

assault, undoubtedly are still raping. Probably they have gone on to other victims, either escalating the violence of their attacks or locating less assertive females for their prey.

This difference of opinion over terms, however, should not detract from the major contributions of the research. In summary, I highly recommend the book both to scholars and to the general public.

*Life with Heroin: Voices from the Inner City*, edited by BILL HANSON, GEORGE BESCHNER, JAMES M. WALTERS, and ELLIOT BOVELLE. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1985. 210 pp. \$20.00 cloth. \$9.95 paper.

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I would like to be able to report that this book is not necessary, that the stereotype of the hopelessly hooked, depraved dope fiend—mugging matrons in wheelchairs and filching his own family's TV set to satisfy his ever escalating desire for a fix—has so often been shown to be a simplistic distortion that another ethnography of how heroin users actually live is redundant. Alas, it is not so.

Billions of dollars have been spent studying, treating, and policing the urban underclass in attempts to stem the violent street crime thought to flow from heroin addiction. The pharmacoeconomic determinism implicit in these policies is still hegemonic. Yet recent research on users outside treatment has shown that there is an arguably huge and certainly large number of heroin users who defy this stereotype by self-regulating their use. Hanson and co-workers purposively sampled 124 such users (all Black males from four major cities) and trained former heroin users to interview them in depth.

The authors' theoretical and methodological premises are interactionist. They assume that neither heroin use nor its role in crime and ghetto communities can be grasped apart from the meaning it has in the lives of users. Thus, they begin with "thick description" (Clifford Geertz's phrase) of "the scene" by its participants. The many interesting quotes give the study a ring of authenticity, and, by drawing on subjects in different cities, readers can sense the core themes without losing much of what is unique to each site.

The themes will surprise many. The experiences reported by the heroin users rarely fit the stereotype. More than half the sample use only twenty-five dollars' worth of heroin a day; some 73 percent shoot only once per day; and most achieve only relief from stress or feelings of normalcy

rather than a real "high." Even daily use, then, does not necessarily entail escalation of dose or the onset of ideal-typical addiction. Surprisingly few of these men are propelled by heroin into repeated crimes against persons. Only one in three steals regularly, and only one in five has ever robbed anyone (i.e., taken property from an individual by force or threat). Fully three in five work legally at least some of the time, and jobs are the main source of income for one in four. In fact, because most took any opportunity for earning income that did not entail the risks of crime, there is reason to hope that many would leap at the chance for legal jobs, should any be made available. Indeed, "takin' care of business" for these addicts pushed them only to the fringes of, rather than utterly outside, the normative order.

Succeeding contributions focus on the place of heroin and the underground economy in users' lives and communities; their self-images vis-à-vis "straights"; and the colorful argot with which they exchange fugitive facts and sustain a sense of identity and a viable subculture. The users are neither vilified nor romanticized. Regular heroin use, these subjects report, entails grave risks. But it also offers rewards—a way to organize one's life, a certain dignity for having the inventiveness to pull it all off, and thus status in the community—that are unavailable to them in the "straight" world. They tell us enough about their world so that heroin careers may be understood as much more than merely being hooked.

The collection has its flaws. Some quotes are repeated, and a few respondents get a lot of play while a hundred others are not heard from. A few citations are incomplete, a couple of authors' names are misspelled. More substantively, there are few data on the critical question of how long these subjects have managed to limit themselves to a single shot or twenty-five to thirty dollars' worth of heroin per day, and little analytic attention to the fact that the data consist of accounts, the truth value or self-servingness of which may not be self-evident.

Such weaknesses, however, do not excessively mar the overall portrait. These textured accounts show that many heroin users share basic values with the rest of us (desires for economic security, achievement, home, and family), and "constantly struggle to live [on] a narrow path between the street and the straight worlds" (136). They are committed to and repelled by each world, just as they are both enslaved and empowered by heroin. They are proud of their ability to walk this tightrope without degenerating into "dope fiends" or acquiescing to methadone maintenance, which

they believe offers no freedom, no high, no status, and no help.

This collection should provide much food for thought in policy circles. Treatment modalities based on the medical model of addiction are blind to the pride of craft and self-esteem such people derive from managing their lives and habits. Thus, treatment may remain unattractive to the very users who stand the best chance of transferring their skills into licit pursuits. Moreover, if heroin habits do not inexorably increase, and if use can be controlled to suit the economic circumstances of users *after* they pay the rent rather than "forcing" them to commit whatever crimes are necessary to support their addiction, then heroin cannot be forced to shoulder quite so much of the explanatory burden for urban crime. If the subjects of this book are any guide, the relation between drugs and crime is complexly correlative, not crudely causal, and policies that pretend otherwise will continue the failure that has characterized the entire history of narcotics control.

### Culture, Leisure, and Language

*The Power of the Image: Essays on Representation and Sexuality*, by ANNETTE KUHN. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985. 146 pp. NPL cloth.

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A recent joke asks, "What do you get when you cross a mafia chief with a deconstructionist?" The answer: "An offer you can't understand." Kuhn writes as an enthusiastic deconstructionist, yet she is remarkably understandable. And that may be both her strength and her weakness.

A brief introduction advertises her work as giving

testimony to the fact that readings "against the grain" are not only available, but often compelling. The activity of deconstruction sets loose an array of "unintended" meanings, by their nature subversive of the apparently transparent meanings which the texts offer us [7].

The "grain" in this case is the representation of women and their sexuality in the cultural context of the "privileged phallus," i.e., that which "naturalizes" sexist images and implicit uses of women. To go "against this grain" is to apply a feminist critique to such representations, seeing in them means through which the assumed naturalism of

the sexual difference is constructed, produced, and reproduced.

Photographs and cinematic representations of women are examined in four essays. Even the still photographs, however, are to be read as texts embodying coded meanings referential and available to multiple contextualities and intertextualities. Also being strongly committed to a materialist position, Kuhn works hard at demonstrating not only how the text to be read assumes the reflection of societal discourses in the desires of the observing male, but how the deployment of such discourses is embodied in the very institutionalized rules regulating the production of such representations.

On the surface there would appear to be a great deal here of interest to a wide range of sociological practice. Unfortunately, the performance fails to live up to its initial advertisements. An early chapter ("Lawless Seeing . . ."), essentially on still photography as pornography, points to a persistent error in these essays; it is the absence of a coherent perspective on human development, one that might treat the varieties and overlaps in the behavior of men and women. In its absence, this effort at feminist deconstruction often renders the obvious complex, boldly asserts what has barely been demonstrated, and breeds a latent essentialism in the midst of constructionist arguments. The men and women who are her presumed observers are almost exclusively the opaque requirements of unexamined assertions that on the level of the psychodynamic surprisingly find authority in Freud more than elsewhere.

The implicit theory of sexuality links Freud to Foucault, as representations of sexuality become metaphors for the pleasures of power's deployment while assuming the availability of organisms genetically programmed to the power of pleasure. Not really achieving the level of a theory, Kuhn's treatment of the sexual is more on the order of a presence, a presence of self-evident truths. Having applied the strategy of "going against the grain," she produces little more than the conventional feminist critiques of contemporary erotica.

Subsequent chapters dealing with cinema fare little better. One ("Sexual Disguise and Cinema") missamples cross-dressing. Brief attention to *Victor/Victoria* and *Some Like It Hot* and less than that to psychopaths in drag (*Psycho* and *Dressed to Kill*) creates two categories of little significance, occasioning an analysis so burdened by a sense of the ideological need for preserving the naturalness of gender differences that the management and uses of such differences are almost totally ignored.

The last two chapters, one a reading of Howard Hawks's *The Big Sleep* and the other a surprising