

Did my mother, five centuries ago

Ask me whether I was too cold

Did her feet touch the shipboards

When she left, or did she walk

I would ask her, but all of my asking is gone

Even my thoughts and my thoughts of thoughts

Follow few channels she would ever parse

The record books would tell me, but they melted in the rain

Did my brother, five centuries ago

Ever teach me how to dance

Did he love the sky or the ground more

Could he recognize me now

I might join him, but all of this time passing

Has sent me out of his orbit

And into the burning sun

Where I will not see our earth again

Did my father, five centuries ago

Teach me how to talk, or what

I should say when these sad things

Go on, and go onward

I would tell him about all of my

Trouble, but now trouble has no name

It has wept out onto the rocks

And sunk down in the red dirt

Records in the thousands and words

Can never tell me all; so I ask

How did the sunlight strike our roots?

How did the earth receive my kin and my kith?

In asking I seek to find

A way back; in speaking,

Some way of illuminating that state

Of now and before

As before, as now, I live on a precipice

Where a million antecedents have set me down to live

Where I seek to find and behold,

I seek hope