



Something In The Water

& Other Tales Of Homeopathy

Sue Lanzon

2012



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e: sitw@winterpress.net

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Foreword

by Martin J. Walker

Something in the Water is a book about homeopathy, its practice and its remedies. It is, however, not an ordinary book but a rare one, which echoes the story of its subject in both form and content. The broken narrative of incidental tales, recounted in the first person by a practicing homeopath – someone who thinks homeopathically – offers us an everyday understanding of the homeopath and of homeopathy. The education we are offered, however, is not from a factual, pragmatic or linear viewpoint, but immerses the reader in the very idea of its process. Imagine, if you can, being an English speaker opening a book about the Turkish language and finding part of the narrative itself written in understandable Turkish.

The book describes, in entertaining terms, the holism of homeopathy. This holism, not the mechanics of the practice or the effect of the remedies, is what sets homeopathy apart from ‘scientific’ or allopathic medicine. Homeopathy, as this book tells us, stretches like a live wire between the practitioner and her environment, the patient and her environment, the relationship between practitioner and patient and the onward journey in the life of both these parties. The idea behind *Something In The Water* is post-modern.

Each chapter of the book is a short story, mined from the homeopath’s life, in which a prominent character exhibits the need for a remedy or a situation recalls some aspect of homeopathic practice. The first story, entitled *The Liver*, introduces the major themes of the book; we are, for the most part, in the inner city; homeopathy is rooted in the

everyday; the author is writing from a political, undogmatic perspective; the homeopath's private and professional lives continually merge with and mirror each other.

The other tales range across many aspects of human activity, identity and geography. Some drag you in without resistance while others force you to do your own deductive reasoning. Some seem to have more complex messages than others. For example, *The Homeopath Is Not In* connects domestic problems with the terror of South American politics in the 1980s, while describing the remedies, Stannum and Silica. In the title story, *Something In The Water*, ancient Greek mythology, family concerns, gender stereotypes, romance and the remedy Sepia find a connection on an Aegean island. In all, there are 21 stories, including the wonderfully titled *Shut Up And Talk*.

The idea of postmodernism means that subjects can be addressed by referring to matters apparently unrelated to the narrative's core phenomena. An earlier 'modernist' book about homeopathy would probably discuss its history, its reputed mechanisms and its use following diagnosis. The lengthiest part of the book may have been given over to a complex diagnostic analysis. The modern way of describing homeopathy or anything else was mainly linear and logical.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with this. However, homeopathy, despite its age, is, in its diagnostic method and treatment fundamentals, profoundly post-modern; that is to say it appears anything but linear and logical and is even, in part, unknown. A simple analogy could be found in a comparison between the modern fictitious Scotland Yard detective and Sherlock Holmes.

CONTINUES.... (4 pages removed)....

Above and beyond this, it is an ideal book for any reader new to homeopathy – for it explains this great method of healing, and what might be expected from its uses, in the simplest and most readable form. Consequently it could prompt many individuals to find their way to the therapy.

With homeopathy presently under concerted attack from lobby groups and corporate scientists, it needs defenders, proselytizers and prophets. Like other professionals who have become embattled in the war for science and new technology, some leading homeopaths think that their salvation lies in an exacting scientific explanation of their craft. I personally don't believe that this is a path to be taken with any urgency or at the exclusion of other more popular routes. In time the science of homeopathy will be discovered. In fact this process has already begun.

Exacting explanations by science won't right the slant of the playing field or lead to its levelling, nor will it remedy the worldly ignorance of skeptics and corporate scientists. Real change will only occur when the hearts and minds, the lives of individuals and communities, are changed by discussions about the advantages of homeopathy over pharmaceutical medicine and a more positive education and understanding of homeopathy in the community. Sue Lanzon's book is one of the first to embark upon this promotion and the first to do this using a common, popular language of the people.

Martin J Walker.

The Liver

Here she comes, her black robe billowing, her children trailing in her wake. She shouts at the little one to say hello to me, then tells him off for interrupting. They're Bengali. They have problems with the downstairs neighbours who call them, inaccurately and with great malice, Paki bastards. This happens for the most part at random, but always occurs during festivals and other special days when they dare to entertain at home. When they are, relatively speaking, having a good time. One of the many shortcomings of cheaply built public housing is the lack of sound-proofing. Not only do the walls have ears, but the floors and ceilings as well. This determines more than the material quality of shelter. It condemns her family to a recurring mathematical formula. Celebratory rites, and the right to celebrate, equals another load of racial abuse.

The children were all on asthma medication when I started seeing them. She'd lost count of the number of antibiotics they'd had. I've been directing treatment towards clearing their lungs and cleansing their blood – unsuppressing, if there is such a word. They're doing well, but there's so many of them and they cough a lot.

My actress daughter, Tina, had phoned five minutes before to tell me the great news. She'd got the part.

“Guess what, Mum. I'm playing a slut again.”

“Fantastic, darling,” I say, encouragingly, whilst wondering what thirty years of feminism has really taught me. I also wonder what this devout Muslim woman would make of it if she knew. I experience, not for the first time, a split

between my private self and my homeopath persona. I shake it off and pay attention to what she is saying.

The police were called but did nothing, as usual. Her eldest son had to be restrained. Everyone was upset and the evening, yet another evening, ruined.

She pulls up her robe and assorted jumpers and shows me where it hurts. Right side, behind the ribs – the liver. She's been scanned, palpated and the medics can find nothing wrong. They've diagnosed stress, and she's been given anti-depressants. She hasn't taken them. But her digestive system isn't working properly and her liver, well, it hurts. What am I able to do for her, she asks. What should she take?

I have been trained to view the body in relation to the mind and the emotions. That's common to all holistic traditions and I borrow heavily from various maps, aligning the European road-trip that is homeopathy with, among others, the Chinese medical system. This is an ancient pathway and can be consulted as a kind of Rough Guide to the Organs.

The topography goes like this: when we withdraw our awareness from our emotional pain, the emotion lodges in an organ and the body reacts. The liver is where we store our anger, and our anxiety concerning the past or future. The Liver is 'One Who Lives.'

If there is an inability or unwillingness to be engaged with the here and now but rather to dwell in the failed past or project an unsafe future, the liver becomes compromised. If we suppress our anger, or express it too much, the liver becomes irritated. This does not show up on a scan.

“Well,” I say, “you could try and stop shouting at the kids.”

“Yes, I know,” she says, “but if they make a noise the downstairs neighbours start banging on the ceiling, isn’t it. Then, sometimes, four in the morning they do it, just to stop us sleeping. I shouting at children to keep them quiet.”

Four in the morning. Liver time. At 4 a.m. the liver is at its most active, at the height of its assimilative process.

How neat, I think, as she riffles through a plastic bag and pulls out a crumpled packet of tablets.

“Those last pills you give me. I think they helped a bit.”

“Good.” I reply, unclear as to whether this is true or something that we both wish to be true.

“What else can you do for me?” she asks again, “What should I take?”

I am always touched by her reverence for homeopathy, which comes from a life-time of familiarity. Back home, her mother always used my kind of medicine for the family. She will not take anything, not even a vitamin, without consulting me first. I feel she looks upon me as some kind of benign, light-skinned avatar, a link with her home and her ancestral knowledge, though I’ve never been to Bangladesh and we meet in a crummy portakabin in London. She trusts in me because I am her doctor. Which, of course, I’m not.

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The Poison Nut

Sunday afternoon, the bar is crowded. I’m waiting for a friend. Perched on a stool, sipping my Earl Grey, I feel quietly superior to the drunken punters who surround me. Bright young things with money to burn and the world at their feet. Is it the tea causing me to think in clichés, or am I just tired?

A familiar face emerges from the Gents. Someone I know vaguely from my clubbing days. He’s celebrating, just won a big contract. Swaying slightly, he beckons to someone else over my shoulder.

“That’s my brother.” he says proudly, as I turn around. A man lurches towards us. Handsome, wearing an expensive suit, he’s looking at me like I’m lunch or possibly, by this time, dessert. I can tell he’s having trouble focusing.

“Hi,” he says, thrusting his face and body into the area I regard as my defensible space, “I’m Tiny. Pissed Off P.R.”

I smell alcohol, tobacco, something spicy.

“What you drinking, babe?” He gestures aggressively to the barman. “Oi, Cicero! We’ll have another round of Bellinis, pronto, my man and... a cup of tea? Hang on, I could do with an espresso myself, yeah, cool babe. Coffee, it’s my saviour, know what I mean? Homeopathy? What’s that, massage and stuff? Have you thought about expanding your client-base? Here’s my card. Maybe we should get together, crucial, y’know. Shit, I’m vibrating!”

He takes his mobile phone out of his back pocket, reads a text, grins at me.

“My broker,” he explains.

In the meantime, his brother has disappeared after a woman in a particularly short skirt and spiky boots. I'm trapped.

Tiny? I wonder. Does that denote penile insufficiency, brain capacity, an excess of confidence or what? By now he's holding a drink in each hand, two phones and an unlit cigarette.

"Don't tell me," I say, "you've got a red car, double-parked."

"Right outside, babe. It's ready to go, just like me. You wanna come for a ride?"

He looks deep into my eyes and adjusts his crotch.

"And you're having trouble with your... insides."

"How did...?"

"Your stomach is inflamed. You have terrible indigestion."

"Wicked!"

"An ulcer?"

"Top ranking, babe. What was it you said you did? Astrology?"

As Tiny leans his body further towards mine in a blatantly sexual but somehow absent way, a man carrying a tray of drinks accidentally knocks his elbow. Tiny whirls round, the end of his cigarette just missing the eye of a passing waiter. He is deeply affronted.

"Sorry, mate," the man says.

"You will be," Tiny snarls, "... fucking moron." He turns back to me, baring his teeth.

The friend I've been waiting for materialises at my side, shaking raindrops from his glistening black hair.

"Sorry I'm late." He gives me a hug. Tiny laughs.

Remi is a biochemist from Pakistan. Lithe, relaxed, beautiful, he emanates a watery presence which flows over me,

dampening the onslaught of Tiny's fire and allowing me to relax a little too. He can tell what needs doing straight away.

"Look, there's a table." He points to the far side of the bar where two women are getting ready to leave. "Nice meeting you."

"Later, man," Tiny drools. "Know what I mean?"



Nux Vomica, the poison nut, literally 'the nut which makes you vomit', is a remedy which has been encountered by many who are not regular users of homeopathy. This is because it is a fantastic cure for hangovers.

It can also be spotted, energetically speaking, all over the inner and outer city. Wherever there is noise, bustle, commerce, competition, deadlines, targets or traffic jams, Nux Vomica will be present. Think road rage. It is indeed a driven state. There is an irritation of the nervous system which can produce, or be caused by, a craving for stimulants. There is hurriedness and impatience, a feeling that time passes too slowly, which can lead to explosive anger. The mind is over-active and excitable. There is egotism and a tendency to blame others, overt sexuality and performance anxiety. The functional disturbances and pathology caused by the poison, and healed by the remedy, centre mainly around the digestive system. The heat of all this burning impatience and desire inflames, corrodes and ulcerates. Tiny's prescription was easy.



"So why don't you give him some?" Remi asks. "I bet you've got a bottle in that little bag of yours, haven't you?"

Just for emergencies." He nudges me, winking, "Know what I mean?"

"It's my day off!" I snap. Hell, this Nux Vomica energy is catching. "Anyway, he hasn't asked me. You know I gave up proselytising years ago."

"You could slip it into his pink fizz. Spike his drink with its very antidote. From a biochemical point of view..."

"Don't bring science into this, please."

"Why not? Knowing how to deal with the toxins in your life is a vital step towards self-realization." He takes my hand and traces the lines of my palm.

"You're just being patronising," I mutter, retrieving my hand which has begun to sweat. "A person's got to want to heal."

"Yes," he says, "but sometimes we don't know what we want until someone points it out to us, do we?"

"I think Tiny likes being Tiny. Look at him."

By this time, the man in question has wrapped himself around a leggy blonde, leering into her cleavage and drumming his fingers on the base of her spine. She's teetering on the edge of a bar-stool, tossing her golden mane and running her scarlet nails down the inside of his thigh. The clichés fill up the space inside my empty cup.

"Now you're being patronising," Remi says.

"Nonsense!" I retort. "We're all nuts full of poison in one way or another. Besides, I happen to understand addiction. Oi, Cicero! Another cuppa, pronto!"

Looking For Clues

'Since I discovered the unconscious, I find myself much more interesting.'

Sigmund Freud

He sits opposite me. He's asked to be there, in my consulting room. He's paying for my time. Yet his legs are crossed, his arms are folded, his body slants away from me at a curiously uncomfortable-looking angle as if he's trying to make a break for the door with his shoulder.

'Why is he shielding his left side?' I wonder, shifting my own body to mirror his position.

She tells me something completely, horrifically, spine-chillingly awful about her personal life and bursts out laughing. Has she noticed I'm not laughing with her? Should I mention it? Her grimace reminds me of a chimpanzee in distress.

Instead of saying "My children are driving me nuts" he says "My children are driving *you* nuts." Is he referring to himself here as one of my children? Does he really want to say *I'm* driving *him* nuts? Would Sigmund find this funny?

Then there's the one who, in telling me her current problem, perfectly reflects some aspect of my own. She starts to talk and I know what she's going to say next because I woke up dealing with the same thing and... she says it. I'm aware of struggling not to betray myself. It's a close call. She sees a flicker of my eyelids and some part of her recognizes I am in a state of empathy, of rapport, beyond the usual. She doesn't know she knows this. I concentrate very carefully as I suspect she has something unspoken about her person which I need to recognize in some way. As I offer her a new

perspective on her situation, which may help her to deal with it more effectively, I realize that I'm telling myself what to do.

Erroll, my next-door neighbour and a tough cookie, says to me, "Have you ever thought about the fact that if you put a space between the 'e' and the 'r' of the word 'therapist', it looks like 'the rapist'?"

His wife, Marjorie, a goddess whose wisdom and beauty are renowned throughout South London and beyond, sneers knowingly at the dark circles under my eyes.

"Your adrenals are shot, darlin'. Too much time spent listenin' to other people's crap. It's too excitin' for yer."

"So which is it?" I bleat, glancing down at the cup of dark, bitter liquid Marjorie has thrust into my hand. "Certainly, it can be argued that the uneven power dynamic between therapist and patient will inevitably render the patient a victim on some level. However, as any homeopath will tell you, the existence of psychic vampires masquerading as unwell humans is an undisputed reality."

"Just be quiet now and drink." Marjorie says.

Later, whilst lying in a very hot bath wondering if my adrenals are enjoying the rest or being pushed further into meltdown by the temperature of the water, my thoughts return to the opposing forces that can infect a therapeutic relationship, and the constructs that shape its direction.

Since I discovered the unconscious, I find myself to be much more aware of the delicacy of human communication. I endeavour to translate a language whose meaning is unknown whilst being *constantly* reminded, (I'd just like to take a moment here to thank all my teachers, patients,

children, parents, lovers, friends, cats and my many, many fans who've made it possible for me to be lying in this bath today, being reminded), that my translation is, by its nature, a subjective one. The only way I can ensure that my skill as a healer is not corrupted by this is to anticipate synergy – the making of something greater than the sum of its parts.

I need to meet the patient as an equal in our humanity; provide a safe space between us in which they can lay out the concerns that have driven them to come; note all the different nuances of communication happening simultaneously on the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual levels; put them into some kind of coherent pattern or shape; scan my conclusions for contamination from my own issues; scan myself for vampire bites; offer this new configuration back in a way that invites the patient to participate in their own healing, and gives them something constructive to take home; accept resistance or denial as useful information regarding the pace of change; reflect on what the patient in turn has given me in the way of new insight and knowledge and somewhere, in among all this, prescribe a remedy.

(You may wonder why it is that homeopaths always have to look things up in books. Well, guess what, we're not looking anything up at all. We're just playing for time. You think you've come for a little something for your eczema? Think again).

Hopefully, this dynamic interchange between us acts as a conduit for mutual growth. The tricky bit lies in

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