
Book Review

The Gypsy 'Menace'. Populism and the New Anti-Gypsy Politics by Michael Stewart, ed., Columbia University Press 2012. 382 pages.

The edited volume 'The Gypsy "Menace": Populism and the New Anti-Gypsy Politics' has already become a widely cited work on contemporary social movements in Europe. The reason for this success lies especially in the currently very relevant topic the editor has chosen: the phenomenon of 'anti-gypsism', 'anti-tsiganism' or 'anti-Roma' attitudes, the editor of the volume, Michael Stewart, calls the 'Gypsy Menace'. According to him this menace is a pan-European phenomenon. This finding represents a breakthrough in social sciences with a somewhat orientalist treatment of the Roma. The volume shows how Roma/gypsies have become the 'other' not only for East Europeans but also for many Westerners who have learned more about them along with the enlargement of the European Union. As Michael Stewart argues, anti-gypsism has to be understood within broader shifts in European politics and culture, especially in the wide growth of populism, a by-product of European project. Stewart's perspective heavily relies on the well-known work of anthropologist Douglas Holmes and his concept of 'integral Europe' published a decade and a half ago. Stewart also takes inspiration from Mabel Berezin's sociological perspective on social and political security under European integration published several years later.¹ This cultural analysis – argues Stewart – shows more about 'anti-Romany politics today than economic crisis and fears of insecurity' (p. xxiii) analyses do. The book should therefore be seen as balancing the structural economic accounts emphasising the role of neoliberalism and crisis in the treatment of social movements in Europe.

The book is divided into three sections. The first deals with the social and political contours of current anti-gypsism. The second focuses on social imagery of anti-gypsism. The third discusses extreme politics and how to combat it. The book is prefaced by Misha Glenny, the well-known British journalist, followed by an editor's foreword of the editor that serves as an introduction to the book. Michael Stewart also offers a theoretical framework for analyses of anti-gypsy politics in the first chapter of the book. However, his analytical perspective has not been entirely followed by all the authors of the volume. Fifteen chapters were written by experts including sociologists, social anthropologists, lawyers and political scientists. Despite this diversity in these accounts, the editor's perspective deserves close attention.

Michael Stewart in Chapter 1 reminds us that the EU project 'creates the broad conditions of receptivity to xenophobic politics'. This politics is based on a shift away from mid-twentieth century racism to cultural politics resembling 'popular versions of

¹ Douglas Holmes (2000) *Integral Europe: Fast-Capitalism, Multiculturalism, Neofascism*. Princeton University Press; Mabel Berezin (2009) *Illiberal Politics in Neoliberal Times: Cultures, Security, and Populism in a New Europe*. Cambridge University Press.

Huntington's "clash of civilisations" (pp 3-4). Difference here is being 're-framed as incomparability and purportedly culturally distinct behaviors is being used to justify radical demands for "root and branch" reform of educational, welfare, and, in extreme cases, citizenship regimes'(p. 9). The supporters of new cultural reform are not the new poor. Rather they represent those who feel that they find themselves on the margin of decision-making. Current populism, therefore, is also the revolt of the 'silent majority', Stewart reminds us.

The next chapters of Part 1 bring new perspective on the role of local politics as a source of the 'Gypsy Menace' in Hungary (János Zolnay), narratives of 'Gypsiness' in civilizational terms in Bulgaria (Georgia Efremova), and radicalising attitudes towards Roma in the Czech Republic (Karel Čada). The Western European accounts on anti-gypsism discuss Romany migrants in Italy as a novel source of intolerant politics of the mainstream left (Giovanni Picker), and the historical development of exclusionary categorisation of Roma in France (Ilsen About).

Part 2 opens up the theme of public representation of Roma before and after state socialism's fall in Hungary (Kata Horváth). Chapter 8 presents the development of the extreme-right in the Czech Republic enhanced by the feeling of existential anxiety of the Czechs, as they are constructed by their national narrative (Gwendolyn Albert). Colin Clark and Gareth Rice open the discussion on Romanian Roma in Northern Ireland from the perspective of enduring sectarian violence. Stefánia Toma (chapter 10) elaborates the topic of a 'last drop' event causing the conflict between Roma and non-Roma in rural Transylvania by stressing the need for complex knowledge of the local context for developing mediation strategies.

Chapter 11 opens Part 3 of the book. The themes include the Roma migrants in the Austrian city of Graz and some counter-productive initiatives of NGO-type institutions towards Roma (Stefan Benedik, Wolfgang Göderle, Barbara Tiefenbacher). Lidia Balogh compares two communities in Northern Hungary and how the settlement of a conflict can succeed in them. Very instructive is the policy-oriented text by Brita Stellenberg on combating right-wing populism and racism based on a Bertelsmann Foundation report (chapter 13). Cecília Kovai attempts to discuss the hidden potential of 'naming the Gypsy' via concepts of kinship in order to transcend the ethnic difference in public. The book is concluded by well-argued account of András L. Pap on the need to strengthen liberal democratic constitutionalism in Hungary. His critique of the inability of Hungarian courts and prosecutors to recognise crimes against Roma and the inability to outlaw extremists groups such as the Magyar Gárda represent paramount problems the post-socialist judicial system faces in all of Eastern Europe.

It is difficult for a reader to follow such a diverse number of texts at once and the reading requires time (plus the volume has almost four hundred pages). For more substantive comments it would be useful to provide the reader with a brief historical account on the Roma in modern Europe. Although some authors opted for this perspective in their respective chapters it would still help readers less familiar with Roma to understand the historical-cultural depth of the 'Gypsy Menace'. The issue of ethnicity has definitely been over-studied, especially in Europe. This does not mean, however, that there is nothing specific on Eastern and Western ethno-nationalist projects, not least with regard to state socialism and multi-ethnic tolerance. It would

also be interesting to read analyses dedicated to the role of the economy. Not only by continuing in looking at the economy from 'cultural' perspectives but also challenging inadequacies of some top-down 'world system' perspectives.

Even though there might still be some sources and topics of anti-gypsism to be wished for, this book has now been published and it is the first of its kind. It strikingly well portrays the 'Gypsy menace' to be a much more systematic pan-European phenomenon than anyone has realised or has wished to know. The book therefore represents a must-read for everyone researching European social movements today.

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