

V.B. Price

from *Chaco Elegies*

MOTHER OF MYTHS

We read of the Hopi (that's all we can do)
that the dead are clouds,
that the dead rain down their souls on earth,
that life depends on their essence.

I felt a closing when my mother died,
felt the past had pulled itself from my life;
where she was
now was nothing.

Where did she go?

Is she anywhere more than a sorrow,
more than something gone?

I am starving for new stories.

I have no heaven for her, no Elysium.
She isn't waiting, in pillows and poppies,
for curtain calls from the gods.

She is a memory
I often forget
has no memory itself.

But at Hopi
the dead never leave.
Rain is soul.
And the souls of Chaco
still feed them.
All history's in the sky,
the crops, their bodies.

Any meal is a communion.

But my mother and I are as far apart
as I am from faith
in the Fall from grace.

She is like the canyon was on a Tuesday
7,000 years ago, or a Monday just last month,
a detail
in the history of time.

The canyon is
every day it was,
as the species is
every person it has been.

But she
is my mother,
not a day in the shape of stone,
and I don't know where she is.

She is not in her bones,
not in her ashes I put in the waves.

She is an idea
I have not yet formed
like clouds unborn in the sea.

I want her home with me. I want
death, all death, to be
a right proximity.

In Chaco, at least, I know
the canyon is
where the past remains.

I know it is not
only now.
So can I say
it is time's common grave,

a mother of myths,
where death conceives, where memory
gives birth to the future?

Can I say she is somewhere there
waiting for doubt to leave?