



Valediction

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When at medical conferences,
it's the old doctors I like best!

You can see them in the morning,
like deer in the clearing.
up before the young faculty
sharing breakfast with their spouse.

Men and women who have lived
the joy and sadness of a life in medicine,
and carry this experience to the bedside.
Yet who keep inside old desks,
objects removed from the ears and nostrils of little children
long since grown.

At the session breaks, former students seek them.
In the frenzied years of residency,
starting practices and families.
These youth seek guidance, reassurance.

Of an evening, at cocktails,
they move effortlessly
like small water craft,
between the islands of academics
and the country doctors from mountain hamlets.

Small farewells take place at conference end.
In the elevator, passing the lobby, packing the car,
handshakes and hugs mark without pomp
the ceremony of the passing of the torch
to their younger colleagues.

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