

*Dwight Maxwell*



## The Woman Who Was Not My Grandmother

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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.

