



On Happy And Unhappy Endings (And Hitchcock's *The Birds*)

By Rowena Ronson and Nigel Summerley

RR What are our expectations when we go and see a movie? Do we hope for a happy ending? How do we feel when we don't get one? I remember seeing Hitchcock's *The Birds* many years ago in my teens, long before I had become accustomed to Hollywood's fanciful depiction of life. For those who haven't seen the film, it tells the story of a small town in America that is taken over by flocks of predatory, vicious birds, set on destroying the human race. I felt the film was dark and depressing and even though the ending was ambiguous there was little doubt that we humans didn't come off on top. And I was shocked and saddened.

What are our expectations when we treat our patients with homeopathy? Do we expect a happy ending there too? If it isn't and our patients don't get better, they forget to take our remedies, or don't respond to them, or even die, how do we feel? And do we see it as our own personal failure or the failing of homeopathy?

This last year, I have had my eyes widely opened working at a complementary cancer care centre established by a local hospital. There I treat chronically and often terminally ill patients. One might think this would be depressing work but, from my experience, it is quite the opposite. Homeopathic remedies seem to instigate a process for them like a catalyst for the loosening of a tight coil that has become their way of life. On their healing journey, they have insights as to what instigated that tightening in the first place; they have issues that come up from deep within, which then dissipate; they find an empowering inner strength. Many start to come to terms with the fact that they may die in the not too distant future, leaving their partners and children behind, but they seem to reach an inner peace about it.

So is our expectation always to restore our patients to good health or prescribe to instigate a homeopathic process, even if the end-result lies in a peaceful passing? Contrary to the happy ending I expected and wished for in *The Birds*, where the humans would have defeated their winged and flighty enemies, as we hope we will in our so-called fight to overcome diseased states, what I am starting to observe is a calm and complete *finale*. As they say in India, it is not about the destination, but the journey.

NS The ending of the movie *The Birds* is only a bleak one if seen from a human-centred standpoint. From a bird's-eye view, things look pretty bright: at last, the days of the humans (who have persecuted and killed generations of birds for food and pleasure) look numbered. Countless dodos will, no doubt, be turning over in their graves to applaud.

In homeopathic cases - as in cases involving any other therapy - we can't always have a happy ending. As patients, we don't have a 'right' to a perfectly healthy life; and, as practitioners, we don't have the power to get 100 per cent results.

Just as with the film, in which humans are not the whole story, we need to recognise that we, and our patients, are just a small part of a bigger picture.

The vital force in all its myriad manifestations can take some unexpected turns. As a resigned but perceptive line from an old blues song would have it: 'Life is the fire - and we are the fuel.'

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In its own way, *The Birds* reminds us of our mortality. The individual is not at the centre of

human life; the human race is not central to life on earth; and the earth itself is not the centre of the solar system - or of the universe.

So, let's keep things in perspective. 'Happy endings' don't last - any more than 'unhappy endings' do. We do what we can at the time to point things in the right direction. We give what support we can.

And a happy ending may sometimes be more of a happy way to an ending. For we are not only helping patients to cope with life but also, in some cases, with death.

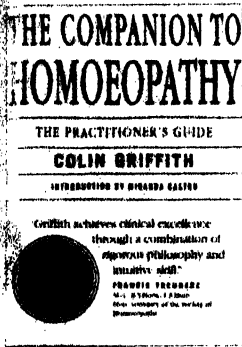
If the patient gets better, as, thankfully, the majority do, then let's celebrate with a sigh of relief, rather than with a pumping up of the ego. And if the patient doesn't get healed, let's be philosophical about the odds stacked against us - perhaps it wasn't meant to be.

In the end, the vital force may be the one and only thing that is eternal - and it will be the humans, the birds and every other living organism that provides the fuel to keep the fire of life burning.

RR&NS

The Birds is the perfect illustration of a 'them and us' scenario: not a useful paradigm through which to view our relationship with our patients - or with allopaths. We - many of us perhaps 'wounded healers' - are not dissimilar to our patients, and we should not forget that. In the current environment of consumer power, choice and CAM resurgence, homeopaths who set themselves up as the new experts are heading for a fall. Working in collaboration with GPs and specialists, without trying to coerce reticent patients to adopt our philosophy of health, is a positive way forward. And let's not get hung up on 'endings' - either 'happy' or 'unhappy' - but instead do all we can for homeopathy and our patients in the continuing here and now.

Reviews



The Companion to Homoeopathy
By Colin Griffith
Publ. Watkins Publishing,
London
Pp 820, Hardback
ISBN 1842931482
Price £30

Reviewed by Lawrence Bogle

In answering the question, 'What shall I write my book about?' Colin Griffith must have replied: "Everything!" So we are presented with *The Companion to Homoeopathy*, a brick of a book whose 800-plus pages are split into three, well-presented and clearly designed sections.

In part one there are colourful pieces on hierarchy and disease, the law of cure, self-healing, and the vital force. All are explained with precision, and there are several clear and interesting cases. He writes about topics relevant to practice, and indeed this alone would lead me to recommend the book to those interested patients who become absorbed in our work.

In part two, we are on to allopathic drug pictures, dentistry, allergens, the pill, classical versus modern *et al.* Interestingly, Griffith poses the question: are homeopaths adequately trained? He is referring to the teaching of anatomy, physiology and pathology, and he is right to ask this question as, when we are so often busy knocking our allopathic colleagues, we can forget they often have a superior grasp of human sciences than we might. So too, Griffith covers geopathic stress: rare to find in a book on homeopathy, and including it with so many essential and informative pieces, he raises many points on which to stop, put down the book, and think.

Griffith is generous in sharing his knowledge, and he does so in incredible detail, not least in the case notes presented. They immediately got my attention: there is nothing like nosing into vivid accounts of a patient's history and waiting for that 'guess what happened next?' moment. An example of this is the fascinating case of a patient presenting with IBS symptoms, which appear to be rooted in the deep held grief of bereavement. Also there is a hysterectomy case, with its 'ghost' hormonal symptoms; here Griffith explains the physical structure of what is happening and how, through layered treatment, we see a return of old complaints. He explains the remedies needed: *Chelidonium*, *Lycopodium* and *Sepia* (beautifully illustrated here) and on, inevitably, to *Natrum Muriaticum*, closing with a miasmatic prescription. It is an example of treating on the physical layer to reach the emotional; gentle and practical, and essentially, letting the patient lead the practitioner.

Similarly, in writing on 'Maintaining Causes', there is an excellent section on physical trauma, which details the importance of skeletal balance. Here the author relates the important work to be achieved when homeopath and osteopath work together. It is common practice and common sense for a homeopath to realise that at some point, other complementary disciplines and intervention might be prudent. So along with righting the mechanical, Griffith has included the nutritional, although this is not centred on vitamin supplementation, but diet. He details how trace elements, minerals and vitamins interact within our biochemistry. What I felt this section lacked was any mention of how 21st century produce no longer offers anything like the nutritional goodness it once did. I believe this directly affects immunity and the vital force, which in turn can influence how we use our remedies, and the kinds of remedies we need now.

There is informative writing on immunisation, which covers its history, the composition of each vaccine, and side effects. Again there are cases to illustrate the effects of vaccines and their potential damage: 'Allopathy views bacteria and viruses as if they were parasites looking for a host to prey on. We should view them as if they were the by-products of a process of elimination that is inspired by and starts with the vital force working to clean up the gene pool.'

And so we move on to the third part, on miasms, which represents the most substantial part of the book. Griffith swims through the miasms with sheer fluidity of movement. One gets the sense that this is the topic that truly grips him. These sections make the book worth buying to read, and read again; the author is in his element here. The Hierarchy of Miasms is the most detailed and informed part of this work and I suspect it may have been the original basis for writing this book.

He explains what goes on physically, emotionally and spiritually with each miasmatic state, and does so with a flourish of excitement and unapologetic enthusiasm. There are cases falling over each other here, and they shine the way through each section, leading the reader to a deeper understanding of all the major miasms. Having said that, there are some ideas worth wrestling with.

When exploring syphilis, the author mentions a bleak study carried out in the USA from 1932 to 70. In it, some 399 black men diagnosed with syphilis were studied, and generally abused. Some died early on, while others lived into their nineties. This would be interesting if we knew anything about their lifestyle and other contributory factors – as it is, we don't. Furthermore, he gives as an example of syphilitic behaviour the 60 traders who jumped out of their office windows following the Wall Street Crash; could they all have been syphilitic? Or were they, as mankind so often is, sheep following the syphilitic leader? Is there such a thing as 'collective syphilitic behaviour'? Undoubtedly there is, but there is a deeper, more substantial taint to the human condition: fear. This can be seen in all the miasms, as can struggle, defeat, power and, indeed, joy. It seems that at times we can be all miasms.

Reviews

Review continued . . .

simultaneously; however, one is able to work through this apparent intermingling, as Griffith gives clear and helpful summary at each section's close.

There is useful information here for practice, not least in the writings on Psora, Sycosis Tubercular and Cancer miasms. However, the section on the AIDS miasm appears embarrassingly short; it barely gets two pages, compared with the 80-odd pages given to the Tubercular miasm. Although it is in the 'Minor Miasms' section, its heightened prevalence in society should surely ignite a brighter spotlight. The final writing is on miasms and karma. This I found fascinating: the idea that unresolved past action can be brought up to be faced is, I feel, very real. Griffith is bold to include this, as he is in his claim that cancer is the miasm set to change lives, and to present a chance for forward movement. He writes: 'Cancer is a coming together of the strands of family history, multi-miasmatic heredity and layers of neglected and suppressed personal pathology and distress. Yet it is our way out of the thicket . . .'

The Companion to Homoeopathy is useful to both practitioner and student, and as is often the case, particularly helpful to the latter group. Griffith makes many claims in this work, as any author rightly should, and while some get trapped in the mud of argument, others shine brightly, illuminating and enhancing one's understanding of homeopathy. I should add I found myself reading every last word, and was glad to do so.

Reviewed by Sarah North

Patricia Hatherly's book sets out to provide a complete understanding of all the issues surrounding breastfeeding, and it really does cover them all. Although titled *The Homoeopathic Physician's Guide*, it has something for pretty well everyone. There is enough anatomy and physiology to satisfy doctors, midwives and nutritionists. It contains some excellent practical advice for midwives, health visitors and new mums, and is written with a sensitivity and understanding which is rarely afforded to mothers these days.

An exhaustive amount of research has gone into the book, evident in the thorough referencing at the end of each chapter. She also tends to drop in some little gems of materia medica information, often from her own clinical experience, so if you try to skim-read, you will miss a lot; it is worth spending time on.

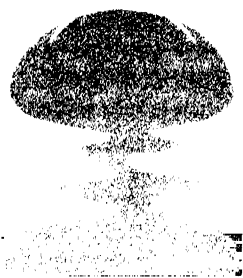
The first chapter covers the anatomical features of the breast, including breast development in puberty, changes in pregnancy and the action of hormones. She closes with a lovely reminder that the breasts lie over a mother's heart chakra, and the suckling baby learns to accept love, as well as food, from this wonderful process.

The next three chapters contain detailed information about breast physiology and the composition of human milk, and offer a thorough and convincing argument for breastfeeding - from both physiological and psychological points of view. She quotes research stating: "infants who are fed artificially are biologically different from those who are breastfed... [and] are deprived of the various immune factors present in human milk". In her discussion of the psychological factors she makes reference to such issues as low self-esteem and confidence, anxiety, poor concentration - symptoms commonly found among the *Lacs*.

So what do you do for women who do not feel happy to breastfeed, or have problems? There are chapters covering the establishment and maintenance of feeding, including advice on technique, diet, and of course many remedies, useful for all the common problems, and some that are not so common.

Patricia Hatherly has many years' experience as a homeopath and lactation consultant, and supervised a proving of *Lac Maternum* in 2002. She gives an interesting discussion of *Lac caninum*, *Lac humanum* and *Lac maternum*, focusing on the psychological states and archetypal themes, but also including symptom tables, which provide useful references for the consulting room. She closes with one of her own cases illustrating the complementary relationship between *Lac humanum* and *Lac maternum*.

One of the things I particularly liked about this book was that, although complex in some areas for those with a non-scientific background (I confess some of the chemistry went well over my head), she has not lost sight of the fact that the most important people to educate are ordinary mums. The book contains a great deal of useful advice, and the author has simplified and packaged it in a series of appendices which she gives us permission to copy as handouts. For anyone working regularly with new mums, it is an invaluable reference book, written with precision, passion and enthusiasm.



The Homoeopathic Physician's Guide to Lactation

By Patricia Hatherly
Luminoz Pty Ltd, Australia 2004
Pp 278, Paperback,
ISBN 0 975 20320 7
Price \$59.95
<http://www.patriciahatherly.com>

Reviewed by Nigel Summerley

This original book is cleverly conceived and excellently written, but, sadly, it also has its flaws. It is based on the premise that people in particular 'constitutional' states will get on better in relationships with people in some constitutional states than they do with those in others.

For example, it suggests, a *Carcosin* will do well with an *Ignatia*, but not so well with a *Silicea*; a *Lycopodium* can be happy with a *Calcarea Carbonica*, but a relationship with a *Lachesis* is likely to be doomed. This would be all well and good - but for the fact that people don't always fit neatly into one or other remedy, and certainly not always into one of the polychrests, which is what Lalor mainly concentrates on here. So, if her hypothesis is correct, the information in the book would have a limited application, and much more work would have to be done on many more remedy pictures.

As she points out, all relationships have the potential to be successful. So why then do so many of them fail? Can it really be just a matter of working out that you're a *Natrum Muriaticum* and advertising for a *Causticum*? This almost takes us into the territory of matching star signs to one another - which is itself, arguably, not a totally satisfactory approach to the complexity of relationships.

Another major problem with the book is that Lalor almost exclusively uses relationships from movies to illustrate her case for the importance of remedy connections. It's not the fact that a few of the movies are obscure - most of them are well-known films such as 'Hannah and her Sisters', 'High Fidelity' and 'Kramer vs. Kramer'. No, the problem is simply that movies are not real life. They may be reflections of life, or projections of what people think life is or should be. But on the whole, they are primarily neat packages of entertainment.

Many of the films here are what Lalor admits are 'romantic' movies, often films with engaging stories and tidy endings. Relationships - and homeopathic practice - are rarely like this. And does 'romance' have more to do with the success of real relationships or with their failure? That question is not addressed.

The failure of relationships, it might be argued, is so often down to general human failing rather than mismatched 'constitutional' types; or to the failure of men and women to understand each other's differences, as chronicled at laboured length in the Venus and Mars books of John Gray (who endorses Lalor's book).

Most humans can suffer from romanticism (ailments from 'love'), can project images of desire onto others, and can make the mistake of thinking that another person holds the key to their happiness. This is surely where the real potential for homeopathic work lies: in restoring individuals to balance, so that they have a chance of a balanced relationship with another balanced individual - rather than yet another clash of egocentric misapprehensions.

What this book does which is useful is to raise the issue of how potent homeopathy can be in the healing of individuals and through this in the healing of their relationships. When we are fortunate enough to treat a couple or a family, the results of homeopathic success, as many of us know, can be far-reaching.

The book does an excellent job of looking at a select number of remedy types and getting us to learn more about them by seeing them in relation to, and in comparison with, other remedies. It also gets us to concentrate especially on their mental/emotional components and their healing possibilities in this sphere.

Catherine Coulter, of whom Lalor is reminiscent, not only in the welcome clarity of her writing, but also in her use of film characters, has provided similarly excellent remedy pictures. But at least Coulter refers also to real-life cases. Does Lalor have a wealth of real cases that she is holding back? Or does she think that movie cases alone are enough? She says the book is based on many years of clinical experience - so, one is tempted to ask, where is it?

One can't avoid the criticism that there is a lack of rigour in the approach she has chosen; it is fine as far as it goes, but I feel that if she wants to be taken seriously in suggesting that constitutional homeopathic types have a bearing on whether relationships succeed or fail, surely she needs to give some flesh-and-blood examples, rather than ones based on characters from modern-day fairy tales.

A Homeopathic Guide to Partnership and Compatibility Understanding Your Type And Finding Love

By Liz Lalor

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