

# C O Ö R D I N A T E S



S A N D R A M c P H E R S O N

*Zayante latitude 37° 02' 53" N, longitude 122° 04' 05" W*

*Bean latitude 37° 03' 05" N, longitude 122° 03' 41" W*

*Ferndell latitude 37° 03' 5" N, longitude 122° 05' 42" W*

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, sii 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  $121^{\circ} 49' 52''$  –  
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."*