A favorite spot – and I could feel it barefoot –
The confluence of the Bean and the Zayante.

There was a third stream there –
A waterfall where Ferndell Springs
Jumped off. Why three?
Why not, the tipped earth said.

Downstream meant San Lorenzo.
And I could map it with my toes.

The three psychologies of water –
Stones, sand, and precipice.

There are more, of course. Sixteen,
When the woman
Of water comes of age.
Because that means a kiss, a pinch.

Just ask the crawdad,
And my conscious toes.

_Hemetca mukurma, siyi sayyan-ta_ –
One woman, water at the heel.

It was safe to go there
As a girl – or as Ohlone woman.

Hiked many times: that nexus
To her gravesite, lost
Now among the biggest sempervirens,  
“The Neck-Breaker.”

We were taken to its burly base, too big to be a foot  
(The trees did have names),

Which wouldn’t be incensed  
If, in prayer, you didn’t kneel . . .

With every stream I now expected to see the great  
Rio Buenaventura; and Carson hurried eagerly to search . . .

The burned-out, burn-hearted, on-living tent  
Of a surveyor’s redwood

Pre-statehood that stood  
In the right-of-way  
Of the lengthy shortest flow from coast to coast.

Longitude 121° 49′ 52″ –  
The maps continually veined it in their time.

Day after day – thinking he had found it  
With every new stream until, like me he abandoned all idea  
Of its existence . . .

Frémont and scouts camped there; inside the tree was coziest.

Later the cut-in domestic shelf.  
Step-downs: tangible beaver cuttings, cartographers’  
Mis-measurements, oh finally myth.  
The dreaded vast interior lake,

Whose bitter waters brought us arid disappointment . . .

But, now, you can feel  
Her knowing health, and when the time came  
Who carried her to burial?

Long gray-haired rapids.  
Each twist counted by a Being Everywhere.

Cool the fish-skin of your shins.  
Climb up-canyon, arms through  
Boughs, then grip  
Flights of roots, those ancients, wrangling,
Young ones wriggling out of Duffy mudstone
(As Mars, Earth’s co-chair, has).

She was the single one.
Found herself this place: beach, fish, favorite acorns.

As in love, loosening its bindings, it happens
That in place somebody else comes along –

In this case
A learning little girl, her toughened feet.

Singing for spirits, playing fossil games . . .
Knitting, I’d squint up the black-green-sungold
Knitted canopy, tell minnows from tadpoles, recount
Dogwood to madrone.
Peoples’ pebbles. To be a pebble’s person.

A favorite spot – and I could feel it barefoot –
The confluence of the Bean and the Zayante.

There was a third steam there,
A waterfall. Why three?

Doesn’t everyone ask the crawdad?
Kuksu, the confluence murmured, purling over shells and sharks’
teeth.

Last woman ever there.
Muwékma, la gente, the people.

A place-name for it?
“My fill of,” said the place,
Never having had to have it.

Note: “The very last of the Zayante people was a woman who lived for many years beside
Zayante Creek. When she died in 1934 she was buried somewhere among the giant
redwoods . . . Her grave, like her people, is lost now.”