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E. Summerson Carr, *Scripting addiction: The politics of therapeutic talk and American sobriety*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. 323 pp. US\$ 29.95 (paperback). ISBN 978-0691144504.

In her well-crafted ethnography, *Scripting addiction: The politics of therapeutic talk and American sobriety*, E. Summerson Carr provides fascinating insights into the ways that institutionalized talk therapy is used as a means of shaping the subjectivities of recovering alcoholic and drug addicted women in an American mid-western city. Focusing on the therapeutic and institutional spaces of the out-patient drug treatment program, 'New Beginnings', she artfully works to untwine the "semiotic entanglements" of her research subjects, "an interconnected group of professional practitioners and drug using clients," as they navigate the network of social services meant to meet the therapeutic, housing, legal, and medical needs of the recovering women. Carr shows us how the languages of "sobriety and self-sufficiency" are closely intertwined, and why learning and mastering this particular script of addiction is vitally important. Not only for the professional caregivers who must learn to frame their program goals and objectives using the script if they want to qualify for state funding in an environment of shrinking resources, but also for the female client-consumers, who constantly work to shape the ways their words will be interpreted by caregivers who have the capacity to give or take away income, jobs and housing opportunities, to say nothing of influencing parole processes and decisions about child custody issues.

Beyond the basic brilliance of her ethnographic description, Carr is interested in demonstrating the cultural and political dimensions of the way people speak in clinical settings. She argues that addiction counselors effectively silence clients from making institutional critiques and social commentaries when they stop their clients from engaging in talk that does not focus on their own inner states. The public talk of clients is then used as a basis of evaluation, impacting access to basic goods and services. Finally, clients who are adept in therapeutic language are occasionally able to "flip the script" to work the system to their advantage.

Carr's arguments are based on three and a half years of fieldwork. During her early engagements with Fresh Beginnings – a result of an internship connected to her master's study in social work – she realized the importance of language in the therapeutic milieu, which prompted her to situate her graduate work within the field of linguistic anthropology. Her combined experiences as an intern involved in the running of the

program and as an ethnographer trying to reflect on and understand the institutional practices of the program from a critical distance allows Carr to offer empathetic portrayals of both care providers and clients, an unusual achievement.

In addition to an introduction and conclusion, the book consists of six chapters. Chapter One, 'Identifying Icons and the Politics of Personhood', provides a broader political and economic framework to the book, linking Clinton-era welfare reform policies and expanding neoliberalism with the transformation of social services discourses away from dependency toward the framing of patients as consumer-clients. The second chapter of the book examines the institutional pathways that brought clients to Fresh Beginnings, showing how professionally generated institutional texts, including case notes and referrals, associated with each client effectively shaped access to various resources and services, and, further, how clients seek to control the production, dissemination and use of these texts to ensure they accrue the best possible service from a system set up to judge them.

Chapter Three, 'Clinographies of Addiction', examines the history of the association between talking cures and addiction in the United States, demonstrating how the therapeutic practices of Fresh Beginnings fit within this history. The focus on the talking cure and its political effect in regards to shaping individual subjectivities is taken up in Chapter Four: 'Addicted Indexes and Metalinguistic Fixes'. Carr carefully illustrates how by encouraging clients to reflect inward and take personal responsibility for their addictions during group therapy sessions, counselors also prevent the women from situating their addictions within wider structural frames. Whenever women seek to explain their situation by critiquing the social services available to them or the state, they are silenced and told to focus on identifying the choices that they, as individuals, can make to improve their general living situations.

Chapters Five and Six examine and theorize the ways clients put the therapeutic script of the addict to work for them, first by focusing on women who seem to come to inhabit the script, publicly speaking as addicts in specific moments, and second, by "flipping the script," that is performing scripts of addiction on cue to meet certain expectations and cures. Together these two chapters show the way clients embedded in an institutional system that does its best to box them into a particular script, are able to strategically reproduce that same script in particular settings and at specific times to be seen as 'good clients', both within and outside of institutional settings.

Carr's book, while a thoroughly interesting and convincing read, is also theoretically challenging, providing convincing evidence to back up a growing body of research relating practices of institutional responsabilization to processes of neoliberalism. This is a compliment, but it also means that it is not a book one would quickly recommend to lay audiences. I would, however, assign it to advanced bachelors, masters and PhD students in the social sciences. I expect the book would be particularly interesting to linguists interested in the link between institutional speech and practice, researchers in the field of alcohol and drug studies, and anyone conducting research on psychosocial therapy practices, particularly those directed at groups.

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