

Barbara Sherman Heyl. *The Madam as Entrepreneur: Career Management in House Prostitution*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1979, 276 pp.

Human behavior is the province of the sociologist. On some rare occasions, for certain sociologists, life becomes art, and vice versa. Sadly, however, when an area of interest within the social sciences is handled artistically (that is, sensitively and with a fair measure of creativity) as in the case with *The Madam as Entrepreneur*, it is sometimes dismissed with the indictment of "light reading."

I do not mean to indict Heyl's work by stating that I could not put the book down. It is certainly not written to appeal to the reader's prurient interests, despite the provocative title. Rather, *The Madam as Entrepreneur* is a serious, forthright and readable look at one facet of racket life—that of midwestern prostitution in a small city.

Taking an interactionist perspective, Heyl traces the "life history" of Ann, a former hustler turned madam. As a good portion of this text deals with Ann's entry into a deviant subculture, her statements are verified through a process of triangulation. The data includes interviews with Ann, referenced by interviews with both important and passing others in Ann's various lives, and personal and legal documents. Heyl recognizes the implicit problems involved in the life history approach, but these weaknesses are more than reconciled in the latter portion of the book.

The book uses a chronological, processual type of organization beginning with an analysis of Ann's childhood. This portion of the text is, of necessity, not as detailed or useful as are later chapters. Once Heyl begins to discuss the interactions involved in Ann's entrepreneurial effort, however, she deals with such valuable issues as the changing statuses of pimps and prostitutes; the orientation of the prostitute to client, to madam, and to other prostitutes; and so forth. Heyl sets herself the task of attempting to "... fill certain specific gaps in the literature on prostitution" (p. 3); indeed, she speaks of several unique and neglected areas. Moreover, when Ann speaks, through Heyl, she comes alive for the reader.

An articulate and intelligent woman, Ann rebelled at the restraints imposed upon her by a difficult home life. Until early adolescence, she and her younger sister lived with foster parents. At the end of this period, Ann's mother rather abruptly announced her intent to re-marry and reclaimed her two daughters. The reunited and fragile family moved to a midwestern city where Ann constantly warred with her stepfather. After his attempt to sexually molest her, Ann left home. She was fifteen.

In a new city, hanging out on the streets, running errands for strippers in exchange for a little money or food, Ann soon turned to "the life." In the years that followed, she was forcibly returned home only to leave again. Twice married, twice divorced, her sole source of stability was her chosen profession. Eventually, Ann returned to the city where she was first "turned out," precipitating numerous arrests and setbacks bound to her past associates in that city.

Somewhat confusingly, Heyl drops her use of the past tense when Ann turns from hustling to running her own business. The ploy is effective, however. It is in the section exploring the socialization of young prostitutes that Heyl finds her stride.

At thirty-four, Ann opened her first "creative" effort—a house staffed strictly by an ever-changing flow of novices. The "Shoe Store," so named due to its location in a commercial district, catered to a working class clientele. Before business hours were scheduled to begin, Ann utilized the time by teaching her neophytes the norms, values and techniques of hustling. As she explains to each novice:

Don't get uptight that you're hesitating or . . . fumbling within the first week or even the first five years. . . . It takes that long to become a good hustler. I mean you can be a whore in one night. . . . The first time you take money you're a whore. (p. 121)

A fascinating portion of Heyl's book deals with verbal hustling, a negotiation inducing the client to spend more money than intended. According to Ann, this was the most difficult aspect of her training. Hustling is an act of aggression; it does not come easily to that sex traditionally taught passivity and deference.

Eventually, Ann was forced to part with her career. Prostitution as she had known it was changing rapidly. Through the seventies, the women she employed tended to work independently, scorning the use of a pimp. Ann had less control over these young "outlaws." Prices had gone up on the streets, and Ann was losing both money and influence. After a lengthy period of hospitalization, and during Heyl's work with her, she began a painful transition back to the straight world she had left more than twenty years earlier.

From this brief, and somewhat editorialized, summation, the reader can perhaps sense the ambitiousness and scope of Heyl's work. She not only details Ann's life but offers a theoretical framework for many of the events that transpired. Ann's journey, as set down by Heyl, is seen as a process, a complicated process with numerous complexities and contradictions. Heyl begins the book with an overview of four perspectives on prostitution (i.e., psychoanalytic, psychological, structuralist and sociological), and, coming full cycle, ends with a proposal for a processual model acknowledging both subjective and situational contingencies that may lead to a career in prostitution.

Those interested in deviance, and more specifically, recent offshoots of labeling theory, may find *The Madam as Entrepreneur* a valuable reference work. Certainly all of us can stand to gain by writing as clearly and thoughtfully as Heyl does. Despite one's orientation, scientific or humanistic, *The Madam as Entrepreneur* is not just another book about prostitution.