Talking to My Grandmother Who Died Poor Some Years Ago

Alice Walker

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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 unhirsty throat.
you will think: Oh, my granddaughter failed to make something of herself in the White Man's World!
but i am not a crook
i am not a descendent of crooks
my father was not president of anything
and only secretary to the masons
where his dues were a quarter a week
which he did not shirk to pay.
that buys me a new dream
though i am weak and i may slip
and lust after jewelry
and a small house by the sea:
yet i could give up even lust
in proper times
and open my doors to strangers
or live in one room.

that is the new dream.

in the meantime i hang on
fighting
addiction
to the old dream
knowing i must train myself to want
not one bit more
than what I need to keep me alive
working
and recognizing beauty
in your still undefeated face.

Nightmare Begins Responsibility /
Michael S. Harper

I place these numbed wrists to the pane
watching white uniforms whisk over
him in the tube-kept
prison
fear what they will do in experiment
watch my gloved stickshifting gasolined hands
breathe boxcar-information-please infirmary tubes
distrusting white-pink mending paperthin
silkened end hairs, distrusting tubes