

JENNIFER ELISE FOERSTER: *Muscogee (Creek)*

California

I have been to the crater.
There were miles of chrysanthemums.
Palm trees swayed to the hum of the gas pumps.
Poppies lit up the hills and were eating the oak.

I gathered the acorns, dreamed in the ashes.
The white flock lifted from the chaparral
like a tattered wedding dress.

Planets were wheeling in the fault lines.
Pearls gathered at the coastline.
I was traveling the shore in a wooden boat
re-stringing the continent's necklace.

Dragging a rack of whale ribs
I carried the relics in my mouth.
Met a woman named California,
could not pull her voice out.

I went to the arcade of angels,
offered my bucket of shells—
in exchange I was given a map of hell.

I hopped its dark barges,
dreamed beneath the fireworks.
There was a carousel on the beach and I
galloped the black stallion. Offered my map

to the roller-skating cashier. In exchange
she gave me a pterodactyl's tear.
I strung it on a thread,
wore it around my neck

then rode the Daly City train
where I sat beside a geologist.
He gave me directions to the sleeping
volcano. The clouds were

oysters, opening and closing.
I trapped the blue pearl,
offered it to a fisherman.
In exchange he gave me a dragon-scale kite.

I dozed beneath its shadow,
drank *horchata* at the cantina,
tangoed with a sailor
beneath the bone dry moon
then rented a motel room

between two highways. From there
I could see the hills burn, the sky
shatter. I pushed a rickshaw of fossils
through deepening mud, my dreams

were the treasures of a sinking boat.
I awoke to the black horse
gnawing hot gravel, the maps
ash in my mouth.

DEBORAH A. MIRANDA: *Ohlone-Costanoan Esselen/Chumash*

Indian Cartography

My father opens a map of California—
traces mountain ranges, rivers, county borders
like family bloodlines. Tuolumne,
Salinas, Los Angeles, Paso Robles,
Ventura, Santa Barbara, Saticoy,
Tehachapi. Places he was happy,
or where tragedy greeted him
like an old unpleasant relative.

A small blue spot marks
Lake Cachuma, created when they
dammed the Santa Ynez, flooded
a valley, divided
my father's boyhood: days
he learned to swim the hard way,
and days he walked across the silver scales,
swollen bellies of salmon coming back
to a river that wasn't there.
The government paid those Indians to move away,
he says; I don't know where they went.

In my father's dreams
after the solace of a six-pack,
he follows a longing, a deepness.
When he comes to the valley
drowned by a displaced river
he swims out, floats on his face
with eyes open, looks down into lands not drawn
on any map. Maybe he sees shadows
of a people who are fluid,
fluent in dark water, bodies
long and glinting with sharp-edged jewelry,
and mouths still opening, closing
on the stories of our home.

GEORGIANA VALOYCE-SANCHEZ: *Chumash*

Chumash Man

“Shoo-mash,” he says
and when he says it
I think of ancient sea lion hunts
and salt spray windswept
across my face
They tell him
his people are dead
“Terminated”
 It’s official
 U.S. rubber-stamped official
 Chumash: Terminated
 a People who died
 they say
 a case for anthropologists

Ah, but this old one
this old one whose face is
ancient prayers come to rest
this old one knows
who he is

“Shoo-mash,” he says
and somewhere sea lions still gather
along the California coast
and salt spray
rises
rainbow mist
above the constant breaking
of the waves