

MISHA - THE REPAIR MAN.

MISHA NORLAND INTERVIEW

by Lelia Doolan

LD: Misha, to start at the beginning; how do people learn to be homoeopaths?

MN: I think you have to be a homoeopath first - then you learn how not to be a homoeopath!

LD: What do schools do then to help in the process?

MN: In homoeopathy, as in any school, there is a lot to learn. There are many facts that you have to have under your belt before you can begin to practice in a loose and free way.

Schools, obviously, can cram you full of facts, they can fill your bottle, so to speak. If you are to go out and practice as a homoeopath, though, it takes much more than just having a bottle full of facts. You have to have an aptitude for it and a school can't make or break an aptitude. As somebody once said: education is not about filling bottles; it's about lighting lamps. So what the school can do is light the lamp of a neophyte homoeopath and keep the light burning. And then, help them in their process of learning to forget what they've learned, in order to step out of the way of the knowledge and just

flow into being a homoeopath.

LD: It sounds wonderfully organic but obviously it takes a great deal of organising.

So, while we're on the subject, did you learn in a school to fill your bottle?

MN: Well, I had a chequered history in school. I was expelled from my first school when I was seven because I was naughty, which doesn't say much for the school, I must say, and I changed schools every two years thereafter. Set a kind of pattern. I hated school. I hated being shut up in rooms. But fortunately in every school I attended there was at least one teacher - a man or a woman - who inspired me. They didn't always teach me anything but I always found one person to inspire me and I used to hang out with them as much as I could. There was one teacher I really adored; he was an Irishman who taught English literature. I used to spend as much time as I could in his house. He must have thought I was a total nuisance but I wouldn't go away. He inspired my love of Ireland, along with W.B.

Yeats.

LD: When you finished school what did you do?

MN: I went into films. Quite a few things happened. A lot of people who were healers said to me: "you're a natural healer and that is what you should be doing". And I ran a million miles! There were two reasons for it, I guess: I've always been a good listener -- and good listening means getting in there and drawing out more. So people would often say to me: "How come I'm telling you all this?". The other was that my family background is Middle European - part Jewish - and refugee, but the real thing was understanding at a very early age that humans could behave in the way that they did, just that they could [referring to World War II] - that these things could happen; that people could do to one another what they did then - all of that put questions in my mind that have never gone away. So it wasn't just a case of listening. It was a case of wishing to understand and somehow repair.

LD: You were born in Czechoslovakia?

MN: No, my parents were. I was born in Wales; it was a safe haven. My family operated very well at that time and moved to London when things got hectic for them. My childhood was very loving. Lots of very early memories which were good. I have a brother who is nine years older so really I am more like a single child.

LD: This need to repair. Were you very aware, as a small child, of what had been done to people during the War?

MN: Yes, completely. It must have been in the conversation a great deal. Philosophic inquiry was what happened at the dinner table mostly.

LD: And were your family practising Jews?

MN: No, absolutely not. My father had shaken that off in his youth and never returned to it. And my mother had no religion. But a strong spiritual quality.

LD: Then you went into film in order to run away from being a healer.... run away from being the repair man?

MN: Yes, I wanted to have fun. I figured that someone who came from an artistic background as I did, and was good at technology which I was -- I'd studied sciences at school -- that film was a good way of blending them both. This was the thought-out reason. I did love the movies and living in Hampstead we had a

movie house, an independent movie house, which showed only films that the man who owned the house really personally loved, which were of a very narrow range and very little 'Hollywood'. The point was they were personally selected films for their excellence so I got an extremely one-sided view of films, but a brilliant view.

LD: What kind of films?

MN: In terms of Hollywood he would not have stretched beyond black and white; he was not into colour! -- Hitchcock, Ealing comedies, Truffaut, the Italians, the great Russians --

LD: Great -

MN: Absolutely! This fuelled my imagination as you can believe. So I thought this was much more fun. And I had quite a few friends who were part of the Everyman [the name of the Hampstead cinema] circle. And we made movies together. I had no formal training, I just jumped in and did it. I started out as an apprentice assistant, got as many short ends as I could -- and was making movies from my first day as an assistant in the cutting room.

LD: That's the way to do it, all right. What would you think of an apprenticeship system for homoeopathy? Maybe there aren't enough homoeopaths around yet? In film, for instance, students regularly go off on placement with a production company for at least a month every year -

MN: Of course it would be a good way. It works out like that to a certain extent with me because they are placed with me for 4 years. And they can observe through video link. But even as a Gemini, there are only two of me! To take everyone on in a proper apprenticeship, given the situation we work in, is clearly impossible. You know how there are styles in schools. Those who graduated through your school carry your stamp and are the mentors and the supervisors for the next generation of students. So the apprenticeship continues and it is actually the best way of learning. But it isn't possible physically, personally, with me.

LD: Right, so. But to go back; what seized you to leave the happy world of film?

MN: It ceased to be a happy world after some years. The art-cinema world was pretty well non-existent. It had had a little flourishing in England with Lindsay Anderson and Karl Reisz, just a little flicker which then died fast. I entered the film industry at the moment of that



flicker - or really on the ashes of it. The documentary film industry was vanishing fast as well -- so everything that I became involved in had a commercial orientation and that has never interested me *per se*. And also, commerce is a whore. She opens her legs for whoever has money. And so I truly felt myself to be a whore, not a good place to be. So money, yes, and contracts, yes. I ended up in the worst place I could have been which was directing TV commercials, for Persil, Kellogs Corn Flakes and so on -- which powder really does wash whiter.....

Then another thing happened. I had a kid. When he was a year and a half my then wife, who never wanted the kid in the first place, nor was prepared to have an abortion because it went against her principles, disappeared, vanished for 4 years, out of the lives of all those who'd formerly known her, including her parents. No one knew where she had gone. She wasn't happy in her situation. So I became his single parent and I was not able in my heart to have somebody else look after him in my place while I continued a career that my heart wasn't in. My heart was for him. Manny, his name is. So that changed things around. So whenever someone is deeply shocked in such a way, you go back to what was really important because you lost the other things. It took me back on my course. So I started to study. I was looking around amongst healers and different healing

modalities to see what folks were up to and what was there. At the home of one of the healers whom I visited -- actually I was a regular because she was such a gas, a wise old lady -- there were some pictures, diagrammatic pictures, made by a colleague friend of hers that represented healing energies. I wanted to meet this man because they fascinated me. This was John DaMonte - the homoeopath [see box on next page]. So I attached myself to DaMonte who ran fortnightly evening classes.

The form of it was that the core group would offer up their house as a venue for the meetings so we would alternate places. And we discussed everything: philosophy, healing, remedies, etc. It was not a very formal education but it certainly was inspiring. And the rest was where you looked and where you read. To give you one more bit of the story: before I'd met John and when I was already curious about homoeopathy, somebody suggested that I get some books by a gentlemen called John Clarke and that the *Materia Medica* was a good start. So I ordered the *Materia Medica* by John Clarke, little knowing that it was a three-volume book, and received in due course notification from the bookshop that it had arrived. So I arrived too and made my acquaintance with the book which I was really loath to buy - it was so expensive - God! And so I spent some hours in the bookshop hidden away in the back somewhere, reading it and I

couldn't leave without it. There was no way. It was my introduction to homœopathy.

Somebody said: homœopathy is 'like cures like' and I thought, yea, well of course! And that was it really! And then there was John Clarke and then there was John DaMonte....

LD: And that settled it. So did you start practicing while you were still participating in the fortnightly events?

MN: Yes, people would hear that you were up to homœopathy. I was a single parent and was going to playgroups and things, mingling with mums, toddlers and babies - the whole range.

And word got about. That is how it began really. I would take every case back to John. I was such a pest - poor John! And then the

bastard died.

LD: Heavens.....How far along the road had you been with him?

MN: Not far enough. I am guessing now, about 4 years. I (laugh) called him up afterwards "Hey, John" - and waited for the divine voice!

LD: But was it also a kind of liberation?

MN: It was a not a real liberation. I missed him and loved him, he was a wonderful man. But then I got very busy and once I met Brigitte my life really stabilized. I met her first as a patient, as one does. You're not meant to marry your patient, understand.

LD: So you had a very busy practice... Were you already beginning to think about how other people should become homœopaths?

DRUIDS, HEALING, ENERGY FIELDS

DaMonte had been taught by a number of different people, notably Don Foubister who did the work on Carcinosis and Thomas Maugham, who was the chief Druid and a homœopath of long standing. And, indeed, John DaMonte was very involved in the Druid order for a long time until eventually he withdrew. The Druid Order is a fascinating thing. Thomas Maugham was actually very involved in and had a long standing love affair with the theosophical movement

LD: Like W.B. Yeats?....

MN: Yes; so his brand of Druidism incorporated and actually stood on the ground of theosophy and the inner teaching was the Kabbala. So we had Judeo-Christianity coupled with an appreciation of energies; and festivals were held at solstices and equinoxes and indeed still are in sites of importance. Our meetings were called 'groves'. I got drawn into it for a very brief period but my heart was not in it.

LD: And the energy

illustrations which so impressed you, what were they representing?

MN: They were representing thought forms. They were pictures of remedies, except that they weren't actual remedies; they were abstract things. Are you familiar with the work of Malcolm Ray? He made visual representations of the energy fields of the remedies and this is the same idea - it's a visual representation. The parameters are: you draw a circle, you make marks along the perimeter of the circle and the position is governed by dowsing while holding the image in your mind. In other words, you mentally focus on an image - allow the pendulum to find some points on the circumference of the circle and then you join the points in the order that you made them and you have a pattern.

LD: This process, what is it disclosing?

MN: It isn't actually disclosing anything. It is a way of refocusing or reminding one of

the state one was in before. So the picture is a representation of the thought that preceded the picture.

LD: And the purpose?

MN: Healing. To heal the person who is there. It's an application of homœopathy. As in homœopathy, you match the energy field of a substance with the energy field of a disturbed person according to the law of similars. Here the same idea holds. It is the law of similars that allows you to decide that this is the concept that this person needs.

LD: So you are making a projection of the energy field of that person.

MN: Yes, and you can do it for remedies too by holding the concept of, for instance, Stramonium, in mind, and then drawing it on the page.

LD: Have you used this much?

MN: No, I have not really followed this side of Tom's work or radionic work because for me personally it is a bit too ungrounded. Each to their own....

MN: Yes, but I want to say something first about busy practices. One of the things I found difficult in those days was having a sense of a homœopathic family. There were other homœopaths but they were in another place from me - operating out of a different inner world, a different philosophical background. At the time my practice was getting very busy, I was finding a group of people whose inner world I shared. This was the group who had concentrated themselves around Barbara Sommers and Ian Gordon Brown and the work in transpersonal psychology. So, that was an important branching into (rather than out of) my work as a prescriber at that time. It helped me to formulate some of the background for the way in which I was going to teach in the future.

LD: I'm aware that being a prescriber can become very thin unless you are constantly being nourished by ideas, philosophy, the wisdom of other people apart from yourself...

MN: Absolutely. It is too easy to become a health technician, computerizing symptoms and popping pills. That is not what it is about.

LD: Can you say a bit about how the work in transpersonal psychology was nourishing you?

MN: Indeed. There are a number of different strands that weave together to form the growing tip of this transpersonal psychology -- of which the one that I particularly pick up is the Jungian strand. Because I think that Jung is a very major source of wisdom. He is wonderfully eclectic, isn't he. And Gordon's work on Freud. By the way, I read Freud in my late teens - dream analysis. I didn't know about Jung. Another thing I did in my teens was to get into Hindu mysticism. And then theosophy, rather than Buddhism, but that was just what was available to me at the time. I guess it is because I had a Hindu teacher...

LD: Back to transpersonal psychology...

MN: Yes; the other strand in it that is really important and actually informs it the most is Eastern spiritualism, any type of spiritualism, I guess. For the time we're in, the imagery and central tenants of Christian spirituality no longer hold water for us. We look to others, other places - Eastern mysticism, the psycho-analytic tradition and Jung's depth psychology in particular. These are what fed me...

LD: And you are using all these things to create or construct your world view -- and using it to form the ideas for your own school?

MN: Yes. Once John DaMonte popped his clogs, the group did not disband. We continued. We considered it our work initially to write down what we had been taught. So we regurgitated from our memories and from our notes and tried to reconstruct. This was at the time when homœopathy was beginning to ferment and increase - around 1976-77. The College of Homœopathy - the Robert Davidson and Martin Miles College - dates, I think, from 1978. They were actually in Thomas Maugham's group, the South London group. And the Society came out of it. It came out of the two groups coming together, the South and North London groups -- again at around this time, 1978. So, yes, we were reconstructing or renovating the teachings of John and those people, and others were joining us from the outside. Those of us who had something to say would say it and I guess I was actually the busiest in practice of this particular group. So I ended up saying the most. So after a certain period it became 'my' group, while still remaining John's group in name. But I did most of it. Then it extended and came to meet in my house and, in a sense, the school started there. Then when the College of Homœopathy was going, I didn't teach the first year but the second year I did. And they gave me a very extraordinary task - they said: we would like you to teach *Materia Medica* - just *Materia Medica* - to this group. They had a group of about 25 students. I was to just do *Materia Medica* in the first year. So that is how I cut my teeth. I knew how to teach because I began with John Clarke. I love *Materia Medica*! Most things that are useful medicines have entered into our healing experience for a long time prior to their identification as medicines. And so there is usage, maybe in mythology, there may already be links made between different realms of existence or different spheres of activity. I delight in that connectedness.

LD: It is a great play.

MN: Yes! With archetypal characters, strutting about on this huge stage. What lines they have...

LD: Right. So to go back to the school idea again -- how did you come to move out of London?

MN: I had been thinking of London for some time as some kind of hideous fungal growth. Which is a bad way to think about where you

live. And when Manny, aged at about nine, started throwing milk bottles at passing cars and putting fireworks in peoples' letterboxes, God forbid, I figured that peer pressure was stronger on him than my power to counteract it and the best thing was to get the hell out! Also, Brigitte, the love of my life, and I, had a small baby at that time. So moving out of London became not only obvious but 'the' thing to do. And, one of my students who was living in Tiverton already had a number of students studying nutritional medicine and said why don't you come and teach the group we have? Come and teach homœopathy. It is already set up for you. The space is there, the students are there. Will you do it? Yes, I said and the Tiverton area I knew already. I'd spent some very happy months there - as a 12 year old, actually. I like it, it's enough like Wales. Those early memories are emblazoned in you, in your mind, and I'd had a happy childhood in Wales. But Wales was too remote for a school. So back I went. First to Tiverton. That's what we did.

LD: So tell us about your school... After John DaMonte and the group, and your experience teaching, here was the opportunity to put it all together. How did you structure it?

MN: Things were very simple in the beginning. The Society had only been going a couple of years and there was only one other College going. We were inventing the wheel for ourselves, really. There weren't any known assessment systems other than the ones we had as models from our school experiences or university experience. And they didn't seem appropriate. We had somebody teaching the medical sciences who was already there. So in the first group I taught anatomy and physiology and homœopathy and someone else taught disease - pathology. I think that the body in health is such a wonderful thing. It is great to talk about it, really exciting. And then Dave Mundy came in and helped, especially in teaching philosophy and *Materia Medica*. He had a background in acupuncture and a very nice line on it. He's a wonderful teacher. We had few structures in place. I think we were probably rather better at lighting the lamp than filling the bottle initially. But then, you need a balance between the two. We put structures in place - first of all for the first four groups. I had end-of-term exams, little exams - paper

exams. But when people went out there was no way of holding their hands - no supervision structures. I always encouraged people to phone me if they had problem cases, but that was all.

We had about 20 students every year. Then we put some more refined structures in place - a weekend system, a residential system, for three years which has now become four.

LD: Does it need four years?

MN: Well, I think that it needs more than four years. In terms of filling the bottle, it's just about OK. But it does require people to work very hard. Truly I feel it is a bit little, in a part time course.

LD: What would your ideal be?

MN: You know the fantasy of winning the lottery. If £5 million landed in my pocket I would know what to do with it. I would have no problem with it in theory. I would like somebody who has a working, ecologically sound farm, with a large house and lots of outbuildings to say 'I'd like a school for healing to come here'. It would be wonderful if people could drop out of their lives for a while and drop into this environment where they would work. There would be work to be done in the fields as well, growing food and sustaining themselves would be part of the activity.

LD: Sounds like a monastery -

MN: Yes, you've got it. And for a number of years you would live there and learn and watch and obviously it would be a healing clinic. And people would come to it, as they do. It would mean stopping what you are doing.

LD: There are the ruins of monasteries here in the Burren where you can still decipher the remnants of their herb gardens - which they used long ago in their healing arts. It makes a lot of sense. And would people come for just as long as they needed?

MN: Well not exactly, there would have to be some structure on things and they wouldn't come indefinitely unless they were part of the family and needed to be here -- from all over the world. It would take commitment. This is a dream, remember. I personally would like to make that step but I'm in *this* step now, having gone through a wobble the past few years over to what extent I wish to continue to do it. I am now happy with that and I am fully committed.

LD: You know how there are different models and different approaches. Do you deal with that in the College?

MN: Absolutely not, no. There isn't a 'Misha Norland' brand of homoeopathy. It's really easy to confuse students and Lord knows I was confused enough when I started. I was given a very eclectic form of homoeopathy: high potencies did the real work, was the highest ideal -- but in the real world, you know, where things are all complicated, you've got to drain the organs with these kind of organ drainage remedies like the French do; then there are cell salts which are used to support the structure..... there was the idea of the cathedral with its spire, and the flying buttresses to keep it up there -- they are like the cell salts, the low potencies that you give. This was very prevalent in England; you get it in Blackie's book. This is the way we were taught - and bowel nosodes got thrown in as well! So you might be seeing a patient and actually giving him three or four remedies in sequence or even a few simultaneously, different remedies. We weren't taught to give combinations so much although Thomas Maugham was quite into it. He was into his triads. There is nothing wrong with anything as long as you know what you are doing, in my opinion.

There is no law, no God, that says: 'Thou shalt not mix remedies'. But you must know what you are doing and the more things you mix the more difficult it is to know what is having an effect. And whenever I've got into a right muddle, I've figured that the best thing to do is to go to first principles. The first principle is to remove as many variables as possible. And I discovered that one thing, given some time to work itself out, because you have to reorganise yourself in order for the remedy to work through -- and that might apply in your life as well -- but given time for that kind of reorganisation to occur, one remedy can do amazing things; it may need repeating but it still is astonishing. So that's personally the way I always do things and in that it still has so much the form of an apprenticeship, one is continually exploring....



Unsuitable Cases of Treatment

Some recent research findings from an article by The Observer's Health Correspondent, Judy Jones, summarised by the author.

Hip replacements

One in five of the 40,000 operations a year has to be repeated because doctors do not know which of the 34 types of hip prostheses work best.

Dilatation and curettage (D&C)

UK's most common gynaecological operation. Supposed to reduce menstrual bleeding, but research shows it rarely works and may cause harm.

Grommets

Meant to cure 'glue ear', a form of deafness in children, by inserting a small tube or grommet into the ear. Often the operation brings only temporary relief.

X-rays

Often carried out for no sound clinical reason, especially before an operation, wasting at least £20m a year, according to the Audit Commission.

Keyhole surgery

Some 1.8 million operations were done over five years in the UK before evaluations began to cast doubt on their safety.

Traction for chronic back pain

Commonly prescribed for several weeks; of little benefit beyond two days and potentially harmful because of loss of muscle tone.

Drug therapy

People with advanced cancer are often given chemotherapy, more on hope than expectation, risking dangerous side-effects; the Audit Commission puts the cost of mis-prescribing other drugs by GPs at £425m a year.

Heart surgery

Up to 40 per cent of people who have balloon angioplasty to clear clogged arteries in angina cases require a repeat operation within six months.

Source : The Observer
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