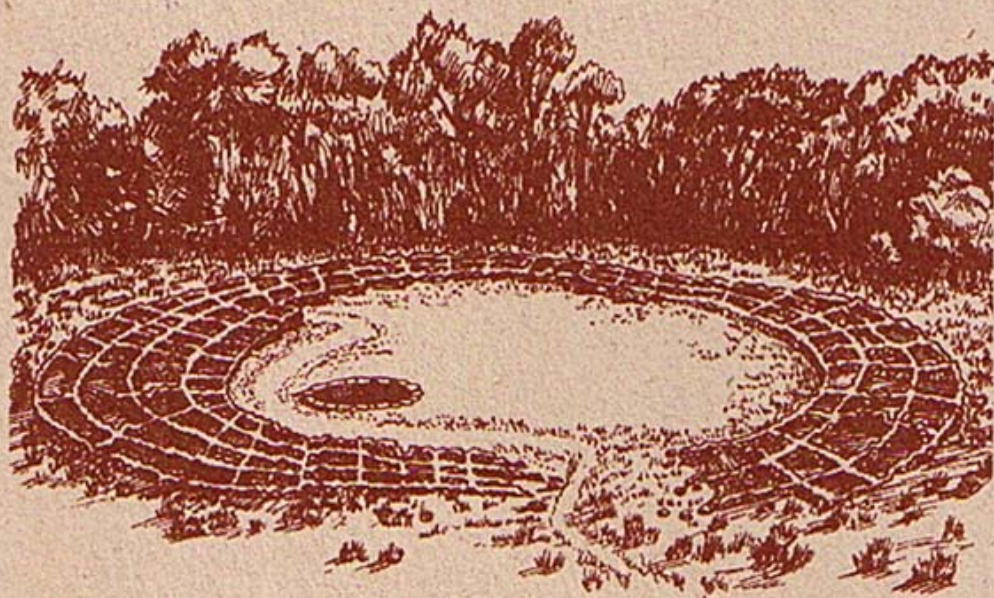


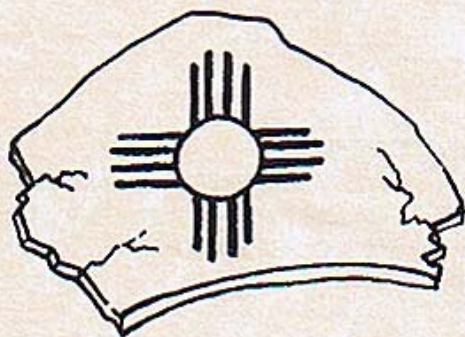
# TIERRA ZIA



**GARY DAVID**

**ILLUSTRATED BY DAWN SENIOR**

# TIERRA ZIA



Gary David

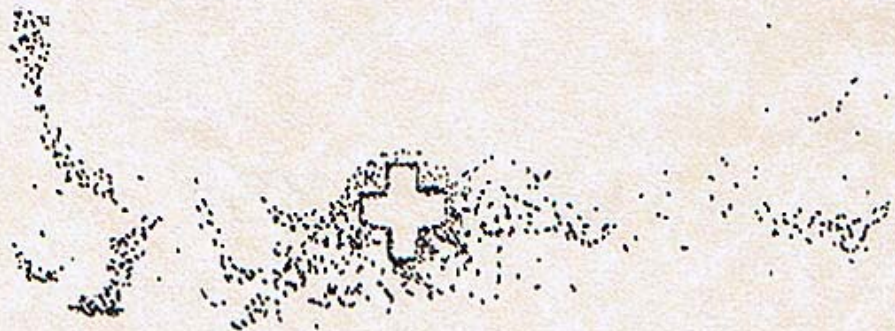
Pen & Ink Drawings by Dawn Senior

NINE MUSES BOOKS

SEATTLE 1996







The author would like to thank

*Haight Ashbury Literary Journal, Pemican, South Ash Press, Synaesthetic,  
W'ORCs and The Spirit That Wants Me: A New Mexico Anthology*  
for previously publishing a few of these poems.

The illustrations in this book were drawn by Dawn Senior  
from photographs taken by the author.

Front cover: Tyuonyi ruins, Bandelier National Monument

Back cover: stone work façade on the Clear Light Opera House, Cerrillos, NM

© 1996 Gary David  
Illustrations © 1996 Dawn Senior  
ISBN 1-878888-19-6

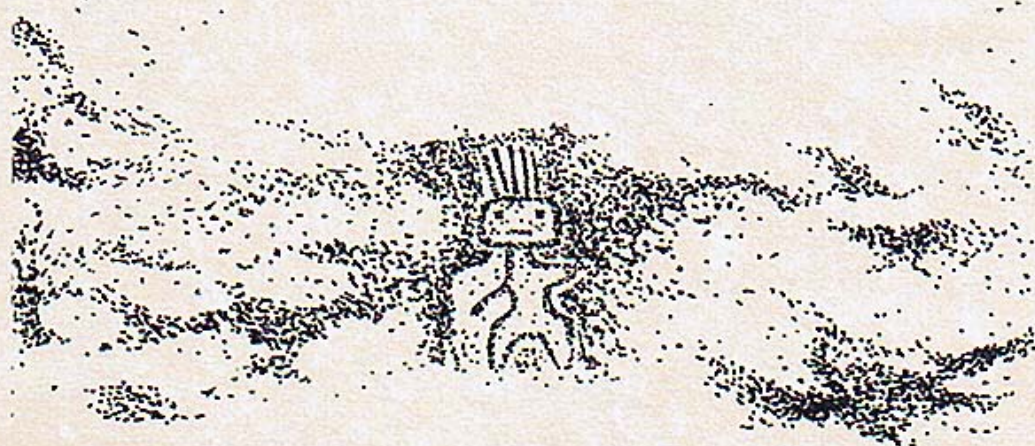
nine muses books  
3541 kent creek road  
winston, or 97496



***INTERLINEAL DEDICATION***

*This book began with our daughter  
Zia Ann Descault David  
born a Leo (4:30 p. m. July 26, 1988)  
Santa Fe, New Mexico.*

*These lines seek to honor the Ancient Ones  
whose work in stone quickens  
our love with a pure play  
of light their turquoise skies intone.*

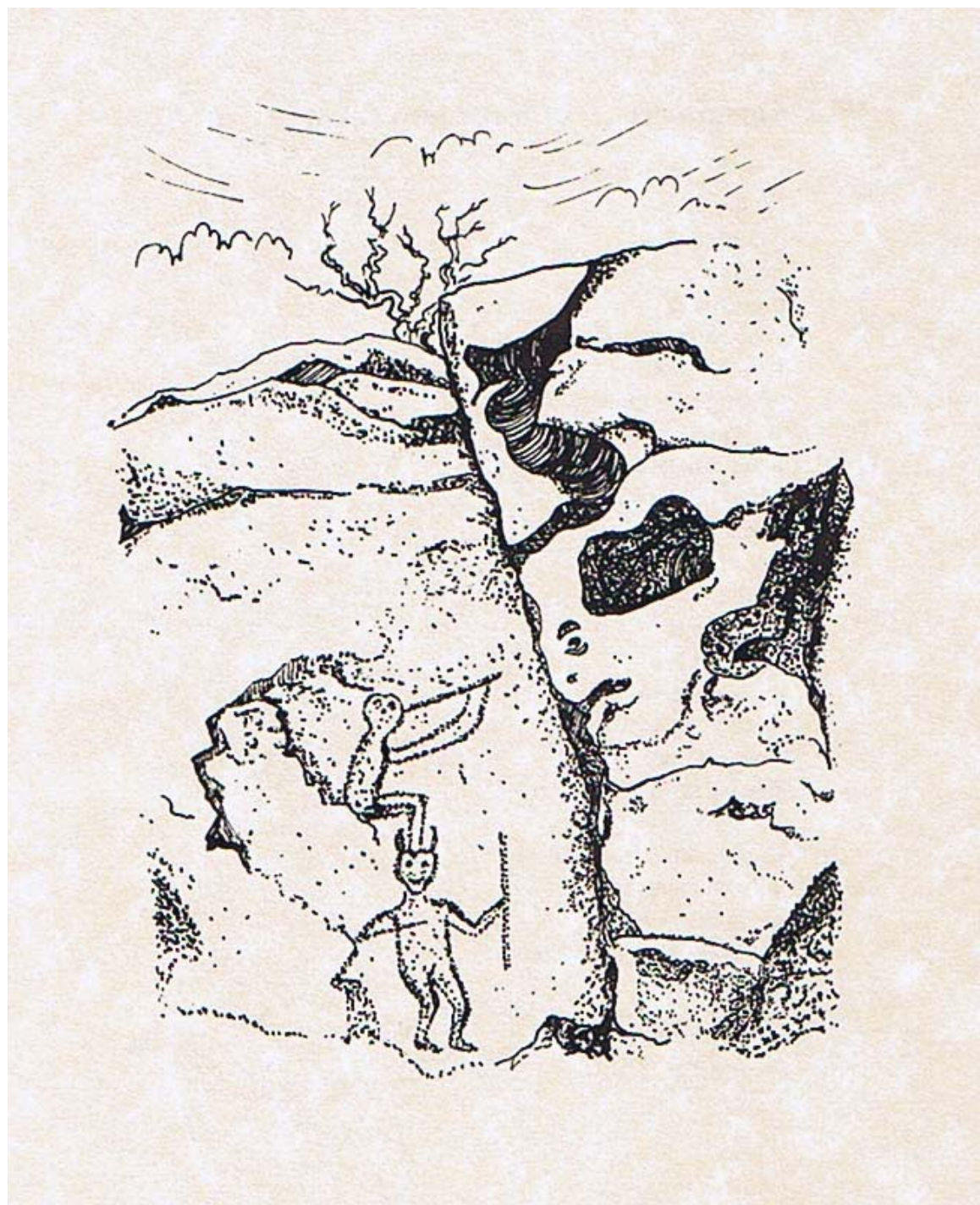


## THE SPECTRAL SKIES IN NEW MEXICO

A blue so  
quick it quivers  
into indigo  
everywhere  
your eyes turn.  
Into sere mouths  
of mountains on the horizon  
skies pour.  
Into the hole  
of a kiva (the sipapu)  
beyond names  
skies full  
of blue  
flames fall.  
Blue puddles  
on its floor  
as smoking spirits  
close the door.  
Beyond sight  
skies snake  
underground streams down  
your umbilical road  
to the first world.  
Mornings there are endless  
blue mesas  
of air.







## TURNING SUMMER

After reading a long time about deep  
ecology, I step out on the porch.  
The belly of midnight swells  
a sweet breath of growth.  
Stars' stridulations echo  
all the nameless constellations  
of crickets hugging crystal globes  
of dew. I think of concentric spheres  
the medieval cosmos spun, smell onion  
in the garden. Inside, my child stirs  
inside her dreaming mother  
or his. It's a mystery which-  
ever way we turn. Whisper syllables  
from sacred circles, and stars begin to burn  
in the eyes of the unborn.



## MORNING AT TSANKAWI \*

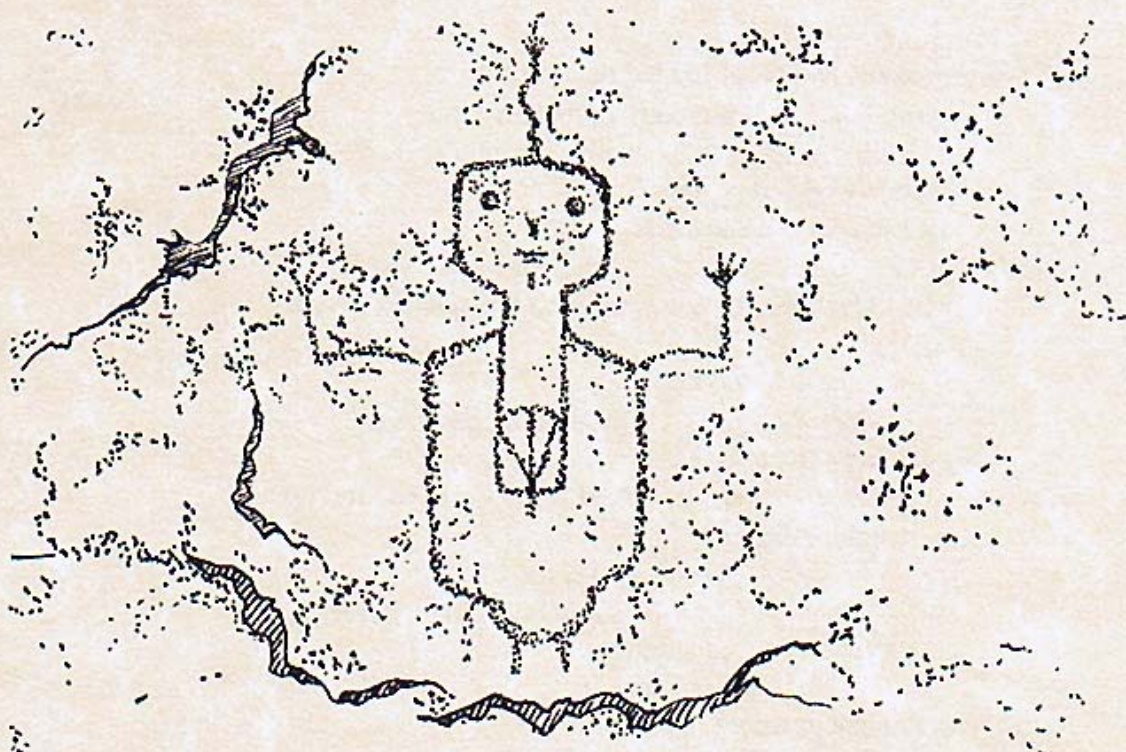
Across stone slabs  
snakes of lightning slither  
into the hole of the world  
before our own.

Whirlpools arc  
into rock  
migration routes  
which draw one  
inward  
still.

The unblinking eye  
etched with fire  
for over five hundred journeys of the sun  
to the south & back, as sire to song  
the Turquoise Shaman raises  
forever  
his arms in praise of light —  
his thunder prayer  
for life seeds  
of He-rain.

\* Located between the Sangre de Cristo and Jemez Mountains of northern New Mexico, Tsankawi (tsank-ah-WEE, meaning "gap of the sharp round cactus") was the home of a group of Rio Grande Anasazi from the early 14th to the late 16th centuries. Upon this mesa they built a rectangular pueblo of about 350 rooms, 2-3 stories high, enclosing a large courtyard. On the south-facing cliffside, smaller "talus pueblos" were constructed adjoining a number of caves, some of which appear to be ceremonial in nature. All the petroglyphs shown in this poem (as well as the ones on p.6 and p.16) are representations of those found on the caprocks or inside the caves of Tsankawi.





Across the mesa of sharp round cactus & sage, ancient days  
are scattered  
potsherds, geometrically intricate  
echoes of poetry  
the clean-shaven winds snatch away— restless  
as snapshot tourists. On the wavering horizon  
blue mountain ranges drift like dreams  
of shivering aspens, spruce needles & ice crystals  
melting into morning.



At Tsankawi, worms of fire writhe  
in the dust. Terraced rooms of mortared tuff  
tumble the rubble  
of a world where once  
the kachinas came to drink.

Within the round red arms  
of ten kivas, the Ancient Ones felt the mothering Mystery  
as sound

& as sure as one's own  
heart beat. Each stone  
sang a litany of pure rivers.

Their green world was forever  
laughing & clean  
as leaves of corn  
a storm of white water leaves  
shining.

What drought or sacred sign  
scorched in some dry arroyo  
had driven them here  
so long ago?

In the West they'd left behind  
the Yellow Corn Maiden— her brittle husks scraping  
against the stubble  
of the wind's face.





Upon the village's path  
ages of aching arches  
on bare soles  
or sandals made of yucca  
came to abrade  
a sandstone track— in places  
up to two feet deep. Up to the mesa  
the Hump-Back Flute Player  
leads us, skipping  
satyr-like  
through rocks & cedar brakes  
sowing his sack of seeds.  
Blowing a trickling melody  
of kisses  
into the honeyed heart  
of a flowering cloud  
he dips  
his hummingbird beak  
to make  
the She-rains come.  
With songs soft as a fawn's ear  
this pied piper of Tsankawi  
lured the children off somewhere  
so long ago  
beyond the misty rim  
of their rainbow world.







At noon

a flock of raven-like heat waves

forces a dizzy retreat  
to cool-tongued shadows  
of cliffside caves.

In the haze to the South

Turtle Mountain\* drifts  
at the red edge  
of the once-sacred world.

One's gaze grows dim  
as a smoky flake  
of obsidian.

Upon the soot-darkened wall

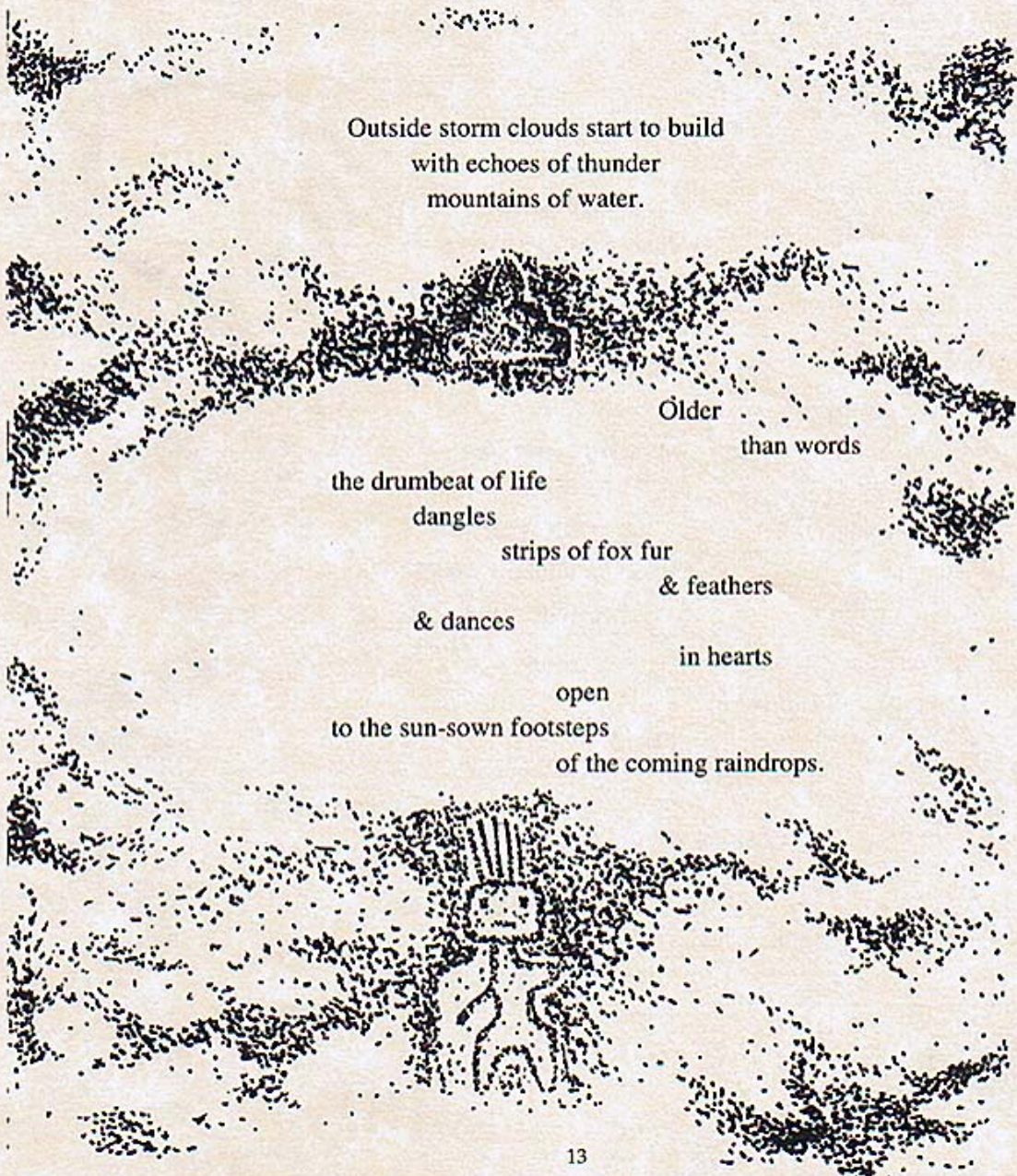
of a dank womb  
of rock  
the Plumed Serpent stirs  
the tap root  
in the blood.

Surrounding everyone

his return  
begins to shimmer without beginning  
or ending.

\*Sandia Peak, near Albuquerque.





Outside storm clouds start to build  
with echoes of thunder  
mountains of water.

Older  
than words  
the drumbeat of life  
dangles  
strips of fox fur  
& feathers  
& dances  
in hearts  
open  
to the sun-sown footsteps  
of the coming raindrops.



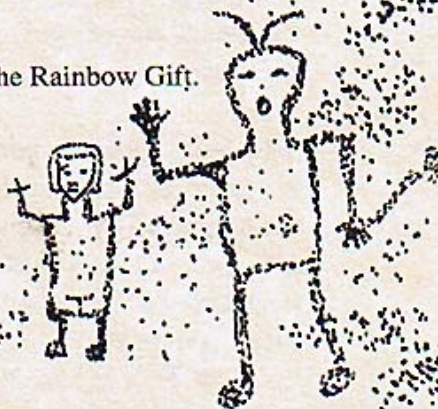
Upward from earth  
pulses  
the Wingéd Serpent  
torque-tight in the cave  
of all races  
surges forth!  
With a wind-blown rush  
of fire  
at the backbone base  
he rises  
higher & higher  
in a whirling rainbow wheel  
of light!

Across the hills of heaven  
rolling  
tumbling coils  
of roiling sounds  
the soaring serpent makes  
his rounds  
with lightning tongues  
& cracks the clouds  
like a giant rumbling  
rawhide whip.





Down below the Warriors of Light  
lift  
seed-bright & shining arms  
to receive  
the sacred sign  
of the Rainbow Gift.



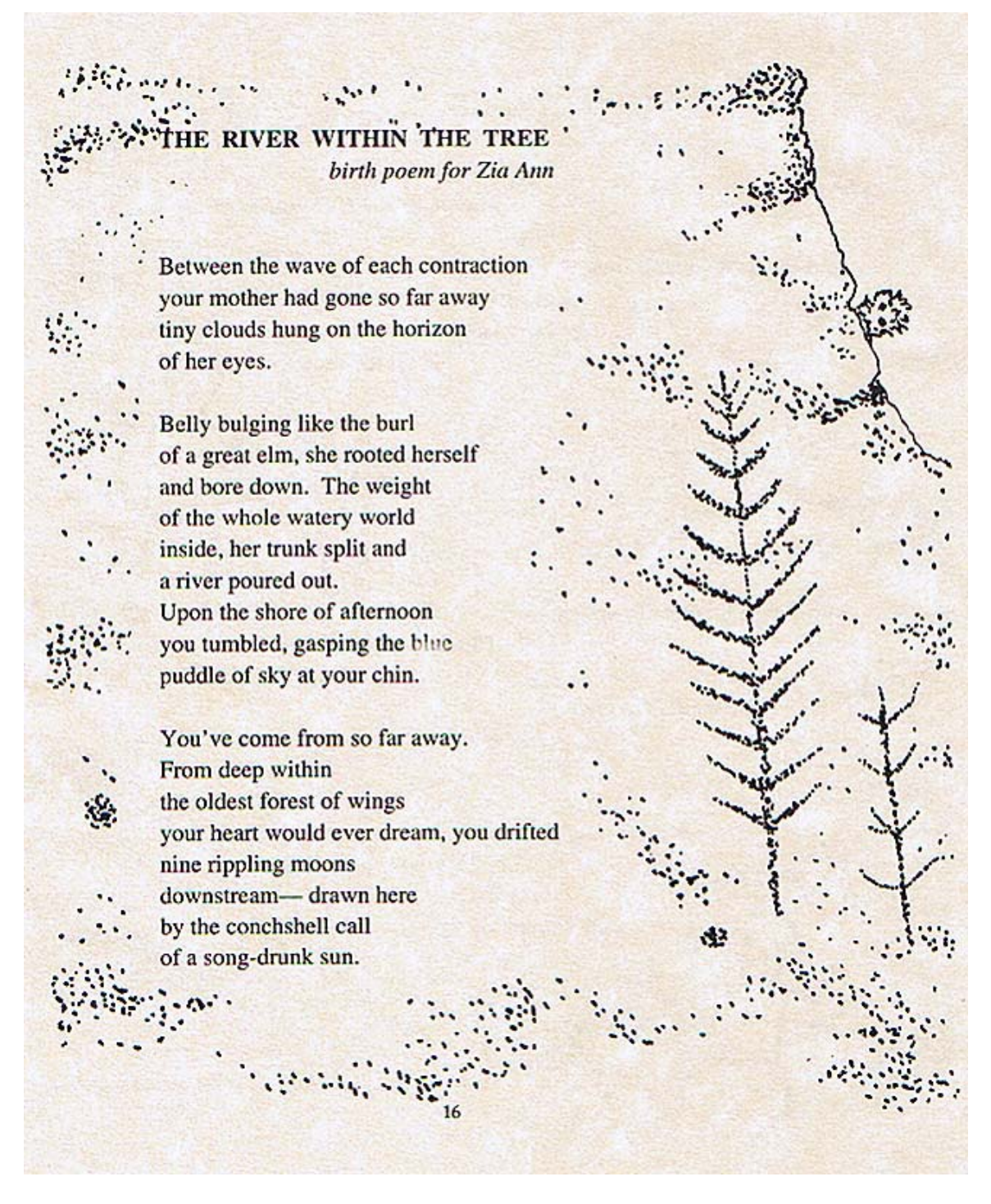
Above the blue Bear Mountain\*  
the Dipper pours  
its milk of stars  
southward. The scales  
of the Plumed Snake  
gleam  
in the dark  
& wandering eyes

of the war-weary children  
seeking  
the coming dream.



San Antonio Mountain, near the Colorado/New Mexico border.





## THE RIVER WITHIN THE TREE

*birth poem for Zia Ann*

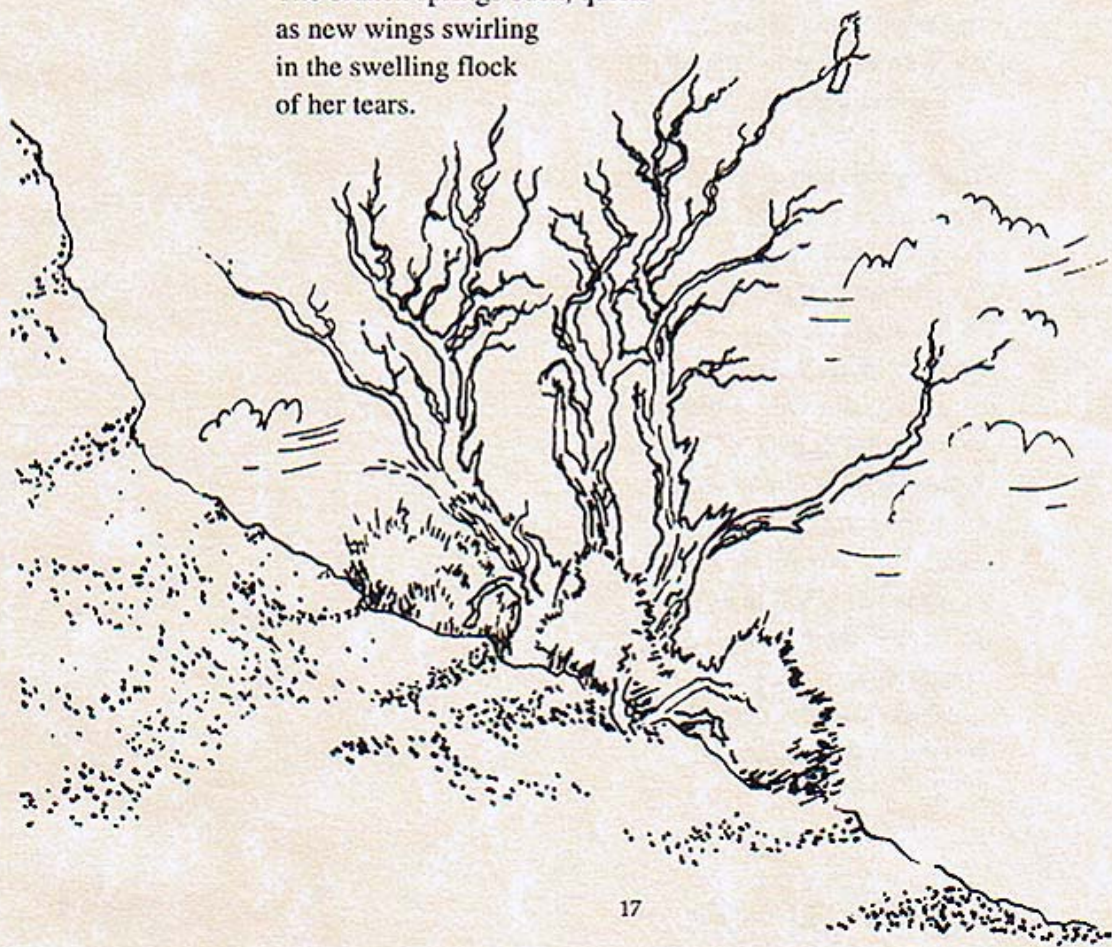
Between the wave of each contraction  
your mother had gone so far away  
tiny clouds hung on the horizon  
of her eyes.

Belly bulging like the burl  
of a great elm, she rooted herself  
and bore down. The weight  
of the whole watery world  
inside, her trunk split and  
a river poured out.  
Upon the shore of afternoon  
you tumbled, gasping the blue  
puddle of sky at your chin.

You've come from so far away.  
From deep within  
the oldest forest of wings  
your heart would ever dream, you drifted  
nine rippling moons  
downstream— drawn here  
by the conchshell call  
of a song-drunk sun.



Love, the name of the river  
is yours alone. The tree of the world  
is ours together: the Great Mother.  
Listen! Before she leaves  
her perch, a yellow bird warbles  
softer than the water  
I weep on your cheek.  
The branch springs back, quick  
as new wings swirling  
in the swelling flock  
of her tears.





## ST. FRANCIS FEEDS THE BAG LADY

She'll never swallow his vow  
of poverty. She drinks  
his spirit in a cold shadow  
of the oldest house.  
Now he wouldn't last  
one night in his namesake:  
La Villa Real de la Santa Fe  
de San Francisco de Assisi.

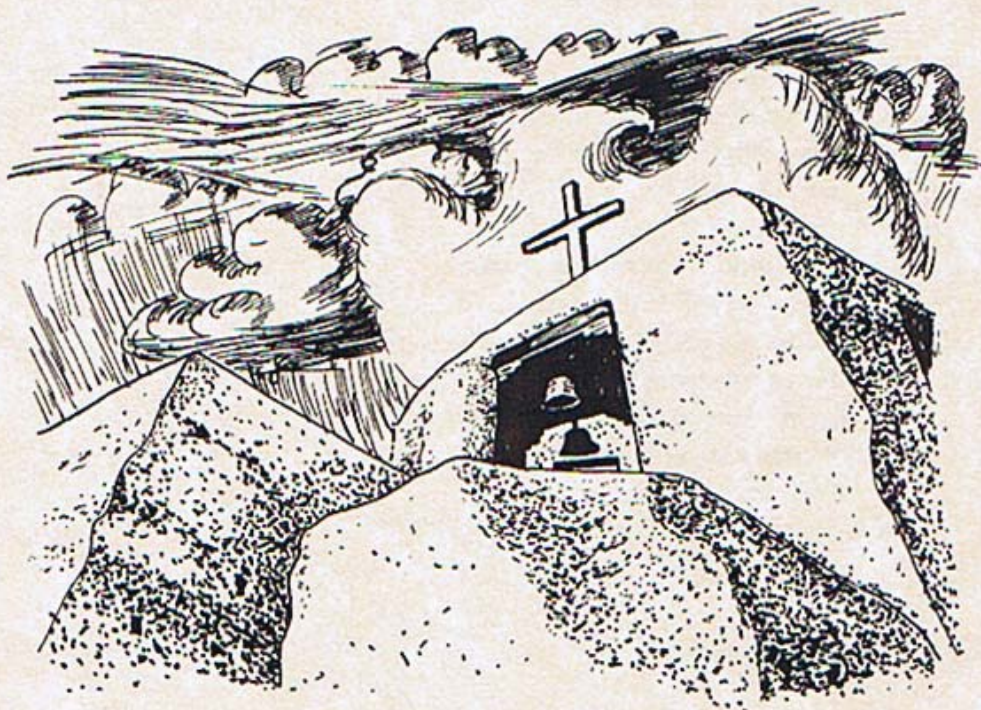
The painted birds  
forsake her shoulder.  
Silver lining turquoise  
eyes, bronze tourists flock  
to patronize the arts.  
Perched on a cloudy curb  
of gallery alley, she whispers  
to fluttering fingers  
words torn like bread crumbs  
from the foreign language  
of her life. No sisters  
in sight, she's lost in a forest  
by others' more conspicuous  
consumption. They spot  
a goblet of leaded crystal  
instead of darker faces.



A quainter painting shows  
the blind faith of the famous  
archbishop. He's feeding his masses  
of pidgin Indians. They've come  
to depend on him and vice  
versa. Against the dark  
wings which daily drop  
upon our bag lady  
of Guadalupe St., his mission  
was a nippy Sunday picnic  
in Cathedral Park.

Her mouth opens and the tongue  
cracks the bell in the tower.  
She knows each hour of hunger  
thin as a wafer of light.  
From a bloody century  
the friar blesses her  
final bottle of Thunderbird.





San Miguel Chapel, Santa Fe



## CORONADO ON THE INTERSTATE (AT KUAUA RUINS)

If I sat  
    near this jade slate  
        of water sliding south—  
If I sat here  
    with ragged scraps of Rio  
        crow songs in my ear—  
If I sat here long  
    beside the banked fires of cottonwoods'  
        humming buds in a March wind—  
If I sat here long enough  
    across from Turtle Mountain dusted  
        by morning snow and piñon—  
If I sat here long enough I might  
    against a thousand indigenas driven  
        toward the Seven Cities of Cíbola—  
If I sat here long enough I might find  
    above a feathered heartbeat  
        thumping drums in the mud—  
If I sat here long enough I might find a poem.

If I sat here longer  
    under bloody colors dancing  
dream creatures within  
    a smoking prayer hole\*

\*The "Painted Kiva" at Coronado National Monument near Bernalillo, New Mexico contains a series of fresco murals done by the Pueblo people long before the conquistador Francisco Vázquez de Coronado arrived to spend the winter of 1540-41.



I'd need to do no more  
    than bless these bones  
of a deer on the shore  
    with corn pollen— let them  
slip into the river  
    fast as sleep.

But no, I am Coronado  
on the interstate  
to El Dorado— a shadow  
skin of a rattlesnake  
the fallen sun has shed.



**OPPIE: *TAT TVAM ASI* (THOU ART THAT.)**

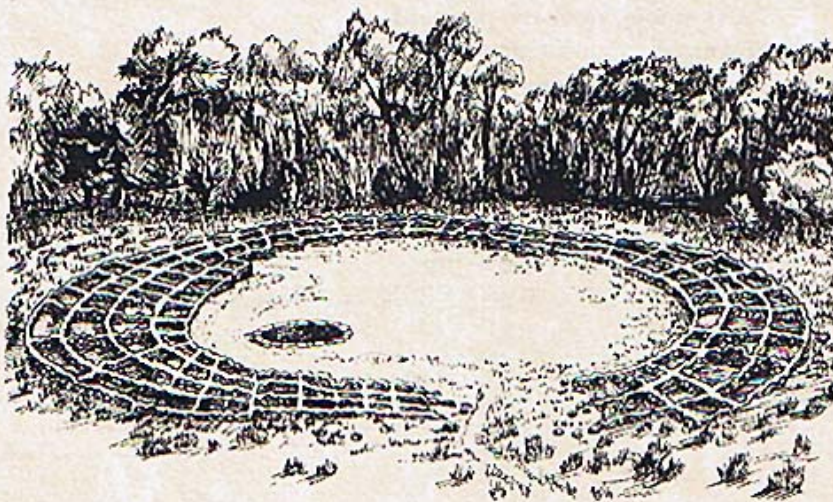
Sporting porkpie hat and puffing  
professorial pipe, prophet-like he gazes—  
eyes glowing toward critical mass  
across Pajarito Plateau. Sanskrit phrases  
quantum leapfrog chalkdust equations  
in dry arroyos. The *Gita* echoes  
ponderosa pine and piñon  
whispers. He knows the bloody skull  
necklace Kali wears—just as well  
as the devil's own chain reactions  
plutonium (two thirty nine) unlocks. At dawn  
on a blackboard mesa, this weary scarecrow  
stalks among scattered potsherds  
of Anasazi corn country, searching for a theory  
which will hold heavy water.

Above Frijoles Cañon  
at noon, the match-blue sky strikes  
an eagle's eye. In the crumbling honeycomb  
of the ruins, the Blue Star Kachina  
starts his heart to pulse in time  
to the round dance dynamo of the open kiva.



Now the western mountains breathe deep  
in the night. Ancestors form a circle  
into the Fifth World. Oppie bolts upright  
in bed, each bead of sweat a crystal  
humming high frequencies  
on his forehead.

He has seen the end  
of his dream: a gourd rattle  
of fire and thunder rises.  
For the first time ever  
he is shaken.





## BLEEDING BLUE FIRE

Last night I lay in a concrete cage  
no larger than those cardboard shacks  
the homeless build beneath the thunder  
of urban bridges. Cobwebs and cracks  
snaked with urine, its bed chilled  
my haunches like a morgue's slab.  
Naked and dusty, a low-watt lightbulb  
my only heat. No window. Smells  
of musty breath and bread mold  
crept across my pillow. Rats  
with gray armadillo scales kept  
running on my chest. All night  
I lay in a concrete cage.

Today I'm trapped in the distance  
the Sangre de Cristo brings to my eyes.  
In waves, sapphire on indigo, they lift.  
There must be justice somewhere  
I whisper— somewhere within  
their arms of spruce and fir.  
Beyond cloudy mountains bleeding  
blue fire through canyons of sky  
there must be a clearing—  
some quiet place  
the sun is born.



## TRINITY CITATIONS

### I: J. Robert Oppenheimer

*The Fruit in the Midst of the Garden  
(Or, Why I Built the Gadget)*

It was technically  
sweet.

### II: General Thomas F. Farrell

*The Truth of the Matter*

It was that beauty  
the great poets dream about  
but describe most poorly  
and inadequately.

### III: Edward Teller

*Sinners in the Hands of An Angry Bomb*

The things we are working on  
are so terrible  
no amount of protesting  
or fiddling with politics  
will save our souls.



## THROUGH THE MOUTH OF CHACO CANYON\*

-1-

Forlorn as an echo  
of a shotgun, roofless rooms  
at Pueblo Bonito, blasted  
by sunlight and wind, recede  
from our understanding.  
We know the bolt action  
of our own time, but don't succeed  
in making whole again  
these broken pots. On the curve of  
a great kiva, dawn ignites  
the longest day in a niche  
of summer. A hidden passageway  
to the center whispers  
riddles in the dust to which  
our radials have taken us.

Twenty miles over a washboard road  
still leaves a nuclear family  
in the middle of nowhere fast. I race  
my wife and little girl to the scarp, stop  
at masonry stairs climbing  
toward places we'll never go. Dead clans left

\*The site of Anasazi ruins in northwestern New Mexico. Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl are two major villages in this complex of multi-story, stone pueblos. Fajada Butte and Chacra Mesa lie a few miles southeast of these structures. Until very recently a spiral petroglyph on Fajada Butte precisely indicated solstice and equinox dates.



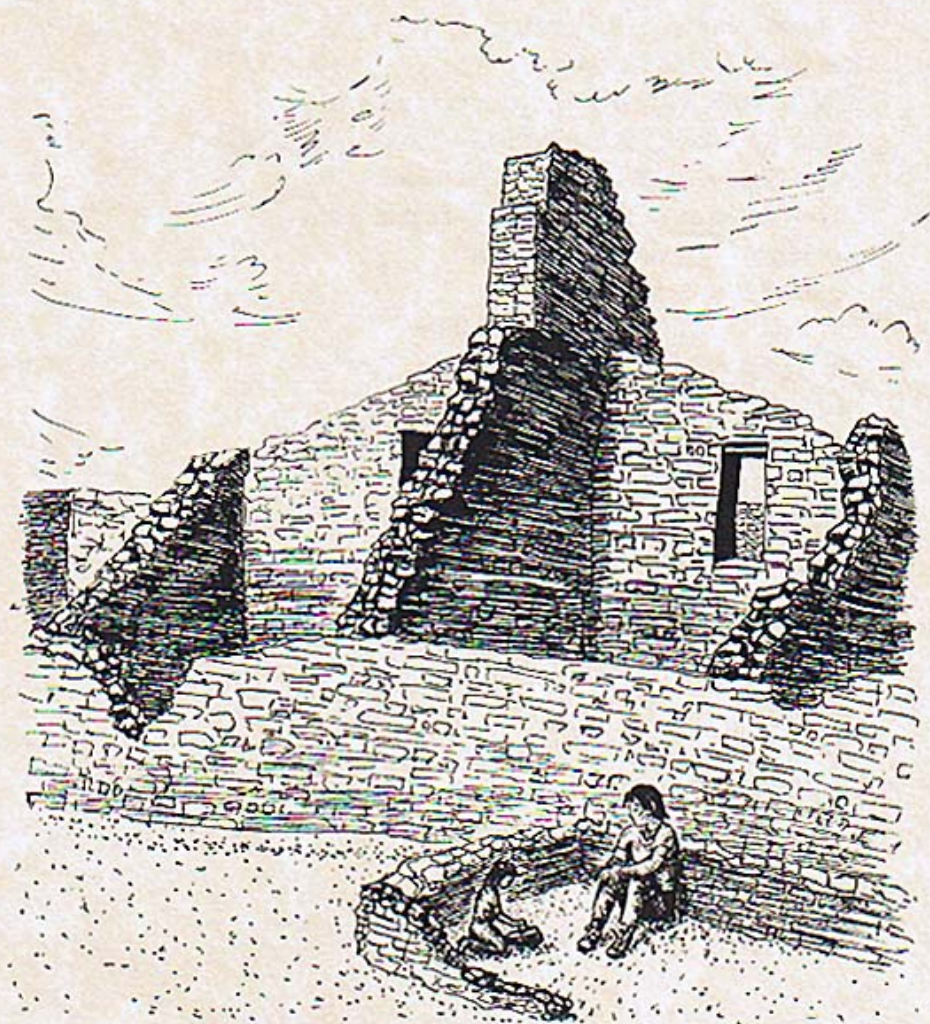
no maps to the crowded plaza  
where we belong. We find instead  
the sun dagger at Fajada Butte  
no longer quarters the yellow squash  
of the solar circle, shifted  
by waffle-soled boots.

Layer upon chinked layer sealed  
with caliche, stonework withstood  
drougts and mounting centuries  
of snowdrifts. A crow sweeps  
his melting shadow over  
ocher cliffs the same  
morning a Norman duke crosses  
the channel to Hastings.

-2-

As Nita and Zia giggle in the rubble  
of Chetro Ketl, grinding pretend corn  
on mano and metate, I lean against a wall—  
its shadow shifting long after we've fallen  
silent— and read about "The dearth  
of human remains..." Not enough bones here  
to flesh out the five hundred rooms. Behind us  
stones chew the meal of years too slowly  
for us to taste whatever sustained  
across sagebrush miles on Chacra Mesa  
the holy dances back to the heart.



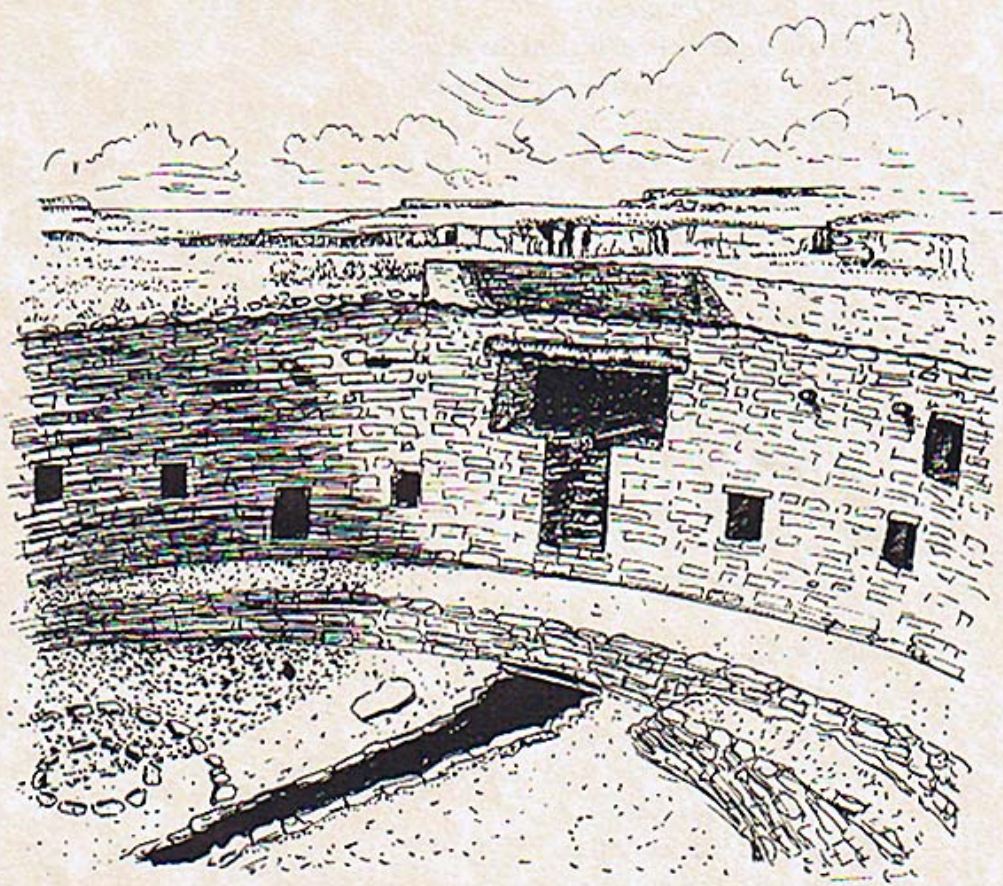




Clouds crumble in golden light  
the fallen pueblo sun gives.  
Copper bells, turquoise beads, and macaw feathers  
point elsewhere. We're farther away. Evening brings  
news of another day to a motel in Grants.  
Snacking on sugared cereal, our daughter aims  
the remote to switch the channel.  
A coyote drops another anvil  
off a cliff. It keeps falling and falling  
through dreams hours later, smashes  
the skull of the last ancestor to bits  
of black-on-white pottery.  
Red star petroglyphs evaporate  
from a rock face as I wake  
to the white noise of an air conditioner.  
To the east a gray blur  
paves the road home—the only place  
in all our ruins we've failed to find.

As I drive back, a commuter sun  
wheels through a new adobe  
supermarket in Albuquerque, blinding us  
to kivas sleeping in the dark  
of each sprouted bean.





The great kiva at Casa Rinconada



## CLIMBING PUYÉ\* CLIFFS

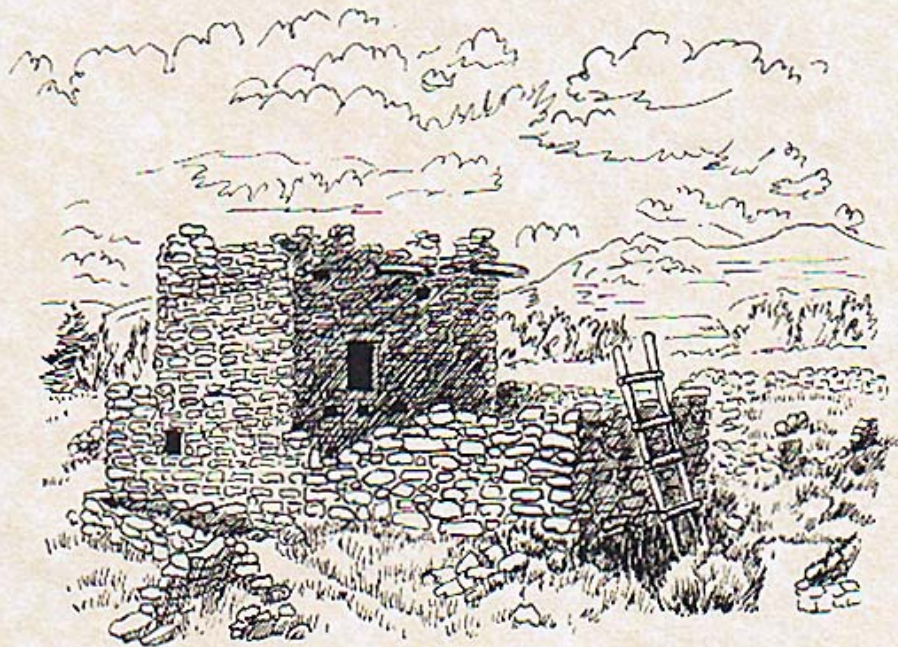
Talus scatters your footsteps  
at the base of the mesa.  
A light-headed climb toward the plaza  
choked with ragweed and rabbitbrush  
steals your breath.  
Your spirit has forgotten  
like a fallen brick  
its dark house. Turned to dust  
your heart no longer mourns  
the hearth's ashes. A hush  
over four centuries sifts  
through thin, arthritic fingers  
in the wind. Still  
the painted shards recall  
hands that shaped the jars  
from red ancestral clay  
of your homeland.

On broken vertebrae  
of the village wall, a lizard waits  
motionless— its head dull  
as a crowbar. Pocked with black  
viga holes, cliffs vanish  
far beyond blank horizons  
in its eyes. Quick as a gasp  
it skitters into dead grass.

\* The Puyé Cliff Dwellings are located near the Santa Clara Pueblo northwest of Santa Fe.



Through the dry clack  
a hopper's wings make, you hear  
the arrogant drone  
from a distant airplane bore.  
It sputters into dead clouds. You fear  
it's headed for a high blue hangar  
in the future.



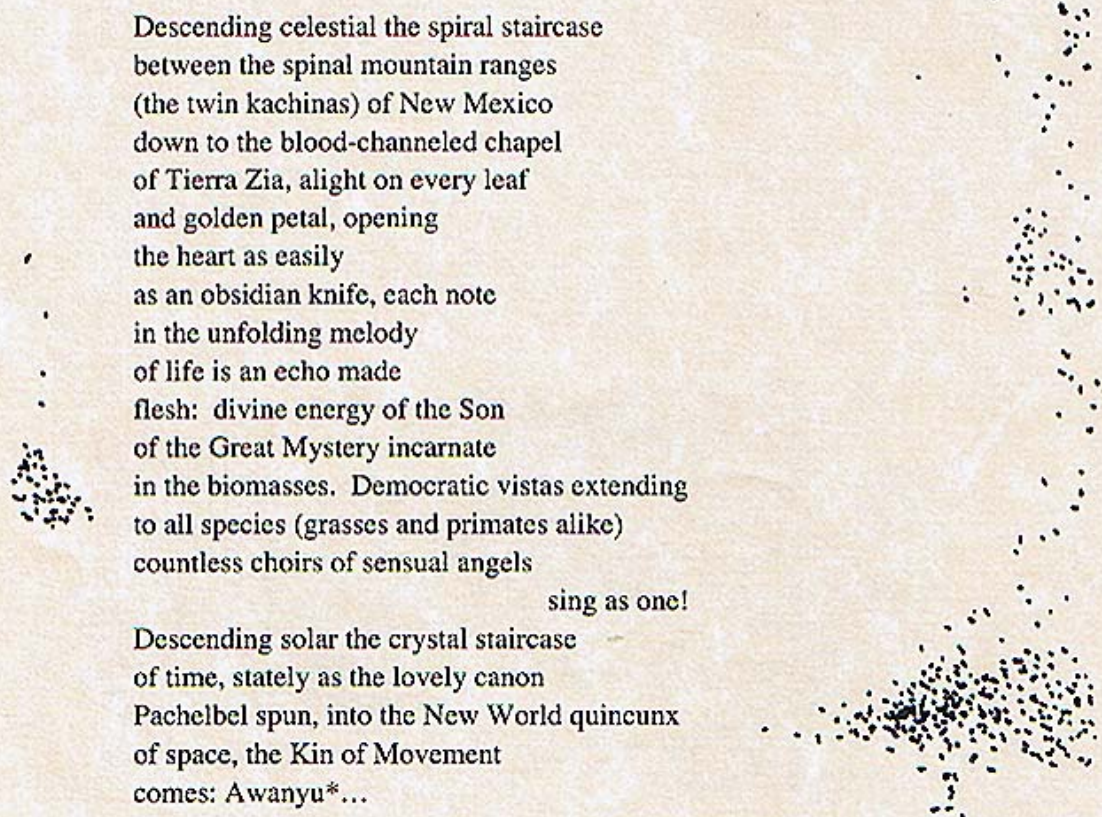




## TIERRA ZIA

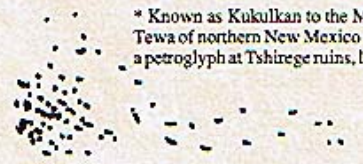
"Ah Sun-flower! weary of time,  
Who countest the steps of the Sun ..."

William Blake




Descending celestial the spiral staircase  
between the spinal mountain ranges  
(the twin kachinas) of New Mexico  
down to the blood-channeled chapel  
of Tierra Zia, alight on every leaf  
and golden petal, opening  
the heart as easily  
as an obsidian knife, each note  
in the unfolding melody  
of life is an echo made  
flesh: divine energy of the Son  
of the Great Mystery incarnate  
in the biomasses. Democratic vistas extending  
to all species (grasses and primates alike)  
countless choirs of sensual angels  
sing as one!

Descending solar the crystal staircase  
of time, stately as the lovely canon  
Pachelbel spun, into the New World quincunx  
of space, the Kin of Movement  
comes: Awanyu\*...



\* Known as Kukulcan to the Mayas and Quetzalcoatl to the Aztecs, Awanyu was the name the Tewa of northern New Mexico called the Feathered Snake. This representation is patterned after a petroglyph at Tshirege ruins, located within the boundaries of Los Alamos National Laboratory.





... the Plumed Serpent

returns— his blinding vision of fission force  
transformed. Over are the hell cycles and flywheels  
of well-oiled machinations grinding to the fossil-fueled end  
this millenium. Over the Sangre de Cristo  
corona down and pollen dust mingle. The People  
of all nations gather now in the sacred hoop

of the Rainbow Snake.

Ascending pineal the milk-smooth forehead  
of the White Corn Maiden, Morning Star chants  
new beginnings. Like the time-lapse  
of the last sunflower, each hour blooms  
an instant— each age a blink  
of the dark eye raging  
in the Sun of Man's heart. Rising  
as the halo of the Holy Virgin, the red arms  
of Zia

reach out to bless the dawn

of sacred earth.





## SKY CITY\*

– 1 –

Scanning the telescoped landscape  
for a language of feathered clouds  
dreaming rock, we took an old bus  
to the blue-roofed mesa top  
of the zodiac. An Ácoma driver told us  
how long, how cold nights are  
a river of stars where some of his clan  
still winter. Under thin March sunlight  
we walked their plaza: displaced voices  
muted by late afternoon  
sepia and dried blood. While kinship echoes  
a thousand years on this parchment vista  
dripping shadows, felt-tipped  
verses would evaporate the moment  
a melting moon cleared  
the edge of her red world.

– 2 –

Cutting through the daily rote  
with a sharp shard in her throat,  
our tour guide's dark wind hissed  
the hardest story of this  
"oldest continuously inhabited city

\*Ácoma Pueblo, about 70 miles west of Albuquerque.



in the U. S.” Pointing skyward  
she told how their poor children  
got sold into slavery— all  
so that brass mission bell  
of San Estevan up there might toll  
forever! (How many? It was many  
years ago.) Might’ve been four  
or seven —times ten?— little “people  
of the white rock” taken away  
to Tenochtitlán. Might’ve been  
the Pleiades to which they flew for all  
we or they knew or know.

– 3 –

Beyond the nova-headed nails  
of a kiva ladder, alone above  
the catch basin of green water stood  
their star-hearted cottonwood— leafless as bone  
dreaming rain. While our three-year-old  
daughter Zia drifted off  
softer than seed fluff  
on her mother’s shoulder, two little  
Indian girls in mermaid T-shirts  
by a beehive oven dug  
through golden dust seeking  
the yeast of years to come.



But we'd taste no warm bread  
on the breeze nor turn red wine  
into water on their tongues, hear  
no deer songs that urge  
blue or yellow corn up  
from rainbow earth either.  
No new clay pot or plate to adorn  
our days, years ago  
we just bought an ancient  
brown and black on white  
star-broken piece found at the base  
of Enchanted Mesa to the east.

— 4 —

At dusk we took the hard way  
down, the slow way— sleeping little  
rosebud girl on our switched backs  
on their toeholds hacked  
from sunburst sandstone how many  
years ago! How many spirit hands  
eased us down, took our steps  
down those cliffs! How many wings fluttered  
hummingbird hearts until  
the tingle of soles stopped  
at the unpurchased foot of that  
precarious stairway. We make

the hard way, the slow way  
still: spiral  
arms of the farthest Sky City  
calling us home.



## THE DIFFERENCES

From white apricot blossoms my eyes  
lift —the luminous blue distances—  
to sun-bright snowdrifts in the heart

of the Sangre de Cristo. Groping  
down a dirt road, shadows crawl  
adobe walls. Ristras drip red

on turquoise doorways. From the blood  
a thousand conquistadores sung  
to the Anglo's bones flowering

at Ghost Ranch —like the thread  
of a spinning spider— a dust devil hung  
between thorny whispers thirsts

to dance over the differences.



## ENVOI: TOUCHING THE TEACHER

My daughter dancing, her eyes  
learn the ways of the world  
as she follows the line on the first map  
she makes with a purple pen:

Slumberland, Castle of Evil Wizards,  
Island of Faeries, Island of the Princess  
she says she is. Dreamland...  
"That's much bigger than the world,"

I say. Through cloud gauze  
on the evening horizon, the sun clots.  
"Why do we live in this planet?"  
She whirls the indigo veil

of her wings, skips and leaps a tipsy  
pirouette. "To learn to do  
things, to learn..." but  
tired of talk, she breezes off

before I can add: "to love—  
to love before we leave."







Photo by Gábor Wéber

*"Tierra Zia is a book of beginnings. Most of these poems emerged from an initial sojourn in New Mexico, during which our first child was born. Having lived a decade in South Dakota's Black Hills, we were instantly awed by the intense light and vibrant colors this new landscape and sky reflected. I bought a secondhand camera and began taking photos for the first time. The unique mixture of cultures, architectures and histories intrigued and delighted us. Soon lines of poetry rose out of Anasazi ruins and petroglyphs. Even though unfinished insights and employment elsewhere ultimately ushered us away, other New Mexico poems grew from subsequent visits. Still we yearn for the many mornings: sun breaking upon stone, the two-room adobe on the outskirts of Santa Fe, and the apricot tree, forever in bloom."*

Gary David is the author of *The Possibilities of Blue Sky* (Northland Press, 1989) and *A Log of Deadwood* (North Atlantic Books, 1993). Born in Ohio, he currently lives with his wife and daughter in Chino Valley, Arizona.

*this book was designed and typeset in times by MARGARETA WATERMAN in cooperation with the poet and illustrator, using MACINTOSH & ALDUS. cover font is CONTEMPORARY BRUSH. the illustrations and photos were scanned by DAVE HARNER of TRI-CITY PUBLICATION SERVICES, prescott, arizona. the book was printed by ABCD PRINTING, and bound and the cover printed by ELBOW PRESS, in seattle.*





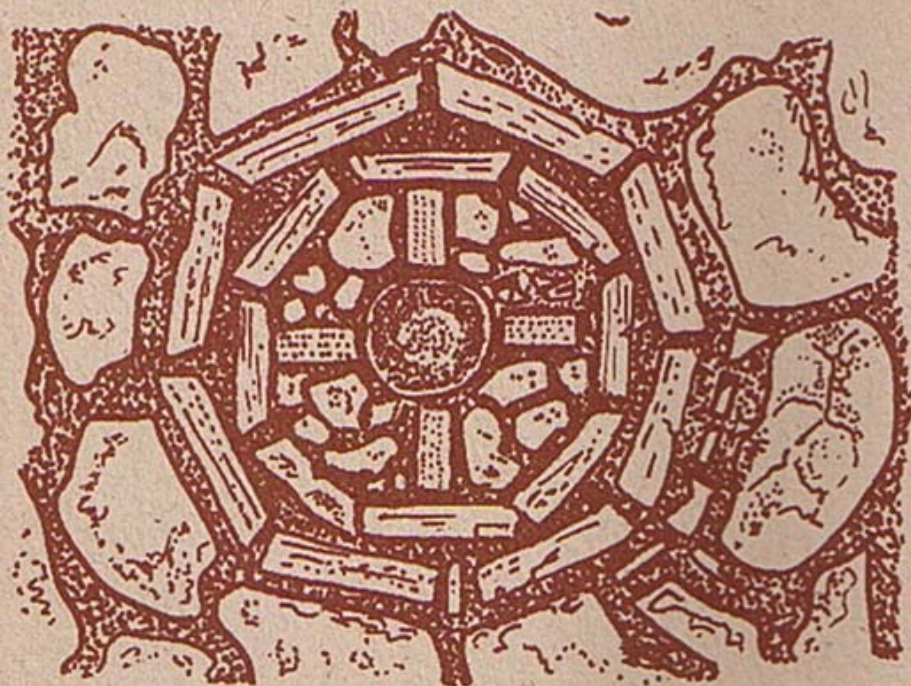
Dawn Senior grew up in a log cabin her family built in Wyoming's Snowy Range, where she still lives. As a teenager, she spent five years on the Navajo Reservation in Arizona. She has illustrated numerous books, and her poetry has been published in magazines and anthologies. She has served as an editor of the literary magazine *Wyoming, the Hub of the Wheel*, and presently works in the Artist-in-the-Schools programs of several states.



nine muses is an artists' collective, a vehicle for serious writers to design and produce their own work. each author owns her/his own books. the design of each book is seen as a further step in the same creative process that produced the writings. a blending of the poet's and the painter's eye gives the books an unusual degree of visual interest and beauty.

nine muses mystery theatre produces video and audio recordings, and live performances.





nine muses books