**The Radiologist**

He sits in a dark room,
a light for a wall,
and stares beneath the flesh.
A stranger’s chest shines
botched lungs into his eyes.
His own life flashes,
ribs pinned, heart placed,
all that he has done as hard as bone.
He is tired of the parts,
toes, skulls, shell-shaped embryos,
masses, spines, traumatic breaks,
the excess that fills
a bone or cavern, light and metal
that create the angles
from which he has learned to see.
He wants light to rush through him,
a glimpse of just himself,
but he cannot measure without degrees.
Damage sometimes looks newer than it is.
The lines and swells on this x-ray
could be scars from an older injury.
He compares it with the next-to-last picture,
traces again the airless lungs,
the heart, the ribs like empty shelves,
the darkest lightest difference
inside someone else
and translates history onto what he sees.

*Elizabeth B. Crowell*

*Concord, MA*

**Editor’s Note:** The author writes: “This poem was inspired by watching radiologists at work years ago and considering the way an x-ray is a kind of metaphor for the unseeable life of the body. I have an MFA from Columbia University and teach high school English in Lexington, Massachusetts.”

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**Home Health Aides**

She is washed,
powdered, creamed
by half a dozen hands.
Hands of women,
fat or lean,
from Russia, Lithuania,
or the capable islands
where the women
must wrest happiness
from unfaithful men
sweet as coconuts and love talk.

Their movements
fill the room with calypso
as they wash and scour
and ply a broom
as if it were
a musical instrument.

For $5.75 an hour they make
the whole place fragrant with AJAX
and other magic powders,
nor do they stint on love,
giving my son their food,
calling my mother “Mama”
as they wash the weariness
from her body.

They have restorative powers.
I rest in the crook
of their motherliness
as they fold the laundry.
When I was weak
from my hip operation,
our Elana stayed to bring me
bouillon in the night,
and rub my feet.
I rest in the hum
of their diligence,
making the small things right,
though the large ones are askew.

*Nikki Stiller, PhD*

*New York, NY*

**Editor’s Note:** The author writes: “My mother was mortally ill with Parkinson Disease. I was very grateful to the (mostly foreign) women who took care of her during that trying time. I am a retired professor of English.”

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