lizards linger at the windows

i understand other's ignorance
because of my own stumblings
no need for me to say you, you, you

it may be leaky mercury fillings
throwing her off
for all i know

*

fitting in because i wore a uniform like all the others except most had more in a weekly allowance than i had in a year

*

partly, we thought we had so little because our minds were shaped by the generations--daddy's people who settled on the east coast at its beginnings, sailmaker, mother of thirteen and seamstress, and the ones more recently who had come across the oregon trail, making do with corn and shotgunned bird

mamma's folk, diasporas of indians and jews, living/working in the woods and towns of the south, finding their way over from scotland, france, spain, coming through the wars, the wars, the wars, the rug pulled out, slim pickings

call it the depression, but that time repeated backwards and forwards in time. gran showing me where she was hiding her money, little pockets in walls, dollars under mary katherine's rugs

great aunt mary katherine's floor-to-ceiling hoardings in the back room, thirty year old jello boxes, identical tablecloths still in their packaging, the room we'd heard her say she was going to get to, this was the summer to clear it out, the room we played in when we were children but the next generation didn't, the door always closed, we didn't know why

her cherokee grandmother who passed on to the generations the dollar-for-land sale paper

my roots are all transients, migrators, pilgrims, pioneers, displaceds, ones who took on different appearances

and the work tiring, nearly too much to express the self creatively

but telling a story, singing--this doesn't perish

comes through
through & through

i was intent on being a good student when i was young

when i got older, the bitterness of the attacks once they took me off the pedestal

the ache that i'd have to sit with til it dissolved when the loved one could no longer fill what i
thought was love

tuesday follows monday, those tuesdays, all others, i don't recall all those moments

what's my good form now?

you get sand you get water
you get a cat in your dreams
who stays close but some feeling within you
says it's not yours
a strange humid summer
flash flood mountains every day

your ground your sky
in a day here and the next changed
might as well
not look for the definition

job's daughter, after coming out of
his trials, named jemima--the bountiful one

i lived with my parents and we all clamped down, ate fast, held on to our breaths, i go into the underworld and i'm not shying away, these stalactites, stalagmites--mightily holding up or tightly holding onto the ceiling of anger and fear, here's spiders, here's dampness, but i see it, no need to panic, this is what it is--yoga didn't make me more perfect, didn't make everything pleasant, as i conjured, it's brought me that much more to the marrow, eyes wide open in the primitive state, candlelit cave, this nomadic mind and body

i slipped around, feeling anxious, because i kept
trying to fix myself into a place where someone else was

no oak is alike but i don't know that
except by being with them

that one in santa ysabel taking the shape of
two types as its own
half leafing, half shedding in winter

*not such a tragedy, post hurricane
to be given a trailer to live in
to live in the rest of my days*

*this here is all i could want
gators, birds, fishing*

it's better not to watch time

now how does one make themselves into two

how does a twoship
find the parting into oneness

old twinned faces that have kept
to their word, work
pulling the corn stalks at the end of the season
shucking, drying

out on the flat where rocks pile up
bones dry

sun going and i've only just begun
the poem

he says to her, well, why couldn't you smile before i leave?

and for now, those battles not my kind

out of it

can't be in the backwoods of myself for long, though--
we need each other so much

*

dark clouds, the child says
the ground shines with blue sky patches
of telescoped sunlight

night is colder, afternoon darker
apples bake, wet ground steams out sweet air

second rain of the fall

the child calls out to the rain, there are birds coming out, it's a spread out, spare kind of rain
rain, rain, she says, and her name, too

we won't see it, but the full moon
will be eclipsed this late afternoon

i have been so preoccupied
with the private life

the child says, i'm falling, when i set
her on my lap and take her shirt off
and i say oh no, i would never let you fall

springs of joy coming out of the mud
we spin on the floor, she curls over
so she's leaning into
the top of her head

*

it's a day's journey
the neighbor seen scavenging
in the lot where a new home is going up
the child saying, sit
the woman standing in the park
talking to herself
she could be waiting for a ride
but she's not
because there's a fence between
her and the road
skull bones hang from a tree
pumpkins line the top of the brick wall
grave stones lean half-fallen
on the ground
it's the jest of the season
to be mirthful of the dead
and to have the brightest colors
of the late summer's harvest

how would i marry anyone now--

vacume, the child says, when i open the closet

when i get it out, she says, yeah, yeah!
 loving the roar
 loving to hold the tube

i am looking, in my dream, for the waters
 and wine they ordered upstairs
 i am talking to the chef/owner,
 do you realize i've just started working
 without an orientation for where things are?
 and i laugh

go numb or go deep

let's talk our different languages
 and try, really try, to understand
 each other

i won't say impeach, narcissist, crazy

singing in the manzanita thicket

i've made you macaroons

let's not speak the language of commerce

a sparrow on a twig
 with a yellow berry in its beak

relating

remaking

my hands on her back

leftovers of narrative

i could have ladled soup to the homeless forever and forever be told and written of as being too
 young to have possibly begun such a project

i'm thinking that finally you painted without jury or gallery

another kind of foundation

loose
incorporating space silence

as much as i was told to make money

to be clear and precise

details

that journal writing isn't writing
to be published

be on the move, buy this book
see
this movie

why computer screens are alluring
forgetting the self in a mind-focus

i am still learning

apple gopher rose hip

hummingbird moving so quickly

drink this

names not to be believed
timber pines apartments could be
renamed freeway gully apartments
but that's not quite it either

she came out of the community center just when the child saw the orange that had been left on
the ground by the bench and the child said, orange

sixty million of us indians in 100 years
1500 to 1600
killed

do we put up the skulls and laugh
through the pained memory

we didn't trick or treat, we brought our wreaths of paper flowers and candles to our family's
graves

then i will be no one and i will not be caught sitting here
 another kind of on-the-run from the colonizers

she's indian, don't play with her

she's lesbian, let's get her

we're sorry to inform you that we have had more submissions than we can include in our journal
 at this time

she says pumpkin doodle because i say it

if i could give you what you want
 only that
 you'd/i'd be happy

as if i could, always, forever

marry you

marry you in vegas
 the made-over place for families

gamble for it
 have it and hold it

vote for that one who keeps saying family

we could be one big happy family

now i should rhyme
 now i should stand up and sing
 oh say can you see

the binding on the books the kind
 that keeps, won't split

the name on the list you see again
 and again, known
 and a many times over winner

i hadn't had any intention of being in debt--ever--and not, at least, again

we expect you all to go over here
 so you will be safe
 we will help you stay alive

i have found one enormous old jeffrey pine
among the others that are newer

leave the stars unnamed & out of reach

sitting with the blooms of mallow
the ants on the move

what's carried disappears

notes typed, otherwise forgotten

what we know as world, what is real

the grey of fog, fear

pick your words carefully

fading clothes bright sun

a time ago

i wandered in wilderness
without first aid kit
in the event of

all along, the river song

and we didn't chronicle
the disappeared

iced over lost crops
blazing sun

breath word

earth sky

so threadlike, so much the thing
to use now in the weave

i said you always told us
who cares what they say, what they think
be yourself, do your own thing
who are they anyway

rock above gully where water sometimes flows

slipping because there's already ice
season of yellow grass in colder air

when i am not moving but already going out
to meet you who are coming this way

ten children who speak the language
means it's not endangered

one hundred elders who speak the language
means it is endangered

the addition of all of us
making up how we know
what to say

you've always managed somehow

make a guess

sometimes i'm just quiet with you

red berried toyon in the canyon

a friend advised, don't talk feelings,
talk facts

i come out of the mountain borders, the long valleys and into the sand stretches of desert, at first some volcanic rock, the black and red rumped bumps, into yucca and joshua trees, into emissions-greyyed sky, overridden sands, the house tracts for more of us, the highway then, and then the highway dropping off into the big hilled bowl, coming up at the lake shallows, through the hills of chaparral, avocado, orange,...in the sierras i would sit off-trail on the mountain and see the miniature landscape, a dried cocoon, the butterfly long gone, a light pink, tiny twiggy plant, thick but spongy duff, yellow fungi at the tree's base...

cold wind in the mountains and the coast hot. santana has blown the land sites clear. you see up to the ridgeline, down to the coastline. a flume of grey-pink smoke moves up from baja. a horrible, tremendous fire. the sky darkens in a wind lull, then clears to funneled smoke streams

so dry, and i pass other sniffers, touch the door, and i'm jolted with a charge. this ionic sky makes some of us happy, some of us nuts

small birds won't fight the winds

coots in the lake at both ends drift, as if cued, all north, then settle in place

fallen weathered logs in the meadow gleam

the golds are gone in the woods; now it's pine and the leafless

brightest light is deeper hue, the lake darkens, the ground in brown grasses

you must arrive early to roam in brief light

birds fly in but homestead other places

they had harvested what they would need for the year, but they kept working mother earth,
overworking, and so the rain came but kept falling, too much, flooding, ruining the tilled and
planted land

*

there's a gnatcatcher calling up above
a black sky changing into faded blue and thick clouds

*

it is really barren, nothing's come back but a bit of sage in those burned hills from the fire two
years ago, some sumac

*

i'm thinking of a friend who can swim but can hardly walk

of all the women who are writing, what would inspire and feed us if we knew them

cold days for now with caved-in gray sky

coyote had to put sticky, tarred rabbit down
and then rabbit ran away

a toddler has to climb & ramble & sing & if you say come here
she'll run the other way

a torrey pine branch broken, not at a joint, but at the middle
it hangs in partial breakage, wound

in all my plans there's walking, the filter of no hurry

waves resting in their place, the sea, behind the shoreline cordon

i had an idea of our relationship, she was unhappy and i was, or something was to blame

*

birds i don't know but who catch my attention
visitors, residents

*

why didn't they ever teach us
there is no allegiance
that would clear the chaos

a girl in the low oak branch

cottonwood hanging out with sky, leafless
nothing to make wind rhythms
but its whistle of standing

willow persistent, cold-bearing, yellowing

*

warm fog, wet leaves, the surf lost its blue

passing where the skunk passed the snap-off piece of manzanita

sand in a hard pack and ribboned in black

always, every day, what i've never known

two gulls who crane their necks to the surf and hoot

whales, first one, then others, those huge, startling bodies, turning, gliding, spouting

if i were rich, it would flip so many of my directions

if i were well suited for swimming these waters

i'd have to scavenge for other questions

clouds unpredictable for their heaviness

their packages of cushioning warmth or wintery cold

dolphin and whale keep breathing

storm waves have brought up some of the clutter people threw in by ship or at shore

what's thrown back, broken up, but insoluble

i'm walking cobbles of discards

shaky top of the wild pool
catcher of light, refractor

poem coming undone

nothing stays the same
the thing not concrete

fire took teddy & cinda & the kids' house two years ago

time, the big mouthed void, devours disaster

the bigger form of what this boulder once was

Work Cited

Bouvier, Geoff. "More or Less Sudden Mountains." *The San Diego Reader*. 13 Jan. 2005. 33.

