

own father's death earlier this year it wasn't surprising that I found some of the poems in the final section particularly resonated with me. Denise Levertov is a wonderful poet and 'Talking to Grief' is a powerful metaphorical evocation of loss:

*Ah, grief, I should not treat you
like a homeless dog
who comes to the back door
for a crust, for a meatless bone.
I should trust you.*

It is not loss in death but decline though dementia that many readers will also identify with in Bob Hicok's 'Alzheimer's':
*Chairs move by themselves, and books.
Grandchildren visit, stand new and nameless,
their faces' puzzles missing pieces.*

However, this edition is shot through with plenty of joy as well. In Jo McDougall's 'Mammogram', after receiving the all-clear from the surgeon, the patient in the poem gives vent to her relief:

*I pull on my radiant clothes.
I step into the Hanging Gardens, the Taj
Mahal,
the Niagara Falls of the parking lot.*

Czesław Miłosz's 'Gift' is a dizzying dance of delight in simply being alive:

*A day so happy.
Fog lifted early, I worked in the garden.
Hummingbirds were stopping over the
honeysuckle flowers.
There was no thing on earth I wanted to
possess.*

*I knew no one worth my envying him.
Whatever evil I had suffered, I forgot.*

If only a fraction of the readers of this wonderful anthology enter their surgeries and clinics with this kind of spirit each day, this book may do more to help the NHS be a better place to work in than the many grand schemes costing millions.

Trevor Stammers,

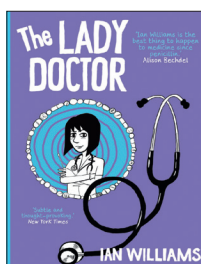
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**The Lady Doctor
Ian Williams**

*Myriad Editions (Graphic Novels), 2019, PB,
224pp, £14.99, 978-0993563362*



PROFESSIONAL INSIGHT

It's a brave move for a male doctor, in today's highly sensitive climate, to dare to tell the story of Lois, a 40-year-old female divorcee, salaried GP, and sexual health doctor. *The Lady Doctor*, follow-up to Ian Williams's debut *The Bad Doctor*, is a fast-paced graphic novel, which follows the twists and turns of 'lady' doctor Lois's work and home

life in a rural Welsh community.

Should she go into partnership with her two male colleagues who see her as a safe bet now her biological clock has run out? What to do about her estranged mother who's suddenly back in touch and needing a liver transplant? And then there are her one-night-stands and dysfunctional relationships, her dubious coping mechanisms, the nippings-out for a smoke, the downing of wine after work, not to mention the drug addicts and STI-ridden patients who keep knocking on her clinical door.

Weaving its way through the ethically challenging antics of this book is a very human, at times hilarious, and insightful narrative of a woman you can't help but grow to love. The messy mix of Lois's personal brokenness and that of her patients is touching, and the issue of addiction, in its many forms, is faced head on. Important ethical and professional issues are tackled with a lightness of touch through comic art, a medium that doesn't distract from their weightiness. And the GP surgeries represented in cartoon form had me laughing out loud. The professional insights of Ian Williams, who was a GP for 20 years, are apparent throughout.

But does Lois epitomise 'lady doctors'? I hope not! Does she face realistic professional challenges in her life? Oh yes. And does this male doctor/author/artist get away with it? As far as I'm concerned, yes, he does ... by the skin of his teeth!

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