

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Susan C. Boyd, *Hooked: Drug War Films in Britain, Canada, and the U.S.* New York: Routledge, 2007, 262 pp. \$US 95.00 hardcover (978-0-415-95706-9)

In *Hooked*, Susan Boyd provides a useful and substantive contribution both to the literature on drug representations and to a larger body of developing cultural, feminist and critical criminology. When she writes, "I care about films, especially drug films, because they tell a story not only about drugs but about nation building and criminal justice, pleasure and threat, and occasionally they challenge war-on-drugs narratives," she alerts us to the larger concerns and innovations of her volume (p. 2). Her work focuses upon the complex arenas in which drugs appear, including conventional representations of users and traffickers and new work on images of addiction and treatment. She elaborates the relevance and theoretical import of drug films by linking these contexts consistently and with greater depth than previous groundbreaking work (such as Michael Starks's 1982 book *Cocaine Fiends and Reefer Madness*) to discourses on race, class, and gender against the frameworks of nationalism, militarization, and empire-building. Her volume employs a comparative framework, including Canadian, British, and American films. Boyd also examines films which disrupt hegemonic and stereotypical representations of illicit drugs, drug users, and dealers.

The volume takes readers through a foundational and yet broad spectrum of issues in drug representations. Chapter 1 emphasizes the ways in which drug regulation and control have extended to drug imagery as well, chronicling different modes of censorship stemming from moral-reform movements and shifts in drug laws across Britain, Canada, and the United States. The second and third chapters examine depictions of drug users and addiction-as-disease narratives from early cinema to drug films produced from the 1960s to the 1990s. The first half of the volume thus is a linear exploration of the history of the cultural discourses and legal and moral regulation surrounding drug use. The second half is far more interesting in its less predictable survey of ruptures in addiction narratives (ch. 4), depictions of drug dealers (ch. 5), representations of women (ch. 6), and challenges to the drug war from a contemporary focus (ch. 7). Across the volume, Boyd's sampling of film is smart and relevant, with exemplars ranging from D.W. Griffith's *Broken Bloss-*

soms (1919), *The Cocaine Fiends* (1935), *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955), *Superfly* (1972), and *New Jack City* (1991) to *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle* (2004).

One of the great strengths of the volume is its juxtaposition of the normalization of drug use against historical moments of prohibition. For instance, with films like *Chappaqua* (1966) and *Easy Rider* (1969), Boyd maps important shifts in drug discourse, emphasizing the normalization of recreational drug use apparent in the countercultural movements of the 1960s, followed by a wave of backlash films that include *The French Connection* (1970) and *Panic in Needle Park* (1971). She also introduces the regulation of addiction through treatment models which emphasize self-discipline and self-control as a mechanism of governance and state building. Employing drug users and dealers as key foils to proper citizenship, she argues that drug films historically have reaffirmed the white heterosexual nuclear family as the building block of national identity. Within this framework, Boyd points to several key conventions in the representation of race, class and gender. For example, she demonstrates how depictions of women's drug use are consistently sexualized and often bound up with notions of maternal unfitness. The relationship of both gender and whiteness to images of drug use is epitomized in a scene from *Traffic* where a white middle class girl's addiction and sexual corruption is depicted via a young black male drug dealer. Alongside this limited ideological framework, Boyd emphasizes how controlled use is rarely depicted and treatment, when invoked, is part of a mandatory criminal justice/punishment matrix. She also contends that the addiction as disease model, which is predominant in cinema, is limited by its disregard for a confluence of social, political, cultural, and economic factors which shape drug use.

In contrast, films like *Trainspotting* (1996) and *Gridlock'd* (1997), Boyd argues, challenge to some degree these conventions in their critiques of consumerism and exploration of the relation of drug use to poverty, class, and unequal access to social services. Interestingly, Boyd also positions "stoner flicks" as an alternative to dominant discourses, focusing upon how in films like *Up in Smoke* (1978) and *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle* (2004), ethnic stereotypes are contested and drug prohibition critiqued. In the end, Boyd insists that negative mythologies of drug use persist across the US, Britain, and Canada, with Hollywood productions the most deeply bound up with war-on-drugs/law and order drug war ideologies. Although such mythologies are unsupportable in light of scientific evidence they generate powerful fears and politicized calls for harsher regulation and laws.

Boyd's volume is tightly woven as she invokes and explores key films across the work, revisiting them to emphasize different points. At times, the volume reads summarily and is formulaic in its description of films, especially at key moments where meaning is imposed rather than demonstrated or applied. Similarly, some of the more complex themes of the volume, including nation-building and its relationship to normative models of family, race, class, gender, and consumption could use greater theoretical elaboration. Still, her strategy is understandable, and perhaps necessary in order to conduct a broad, comparative survey of drug films across time and with attention to such large themes, and yet remain highly accessible to a university classroom audience. Ultimately, Boyd makes a critical contribution that marks how positive and alternative images of drug use and altered states of consciousness are difficult to find historically and comparatively.

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