

The ritual of care

was the sagging skin
of my grandmother's elbow
dipped carefully
into hot bath water.

She'd dip then stir
dip then stir
as she patiently awaited
the perfect temperature.

Gently she would sing
'til the folded-in skin
of her elbow said:
this is right, bathe him now.

She'd lift my brother
at the folds of baby-skin
beneath the armpit
and slowly settle him down

into the water: his *vetkoek* feet
his lumpy legs, his plump tummy
until he sat in the bathwater
solid on his bum.

She soaped him with method.
To end she would pour
water over his head.
He'd chortle. She'd laugh.