

The Visit

I
My grandmother was a medicine woman
who cursed doctors and hospitals.
She believed in the power of wild
growing herbs and the cleansing of the body
with unpolluted waters.

I remember her hands
strongly pulling my soul
back to life.

My body a container of evil
she must empty before it was too late
she rubbed and stroked my arms
while saying a prayer audible only
to the saint she had invoked.

The rosemary and the menthol her accomplices
her hands moved to my legs
and they turned my skin red.
The only way she knew to bleach
my soul of any evil lurking inside.

I stood cured,
result of an undocumented miracle
or the force of her herbs.

II

I remember the hall,
sterile whiteness extending to both sides.
My steps a lonely echo
bouncing off the walls cold and empty.

I stood in front of the door I knew hers.
Looked around.

My hand a container receiving the cold
radiating from the walls around me.
I knew this time the herbs and prayers
were not going to produce a miracle.

I stood still at the foot of her bed.
Her long hair no longer pulled tight
to the back of her head in a bun
but cascaded on her white pillowcase.

III

I stood still. Her irregular breathing
accompanied my silent prayer.
"Please, Lord, don't allow my granddaughter
to ever stand where I'm standing now."