



On John Diamond's Writings

By Rowena Ronson & Nigel Summerley

One Issue Two Perceptions and A Step Outside The Box

RR I wasn't one of those avid readers of John Diamond's column in *The Times*; through three years' full-time study of homeopathy and raising two young boys single-handed, I had little time for newspapers. I was one of those touched by his untimely death and felt he was reaching from the grave to tell me something, but at the time I wasn't sure what.

My first contact with him was bizarre. I was writing my final-year dissertation and putting in yet another late night on my computer when I was beckoned by my rarely used remote to switch on the television. A programme on Diamond was just beginning and I sat for an hour transfixed as he told his story, his journey with cancer. It was March 2001; the documentary, I believe, had been made a year earlier, and he had died on March 1. He touched me.

Two years later I was chatting with my journalist cousin, Jon Ronson, and he told me Diamond had been a close friend and they had a shared scepticism towards alternative medicine. I hadn't taken this on board before, and possibly hadn't wanted to. But now I was intrigued to know more. On a trip to a bookshop, I sycotically bought both *Snake Oil* and *C - Because Cowards Get Cancer Too*. I don't think this is just because of my morbid fascination with cancer. Other writers have penned their stories and I have not been drawn to buy those. I wanted to know why this man was anti complementary medicine, what his experience had been, why it had not worked for him.

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I had seen from the documentary that he had been under the surgeon's knife and blasted with 'chemo' and 'radio' therapies, but his books told me the whole story. His words moved me, he befriended me with his humour, my 'unprejudiced observer' training allowed me to hear his point of view and I was able to gain his perception. From what he wrote, he seemed to have done his research on homeopathy.

In *Snake Oil* he puts up an excellent argument against our healing art and the other disciplines that make up the growing CAM industry. And his experience of complementary medicine was not a good one. As I read it, I felt he was entitled to his opinion ... and to voice it.

NS In 1997 I was associate editor of *The Sunday Telegraph's* health magazine, 'Rx'. As well as being in charge of production, I had special responsibility for alternative health coverage. I was initially given a free hand to write and commission articles on unorthodox therapies, but 10 months into the project, I found I was required to include a regular column by the scourge of holistic therapies, John Diamond. Its purpose? To rubbish alternative medicine.

My fears that this would be a misleading, ill-informed and biased contribution were more or less fulfilled; and my complaints about references to Hahnemann's ignorance and the 'unscientific' basis of everything from acupuncture to osteopathy got nowhere. The message from on high was that this was precisely what the editor wanted.

Diamond on homeopathy: 'To stick to those quaint principles when we know rather more than Hahnemann ever could about the way the world and its inhabitants work is the equivalent of running our rail system at 29mph because Victorians believed moving any faster was more than the human frame could endure.'

Disillusioned, I started looking for work elsewhere; two months later I was working at *The Times*, producing an alternative health magazine called *Healing*, written and edited by people who had a knowledgeable and positive approach to holistic therapies.

Diamond died, but his influence outlived him, not only in his books but also in a handful of journalistic imitators who today carry on the anti-alternative work in the health and science pages of national papers.

Why did I find Diamond's writing so loathsome at that time? Because through my work as an alternative health writer (busy training as a homeopath), I felt I had served on the front line of exposing the shortcomings of allopathy and educating readers to see that there were serious alternatives that they could choose to use.

Diamond, almost bullet-proof to criticism because he held the ace card of his imminent death, seemed to be a bitter and negative man, sadly destined to die prematurely, but determined to take as many alternative practitioners with him as he could.

There was a time when I would have linked mental symptoms from the proving of diamond the substance ('impatient, intolerant, critical . . . needs to assert himself by picking on someone he neither knows nor respects') to Diamond the man. But now I have come to respect the fact that he had every right to take his stand for what he believed in, just as homeopaths do.

RR&NS

We can either be as negative about John Diamond as he was about homeopathy and other complementary and alternative therapies, or we can try to understand why he was like he was. If we simply ignore Diamond and the anti-alternative school of health writing and the fact that they strike a chord with their readers, we fail to acknowledge that to a large proportion of the populace we look like charlatans making money out of sick people's hopes and gullibility. Understanding what we are up against may help us to present ourselves in a new way. As alternative health practitioners, it is easy to buy into the paradigm of cancer being a matter of choice and that with a positive attitude, a revamped diet and a natural choice of medicine, good health can be restored. With someone suffering from cancer, who has tried some alternatives, who has not responded, and is working against the clock: who are we to say that they have taken the wrong decision for their health? Who are we to say that we would not feel that alternative medicine had failed us, and that it doesn't work? Who are we to say that we would do any different?

Reviewed by Jo Evans

'Listening', in the broadest sense, is what we do with our patients, with the language of provers, and it is also a good word to apply to understanding the energy of new remedies. The word 'listening,' in the title of this book, provides a clue to the art and sensitivity with which the proving information is presented. It combines art and science in well-judged measures.

Six new provings are presented in this book. *Cypraea eglantina* (the remedy was made with cowrie shell and a part of the snail), *Lithium carbonicum* (the element Li., prescribed in conventional medicine for manic depression), *Ephedra sinica* (an ancient plant used in traditional medicine, but also linked to amphetamines and ecstasy), *Ginkgo Biloba* (the tree called the 'living fossil' by Darwin, one of the oldest plants on earth, and a big seller in popular herbal medicine for its reputed ability to help prevent memory loss), *Lignum aquilaria agallocha* (eagle wood, a wood used since Biblical times for its incense and fumigation properties, spiritual yet erotic in its aroma), and *Lapis Lazuli* (the intensely blue stone, flecked with gold pyrite which appears in Buddhist symbolism representing compassion and healing). Here we have a vibrant chorus of energies to 'hear', feel, and understand.

For each proving we are provided with similar chapter sub-headings: *Substance* (about the proving material, its uses, symbolism, toxicology etc.), *Proving* (if it has been proven before, about the current proving, how many people, male and female etc, and the exact words and symptoms of the provers under appropriate repertory headings, but not grouped into themes), *Summary* (bringing together themes by grouping the words of the provers, disease pictures, comparisons with other remedies, polarities of the remedies, stories of synchronicities taking place during the proving, and general comments), and *Repertory* (the solid rubrics to come from the proving).

This is not a proving book to buy simply for reference. We have the potential to search and reference new provings on homeopathic software when studying a case, and the task of reading a list of proving symptoms can be a drier, more challenging one. This book has the facts and figures you would expect from a proving, in condensed form, yet manages to also present each remedy in a coherent and memorable way, with many 'extras', for example cross-referencing the cowrie shell with other similar sea remedies (*Concholinum*, *Murex*, *Pecten*, *Calc carb.*, *Sepia*), or *Lapis Lazuli* with other stones, *Lapis albus*, *Lap-c-b* (limestone), *Lap-gr-m* (granite), provings from Nuala Eising.

Those who delight in synchronicity, myth, symbol, and the poetry of Goethe (and that is just some of it) will find it woven in here, as well as the results of six Hahnemannian provings, presented in the provers' own words. Reading this book was an enriching and pleasurable experience, after which the remedies naturally lodged in the consciousness, and unconscious, ready to prescribe.

Listening To Stone, Wood and Shell
By Anne Schadde and Juergen Hansel
Publ. Homeopathic Medical
Publishers,
India, April 2004,
Pp. 414, Hardback
ISBN 8190110357
Price: £25.00
www.anne.schadde.com

Reviewed by Francis Treuherz

Superlative and stupendous, feel the width and note the quality. These two volumes are still not the largest repertory on my shelves, but they are the most useful. Here for the first time the advantages of the Swedenborgian hierarchy of Kentian repertorisation (used in the *Synthesis* and the *Complete* repertories) are combined with an updated version of the Boenninghausen method. Generals and particulars nestle side by side with phenomena, concomitants and modalities in an easy alliance.

First the logistics: computers have their uses; my wife once said the only reason I did not take my laptop on our honeymoon is that laptops had not then yet been invented. Without a computer Roger van Zandvoort, the creative compiler, may not have been able to produce this work. But the book itself is beautiful, the binding is first rate, the typography legible, rubrics, remedies, cross-references, author numbers are all legible and distinguishable, even with no magnifier; and my eyesight is definitely middle-aged presbyopic. I try to repertorise at least one case with a book each day, and in order to write this review, I did even more. There is an explanatory introduction in volume 1, and indexes of authors and remedies and a bibliography in volume 2. Each chapter has a loose bookmark instead of a thumb index which makes for great flexibility, and the two volumes mean that one may cross refer and have them both open at one time. The books even stay smoothly open when a page near the front or back of a volume is consulted.

Each chapter contains the two approaches one after the other, so that whichever method is already familiar may be used easily, and combined with the other. The *Universale* differs from purely Kentian repertories. It still contains all the Kentian repertory information in a familiar form, namely all the information found in van Zandvoort's *Complete Repertory*, but the alterations to its basic structure make it a far more flexible tool than one constrained to Kent's schema. The repertory is designed to work equally well with any number of different repertorisation strategies. Boenninghausen's approach can be used as easily as Kent's, and it is ideally suited to the newer family or group or thematic methods of analysis.

In the introduction and guide, van Zandvoort attempts to explain exactly how, where and why the *Repertorium Universale* differs from its predecessors, and what benefits it offers. This is very useful but it begs

Repertorium Universale
The Repertory of Homeopathic
Remedies: Volume 1&2,
By Roger van Zandvoort,
Publ. Homeopathic Team, Italy, 2004
Pp. 3123, Hardback
ISBN 8889315008
Price £125
or 185 euros + shipping directly from
www.homeopathicteam.com

Reviews

Review continued . . .

Repertorium Universale
The Repertory of Homeopathic
Remedies: Volume 1&2,
By Roger van Zandvoort,

some questions and there are some omissions. None of these is serious and could easily be added to an interactive website where users might write in with cases and questions. For me, the first and most important issue is linguistic. The author is Dutch, and polyglot, he knows many European languages. But it is clear that his English requires work by a professional editor whose first language is English. There are even a few spelling errors in rubrics.

Then there are some assumptions; the one that strikes me is that the author knows best. He is a great scholar, but he is no longer in practice and not a teacher. He assumes that we will understand his work. There is no introduction to new students, for whom the history of repertories may not be enthralling, for whom the importance of this work may not be understood, and who certainly will not be able to use the book unaided. The cases are excellent but more explanations are needed. Samuel Johnson described a lexicographer, a writer of dictionaries, as a harmless drudge. Van Zandvoort is a creative genius, but needs an interpreter. The Mirilli repertory and a clinical chapter are there with no explanations. Kent's prostate chapter has vanished mysteriously. The lack of italic grades has been explained rather too briefly for my liking. So on the one hand the book is so clear, and on the other more explanation is needed. I hope that this can be provided and that the author will write a short volume to explain more about how he goes about his work, and how we may learn to go about ours. On the other hand this should put paid to those repertories that do not display their sources or explain their methodologies, which seduce students into lazy anti-intellectual ways of working.

This book deserves to become the repertory of choice for the present and for the future. It should be on the desk of every student, teacher and practitioner. The inspiration of the author will create perspiration for all of us and become a part of our continuing professional development.



The Tao of Homeopathy
By Ian Watson
Publ. Cutting Edge Publications, UK,
2004,
Pp. 104, Hardback
ISBN 0951765728
Price £8.95
www.cuttingedgepublications.co.uk

Reviewed by Lawrence Bogle

Here are a few questions to all homeopaths: What happens when you get stuck? What do you do when, brilliant results one minute, yield nothing the next? Or how about the u-turn patient who, for no good reason, stops getting better, despite the careful and painstaking choice of your selected remedies? What about the obvious, missed? All can add up to panic and a feeling of being a big, bad homeopath. So what to do? Well, we talk and we read in order to understand and move the health of our patients and ourselves along, in the hope the light bulb in our head will ping into action. While you're waiting, though, you might try looking at *The Tao of Homeopathy*, by Ian Watson.

In his introduction, Watson writes, 'I have come to feel homeopathy and Taoism are saying much the same thing . . . and it strikes me as a potent message for these troubled times. Stay open. Trust life. Attune to nature's cycles and seasons.' Those last few sentences contain the essence of the book, whose intention is to present Tao principles and homeopathy as similar. It's a book to thumb through and think about; to meditate on, if you like. It offers some valuable insight into the art of trust and encourages stillness; indeed each page is a little universe of contemplation. The simple format and clean design allows the eye space to rest upon any of the 86 texts, with subjects ranging from interconnectedness to emptiness, doing nothing to doing too much.

Homeopaths read a great deal of literature; there is always something to search through, whether news of provings, technique, methods or something else; mostly exciting, sometimes tosh but nonetheless, capable of sending the head spinning. We are by nature, searchers, and several years in, (or sooner if we're wise), we realise that most of the work to be done is centred on the self. This is where this book can be of value, don't go looking for cures for that pesky eczema case here, you won't find them, but you may find another way of looking, in order to find.

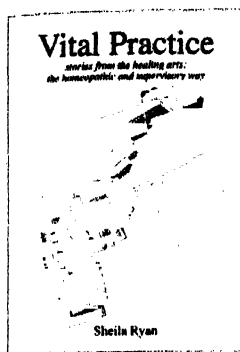
Take this excerpt from the chapter called 'Prevention' for instance, 'Many people are grateful that the homeopath took away something that was troubling them. Few will ever know that what was prevented from arising in the first place was the greater part of her work.' There it is; this is our aim in thirty-five words. There are gems like this scattered throughout; it's a kind of one-size-fits-all book presented as a guide to 'being'. However, therein lies the big question; are you ready to 'be'?

Phrases influenced by centuries of wonderful Taoism are all well and good, but do Watson's words stand up to scrutiny? Well, yes and no, but it is the bold and puzzling statements in much of the book that I wrestled with. For instance, he writes, 'Yin and Yang, Sol and Luna, Heaven and Earth. The counterpart of homeopathy is allopathy.' How so? Yin and Yang are two halves of a whole; isn't allopathic treatment and its ineffectiveness something we (and our patients) struggle with daily? Don't we try to undo the damage cause by allopathic medicine and sometimes despair at it? Allopathy is not the exact counterpart, as in equivalent, of homeopathy.

In his introduction Watson states that possibly non-homeopaths will realise something of the essence of homeopathy after reading this book. I do hope so. Having said that, it would be helpful if they don't see us as the pure beings Watson describes, who come across like some sort of (all female) spectres, floating here and there, casually dropping eternal knowledge like handkerchiefs for our earth-bound patients to pick up.

So just who is this book for? Anyone and everyone is the answer. It's a book to return to, to find answers in, and to gaze upon Rana Chalabi's beautiful artwork.

Reviews



Vital Practice, Stories from the Healing Arts: The Homeopathic and Supervisory Way

By Sheila Ryan,
Publ. Sea Change, Portland UK, 2004
Pp. 210, Softback
ISBN 095478670X
Price £16 incl. p & p UK
www.seachangeuk.com

Reviewed by Angela Earney

I worked with Sheila when we were beginning to set up the Professional Supervision Network in Ireland, and have always admired her skill and perceptiveness. I feel that this book about homeopathy, supervision and how they work together, is exactly the right book at the right time.

Before I began reading, I had very strong notions about what I wanted. I wanted a how-to book, written by an expert, with lots of easily transferable ideas and devices for organising a supervision session/workshop/network. Finally, the penny dropped. This book is not written from an expert viewpoint. As Sheila reminds us 'supervision is a quality of looking.' It is a method of 'getting alongside'. Having expectations about the outcome, or a superior, let's say 'expert' stance, can block us from seeing what is really going on.

Therefore, this book is not a book of answers, more a book of stories and questions. The 'quality of looking' is demonstrated by the stories of the patient, homeopath and supervision sessions. Each story has questions, that illustrate the process of 'getting alongside'. There are also questions about our own practices, which encourage us to supervise ourselves. For example, 'where are you in your practice room?'... The image jumped into my mind that I was hiding behind the door, (I'd better see my supervisor). Each of the stories is also linked to the remedy by its themes, and the images that come up when the questions are asked. The stories also parallel the remedy themes in the way each chapter takes on the flavour of the remedy involved.

In the second part of the book, 'Vital Kit', the material is presented like a toolbox, with definitions and descriptions of the different types of supervision structures. Sheila explores other important themes about healing in *Vital Practice*. She also manages to be homeopathic and supervisory while writing it. This is a book that can be enjoyed for its stories, but it is also a book to come back to regularly, to be challenged by the questions. Try it and see!



Spiritual Bioenergetics of Homeopathic Materia Medica

By Dr Jubraj Sharma
Publ. Academy of Light Ltd, UK,
2004,
Pp. 784, Hardback
ISBN 190447201X
Price £45
www.academyoflight.co.uk

Reviewed by Penny Edwards

My first introduction to *The Spiritual Bioenergetics of Homeopathic Materia Medica* was being told about the, 'reviews received from the spirit world' inside the back cover. These could be more aptly named 'rave reviews,' and included paragraphs from Buddha, Jesus Christ and Samuel Hahnemann. I'll let you find out the others for yourself... there are more! In the introduction there is a recommendation to 'allow the soul to engage with the reading, perhaps imagining there are thought forms within the words, which can leap off the printed page to enter the mind, at superconscious levels'. I would dearly love it if this could happen for me, but so far, I have learned in a different way, by seeing cases, rather than reading materia medica.

A section on 'How to use this book' lists the different areas that are covered for each remedy: scientific; toxicology; spiritual; astrology; oriental diagnosis; craniosacral diagnosis; affinity; modalities; strange, rare and peculiar; mentals; generals; particulars; and related remedies. What a mass of information to be covered! I certainly agree with the idea of this book: that many remedies in our materia medica have limited information from related fields. It can be extremely helpful to see where toxicology or myths have in some way been finely interwoven with a remedy's name or action. Whilst there is a lot in there that fascinates me outside homeopathic reading (everything from angels to Atlantis, karma to kundalini), I wasn't sure of its place in a homeopathic materia medica. Back to the beginning to read about remedies...

Aconite. Ah! Would I recognise the remedy picture? 'Poisonous plants are striving to become ensouled and astralised. This allows the plant to become medicinal. If taken by a healthy person, it has a toxic effect. But if ingested by someone with a similar imbalance in the interaction between astral etheric and physical, it can help the pathological situation right itself.' Is this the explanation of how remedies work, that we have been waiting for? 'When someone ingests a poisonous alkaloid plant, it shifts their astral body out of normal healthy interaction with the physical, and distorts the use of the astral within the physical senses.' I can accept that this is what actually happens when someone is fed the *Aconite* plant, but is that going to help me find that remedy for the patient, if I am not psychic/don't channel/don't intuit remedies?

This book is certainly eclectic, and includes unusual remedies (e.g. *Saddam Hussein Palace*, *Microchip*). I would love to go through the astrological parts with an astrologer, review the craniosacral diagnoses with a good cranial osteopath, or discuss the oriental diagnoses with a Chinese medicine specialist. Perhaps this is more appropriate for someone who practices more than one therapy. I found a myriad interesting topics that I haven't read about before. But I don't know if it will help me to help my homeopathic patients. Having said that, I do look forward to sitting down to enjoy reading at length, those chapters outside the homeopathic discipline.