**Struggling [for Words] on Mesa Tsankawi**

Dick Altman

Black sea swimming with eels of lightening sweeps toward me

I tower over Mesa Tsankawi’s flattened skeletons of Indian ruins /

poet cowering alone under skies hungry / unsparing No metaphors

to hide / guide me / I struggle for words / breath / balance / nerve /

to escape on Tsankawi’s cloud-clinging catwalks No aerialist /

I teeter on shear faces / ledges of speechless fright Tsankawi’s braves

strutted / courted / fought into history on these cliffs Tumble off

their high-wire footpaths / all of five fingers wide / and flesh

in free fall fragments into syllables of body and bone / inchoate

graffiti scribbled across boulders cleaved from Tsankawi’s

erupted tooth of volcanic ash Seeking no end / but sanctuary

of meter and line / abruptly my mind cartwheels into phrases

of silent space / void begging me to flee Tsankawi’s incandescent

heights Rio Grande’s valley orbits dizzily above / below me

My wingless voice / lost to storm / dissolves in air thick with eels

of lightning / Tsankawi’s spirits hungry to consume me / unsparing

of panicked cadences / my fragile rhyme