

EDUCATION AND DEBATE

Poetry and homeopathy: an exploration

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This paper explores a relationship between *poetry* and *homeopathy*. It proposes we expand and enlighten our knowledge of the patient and develop our consultation through our experience of poetry. Within each *consultation* is a *poem*. Heightened awareness of this and many other aspects can improve the sensibilities of the practitioner and enhance deeper healing of the patient. We are challenged to respond. *Homeopathy* (2006) 95, 20–27.

Keywords: Poetry; Poem; Consultation

Pied Beauty

*Glory be to God for dappled things –
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape potted and pieced – fold, fallow, and
plough;
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.*

*All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckles (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; addazle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.*

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889)¹

Enhancing attentiveness

The physician attends the patient; the artist attends nature If we are attentive in looking, in listening and in waiting, then sooner or later something in the depths of ourselves will respond. Art, like medicine, is not an arrival; it's a search. This is why, perhaps, we call medicine itself an art. Southgate²

In exploring the worlds of poetry and homeopathy, my aim is to make a convincing case for accepting and developing the importance of literature and specifically poetry in relation to our understanding and advancement of homeopathy, and with reference to teaching. I believe that it is vital not only to recognize but to actively develop the relationship between poetry and homeopathy. This can

be seen as representative of the continuum between medicine and the arts in a wider sense. As for the practice of homeopathy with poetry, I seek to illustrate how professional interactions may be enhanced and extended by the 'application' of poetry in an encompassing way. Ultimately, my aim is ambitious: to project ways in which homeopathy not only could but should evolve and define itself. Of course, practitioners and patients must drive this and I seek to inspire others. There is also the question of listening to and seeing what is already happening. My fear and concern is that we reduce and weaken the potential of our craft by our lack of attentiveness. In seeking to heal, we must be prepared to expand our own inner space.

I will suggest how this approach can be enriching for both patient and practitioner, and how the therapeutic interaction can be enhanced. I think that developing a greater awareness of where the worlds of poetry and homeopathy interleave can enable a better understanding of the encounters in the consultation and, of particular significance to homeopathy, can develop the understanding, and perhaps even promote, the action of the remedy.

A marginal existence: poetry and homeopathy at the edge

*In the utter silence
Of a temple,
A cicada's voice alone
Penetrates the rocks
Matsuo Basho (1644–1694)³*

Real work goes on at the periphery, not at the noisy, congested centre. And what begins as a margin is often, in the history of culture, what allows humanity to turn a page. Kenneth White⁴

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Both poetry and homeopathy are at the edges, marginalized in their respective disciplines of literature and medicine. Few contemporary poets live off their work, book sales are modest. Looking from the inside as homeopathic doctors, we can forget we are a small band of brothers and sisters within the medical profession. We are organized into an establishment and have a history and our own traditions, but we are on the edge of an establishment too. This allows a uniquely creative position as commentators, the opportunity to innovate. We can, and do, as patients and practitioners, inhabit worlds of homeopathy and poetry. Living at the edge, we are near the boundary, border territory, perhaps even bandit country. This allows us to traverse the many routes and returns between illness and wellness. Just as poetry is infinitely variable in voice, so are we inventive in our therapeutic guise. Homeopathy, used fully, creates diverse ways to healing; complements. Poetry at times can be stultifying, seem irrelevant or poor—at its best it is working at the boundary of our known abilities and consciousness, traversing the edges.

Sontag opens her essay 'Illness as Metaphor',⁵ with the striking assertion: 'Illness is the night-side of life, a more onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick...'. This image is a stark one and, perhaps as doctors, our vision becomes accustomed to the shadows, the darker side of life, since our days are filled with its images. Our view can get skewed, our emotions blunted, even our interest jaded. Homeopathy allows an interface since it considers a seamless stream of life. We have to restore or discover 'the kingdom of the well' within our own understanding and look at the person before us from this perspective.

In fact, we are all in constant flux between health and disease at any one time. We exist, breathe, love as a continuum of wellness or sickness with blurring at the edges. Often it is how we are perceived by family, friends, colleagues, employers that determines our status in this dichotomy.⁶ The perspective of patient and physician in this has to be enlarged. One of the most exciting and fulfilling aspects of practising homeopathy is seeing a person regain a toe-hold on health. Our role is often witnessing an opening of the window of opportunity. Remembering the experience of being integral is a pre-requisite for health. Homeopathy seems to allow the space to remember, consolidate experience, expand one's sense of self. I also wonder whether in part the experience for the patient of being held in another's image through the consultation enables a sense of wholeness and renewal to emerge.

A still centre: poetry and healing

.....

*But, when I thought, rage at his noble pain
Flew to my head, and turning I could feel
My wound break open wide. Over again*

I had to let those storm-lit valleys heal.

Thom Gunn, from 'The Wound' (1954)⁷

.....

Black hills are slashed white with this falling grace

Whose violence buckles space

To a sheet-iron thunder. This

Is noise made universe, whose still centre is

Where the cold adder sleeps in his small bed,

Curled neatly round his neat and evil head.

Norman MacCaig, from 'Spate in winter midnight'⁸

I believe poetry can help both explore and develop healing, create the space for the intense stillness required for this dynamic activity (another seeming paradox of homeopathy to which poetry can lend itself). We talk about 'poetic justice' and 'poetic licence'—words have power. Language, from a patient's perspective can be elliptical, symbolic, metaphorical... It is immensely capable of expressing inner life force. The practitioner must respect this and be aware of choosing language from his or her own perspective. The still centre is not time out, but a continual inner state of being. The practitioner has to find this quality of stillness within his or her self and thus ensure the patient ease from the struggle of other medical encounters, perhaps where they have felt information wrested from them. An awareness of poetry, not necessarily reference to specific poems or poets, can help the practitioner achieve this state. It is an extension of enhanced attentiveness.

Listening to someone's words, understanding the shape or form of the consultation, sensing the emotional impact of what is conveyed, perhaps through transference, a poem in effect emerges. This can further understanding—it allows a frame, however sparse, which can catch and gather meaning on subsequent encounters. Even if the interview or consultation is fractured or difficult, the 'poem' has a wholeness that is potentially healing in itself. The language one uses at the end of a consultation as practitioner can be soft yet canny; non-directive yet relevant.

As always, it is difficult to define homeopathy, and those who practice it are diverse and may have different sets of beliefs. It is important to recognize we all have an emotional response to its very concept, as well as practical considerations such as a vested interest in its efficacy. Each practitioner also has personal sets of values he/she may mistakenly attribute to the discipline. It is salutary to read historical articles that remind us that what we may perceive now as a free-thinking, flexible, quite alternative approach was in fact regarded by many as the most rigid 'scientifically-orientated' approach to medicine for many years.^{9,10} Patients too may have high expectations and pre-conceived ideas relating to homeopathic practice.

Any medical practice, homeopathy or otherwise, is a system. On one level, for the most part we do not work in high-tech medical environments, but we can choose

to make homeopathy a parody of high-tech focus in the way we use it. Professor Downie has discussed how scientific understanding relies on patterns, with what is repeatable. '...whereas the kind of understanding which comes from the arts does not arise from what is repeatable but is unique to each situation'.¹¹ There is a danger of the practice of homeopathy being reduced to pattern recognition, for example by a too zealous search for a remedy, such that diversity is not reflected. Reduced too restrictively to a formal system, full dimension is denied, including potential for healing.

Of vital importance in the interplay of homeopathy and healing are what I sense as the spaces within: what happens around the remedies. I believe in creating a space for deep action of remedies, allowing the space for healing: telling patients to take time, for example suggesting they take their remedy at a weekend and allow themselves physical space, perhaps also emotional time away from relationships or work stresses, to facilitate the whole experience which, if truly engaged in, can be demanding. Looking at the image of the dual kingdoms, homeopathy may be visualized as a place of overlap of sections of a Venn diagram: a hinterland of healing between night and day, dawn and dusk.

The practice of medicine takes place in this no-man's land. Why should the practice of homeopathy be better than anything else in this regard? There is direct engagement. The pursuit directly encourages the revealing of and exploration of the dark - there is a polarity of possibility, just as remedies have their light and dark side. This enables a sense of balance in the individual to be envisaged. A whole range of possibility extends to the person - development of the self, soul and body with engagement in the healing process. There is the complex dynamic of interplay between light and shade, with all the richness of potential.

The essence of homeopathy implies to me something darkly concentrated, distilled. At the other extreme is the vapour of uncertainty, barely tangible, yet nonetheless powerful, conferring infinite possibility. This is where the spaces gain dimension. By its very nature, and particularly by the way we choose to expand it, homeopathy is a paradigm for healing. The elusive yet precise nature of poetry, saying so much in the spaces between, with so much alluded to and beneath the surface, breathed in between still moments, harnessed with the lightest of touches, reflects what happens in a homeopathic consultation. This encourages an awareness of well-being, a sense of wholeness and health that does not rely on the absence of disease, but is a well-spring, an affirmation of life. This spiritual wholeness, once engendered, can sustain and nourish even in advanced stages of disease.

*At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor
fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the
dance is,*

*But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it
fixity.
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement
from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the
still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
T.S. Eliot, from 'Burnt Norton'¹²*

The secret lives of remedies

Le Serpent Qui Danse

.....
*Tes yeux, où rien ne se révèle
De doux, ni d'amer,
Sont des bijoux froids où se mêle
L'or avec le fer.
A te voir marcher en cadence,
Belle d'abandon,
On dirait un serpent qui danse
Au bout d'un bâton ...*
Charles Baudelaire, from *Spleen et Idéal*¹³

Language like this brings the full-bodied person into our vision, enables us to focus on the intricacies and depth of character, gives form to inner movement. Sometimes as practitioners, we perceive the other person, the patient, in too close confined a space of a small consultation room. The consultation is itself an artificial construct. This encourages habits, which we may shrug on comfortably like an old coat, familiar with years' use but heavy with our preconceptions - a bit shabby, even unsavoury. We can be personally protected by such a concealing garb, yet also constricted by our limited and limiting understanding of others' dimensions. As we get our professional head down to the task in hand, seeker of symptoms, repository and scribe of the strange, rare and peculiar, can we dare to sense the shadows and import of another's loves, lives, griefs, joys? We have to be transparent, comfortable to be shed of our layers, unprejudiced or at least able to recognize such distortion.

To imagine a patient in the full flow of life, as vividly sinuous and mysterious as the image in a poem, is to restore to that person the potential and freedom to regain not only full health but full expression of being. Sometimes, with homeopathy as our tool, the restoring or even creation of this vision, however fleetingly glimpsed, can be the bridge to the further expansion of self.

Just as poems come alive for the reader (they have a life apart too - they pulsate with each experience they describe), we are alive in others' thoughts, our secret lives. Remedies have an other-worldly existence too, expressed anew by each patient or practitioner, conjured endlessly yet gaining substance through this repetition, subtly altered and altering. It takes dedication and skill to know and live and breathe the secret

lives of remedies, and we take guidance from our teachers with this and read each encounter attentively. The remedy can reverberate in many literary forms, paintings and in the natural world; perhaps when we learn a remedy we need to be able to use all our senses and more. The best contemporary teaching includes much imaginative description of remedies and striking images.¹⁴

Particular remedies may of course be conjured by readings of certain poems (see for example 'Mrs Midas' by Carol Ann Duffy, which strongly conjures *Aurum*). This can be open to quite personal interpretation and it has to be remembered that one is in a sense appropriating a poem and directing it, and so must be aware of motives and bias. I am wary of the interpretation that there may be a 'perfect' poem for a particular remedy – this may be a way of limiting view and reinforcing stereotypes. Too literal a reading of a poem may be a barrier to deeper understanding, just as with 'reading' a remedy or indeed in a consultation. Also, the reader or practitioner has his/her own points of reference, from knowledge of literature and the rich fabric of personal and professional acquaintance and experience. Such points may resonate echoes through a particular consultation or perhaps afford illuminating insights later. However, this particular point of reference may mean something quite different to another, it may open a window to another world of associations. Patients rarely feel neutral in our choice of remedy for them. They may feel slighted, angry, empowered. They may select the remedy themselves.

Homeopathy, like poetry, is capable of endlessly reinventing itself and is always a reflection of the time in which it is practised. Old remedies can be rediscovered, small ones expanded, new ones proven; there is great possibility to enlarge the remedy repertoire. Remedies mean different things to different people, yet have their own entity and existence nonetheless, a past. Each poem is a unique experience to the reader. Each remedy takes on a particular aspect with each individual. The remedy comes fully alive when expressed through the patient's experience of it. How could you, for example, visualize *Pulsatilla*? Transposing it to an external form expressed through another medium, one senses that not only the plant, but also its image associations are important. We are administering this too and the person taking the remedy may have their own perceptions of it and give it greater 'strength' (as with any drug, but particularly so with remedies).

There is a language which defines our common humanity, our care for each other, yet relies on understanding beyond language. Culturally, we are diverse and educational backgrounds differ (Shakespeare may be a common ground; Scottish schools include poets such as MacCaig), but awareness of this universality is crucial in extending our consulting, through poetry or otherwise.

Mermaid song: poetry and the art of homeopathic consultation

*Goe, and catche a falling starre,
Get with child a mandrake roote,
Tell me, where all past yeares are,
Or who cleft the Divels foot,
Teach me to hear Mermaids singing,
Or to keep off envies stinging,
And finde
What winde
Serves to advance an honest minde.*
John Donne from 'Song'¹⁵

*'I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.
I do not think that they will sing to me.'*
T.S. Eliot from 'The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock'¹⁶

Certainly the tasks of truly listening to patients and more so hearing their song can be just as difficult as this. This necessitates the question of whether these feats are possible. I look to another of Donne's poems ('A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning'¹⁷) when I feel daunted:

*'Moving of th'earth brings harmes and feares,
Men reckon what it did and meant,
But trepidation of the sphaeres,
Though greater farre, is innocent.'*

Sensing this 'trepidation of the sphaeres' in terms of the therapeutic homeopathic encounter, so barely perceptible at times, may yield the reverberating core to potential change and healing.

Listening to the consultation itself may reveal qualities of a poem: in the overall shape and form; it is open to interpretation; it may have resonance long after the event; it may not be fully understood at the time. There may be glimpses only, insights hinted. Associations are triggered of significance to the practitioner (like to the reader). There also may be the difficulty of identifying the language used. There may be nuances the homeopath does not share with the patient. It is a condensed and potentially intense period of time, may be emotionally charged, difficult and discomfiting or quiet and almost reverent. People are gifting their deepest thoughts and experiences to us through language. We respect this and can be awed. Laughter too can be the life force of other consultations, and as deep and significant as sharing tears. What is unsaid in the consultation may have the greatest emotional charge, just as the spaces around the form of a poem hold myriad experience.

How do we hear other-worldliness? Stretching free from pre-conceptions (as when we look at a poem); we enter a parallel world that can be free of illness and mirror that of health. In the consultation, we rehearse the path to health – enable inner directions using the

remedy and our own skills. The interplay and exchange between practitioner and patient *rehearses* wellness.

As we consult, we are trying to recall, reveal the whole person within the patient before us. We deal with the immediacy, try to perceive and understand the sick person and address their needs. Sometimes the most telling, touching, indeed humbling question we ask in a consultation can be 'When did you last feel well?' This may bring back such an intense awareness of the person's former life, that their altered status is acutely painful. Another question that expands into the space is 'How has your illness affected you?' Here, the impact can have surprising reverberations. Assumptions have no place in such encounters.

It is of course possible to 'read' the patient in a detached way like a highly intellectualized form of literary criticism, follow a question-response route through the consultation. Although this form of analytical approach may have its advocates, if a more developed sensitivity and perception are brought to the consultation, it can be transformed to an exchange, a dialogue.

Does the patient have a life away from our direct gaze? Analysing the consultation alone and the artificial construct of that 'exchange' (which may in reality be a sparring match, the patient reluctant to disclose information and the frustrated eager practitioner, seeking a full and frank encounter!), we may forget the great world we inhabit. The consultation can be a suspended and detached moment, but people are not only ill or well, they are people--dancers, plumbers, daughters, neighbours. We can miss the full impact--sometimes we understand most from the shadow a person or poem may cast (Twentyman writes of shadows cast by disease processes too¹⁸). This is another sense of opening the space. Of course, a shadow requires a physical being, mermaid or otherwise; hence, the importance of a shadow in guiding us to its source. We can sometimes become too pre-occupied with the shadow, the disease. The space we do not inhabit may tell a lot more about ourselves than our corporeal presence. Remember, we displace space with every move, splintering un-ease, disarming.

Postscript

*And some time make the time to drive out west
Into County Clare, along the Fluggy Shore,
In September or October, when the wind
And the light are working off each other
So that the ocean on one side is wild
With foam and glitter, and inland among stones
The surface of a slate-grey lake is lit
By the earthed lightning of a flock of swans,
Their features roughed and ruffling, white on white,
Their fully grown headstrong-looking heads
Tucked or cresting or busy underwater,
Useless to think you'll park and capture it
More thoroughly. You are neither here nor there,*

*A hurry through which known and strange things pass
As big soft buffetings come at the car sideways
And catch the heart off guard and blow it open.*

Seamus Heaney¹⁹

A quality of stillness and presence has to be found in the exchange to allow this passing of 'known and strange'. Our aim in the consultation encounter is to truly see the known, in itself challenging, and further extend ourselves to perceive that which is more elusive, and so come to a fuller appreciation of the individual. It is the spaces within the encounter, the pauses that may yield the most. One has to be attentive to such times, as like the moment in the poem. There can be a great subtlety with the practice of homeopathy that cannot be ensnared, but is nonetheless physical and tangible, like the wind and light 'working off each other'. It is as if we too need to be able to experience the off-side buffetings to awaken our sensibilities and perception. The images in this poem are so evocative and lovely, just what is needed to hold in one's heart on a Monday morning's consulting. If mermaids sing, we should try to hear them and be so taught.

The homeopath awakened

What would I give for a heart of flesh to warm me thro',

*Instead of this heart of stone ice-cold whatever I do;
Hard and cold and small, of all hearts the worst of all.*

What would I give for words, if only words would come;

*But now in its misery my spirit has fallen dumb;
O merry friends, go your way, I have never a word to say.*

What would I give for tears, not smiles but scalding tears,

To wash the black mark clean, and to thaw the frost of years,

To wash the stain ingrain and to make clean again.

'What Would I Give' by Christina Rossetti (1866)²⁰

The bleakness and isolation expressed by the voice in this poem can resonate with images we have of particular patients, indeed evoke certain remedies. We can reinforce our knowledge and gain new insights through poems. Poetry may make us better homeopaths in the sense of prescribers. It can also improve our skills as doctors in a personal and professional sense. Our understanding of people, their conflicts and troubles may be enlightened and find expression through another's voice. This enables us to extend and hone our skills. Perhaps we should not define ourselves as homeopaths either, but rather as those who practise this art and may at times express themselves through it. I would argue that we need to be as fully fleshed,

active and spiritual beings as we would wish our patients to be.

Sometimes, a poem may guide the remedy. Perhaps it is in the practitioner's or patient's mind, helps the picture of the remedy, the similitum to emerge or shows a light through the tangle of layers emerging. There is a striking phrase in Sylvia Plath's novel 'The Bell Jar'²¹ in which a character describes how poems can be held on to when you are sick (actually placed in juxtaposition to what a doctor may offer). We should not under-estimate this: they can be a lifeline for some people, affording expression of the darker sides of existence, the realities that affect us all and the horrors that touch only some. The allusions of language, the power of strong visual images, can convey, for example, the great anguish and self-loathing of *Anacardium*, the black despair of *Aurum*. I believe our understanding of these remedies can be improved and our use of them enhanced. Occasionally, a patient may show poems they have written and, through this, another approach to treatment, perhaps even the choice of remedy may be reached. This may be a therapeutic approach to consider, appropriate to that individual. Patients do not require literary skills or literacy though, or even any interest in poetry for it to be present in the consultation. I believe the consultation itself is a form of poem, whether raw and jagged at the edges or a smooth and seamless entity. It is a quality of attentiveness, and this reflects the homeopath's recognition of the potential of the experience to extend space, sharpen awareness.

There is an inner dimension, space to inhabit if one is to engage in the practice of homeopathy. Poetry can be one key to the 'inner space' as practitioner too. I find myself returning to certain images in poems, looking to a sculpture or painting or phrase of music, indeed seeking new points of reference to illuminate and deepen my understanding as my experiences with homeopathy expand.

Poetry, like all art, has infinite capacity to reflect the inner state of the patient and homeopath, even the atmosphere of the particular consultation. Poetry can be lyrical, expansive, static, concrete, cruel, light-hearted.... We may all have a little of the poet in our soul, perhaps it comes with the homeopathic territory we choose to inhabit. Anyone who distils life experiences or natural wonders to a form of expression is practising it, even unknowingly.

The case history

Near Point of Stoer

Full moon
and a wind from the North
little sleep tonight

up at four
walking along
a silent shore

trying to translate
into a tongue that's known
a poem writ
in the language of stone
Kenneth White²²

The way we not only engage in the consultation, but also record it as a case history, gives a form. In effect, a poem evolves from the consultation. Words, images, experiences take flight from the exchange, harnessed by a few chosen words or instilled in a text of the patient's own words. Care has to be taken to convey the vivid immediacy. Some consultations may be so powerful, very little is written—to do so would be intrusive and perhaps exploitative or abusive of a patient's vulnerability. In this instance a short-hand phrase must encapsulate the force of the moment, resonate an image to evoke what has passed.

Hunter gives a convincing and strong argument for the protection of the patient's privacy against 'unwarranted invasion'. 'We seek medical help and advice in times of need and anxiety; with our consent our bodies are appropriated for diagnosis and treatment. But there is no need for our life stories to be appropriated, too. Our nakedness is required, confession is not'.²³

With homeopathy, do we need to reach deeper while respecting the individual's privacy? In many other practices of medicine, the case history has become an artificial construct, largely from the perspective of the investigator. The well-known case histories told by Sacks²⁴ are compelling and perhaps homeopathy has something in common with this specialty, in that there is a large reliance on subjectively reported details of the patient's experience. In other specialties of medicine, investigations and other diagnostic techniques may have a heavier weighting.

The critical task of the doctor as homeopath, as in any other medical field, is learning to empathize while keeping an objective inner eye. This is like the poet's vision, an important self-awareness.

We can think creatively about the form of the case history, its language and thus define and develop the way we practice homeopathy and medicine too of course. The form of the case history informs the way medicine is practised. For the case history to be more humanized, the medicine must be more humanized (and converse). Homeopathy engages with existence at the interface, traverses the borders, boundaries of consciousness, self. The case history should evolve to reflect this. At times, certain phrases, colours, shapes leap out from a consultation, as if fashioned to a poem—an electric and evocative record of the encounter.

The poet

.....
*Through the window I see no star:
 Something more near
 Though deeper within darkness
 Is entering the loneliness*

.....
*Till, with a sudden, sharp hot stink of fox
 It enters the dark hole of the head.
 The window is starless still; the clock ticks,
 The page is printed.
 Ted Hughes, from 'The Thought-Fox'²⁵*

Poets write and talk about their work, the process of creating. Through this we can gain insights, be encouraged perhaps to discuss the way we work as homeopaths with a fresh and new language.²⁶ From the poet we can learn intense descriptions, clarity, conciseness and hone in ourselves the skills of a language which must be deft to unpeel the layers of illness, bright to counter the dark rank and spoor of disease, wily to counter the sweet seductions of sickness myth.⁵ What may be required is not only to shrug free from illness metaphors but to create well and healing images, to shape and create a well image. We can see that some patients such as those with long-term ill health for example chronic fatigue have to practice at being well again, start to inhabit an image: When were you last well? we ask. If this was several years before, then helpful images will be needed to stimulate a more realistic sense of where the individual may now wish to place themselves. They may need to inhabit a different space, their relationships and views are different.

White discusses the apparent simplicity of a poem (in 'Coast to Coast'): '...the simplicity I'm after is like a stroke of lightning. One clean gesture—but what an energy-field.'²⁷ This can bring to mind the deceptive simplicity of homeopathy, the delight of the similitum.

Poetry and the patient

..... *Thin as a swan's bone
 I wait for the lessons of pain and light*
 Frances Horovitz, from 'Evening'²⁸
*The violence of poetry
 is still
 and goes deep
 to the bone
 to the white*

Kenneth White, from Cape Breton Uplight²⁹

Really, this is the most thrilling part of the exploration as it remains uncharted, to be revealed with each person's experience. To outsiders of the profession, homeopathy may seem rather soft, a not very serious or tough discipline. It certainly affords a light touch and delicate sensitivity and allows scope for the development

of these qualities, but just as with poetry the power should not be underestimated or indeed undersold.

Conclusion

Through my exploration of poetry and homeopathy, I have shown to understand further: we must be attentive, be fully present for the patient. Daring to wander the edges, we find a still centre of healing possibility. As the consultation evolves, language and forms of poem unfold, improving the dialogue and relationship, expanding space. Remedies seethe and seep through our consciousness, enlivened by poetic images and their expression in patients. If not mermaids, we can be taught to hear something of other worlds as we practice in this heightened state, and can assist the visualization of the full being of the patient before us, taking care in the telling of the story, such that this assists healing too. All this requires courage. We share with the brave poet a sense of wonder; an enriched practice of homeopathy emerges.

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