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Friedman, S. (ed.). (1993). *The new language of change: Constructive collaboration in psychotherapy*. New York: Guilford Press. Foreword by Kenneth J. Gergen. 000 pp., \$00.00 CDN.

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Steven Friedman, who edited this compilation of clinical studies, says the book reflects "a move away from theoretical certainties and toward a critical respect for differences." It features an emerging, constructivist/social constructionist approach to practice premised on respect—a collaborative orientation intent on handing the power back to clients.

In one of his own contributions, Friedman suggests that therapists view their roles as "competence detectors" rather than pathology detectors. This metaphorical turn resonates throughout the book. In eighteen articles which mostly combine theoretical discussion with clinical excerpts, the authors demonstrate a dogged curiosity in client resources, and a belief in their potential to liberate themselves from oppressive and constraining forces in their lives.

The articles are divided into four sections, three of which represent emergent fields in postmodern approaches to therapy, and which include a dialogue with the authors by way of a series of editor's questions. The first, "Paths to Solution," features Berg and DeShazer, O'Hanlon, and other solution-focused practitioners. The "Narratives of Liberation" section is more reflective of the ideas of White and Epston and others associated with narrative family practice. It includes contributions by the teams of Freeman and Lobovits as well as Dickerson and Zimmerman.

Friedman coins the term "Reflexive Conversations" to describe the third variation of collaboratively-oriented therapy featured here. Tom Andersen's seminal work with the reflecting team hovers behind this section, as well as the thinking of the late Harry Goolishian and contributions from Harlene Anderson, Lynn Hoffman-Hennessey and Judith Davis, among others. The book's final section is a departure from the book's predominant format. It includes a transcript of an interview in which Alan Parry explores Don Sawatzky's story of his reunification with distant relatives, and an essay by Parry on various dilemmas of the postmodern era.

I found this organization of the book into broad (and occasionally overlapping) categories useful. While not heavily technique-driven, these various postmodern orientations can be differentiated by their emphasis. The contributions range from O'Hanlon's pithy account of a vigorous quest for exceptions to a client's depressive behaviour, to a description by Hoffman-Hennessey and Davis of their work with a suicidal woman, in which they eschew a focus on outcome in favour of a gentle opening of space for the "unsaid." From a convergent pursuit of solutions to a divergent and un-rushed dialogue, the tenor of the approaches featured here varies widely, despite the non-pathologizing impulses they share.

Theory rarely takes centre stage. More than a road map, the book is intended as a guided journey through a therapeutic frontier. Most articles

are laden with excerpts from therapy sessions, and generally tend to launch into these clinical examples without prolonged elaboration on their theoretical foundations. The sessions speak largely for themselves; for readers more interested in *doing* than conceptualizing, these offerings may be a refreshing departure.

Despite the practical emphasis, a certain familiarity with these language-based, narratively-oriented approaches is helpful. When the theoretical underpinnings which inform the work are addressed, a gap sometimes opens between the (occasionally) straight-ahead work demonstrated, and the sophisticated conceptualizations within which it is framed. The emperor loses some of his wardrobe. But this is "transparency" in practice, and it leaves the impression of openness (as opposed to therapeutic sleights-of-hand) which most of the contributors espouse.

The territory explored might be viewed as the flip side of the landscape of pathology which has fascinated psychotherapy for much of this century. In his foreword, Kenneth Gergen wryly points to the book's *dis*respect for the traditional therapist-client hierarchy, and a disinterest in "the cognitive dispositions, emotional incapacities, personality traits, and family structures that have long served as the chief focus of many therapies." Gergen seems to take delight in witnessing this menagerie of postmodern therapeutic practice: it draws deeply from a social constructionist perspective, for which he is a passionate and articulate spokesperson. If, as the ubiquitous Gergen repeatedly reminds us, our reality is ongoingly constructed in communion with others, why not incline ourselves towards the light?

This book is a must-read for clinicians curious about the practical implications of postmodern thinking, but suspicious of the spells woven by purely theoretical rhetoric. *The New Language of Change* takes the reader on a tour of therapy sessions dominated by compassion and curiosity. Here is a frequently sensible approach which deliberately relinquishes therapeutic strategies and manoeuvres. The result is a reassuring book, both comforting and exciting. Comforting because it rests upon a faith in the inherent competence of each individual; exciting because it demonstrates how the seed of respect may be transformed and germinated into new possibilities for living.