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identity formations among Muslim communities in Europe, such as governmental policies, schooling or migration histories.

This book makes a very good contribution to the sociology of religion and European studies. I would recommend it to scholars and postgraduates specializing on Muslims in Europe.

Teela Sanders

Paying for Pleasure: Men Who Buy Sex

Reviewed by Heather M. Morgan, University of Aberdeen

From the outset, it is apparent that Sanders’ approach to representing trade in sex is different from those commonly found among feminist scholars. Immediately, she attempts to dispel the stereotypes of seediness and misogyny surrounding men who, as she terms it, pay for pleasure. She presents and analyses their engagements with and reflections on buying sex. Importantly, she does so prudently, that is to say without rejecting the plethora of important feminist scholarship that has tackled the so-called problem before now. Sanders frames her rationale in negotiating this transgression particularly well within the preface. She points out that ‘there is a fundamental flaw in sex work research’, it having, to date, considered ‘the sex industry only from the position of the female sex worker’. This, she claims, ‘denies the reciprocal relationship of any “supply and demand” chain to be exposed in its entirety’ (p. vii). As such, she comfortably markets her work as novel rather than controversial.

Sanders’ intention is towards greater exposure, the offer of a deeper, more comprehensive, account of prostitution. This is rather refreshing. She deals with scarcely contemplated aspects of participation in the industry and so her text is useful for our better understanding of some additional nuances in purchased intimacy. Her chosen structure works well: the themes are well categorized and quite simple, and her writing is both fluent and accessible. Nevertheless, Sanders properly acknowledges the complexities of her chosen subject area and also the theoretical and methodological frameworks available. She satisfactorily discusses her own angle, reflecting carefully, but without fear of reproach, on both. She does, however, appear to complicate her generally unbiased perspective. She sometimes draws allusions, I feel, to Mulvey’s (1975) male gaze, thus identifying in places with a so-called feminist standpoint. This seems to work, though; she makes known her critical gender scholarship, whilst simultaneously, perhaps contradictorily, eliminating the cynicism and often defensive nature of gender studies. For instance: ‘In the radical view of commercial sex, the basic premise is that sex work is an act of violence against women whether there is consent between adults or not’ (p. 6). Her consideration, then, goes beyond conceptions of total cruelty in an attempt to represent various attitudes inside the industry more openly. For example, she considers matters of emotions and identity. Most importantly, she does so without prejudice towards the
under-researched perspectives of men. Perhaps this is ironic in terms of gendered violence; however, Sanders demonstrates a good grasp of that particular feminist outlook and, therefore, does not compromise a feminist agenda in my view.

As I have suggested, Sanders writes in detail about her manner of approaching research into sold sex. In particular, she describes her recruitment of participants, their types and typologies. What becomes apparent, however, is that the men involved in her study, although assorted, are similar. Essentially, she talked with men who use(d) online forums to engage with sex workers and other men who buy sex: a sort of self-regulation of services and activities within their local industry. Therefore, whilst Sanders addresses the sex industry from males’ perspectives, she is only able to represent the stories of the men who use this facility. As such, although she brings a new research perspective to our attention, she is limiting it, and therefore our ability to fully consider her dismissing a ‘sex work as violence against women’ knowledge of the industry. The men she has spoken to clearly seek to remove themselves from that stereotyping through more respectable and responsible pleasure, and do so within the United Kingdom. This is not representative of the whole gamut of male participation, or motivation thereof, in the sex industry. Nevertheless, Sanders does not claim to have provided this. She merely seeks to open academic and non-academic eyes and discussions to the possibility that the sex industry, or parts of it, warrant neither preventative policy nor moral panic on the basis of assumed violence.

In sum, Sanders has organized her book primarily around presenting interview data, thus crystallizing her opening principle: fresh representation and analysis. Notably, in spite of her rejection of ‘inflated concerns about ethics’ (p. vii), Sanders is extremely sensitive and respectful to the men who have participated in her research. She is critical, without being disparaging: a clear indication of the excellence of the work she has conducted. Indeed, Sanders writes at some length about researcher–researched relationships (pp. 17–21, in particular), contributing more widely to reflexivity in and the philosophy of social scientific research methods. Furthermore, Sanders provides a useful and detailed account of existing work surrounding conventional perceptions of and attitudes to men who buy sex. She gives a thorough, synthesized analysis of what she implies underpins, even determines, the sex industry and our traditional, if incomplete, impressions of it. In spite of her unabashed assertions, she has been academically rigorous.

This text provides a valuable contribution to the disciplines of criminology, gender studies, sociology and social policy. Sanders has provided an interesting and challenging critique for each, in terms of both theoretical and empirical methodologies, and has done so in an interesting manner.

Reference