

& a small head noddin
crowd gathered diggin
on his music

Richmond Barthé: *Meeting in Lyon* / Melvin Dixon

Lyon is a city of two rivers and Roman aqueducts
two thousand years old. I come by snake-roads
through the faces of three mountains; following
butterflies and the tracks of old bones.

I find you in the hour of molding and the time
of two rivers running here. Old fingers press
into clay; *the old ones touch the young*
and help them believe.

I look into eyes that have seen through stone,
I listen to lips that gave language to the clay,
I touch the spidered hands that bent bronze into blues.

Africa Awakening, Meditation, Shoe Shine Boy,
Your blood hardens into stone. "Study nature,"
you tell me in riverwords that pulse two veins in Lyon
and leave Roman remains.

It is why your young-old eyes are *thin-skinned*
and *burning*. Mississippi, New York, Jamaica, Italy,
Sweden and more fire. Bronze burning in black fingers
shed the thin skin, shed the twisted muscles, shed
teeth and tears, leave the *inner music* and the
mountain butterflies to show the way.

II

Two rivers swell in Lyon and clean the old dust.
History is stone polished black,
is blood and burnt bronze.

Your blood hardens into stone poems. "*What color is art?*"
and "*What color is love?*" The questions and your crisp
eyes clean me, let me know the years you read the muscles

torn from proud black chests, from open stilled mouths,
from wide nostrils and ebony bones and now reading me.

How I ache from being opened in these hours and cut
by these mountains and two rivers.

Who were you once in marble reincarnation? A statue,
a flesh carved god? A rock leading to mountaintops?
Who you will be next will meet me; that is why
we cannot say goodbye here.

*Rivers keep swelling and swelling, keep cutting
mountains, keep washing the Roman stone,*

And one man lifts his wings; his neck veins stretch
alive though the sun boils him and this land heats
a kiln, this history a steady fire and two rivers burn:

*We begin to heal ourselves
by our own believing—*

The clay now bakes its own warning and the statued
marble collects the blood prizes. But can these words
too become bronze breathing, or rock hardened
and cut tall to ride horseback in Haiti,
to swing machete *and still dance?*

Talking to My Grandmother Who Died Poor Some Years Ago / Alice Walker (while listening to Richard Nixon declare "I am not a crook.")

no doubt i will end my life as poor as you
without the wide verandah of your dream
on which to sit and fan myself slowly
without the tall drinks to cool my bored
unthirsty throat.
you will think: Oh, my granddaughter
failed to make something of herself
in the White Man's World!