



## Life, Death & Homeopathy

By Rowena Ronson and Nigel Summerley

One Issue Two Perceptions and A Step Outside The Box

**RR** Several years ago while sitting in a religious service, a rare occasion for me, the sermon-giver discussed the topic of birth and death. It was a special, annual ritual where all those in the community who had died in the previous year were mentioned. Those whom they had left behind sat silently in grief and remembrance. I was there to support my mother who had recently lost her father. After the long list the holy man talked of the joy of birth and new life, which without death, would not exist.

I pondered afterwards on his words and thought of my own young children and chose the perception that my grandfather hadn't died but continued to exist not only in our memories but also through his great-grandchildren. His physical form had returned to the earth, but his essence, his genes and his spirit lived on.

*The flame is shining too strongly and too brightly for it to return only to a flicker.*

The lightning bolt of homeopathy struck our founder Hahnemann some 200 years ago. Our healing art was born, embodied in a strong and influential man who was brave enough to hold onto what he believed in, learn from his mistakes, and grow. He lived and worked long and hard enough to leave an eternal legacy, which is still developing and can never die.

Ever since, the flame has continued to burn. Sometimes it has only been a flicker with a handful of homeopaths practising quietly in tune with nature. But the whisper that passed through the 20th century has been succussed in the past 30 years into a very audible hum. We are witnessing the raising of awareness and consciousness on a grand scale. And the homeopaths of today are working in many different ways but with the same aim, to heal the sick.

I am in the process of writing a book, *Conversations with Hahnemann's Disciples*, a collection of fifty interviews with our homeopathy teachers here in the UK. Some of them lit their candles from the two main wicks of homeopathy in this country back in the late 1960s: Thomas Maughan and John Damonte. I start each interview enquiring how homeopathy was 'born' to them, and one of the last questions I ask is: do they see homeopathy becoming dormant again? Mostly they reply with an adamant 'no'. The flame is shining too strongly and too brightly for it to return only to a flicker.

**NS** Just before I qualified as a homeopath, I had a shock. My cases supervisor, an excellent homeopath, announced that she had decided to close her practice and return to her original field of employment. Why, I wondered, would anyone do that? The more years I have spent in practice, the more I have come to understand her decision.

Everything has a birth, life and death. Nothing is exempt from this - whether it be a starfish or a star. There are some religious beliefs to the contrary; but such beliefs may also die, as people become more enlightened and see organised religion as an escape from facing the truth of death.

Homeopathic careers and practices must also come to an end. And must homeopathy itself, as in the nature of all things, die one day? Sometimes I fear it may already be terminally ill. Whether we like it or not, the monstrous regiment of allopathic medicine, media animosity and a society largely based on ignorance predominates.

Of course, it could be that we're just on one of the downward dives on the rollercoaster ride that homeopathy has always been on; and in a few years' time, we'll be heading upwards again. That is definitely how things have gone in the past - cycles of ups and downs. But could we have been nudged off the rollercoaster and be heading for a fall?

In the very moment of birth, there are the seeds of death. Is it possible for a therapy based on such an iconoclastic set of principles as that devised by Hahnemann to survive in a world lacking true imagination and the ability to challenge orthodoxy? Was it always too revolutionary to last?

Perceptive as they are, many homeopaths don't want to see any possibility of the death of homeopathy. In the UK, they seem to devote much energy to discussing remedies, potencies and prescribing, rather than survival as a viable healthcare profession. There is a danger of missing the big picture - which may be one of a large hooded figure with a scythe. And to survive, we need to persuade allopaths, politicians and the public that homeopathy works.

There are times when I'm not sure I can afford to be a homeopath any more - which is what I think drove that supervisor to reluctantly do what she had to do. I suspect, if we're honest, that applies to a lot of us.

I truly don't want to play Cassandra - I have invested as much in homeopathy as the rest of us. But, as in the wider context of life, we may have to look unflinchingly into the face of death on a daily basis - for, in doing that, we may learn the most important lessons about life.

## RR&NS

Homeopathy is a remarkable yet mysterious therapy. In the treatment of chronic disease, it so often does what allopathy fails to do - restores people to health, without suppression and side effects. But because, in the West, we live in a world dominated by 'science' and the attitude that everything must be explicable - and if it isn't explicable then it can't be real - homeopathy may always be regarded as little more than sophisticated voodoo (and, by some allopaths, as a nuisance or threat). This may mean that homeopathy will always remain a therapy used by a minority on the alternative fringe of society. Which means that homeopaths might always struggle to make a living. To avert the death of homeopathy, we need seriously to tackle the issue of survival - now.

# Reviews



**Copeland's Cure,  
Homeopathy and the  
War between  
Conventional and  
Alternative Medicine**  
By Natalie Robins  
Alfred A Knopf/  
Random House,  
New York, 2005,  
Pp. 330, Hardback  
ISBN 0375410902  
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Reviewed by Francis Treuherz

The American dream: a provincial boy from rural Michigan becomes a doctor, rises to become a professor at Ann Arbor medical school, from which he graduated, mayor of Ann Arbor, dean of a prestigious medical school in New York, health commissioner for New York, and finally a US Senator.

Natalie Robins has written her story with the same verve and spirit with which Royal Samuel Copeland (1868-1938) went through life. He sounds to have been a fun guy, living on the edge, never far from controversy, working too hard, a sentimental family man, and a high achiever. His main achievement was the inclusion of the US Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia in the 1938 Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, thereby giving it a Federal Drug Administration (FDA) seal of approval and preserving legal access to our medicines.

He was of course a homeopathic doctor or there would be no story. The author uses his life as the key to understanding the late 19th-and-20th century history of homeopathy, mainly in the USA. She explains in great detail the aggressive tactics of the American Medical Association (AMA), and the half-hearted defence by the American Institute of Homeopathy, and the near-silence of the International Hahnemannian Association. For Robins, it was not the controversy between high or low potency prescribing that led to the near-terminal decline of homeopathy, as described by Harris Coulter (*Divided Legacy* volume 3, 1973), it was the acquiescence of so many homeopaths, not well enough trained in the ways of Hahnemann, to the blandishments of the new so-called scientific medicine, and the invitation to join the AMA. Robins herself lists the many discoveries of modern science and repeatedly implies that this was the march of progress.

Copeland tried at first to keep both feet in both camps. With the homeopaths, as dean of the New York Homeopathic Medical College and within the AIH, he was a homeopath. To the AMA he presented as a modern scientific doctor. In Senate he tried to be neutral and endorsed many over-the-counter medicines, and preventive medicine such as good food and exercise. Julian Winston (*The Faces of Homeopathy* 1999) suggests that his failure as a homeopath was due to never mastering the repertorial method, even if he obviously grasped the law of similars and the idea of individualisation: Copeland wrote that a remedy should fit the patient "as the wing of a bird fits the air". Robins has no evidence as to how Copeland managed to save homeopathy, whether he was lobbied, whether he was open or needed to use subterfuge. She simply believes he remained a homeopath at heart. And as the bill was on the brink of becoming law, his heart gave out and he died.

The AMA was wrong when they proclaimed homeopathy to be "as dead as last year's bird nest". They were nearly right, but Robins ends the book

with an account of the work of Jennifer Jacobs and Michael Carlston, and the growth of homeopathy in the past 25 years; they are two medical homeopaths whose work she explains in some detail. Homeopathy is alive and well, but will not be her choice. Natalie Robins suffered with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and recovered thanks to allopathy. Carolyn See, writing in the *Washington Post*, (see [www.homeopathic.com](http://www.homeopathic.com)), suffered for three months with a ravaging case of meningitis and its aftermath; she went to a homeopath as a last resort and was cured in a day. This book has already gone where few homeopathy books have gone before, into the literary pages of the intellectual papers. Homeopathy is becoming part of mainstream culture. (*The Mainstreaming of Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, Philip Tovey 2005, and *Marginal to Mainstream: Alternative Medicine in America* by Amy Ruggie 2004).

While I have no doubt that this is an excellent book and a good read, with nice pictures, it has some problems. The author has mistakenly located the origins of the term 'complementary medicine' in our jargon. She cites E. B. Nash defining 'a complementary remedy' as one which has to follow another to finish the cure (page 244). In my view, Robins has totally misunderstood the concept of miasms, for example on pages 10, 139 and 213. There are some spelling mistakes in references, for example, 'Vithoukos'. The footnotes are difficult to check, as they are in a typographical jumble at the end of each chapter, sorted not by number or alphabetically but by category (book, journal, specialist archive), and the bibliography is selective rather than comprehensive. This means that I think there is no reference (I have looked but cannot see) to the authoritative and critical article *An Alternative Perspective: Homeopathic Drugs, Royal Copeland, and Federal Drug Regulation* by Suzanne White Junod PhD (email copy from available from me).

Most worrying is the author's reliance on the unreliable work of self-styled quackbuster, Stephen Barrett, whose work is frequently referenced. His [www.homeowatch.org/](http://www.homeowatch.org/) & <http://www.quackwatch.org/> websites and his extreme polemic have been shown in a very bad light. In California, he has been formally discredited in a Superior Court, and in a published appeal court decision, where he was described by the three-judge panel as "biased, and unworthy of credibility". His medical and psychiatric licenses have lapsed many years ago, and his organisations are morally and financially bankrupt. This information by Tim Bolen may be found at <http://www.quackpotwatch.org/>. As the *War between Conventional and Alternative Medicine* continues, we are only too accustomed to convincing the sceptics; we are happy to discuss with them, but let us avoid involving the paramilitaries. Copeland was working for peace. I am sure that this dedicated and talented historian Natalie Robins is with us in that. Read this enlightening mainstream book.

# Reviews

Reviewed by Alistair Dempster

*The Repertory of the Elements* shows a visionary at work, providing connections to remedies within Jan Scholten's familiar conceptual framework of the periodic table of elements. This Repertory is unlike any that I have encountered before. It is a synthesis of Scholten's thinking.

I approached this review with anticipation and excitement because I felt that this represented a gap in Scholten's work that had been filled. Initially, I was disappointed because it did not live up to my expectations of a repertory (based on my experience of previously published repertories which all conform more or less to a specific format, with limited additions and variations). It is amazing how often expectations can form the parameters of prejudice and stop us from being objective; clearly I had much to learn before I could use this book effectively. The presentation of the material in repertories appears to be changing to reflect the diversity of contemporary methodologies. The thematic approach is what this repertory is all about.

As the back cover notes suggests: "It is a good tool to learn the way of thinking of the *Element Theory*. It helps you to differentiate between the stages and series of the periodic table by showing the different nuances of them." Ideally, the reader needs to be conversant with Scholten's concepts. Secondly, the reader needs to know how to apply remedy concepts such as Families, Series and the Stages of the periodic table.

Lack of familiarity with Scholten's body of work may cause the reader to struggle with this repertory. However, for those who have kept up to date with Scholten's teaching and publications over the past decade, the Repertory offers the opportunity to perform a differential diagnosis, within the context of the periodic table of elements.

Since receiving the book for review, I have used it to analyse cases. As is often the case with a new repertory, I started out struggling. My impression was of a concept book. In order to fully reap the benefits of this repertory, I would say you need a flexible, open mind that makes good use of imagination and creativity, since the use of language can be crucial to case understanding. Scholten has gone to some length to describe his philosophical approach in relation to the use of language, and its homeopathic interpretation within the repertory. How useful the repertory is depends on how well you can use it. Herein lies the rub. Using this Repertory took me some practice, even though I am familiar, to a large degree, with the *Elements* theory.

I found a lot of things unexplained, mostly about the differentiation of words in different areas of mind and their relative relationships. This probably connects to the philosophy regarding the relativity

of Action, Subject and Object to sentence construction of subject, verb and object. To provide a symptom of real value there must be a relative connection of these parts, otherwise there is no relationship and therefore no symptom. I found distinction between the Subject and the Object ambiguous at times.

The organisation of the book is in sections that differ from previous repertories:

Mind: Action, Thematic  
Mind: Subject, Setting  
General: Object, Dynamic  
Body: Action, Thematic  
Body: Subject, Setting

Each of the above sections is split in to subsections, for example the General: Object, Dynamic section further splits into Time, Weather, Food, Motion. The Mind: Subject, Setting section gives us: Abstract; Mind; Family; Person; Animal; Nature; Body; Thing; Region.

There are the listings of Families and Names. The Families section, from *Acanthaceae* to *Zygopyllaceae* consists of a long list of Family names, a list of remedy abbreviations related to that family, and their code within the repertory, as described in the nomenclature framework within the Introduction. The Names section is also a list of remedy abbreviations, full name and their code within the repertory as described above.

A shortcoming of the book is its organisation and sometimes its lack of correspondence to the Table of Contents. It is not immediately obvious where one section ends and another begins, whilst some subsections are missing from the Table of Contents altogether. More attention to detail in this respect would be helpful. Clearer demarcation of the sections would help, perhaps even a thumb index. This might add to cost but may aid quicker access to relevant sections. Another problem for me was the lack of rigorous proof reading. Further editing would have enhanced unnecessary anomalies and spelling mistakes in the text. Some Dutch words crop up where there should be an English translation.

One has to wonder and be amazed at the intellectual prowess of this innovative, committed homeopath who has taken homeopathic theory into areas that some find uncomfortable. Hahnemann was, of course, beleaguered by his medical peers. Some find Scholten's ideas challenging, unprincipled, even heretical; many others have solved cases as a result of his brilliant work and marvelled at the scope of his homeopathic thinking. Scholten's approach to homeopathy has provoked many questions and will no doubt continue to do so. Whilst there is room for fine-tuning, this new repertory promises to be a good tool for those who understand and use Jan's work in their practices.

## Repertory of the Elements

By Jan Scholten

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