

Looking Back Moving Forward

By Rowena J. Ronson, 497 pages, paperback, \$35, ISBN 978-0-9547033-3-2

Reviewed by Tina Quirk, MS, PCH

Homeopaths have the unusual ability to keep both the past and the future in simultaneous view. We have a healing tradition that reveres its history by practicing according to the same philosophy and principles established by our founder two hundred years ago. And true to the human spirit of inquiry and our urge to evolve, we have ventured forth from this solid foundation to investigate new theories and devise novel methodologies. From both stances, homeopaths are asking how do we reconcile new views with old?

In *Looking Back Moving Forward*, Rowena Ronson brings us a book that speaks to this question. Inspired to look at where homeopathy has come from in the past 40 years and where it is going, Ronson spent a year interviewing 34 teachers and practitioners of homeopathy based in the United Kingdom. She has compiled these interviews into a living history of UK homeopathy, and if one reads carefully, a direction for the future emerges. Ronson hopes that by seeing that we have a common root, we will all “pull together as a profession to secure a continued and expanding future for homeopathy.”

Most American homeopaths are unaware of the history of British homeopathy, although it is highly relevant to us since the recent resurgence of homeopathy in the United States was in large part fueled by the revitalization of homeopathy in the UK. Many of our early teachers were from England, and their influence on the development of American homeopathy has been substantial. Current issues that we are deliberating in America, such as sustainable practice, clinical supervision, educational curriculum, and professional standing, have been examined, clarified, and worked out by our UK counterparts.

With great curiosity I opened Ronson’s book and discovered whom she interviewed. Misha Norland, Simon Taffler and Jeremy Sherr were there. With a keen interest I read as Robert Davidson, Martin Miles, and Peter Chappell, who along with Norland, talk about their beginnings in homeopathy and their initial inspiring shamanic meetings with Thomas Maughan. They tell about their early days as ardent missionaries of homeopathy—starting homeopathic colleges, journals, and professional societies after their own teachers’ early and tragic deaths.

Through the pages of *Looking Back Moving Forward*, we meet other homeopaths such as Francis Treuherz, writer, journal editor (past and currently of *The Homeopath*) and homeopathic archivist, and Sheilagh Creasy, a long time teacher, who relates her experience treating Chernobyl victims at a Russian monastery clinic. Brian Kaplan, author of *The Homeopathic Conversation*, melds his medical background with the “human side” of homeopathy and healing. Rebecca Preston, known for her repertorial ability, tells about her proving of Amethyst. Kate Chatfield talks about teaching in a degree course and her interest in homeopathic research. Lionel Milgrom, practicing homeopath and scientist, shares his thoughts on entanglement theory and homeopathy.

The interviewees come from remarkably varied backgrounds—art, film, theater, biology, dentistry, philosophy, and social activism—but the conversation is familiar to anyone who has spent more than ten minutes in a gathering of homeopaths. What is the best potency? How do we know when a patient is getting better? What is health? What is disease? What is the best way to teach students? Is it possible to teach the art of homeopathy? How do you study provings? What about new methodologies, remedy families, and relationships? What is classical homeopathy? Is there a simillimum?

With a wide range of homeopaths represented, you may wonder how this book maintains cohesiveness. It is Ronson’s skilled interviewing, no doubt honed by her homeopathic case-taking, that keeps the golden thread running among the narratives. The interviewees seem eager to tell their story. Ronson gives them space to do that, while gently shaping the discussion to focus on their beginnings in homeopathy and their view of the future.

Ronson calls this book her “journey.” In each chapter, she describes the setting in which she interviewed the homeopath, ranging from homes to local bars, lunch spots, and Harley Street. She sometimes includes what crowded highway she had to drive to get there and her own feelings of nervousness, excitement or fascination at meeting the individual. Through these observations, she invites us into the interview. We feel this is our journey as well, and we are eager to enter into the shared conversation. This is not a book to be read at one sitting, but one to be visited

every so often as if, like Ronson, you were meeting the interviewee for a lunch date or for tea.

What is the conclusion of this book, and what does the future hold for UK homeopathy, and by inference, world homeopathy? I would have liked to hear more from Ronson on this subject. Her last chapter, “What I learnt, reflections and questions for the future,” was the only part of the book that left me a bit dissatisfied. Her reflections are more about making homeopathy attractive to potential users rather than about the future of the profession.

An indication of the direction homeopathy is going can be gathered from listening to the aspirations of the homeopaths interviewed. Some are scientific, such as Jeremy Sherr’s mission to do formal research on homeopathy and AIDS in Africa. Lionel Milgrom’s ambition to understand homeopathy as quantum physics is theoretical, and Annette Gamblin’s desire to integrate homeopathy into a holistic health system is organizational. Other goals relate to teaching, such as Ellen Kramer’s commitment to challenge students’ belief systems, and Simon Taffler’s aim to nurture and support students to think homeopathically. Regardless of the personal focus, each homeopath expresses a passionate dedication to homeopathy and a steadfast mission to bring deep healing to suffering patients. These aspirations point to a future that is “continued” and “expanding,” reassuring us that Ronson’s purpose for compiling the book will be fulfilled.

Ronson’s book is a dynamic expression of 34 homeopaths who share the common root of Hahnemann’s homeopathy, and at the same time, reflect the individuality of thousands of homeopaths worldwide. It encourages us to look back and move forward at the same time. In homeopathy’s current state of polarization, division and dissent, this book may turn out to be homeopathic.

In the US, *Looking Back Moving Forward* is available from Minimum Price Homeopathic Books and Whole Health Now. Books are also available directly from www.lookingbackmoving-forward.com.

Inspired by her UK teachers, Tina Quirk moved forward from her profession as a psychiatric nurse practitioner to become a homeopath. She practices, teaches, writes, and manages Jeremy Sherr’s practice in New York City. With him, she is co-authoring a research proposal to study homeopathic treatment of AIDS patients in Tanzania. Email: tinqui@aol.com