

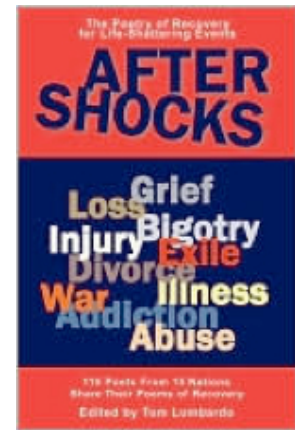


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BOOK REVIEWS

Lombardo, Tom. (ed.) *After Shocks: The Poetry of Recovery for Life-Shattering Events*. Atlanta, GA: Sante Lucia Books, 2008. 387 pp. Contributors' bios 53 pp. \$19.95



What an accomplishment for the editor Tom Lombardo, who put together this anthology in which 115 poets from 15 nations come together to share their poems of recovery! Indeed, the theme of recovery with a focus on acceptance, hope and healing, however strong or faint it may be, runs through the entire collection that comprises twelve sections. These include the Recovery from Death of a Spouse, from War, Exile, Abuse, Addiction, Bigotry, Loss of a Child, Divorce or Loss of Lover, Loss of Innocence, Illness or Injury, Death of Family or Friends, and Stresses of Living. This diversity surprised me initially. The editor clearly shows the personal and subjective experience of life-shattering events and manages, through his clever selection of poems and their arrangement in the anthology, to validate precisely those experiences. No loss or devastating event is considered more or less important than any other. That alone offers a place for healing and comfort to the reader - at least we know we are not alone, regardless of the circumstances.

The selection of poems in *After Shocks* crosses and transcends many boundaries and highlights the grief and yearnings of the human soul, common to us as human beings. Although the geographical setting, the language, melody, styles, emotions, and modes of expression vary almost from page to page, we, the readers, never lose track of the underlying and overriding theme – the resilience of the human being who can and does survive the initial trauma and succeeds in living the story of grief. The poets' voices convey their experiences of pain, loss, love and connection in a deeply compelling manner. The many paradoxes inherent in the grieving process and in recovery, regardless of culture, belief system, or age become apparent. Surrender or letting go on the one hand and forever living with the events of the past on the other hand, develop simultaneously. The poems also illustrate for us clearly how the poetic language of symbols and metaphors powerfully conveys the deeply universal and uniquely personal aspects of the journey of loss, grief, and healing. We also become keenly aware that the process of recovery is just that – an open-ended, unscripted process with no finite point. Each poem invites us to reflect, to empathize, to open our hearts and allow ourselves to receive the images painted in this colourful compilation of poetic imagery.

Many of the poets, whose short biography is included in the biography section at the end of the book, are distinguished poets in their countries, to whom a huge array of awards is attributed. Only a few, it seems, wanted to share with the readers their brief personal stories that motivated them to write a particular poem or series of poems on the topic of recovery. When they did, Lombardo inserted their

words in the biographical section, which I greatly appreciate – as this decision allows the poetry to stand completely on its own, while readers still have the information available to them.

Tom Lombardo, the sole editor and publisher of this substantial collection, has presented us all with a gift that may serve to ease grief and restore hope and faith so we can heal or be present to others who find themselves on this journey of recovery. Quite understandably, it seems most poems were written many years, even up to thirty years after the event described. Therefore, I would be cautious in recommending this book to individuals for at least two reasons. When the initial shock of any life-shattering event has not yet worn off, the sheer size of the book is likely to surpass their ability to focus. More importantly, the paradox of loss and grief remains impossible to grasp for many individuals in the early stages of dealing with their experiences because the absence of the presence, the pain and anger, the numbness or shock may render the future incomprehensible and out of reach. And, of course, the opposite might also be true. Others might find solace and comfort in knowing where their path might lead them eventually.

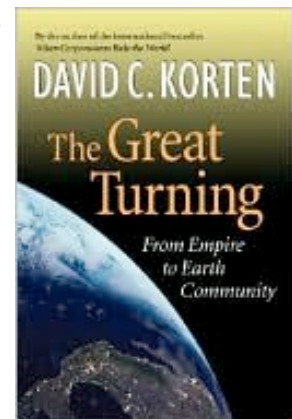
Poetry speaks directly to my heart. This review is not intended to serve as literary criticism of *After Shocks* but rather as an assessment of resonance. In other words, I turned within, inside my heart, where I listened to my heart and allowed myself to tune in to the emotions and compassion that were swelling up inside me and stirred me. With other books I might include a sample of the text. With this book, I feel that selecting one or two poems as samples from among the enormous variety of topics, poets, and styles in this anthology would only reveal my strong personal bias that is informed through my poetic tastes and my life experiences in general, rather than do justice to the skilfully arranged anthology.

Lombardo's dedication and deep commitment to his project inspired the generosity of many poets to contribute to this anthology that consists of previously published materials, all of which are carefully cited – a true treasure chest for those of us who feel captivated by a particular poem or poet and are yearning for more. True to the nature of an anthology, we have the luxury of choosing only one poem at a time, randomly, in sequence or by topic, or of reading entire sections. Particularly during this chaotic period throughout the world, the poetic pictures, gems, and insights offered to us in *After Shocks* may carry us through transitions and remind us of our ever-transitioning stories that we call life. The poems provide us with the opportunity to remember once more the common and shared experiences in the cycle of life, death and rebirth through which we are all connected.

Book Review by Martina Steiger, ThD, BEd, MA
IJHC Editor

David Korten. *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*, New Stylus 2006

We are living in a time of tremendous change. Some of the ongoing shifts are quite disturbing, such as the economic news, and some of them seem quite positive, such as the expansion of sociocultural possibilities. But we know there are many forces at work, it's all very complex, and we don't want to be rushing off in all directions – or to retreat out of fear. What we need is an explanatory story – to help us understand the forces and direction of the changes, so that we can choose what part we want to play in this great transition.



David Korten's *The Great Turning* offers such a story. His intention, he says, is “to provide a historically grounded frame for understanding the possibilities of the unique time in which we live and

thereby enable us to envision the path to a new era. Failing such understanding, we will continue to squander valuable time and resources on futile efforts to preserve or mend the cultures and institutions of a system that cannot be fixed and must be replaced.” Elsewhere he adds, “We can change the human course by changing the framing stories of our dominant culture. The prevailing Empire stories celebrate the individualism, violence and greed that express the pathologies of our collective human immaturity, while denying the potentials for community, love, and nurturing service that define our more mature human nature. The turning from Empire to Earth Community depends on changing these stories through conversations that make public the transformative inner wisdom we possess as individuals. Institutional change will follow naturally.” (Korten, [Web reference](#))

Danny Glover calls *The Great Turning* “an epic work,” and Margaret Wheatley says it’s “a stunning and compassionate tour de force, calling on history, science, economics, and our human goodwill.” Riane Eisler says it’s “a work of amazing scope and depth.” I would add that, if you’re interested in these issues, you’ll find this a very readable page-turner. But more than that: I am delighted and impressed that Korten not only shows that we are leaving both “strict-father” religion and scientific materialism behind, but also speaks deeply to the spiritual understanding of the mystics: we truly are One, and one with our Source – and that understanding must be the basis for the growing “earth community.”

Putting this in context, he says, “The historic battle between science and religion for cultural hegemony has left us with an untenable choice between a scientific story that denies spirit, intention, meaning, and consciousness and a religious story that denies reason and the evidence of our senses. We have paid a terrible price for this self-imposed myopia. A more accurate and holistic vision of Creation is at hand. Religious sages have been describing it for millennia. Scientists on the cutting edge of their disciplines have been staring it in the face for nearly a century, and a few have recognized its deep significance” (p. 264).

To read more – and to be inspired – get this book!

Dr. Korten is co-founder and board chair of [Positive Futures Network](#), which publishes [YES! A Journal of Positive Futures](#), a board member of the [Business Alliance for Local Living Economies](#), an associate of the International Forum on Globalization, and a member of the Club of Rome. His 1995 book, *When Corporations Rule the World* has become a modern classic, and his most recent book, [Agenda for a New Economy: From Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth](#) has long waiting lists at public libraries. See <http://www.davidkorten.org/> for more.

Reviewed by Judy Steele, MTP, who uses powerful energy medicine and energy psychology techniques with her many coaching and counseling clients. Her goal is to bring about positive changes, whether the client is an individual, a group or organization, or a society. Learn more at www.schoolforliving.org

The Pear Proposition: Scientific Study of Consciousness-Related Physical Phenomena.

2 DVD discs, 1 Audio CD. StripMindMedia 2005 www.stripmindmedia.net www.princeton.edu/~pear
www.icrl.org

Excellent discussions by Robert Jahn with powerpoint presentations on consciousness and its interactions with the physical world. I particularly resonated with his term, 'proactive consciousness,' suggesting that consciousness is a primary, moving force in the universe rather than the reactive response of a nervous system in a living organism. It is a lovely experience to attend Jahn's lectures on a DVD, where it is possible to pause and reflect of the richness of his materials and the breadth and depth of his teachings.

Philip Yancey and Dr. Paul Brand, *The Gift of Pain: Why we hurt and what we can do about it*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan/HarperCollins 1993, 1997. 340 pp 3 ½ pp Bibliography US\$12.99

This is the heartwarming story of Dr. Paul Brand, son of English missionaries who served in India as an expert in hand surgery (and, by frequent necessity, in general surgery) and in leprosy. Philip Yancey is editor-at-large for *Christianity Today*.

Brand is one of those rare, deeply compassionate surgeons who has a wonderful gift for observing the human condition and for developing ways to offer his presence as an essential part of his healing ministry. (See also the editorial of Martina Steiger, ThD on *presence* in this issue of IJHC.)

Brand trained during WWII in London, which served as a helpful preparation for his work in Velore, India – as in both situations doctors often had to do what was required in the situation for the immediate, urgent benefit of the injured and sick – frequently improvising due to limited human and material resources.

Brand was attracted to surgery not for the glory of surgical performances and achievements (although he certainly achieved both), but to improve the lives of the people he helped. He became fascinated with the fact that lepers had deterioration of their limbs to a great extent because of loss of pain sensations. This left them vulnerable to injuries and infections of which they were often totally unaware because they could not feel the warnings pain ordinarily provides – to be gentle and to seek medical or surgical care for the damaged tissues.

Brand developed innovative surgical procedures, but always had to give special attention to the unusual vulnerabilities of the lepers under his care. These required compassionate listening, along with awareness of the psychological and social needs of the lepers, which could easily undermine and counteract the best of surgical methods.

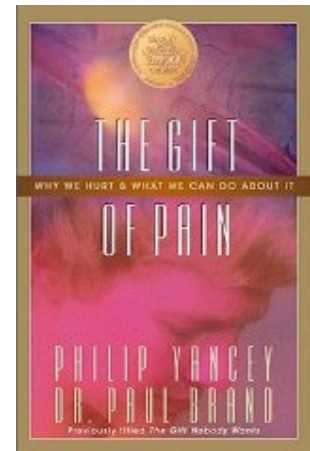
Starting with the awareness of how the lack of pain was a serious, sometimes even fatal liability to the lepers, Brand develops his thesis on how pain contributes to our lives in positive ways.

Here are but a few of the many golden nuggets of medical, surgical and human wisdom Brand shares:

Brand clearly clarifies mechanisms of pain perception that include the peripheral *signal* set up by nerve stimulations of the body; the nerve impulses that carry the *messages*; and the brain that interprets the *meaning* of the signals and messages.

I learned a fundamental distinction: a person who never feels pain is task-oriented, whereas a person who has an intact pain system is self-oriented. The painless person may know by a signal that a certain action is harmful, but if he really wants to, he does it anyway. The pain-sensitive person, no matter how much he wants to do something, will stop for pain, because deep in his psyche he knows that preserving his own self is more significant than anything he might want to do. (p. 195)

The implications of that observation are much more far-reaching than in just addressing the pains of people considering surgical interventions. The same processes apply with pressures on men in Western society to be *reasonable*, on top of masculine genetic preferences for left-brain, linear thinking and socially acquired preferences for disconnecting from their emotions. As men conform to encouragements to ignore and push through their pains, they are more likely to act in ways that can



be harmful. People sensitive to pain are not only aware of preserving their own selves, they are also aware of the importance of preserving the integrity of others.

I have treated patients with acute arthritis who have the same degree of degeneration but respond in opposite ways to the pain it produces. One woman stays in bed all day, clutching the affected hand in genuine agony, and will not even attempt to pick up a pencil. The other says to me, "Yes, my hand hurts. But I'd go crazy just lying around. I've got to work as best I can. After a while, I forget about the pain." Behind these two responses lies a great difference in personality, belief system, confidence, and expectations about health. The "pain-prone" person sees herself as a victim, unfairly cursed. The disorder defines her identity. The second sees herself as a regular human being somewhat slowed down by pain. I have had some arthritis patients who strike me as genuinely heroic about pain. In the morning they slowly force their stiff hands open; it hurts, yes, but the fact that they feel *in charge* gives them a measure of control that keeps pain from dominating. (p. 280)

Dr. Hans Selye was the true pioneer in discovering the impact of emotions on health...

As Selye summarized his research toward the end of his life, he named vengeance and bitterness as the emotional responses most likely to produce high stress levels in human beings. Conversely, he concluded, *gratitude* is the single response most nourishing to health. I find myself agreeing with Selye, in part because a grateful appreciation for pain's many benefits has so transformed my own outlook.

Peopole who view pain as the enemy, I have noted, instinctively respond with vengeance or bitterness – *Why me? I don't deserve this! It's not fair!* – which has the vicious circle effect of making their pain even worse... (p. 222)

I also give Brand top marks for his wonderful ways of encouraging people to employ all of their capacities to bring about healing in their lives. These also include social supports – which are much more commonly present in India.

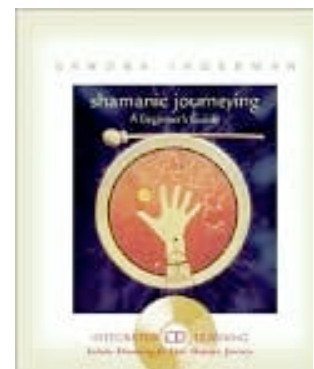
Where this book is a bit dated is in its stopping short of understanding that physical pain is often a message about the disharmonies in a person's life. When these pains are addressed, the physical pains often clear. (This is well illustrated in the article in this issue of IJHC by Patsy Anthony-Green on clearing the pain of severe cartilage degeneration in her knee by using Emotional Freedom Techniques; and also illustrated in WHEE: Whole Health – Easily and Effectively, www.paintap.com.) An index would also have been helpful.

The above criticisms are minor, however, relative to the wonderful, heart-felt sharings about Paul Brand's work.

Sandra Ingerman. Shamanic Journeying: A beginner's guide, Boulder, CO: Sounds True 2004. 79 pp. \$19.95

This is a lovely book which instructs the reader in how to explore the lower, middle and upper realms of shamanic journeying. Sandra Ingerman, a very gifted Harner -trained shaman and shamanic teacher, is also a gifted writer. Her discussions are clear and concise, well illustrated with examples from her practice, and sensibly empowering readers to explore and learn to trust their own experiences and judgment.

Spirit guides frequently present images or make suggestions that may have



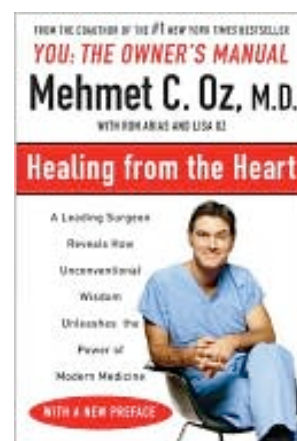
diverse interpretations. I was particularly taken with the following example of caution needed in interpreting the language of metaphors:

...the Aramaic language – the language of Jesus... was highly metaphorical and poetic. When the Bible was translated from Aramaic into Greek and then into English, the metaphors were translated literally, often changing the meaning of the words. One example is that there is no word in the Aramaic language for either 'good' or 'evil.' The most comparable words in Aramaic were 'ripe' and 'unripe,' referring to how everything is part of an ongoing, organic process. But when the Bible was translated into Greek and then English, the words chosen to represent 'ripe' and 'unripe' were 'good' and 'evil.' This mistranslation alone shaped the evolution of Judao-Christian culture such that human nature became perceived as something separate from the natural cycles of readiness and unreadiness. (p. 43-44)

A drumming CD to help shift consciousness for journeying comes with the book.

Mehmet Oz, MD with Ron Arias and Lisa Oz. Healing from the Heart: A Leading Surgeon combines Eastern and Western Traditions to Create the Medicine of the Future, New York: Plume/ Penguin 1998 201 pp 12.95

This is an easy read by a most interesting surgeon who shares the story of his personal journey into and through a holistic surgical practice. Oz is Professor of Surgery at Columbia University College. His claim to fame, besides having been featured recently over an extended period on the Oprah show (well after this book was written), is that he incorporates a spectrum of complementary therapies in his practice. These include homeopathy, nutritional and vitamin supplements, acupuncture, massage and bioenergy healing. The open-mindedness of Oz to these therapies is very unusual for a surgeon.

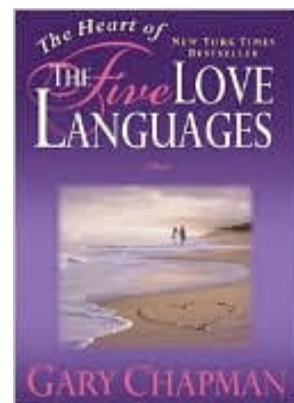


Gary Chapman. The Heart of the Five Love Languages, Chicago, IL: Northfield 2007. 66 pp \$5.99

This lovely mini-book presents the essence of Gary Chapman's observations (also shared in longer versions) on ways in which we express love towards each other, and conversely, how we prefer to have love expressed towards ourselves.

1. Words of Affirmation
2. Quality Time
3. Gifts
4. Acts of Service
5. Physical Touch

It is well worth knowing these languages so that we can clarify with our significant others how to communicate our intended messages of love, and to ask them to communicate with us in the languages we are most comfortable speaking/ receiving.



Rajan Sankaran. The Soul of Remedies, Mumbai: Homeopathic Medical Publishers 1997, 2006. www.thespiritofhomeopathy.com spirit@vsnl.com HB 227 pp plus tables and index

This book conveys Rajan Sankaran's personal experience with 100 remedies and his style of practice.

Rajan Sankaran. *The Spirit of Homeopathy*, 3rd ed. Mumbai: Homeopathic Medical Publishers 2000, 2006. www.thespiritofhomeopathy.com spirit@vsnl.com HB 357 pp plus index

Rajan Sankaran focuses on psychological states as the primary issue to address with homeopathy. He emphasizes that a person's total being is to be understood from their understanding of and beliefs about the situation in which they find themselves, and that this situation will be multi-faceted, relating in complex ways to the present and to the past history.

...What is important to note is that every single aspect of the patient fits into one state, because the whole posture represents a survival mechanism in a specific situation. So, we must understand that every symptom which exists must fit the pattern. If some symptom does not fit, the selection may be wrong. The ideas of situational Materia Medica is [sic] to study a pattern behind the conglomeration. It compels us to perceive the whole state of the patient as a survival mechanism in a particular situation. It is a question of what situation needs such state and then of identifying a remedy whose state originates from a similar situation.

In essence, situational Materia Medica is nothing but the basic delusion of that remedy state. It is the viewpoint from which all the expressions of the state arise, with their obsessions and compulsions.

...what is important to trace is not what situation the person is in but to what situation he is reacting. If you find that out, the situational Materia Medica will be useful. The situation to which he is reacting might have occurred earlier in his life, or in his mother during pregnancy or in his parents. That will merely confirm your prescription but will not be the indication for it. The indication will always be the totality of his expressions including his dreams and his delusions from which we get an idea of his perception of the situation. For this you have to ask in which situation should he behave like this. Of course, we have already mentioned that a state will try to create a situation similar to the original situation; so we can also ask which situation he has created...

The person who understands the situational Materia Medica is one who has thoroughly grasped the concept of disease as a posture, as a state of being, and not as a conglomeration of symptoms or pathology. (p. 285-286)

Sankaran's views differ from Western understandings of psychological mechanisms. His apparent successes in treating on the basis of these understandings invite dialogue – for mutual deepening of understandings of the human condition.

Reviews are by Daniel J. Benor, MD, IJHC Editor, unless otherwise indicated