Stephen Madigan’s *Narrative Therapy* is a stand-alone title among 16 others of the *Theories of Psychotherapy Series*, edited by Jon Carlson and Matt Englar-Carlson. Madigan clearly responds to the editors’ intentions. Offering navigational tools for the training and development of therapists, he reviews “the core constructs of the theory, bring[s] the theory into the modern sphere of clinical practice by looking at it thorough a context of evidence-based practice, and clearly illustrate[s] how the theory looks in action” (Carlson & Englar-Carlson, 2010, p. xi). Madigan begins the book with an introduction that critiques the psychologizing of people’s lives. He brings to the forefront the “relational/contextual/anti-individualist” (p. 4) qualities of narrative therapy (NT), situating the book as raising a primary question: “Who has the storytelling rights to the story being told?” (Madigan, 2010, p. 9).

Madigan clearly steps in as co-author of NT’s storytelling rights. He joins not only the two originators of this framework, David Epston and Michael White, but the many other international practitioners he references throughout, who have contributed to NT’s further development. Also, this book could be considered as Madigan’s attempt at renewing NT—North Americanizing it but resisting and questioning the North American psychological domains of therapy. He does so successfully through a series of chapters nicely framed by noteworthy quotes from Michele Foucault. He departs from an historical account of NT from the unique vantage point of his close collaboration with Michael White and David Epston. Following, Madigan offers a thick theoretical
discussion of the congruency of the poststructuralist theory with NT. He tackles a rather complex theory and makes great attempts at “placing the theory alongside the imagination of common everyday narrative therapy practice examples.” (Madigan, 2010, p. 8). Reading these 41 pages of theory could feel like what I have heard is the experience of tasting a good wine. It is deep, complex and stays with you long after you have tasted it. To fully appreciate the radical fullness of the therapeutic potential of this section, it might be required that the reader explore each sentence with special consideration—much like taking small “sips.”

This thick theoretical revision is followed by its translation into the therapy process, usefully illustrated with transcripts and letter writing samples. I consider that this section stands out as the most significant contribution. Madigan draws from NT vocabularies coined at first by Michael White and David Epston (1990) and further extends them into his own conceptualization of narrative questions. He proposes categories of questions that help to diversify the most recent map-oriented training and practice of NT (White, 2007). He introduces useful analogies for practice such as “counterviewing questions” (p. 93), “internalized conversational problem habits” (p. 96), “therapeutic letter-writing campaigns” (p. 117) and “insider leagues” (p. 129).

analogies for narrative practice immersed in their epistemological, ideological and theoretical contexts that could interest beginning and advanced narrative practitioners. It could also be considered useful coursework material for narrative therapy training.

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References

