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A Conversation with my Grandmother

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Jacqueline Bishop

A CONVERSATION WITH MY GRANDMOTHER

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My father, your great grandfather,
no, he was not an Irish man
Like you say he told you. Rather ---
He was an Englishman from somewhere in Hanover.

I don't know, I don't know,
all these questions that you keep asking,
all these questions you are forever asking ---
I never knew my father's parents,

When my father married my mother,
a dark-skinned woman,
They were none too pleased about this.
My father met my mother

On a visit to his sister in Nonsuch.
See --- you had it the other way around,
his sister coming to visit him.
You must have known his sister as a child,

she who married a black man, and,
like her brother, was never welcomed back
to the family fold. These things happened
a long time ago. Jamaica was very different then.

And so what, if your father's mother,
the woman you did not know, the woman
who comes to you in your dreams
wearing a light blue dress,
so what if she was really from Cuba?