

2011 International Symposium on Poetry and Medicine

Saturday 7th May 2011

Medical Teaching Centre
Building 37
University of Warwick
Gibbet Hill Campus, CV4 7AL, UK

ABSTRACT



Sex and poetry

Author(s): Sandy Goldbeck-Wood

At first glance small and particular, the subject of sex in poetry can rapidly seem too big and slippery for comfort. Sex seems, at second glance, to be everywhere in poetry. It figures as a subject in its own right - frankly or wrapped in metaphor; embodied within, or excised from, emotional context. Or else it resonates in a poem's subtext, as metaphor or allusion, potentiating other material, like a sort of poetic "co-factor" to facilitate the poet's penetration of the reader's defences. Pinning this down is challenging. Head-on database searches yield few direct hits, but indirect, inclusive searching yields an unfeasibly large number. More invitation than conclusion, this presentation will set the scene for debate, sketching out some themes and distinctions. How have poets navigated the lines which join and divide sex, love, sensuality, and pornography? Where has sex been treated coyly, lyrically, or with nail-on-head bluntness? When does bard become bawd, and what are the general rules of engagement, if the reader is to acquiesce? And when do the politics of gender or of sexuality risk intruding into the intimate relationship between poet and reader – or were they there all along?