

The two leather chairs of community
and isolation:
the desire to heal — a drilling for water;
a searching for the doctor.
The body a given, a gift, a limitation,
also a mystery
of which there be no end to the cruel
suspensions of its mystery.
Over my interiority as if, paradoxically,
outside myself
how powerful am I, Doctor? You who
know and do not know the body,
how powerful are we? . . .

It is not surprising that the sharing of poems by patient and physician nurtures the relation between creative self-expression and healing. Unfortunately, the reality of today's 15-minute office visits with patients may preclude such exchanges. Nevertheless, reading this book is an experience in and of itself. The book offers a reflective moment similar to what one might feel while sitting in a place of worship. It is an afternoon by a waterfall or at the sea's edge for the busy practitioner, in which to stop and listen to the rhythms of life.

Of "Famine Relief," by Marilyn Krysl, about feeding a starving girl in Calcutta, India, Campo writes, "We see laid bare in poetry the complex intersection of biological and cultural forces; in the face of the most profound physiologic deprivation, the delicious mystical sustenance of empathy abounds."

Explain, please, this wonder, this
creatorous pleasure,

this ruby of feeling
while I feed another being: tell me why

when Hasina opens her mouth,
it's as though the world in its entirety

opens, the lotus of the Buddha unfolding
its jewel. Veil of skin, draped over

bone: Hasina's fourteen, so thin
she can't walk, sit up,

hold a cup. Eyes a single beam
scanning for food, even when

she's full. She's the mouth
of the soul. . . .

Campo invites readers to take part in this therapeutic dance of words. The reader may feel an urge to recite or reread a favorite poem. He writes, "Let us pull ourselves away from validating science, and open our minds to the music of the poets themselves." Campo acknowledges that even the best iambic pentameter cannot replace important medications such as pegylated interferon for his patients with hepatitis C. But he believes that poetry serves where medicine remains notoriously inept, as in exploring and accepting death, "the greatest human drama of all."

Audre Lorde, an activist for social justice who died of breast cancer in 1992, wrote in "A Song for Many Movements":

Nobody wants to die on the way
caught between ghosts of whiteness
and the real water
none of us wanted to leave
our bones
on the way to salvation . . .

Campo uses Lorde's poem to conclude that "in poetry, that most valuable effort against the dark, we might all just live and love forever."

Campo successfully weaves such threads of philosophy and psychotherapy into his reflections on patients and society. His is a gallant mission, to use poetry to "reclaim medicine as the art it truly remains" — a healing art.

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CORRECTION

A Comparison of Two Intensities of Warfarin for the Prevention of Recurrent Thrombosis in Patients with the Antiphospholipid Antibody Syndrome (September 18, 2003;349:1133-8). On page 1136, in Table 1, the number (percentage) of patients who had systemic lupus erythematosus in the group with a target international normalized ratio of 2.0 to 3.0 should have been 16 (28), rather than 6 (10), as printed, and the corresponding *P* value should have been 0.21, rather than 0.24, as printed.