

Book review

Eloquent Body

By Dawn Garisch. *Modjaji Books*. 2012.
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There is a creative artist within every person and everyone has something unique to explore. Few realise and actualise it; many have no time or interest, or are overcome with the apprehension of self-revelation. It may be that doctors and scientists have a special opportunity or talent for creative art, be it music, poetry, writing or the fine arts, given their privileged insights into the human condition and the scientific method. One thinks here of Chekhov, Marie Curie, Borodin, Frida Kahlo, William Carlos Williams, A J Cronin, Conan Doyle, Somerset Maugham, Alexander Doblin,

Keats, Kathe Kollwitz and C Louis Leipoldt. Not uncommonly, patients, too, seek refuge in the creative arts.

In *Eloquent Body* Dawn Garisch examines her own creativity in a frank and carefully researched semi-autobiographical new book. She is medical practitioner, novelist, poet, walker, mother and patient herself. She sees herself as a doctor who writes, wanting to become a writer who doctors. Her conflict is not resolved. She is an accomplished writer and her life is enriched by doctoring. She draws widely on her experience with patients – their fortitude, frailties, obstinacy and quirks. She is influenced by Jung. It is as a doctor that she explores, confronts and embraces issues of truth, fear, doubt, service and trust in the creative process. She believes

in the innate self-healing capacity of the body and in the part that the arts can play in achieving that. She has discovered that it is important to relinquish the illusion of control. She maintains that in completing her book the two streams of her life converge. One is not convinced that she has at last found repose, and quite possibly that is a good thing – for her, for us her readers and, not least, for her patients.

Creative art is therapeutic, if not necessarily curative, for patient and for health practitioner alike. Dawn Garisch knows. It's there, clearly, in her book and she has written it modestly and with courage.

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