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Review of The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Dispossession Along the Rio Grande

Gilbert Quintero

University of Montana - Missoula, gilbert.quintero@umontana.edu

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ulation.” The final chapter centers on how the women are assessed by clinic personnel. This is a counterpoint to the earlier discussion of the role that physicians’ views play in designating the pregnant Medicaid patient’s body as polluted, for nonmedical personnel view them as “wily cheats and welfare queens.”

This ethnography does almost everything that a compelling ethnography should do, yet it would have been useful to consider the neoliberal context in which racialization and surveillance of the pregnant body occurs. Consideration of neoliberalism would have broadened Bridges’ analytic frame to interrogate race and reproduction in this context and to cast a net over yet another way in which citizenship is compromised. Additionally, the issue of choice is provoked in this text, not only by virtue of the fact that the women seem to have little of it but also in terms of the meaning of choice in a neoliberal context.

But *Reproducing Race* does an excellent job of exploring the profound incoherence of a poor pregnant woman’s experience at Alpha Hospital. It reveals the ways in which the uninsured are constructed as unruly and consequently receive a regime of medical care that medicalizes poverty. The institutional entanglements, that is, the circumstance of being controlled through state-sanctioned service provision, result in both monitoring performance and assessing deficits. While Bridges’ ethnography represents a major contribution to Black Critical Theory, this groundbreaking work should be widely read in anthropology, medical training, public health, social work, gender studies, African American studies, and critical medical studies, and by policymakers.

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The Pornography of Addiction

Gilbert Quintero

Department of Anthropology, University of Montana, 32 Campus Drive, Missoula, Montana 59812, U.S.A. (gilbert.quintero@umontana.edu). 27 XII 11

The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Dispossession along the Rio Grande. By Angela Garcia. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.

What ethnographic account can convey the deepest dimensions of desperation, suffering, and hopelessness? In *The Pastoral Clinic*, Angela Garcia offers a thoughtful composition that sincerely attempts to reveal an understanding of pathological drug use among Hispanos in the Española Valley of New Mexico, a people and place long considered as epitomizing the intractability of heroin addiction. The author’s self-described task is “to give purpose and meaning to an aspect of American life that has become dangerously ordinary, even cliché.” The result is a powerfully written literary engagement that speaks artfully to many issues in the ethnography of drug abuse while at the same time exposing an intimate portrait of pain, inevitability, and personal destruction.

Institutional structures and social arrangements that effectively merge therapeutic roles, responsibilities, and potentials with criminal ones are given special consideration. Judiciary responses to heroin addicts, especially the drug court model, bring together the possibilities of incarceration with those of treatment, thereby blurring therapy and criminal control and creating an interstitial patient-prisoner. These systems contribute to an endless purgatory for addicts where time repeats itself in a cycle of chronicity and relapse.

This book reveals a number of important challenges faced by rural mental health and drug treatment facilities. These range from a lack of stability in staffing to weaknesses in basic infrastructure. In addition, there is little separation of the clinic from the wider community within which it is embedded. As a result, clinical roles are sometimes complicated by familial responsibilities and being a patient offers little real respite from social ties, expectations, and drug use behaviors.

One of the strengths of this piece is its recognition of the singular aspects of the geographic setting and how these features manifest in drug use. Heroin use is inseparable from place as it is historically and culturally understood. Addiction is an expression of loss and mourning for a past and an identity that struggles to continue amid change. This symbolic connection to landscape means that the land is a source of both pain and hope.

The account of intergenerational drug use is one of the most powerful descriptions of this aspect of addiction available. The interdependencies described here are complex—alternatively caring and destructive. The attention involved in managing drug use blurs the boundaries and responsibilities that typically structure relationships between generations. Adults charged with the care of children become socially incompetent and dependent as a result of their addiction. Over time these roles become more intricate and tragic as children move into their own heroin-using careers. This commensurability is a damaged form of nurturing that leads to suffering and, in some cases, even death by overdose.

This book attempts to understand these predicaments by relying on key concepts from a range of intellectual luminaries. Some readers will wonder whether these ideas really help us comprehend suffering that is so complete and so

devastating and that in many ways seems beyond understanding. And although the author attends to a wide range of literature, there is relatively little thought directed toward a number of relevant contributions. There is no consideration, for instance, of the global supply and distribution networks that Michael Agar considers in his analyses of drug use (Agar and Reisinger 2001). Heroin is not produced in the Española Valley. Thus, the suffering depicted in *The Pastoral Clinic* has links to personalities and processes that extend well beyond rural New Mexico. While the author questions the notion of the “isolated addict,” the analysis does not extend beyond local social ties. This is too insular and has the consequence of localizing heroin addiction in a way that makes it seem like a Hispano problem. Likewise, previous treatments of heroin addiction in the Española Valley offered by Trujillo (2006), Willging and colleagues (2003), and Glendinning (2005) are not taken seriously. In the end, there is a sense that the author is attempting to utilize an intellectual canon to come to terms with damage and pathology, whether it fits or not, while at the same time leaving relevant voices unacknowledged.

There are also many missed opportunities that are frustrating to see from such a gifted and sensitive writer. Chief among these are the thorny human subjects research issues that the author must have faced but that are entirely ignored. The author’s dual role as both a researcher and a clinical “detox attendant,” for instance, must have presented a number of dilemmas. What ethical quandaries and practical issues did the author face? How did she gain informed consent to utilize information from clinical interactions for research purposes? More fundamentally, how does an anthropologist determine that an addict can give meaningful informed consent in these situations? The use of addicts’ personal notes and clinical patient files to create an ethnographic description makes these questions exceptionally pertinent.

Ultimately, the greatest assumption underlying this work is never addressed. The author claims to give purpose to acts and states of being she has witnessed through ethnographic writing. Some will undoubtedly find this claim to be rather immodest. How can an anthropologist presume to have the position, understanding, or authority “to give purpose and meaning” to anything, much less peoples’ pain and suffering? There is a risk posed by offering such a portrayal that the author does not acknowledge, much less explore. Perhaps accounts such as these are too intimate and we do a disservice by intellectualizing pain and suffering. Perhaps instead we should allow those who suffer the dignity to experience their tragedy without an anthropological observer or other outside audience. This may be especially true in a case such as this where no relevant recommendations are made. Does anthropology have anything practical to offer in this situation, or are we limited only to bearing witness to pain? The explicit descriptions of addiction are depicted in a manner that arouses intense emotional reactions but at the same time the analysis makes these dramas voyeuristic. Here one is reminded of the stark images of urban addiction offered by Bourgois

(2001), along with his warning not to fall prey to a pornography of violence in conveying descriptions of crack use in Harlem. *The Pastoral Clinic* does not offer a similar reflection, even as it balances on the boundary that demarcates a pornography of loss, suffering, and hopelessness.

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A Broader Perspective on Craft Production and Specialization

Anne P. Underhill

Department of Anthropology, Yale University, 10 Sachem Street, New Haven, Connecticut 06511, U.S.A. (anne.underhill@yale.edu). 27 XII 11

Salt Production and Social Hierarchy in Ancient China: An Archaeological Investigation of Specialization in China’s Three Gorges. By Rowan K. Flad. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

The focus of most publications about craft production and specialization has been on individual types of objects such as ceramic vessels. This book usefully broadens the topic of specialization by considering changes in the production of a key commodity in many areas of the ancient world, salt. Flad explains that investigations about salt do not fit easily into previous discussions about the social organization of production. There is significant variation with respect to its source, method of production, mechanism of exchange, and value. He shows that although existing models about craft specialization are useful for understanding aspects of its production, analysis of salt production requires a broader methodological perspective. Although salt was a key commodity in several areas of the ancient world, to my knowledge no other study attempts to relate changes in salt production with broader issues regarding social change in a particular region. The innovative methods Flad employs for analyzing changes in associated ceramic vessels (for evaporating brine, etc.), in the spatial layout of production facilities, and changes in other cultural remains will be of interest to archaeologists and historians. This broad approach proves to be useful for revealing changes in the economic role of salt production from the late prehistoric period to the late Bronze Age (ca. 2500 to 221 BC) at the site of Zhongba in Sichuan Province, China, sit-