

Dwight Maxwell



The Woman Who Was Not My Grandmother

My grandmother is not really my grandmother
She who took me in when I had no other
Was naught to me but a stranger smelling of cornmeal and sugar.
O' the woman I call my grandmother is no kin at all of mine.

She is a Syrian woman washed up from the sea bottom with barnacle froth
Hanging from her Asian air, she said her father, a thick-skinned African
With beetle eyes, spilled his seeds out of loss in the ocean night
He missed his kinder folk, who from the dry cliffs of Syria took supernatural flight.

The woman I call my grandmother is patroness of the thread
She pedaled folksongs and sew three-sister dresses to pay the rent
Full of pride, my eyes could not deny that I loved her sagging cheeks
Her young fingers weaving colors for little girls to wear to church.

Something new to wear when I wake.
She fed me and told me stories of her Syrian eyes and her Syrian skin
And I listened softly like a sick cherub doting on his unnatural birth
Wanting every piece of this woman's body.

