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poems  
by  
doctors

## Care in the Community

Raymond Miller

Most often I spot them way off in the distance:  
something in the gait and the weight of their symptoms  
bears the stamp of repeat prescriptions.  
Sets alarm bells screeching and I turn on a sixpence  
To cross roads inventing a previous engagement,  
catch a flower arrangement, bend to tie laces,  
bury my head in shop windows replete  
with cheap trinkets. I treat light on my feet  
but dejected spirits make cock-crow visits,  
patches of ice combine with the rain  
to throw me off-balance; I clutch at displacement  
when meeting ex-patients again.

Or else my elbow shudders at the finger  
As "Hello stranger!" wraps round my shoulder.  
I spin to a name that I can't remember;  
a drug, a diagnosis or simply disorder.  
The furrowed flesh of distress and despond;  
failure to bond and exasperation;  
the trial separation from errant husbands;  
scars and bruises borne by the infant;  
the rooted abhorrence roared at the parents  
have eroded my epithets of empathy,  
I've shovelled that dirty laundry  
into yellow plastic bags for waste disposal;  
I no longer dance to the non-judgemental.  
What's once contemplated can't be unthought;  
they take me at face value; I sell them short.

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Chosen by Femi Oyeboode.

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