variation' (196). Second, there are clearly volatile levels of integration and a hierarchical order among minority communities. Calu's book usefully goes beyond the prioritized Kosovo Serb community (in policy-making and academic research) to incorporate the perspectives of other minorities. Third, the generalizing view on minority integration, based on the consociational power-sharing model tailored for the Serb community, might be useful for short-term integration and pacification, but in the long term disturbs ethnic cooperation and leads to segregation and marginalization.

The empirical basis of the book is rich, including interviews with a broad spectrum of political and civil society representatives. The analysis is slightly disconnected from the extensive but not always logically composed theoretical framework. The writing of names is irritatingly inconsistent—from the hypercorrect use of the Turkish, Albanian, and Serbian writing of Mamusha to incorrect writing of names of places and people in an insensitive variant without diacritics. All in all, however, Calu makes a useful contribution to the research on Kosovo and post-conflict statebuilding more generally. Particularly valuable are the systematic comparison of constitutional, legal, and political measures as opposed to their actual implementation on the ground and the considerable attention to non-Serb minority communities.

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Ioana Szeman, *Staging Citizenship. Roma, Performance and Belonging in EU Romania*, New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2018, 204 pp., ISBN 978-1-78533-730-7, \$ 135.00

Ioana Szeman's *Staging Citizenship. Roma, Performance and Belonging in EU Romania* is a complex ethnographic work of social criticism built from the author's impressively long and socially engaged fieldwork with a ghettoized Roma community in Romania. Advancing along the path of media criticism well-worn by Roma cultural scholarship, Szeman guides the reader through a contested media landscape, examining the political and cultural implications of thematically Roma talk shows, soap operas, comedies, and musical performances alongside youth dance organizations and craft fairs. In each of her examples, elements of marginalization and liberation mingle and conflict with one another, offering an immersive and comprehensive view of the sociocultural struggles at the heart of Roma identity. Szeman's narration of this struggle is both engrossing and effective, avoiding the dangers of romanticism while nonetheless producing an intimate and engaging text. As an ethnographer of obvious quality, Szeman has punctuated her book with biographical vignettes, long quotations from conversations with her participants, and personal insights that take full advantage of her decade-long participant observation with the residents of a slum that the author has decided to call 'Pod' to protect its anonymity.

Each chapter addresses a particular manifestation of contested cultural citizenship. The first critiques the employment of a mono-ethnic framework on the part of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Chapter Two introduces

the 'permanent state of emergency' (49) in the Pod slum before turning, in Chapter Three, to the theme of NGO training and the problem of 'authenticity'. Chapters Four and Five focus on publics and counter-publics as they are expressed in the Bollywood performances of a young dance troupe called 'Together' and on popular Romanian television serials respectively. The sixth and final chapter critiques the notion of 'success' inasmuch as it relates to popular sentiments about the Roma and musicality, showing how such success is inexorably tied to ethnic stereotypes that reinforce the gulf between Romanian society and *tigani*, the common Romanian word for Roma people which typically carries racist intonations when used by non-Roma.

Szeman convincingly argues that poor Roma in Romania suffer a generalized 'citizenship gap' that is not only reproduced through political and economic marginalization, but appears in spaces of cultural production shaped by a mono-ethnic Romanian national identity. Roma performers find themselves struggling to express personal or collective agency against the expectations and desires of the Romanian audiences, hosts, and writers that structure their media landscape. This 'cultural citizenship gap' is revealed in the choices of the dance troupe 'Together', who find in Bollywood-style performances a self-directed claim to an imagined citizenship that the traditional and expected *csingeralas*, easily recognizable Roma folk dances, cannot imply. The latter style attracts criticism for being 'inauthentic' if it includes apparently non-Roma performers, whose presence disrupts the accepted notion that Roma cultural expressions are simply innate to Roma people and not the result of the conscious preparation of skilled agents (110). The former

style breaks with the 'authenticity criteria' completely by making a cultural citizenship claim to an imagined India as represented in popular films, revealing a substantial gap between the self-identification of the dancers and what is seen as authentically Roma by their Romanian audiences (107). The dancers of 'Together', however, are not entirely constrained by the *gadge*—non-Roma—image of Roma, but perform for and create a 'counter-public' (111); following Michael Warner, Szeman sees these counter-publics as performative spaces that aim to transform society, not merely reproduce it (7). The ever-evolving Roma counter-public, one that also includes sensitive *gadge* performers and spectators, shares a different set of expectations, values, and symbolic associations. Roma-ness here is a less constrained and more experimental terrain for expression that provides a counter-public alternative to 'mono-ethnic nationalism' that saturates Romania's historiography, ethnological identity, and media hegemony (5). Szeman's 'cultural citizenship gap' necessitates what she identifies as performative forms of resistance, creative attempts by dancers, television actors, and singers to close this gap by presenting Roma performers as Romanian citizens without vanishing into the (imagined) Romanian mono-ethnic national culture or interpolating hegemonic media stereotypes and prejudices about *tigani* (6).

On the face of it, Szeman's work deceptively appears to mirror the more 'liberal' tendencies of cultural NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe who seem to find in 'cultural production' a more comfortable analytical wedge than in those radical materialistic critiques that do not assume that democratic representation is a sufficient indicator of equality or inclusion. Media studies that take a similar tack often limit

themselves to the problem of how minorities are represented on the level of popular media or enfranchisement at the expense of structural critiques that upend notions of identity as something primordial which asks only to be described and perhaps amplified in public spaces. *Staging Citizenship*, however, walks this path with a much heavier step, carrying with it a refreshingly blunt critique of the political-economic construction of Roma identity (42–45). Szeman's attention to the impoverished backgrounds of the Roma members of 'Together' adds a class dimension to her cultural interrogation. Two examples stand out as particularly salient to this anthropology of class: the commodification of Roma culture through the lens of tradition exemplified by a Roma craft fair, and the class relation between the Roma NGO PHARE and the residents of the Pod slum. In the latter instance, Szeman accompanies the reader, along with her key informant, into the outreach program of PHARE, where class distinctions between Roma vanish under a tailored ethnic definition of 'community' (76–77). In the former, the author symbolically deconstructs the representation of tradition at a 2002 craft fair by calling into question both the cultural authenticity of the dresses and crafts on offer and the political implications of 'authenticity' itself (29). Szeman shows that the cultural fetishism at the core of both of these cases reinforces the citizenship gap of Roma in Romania by obfuscating the deep poverty reproducing Roma life in Pod, erasing the history of Roma class composition through successive epochs by which such 'traditional' occupations came to be, and hiding the overwhelming structural racism of the Romanian state behind commodified exoticism.

Given the author's clear sensitivity to the impact of political-economy, historical

fissures and fusions, and the contested battleground of contemporary Romanian culture on the creation of Roma identity, it is unsettling and paradoxical to see the specter of nationalism haunt Szeman's text. Despite dedicating the third section of her introduction to demystifying primordialist notions of Roma-ness as both race and ethnicity echoing Stuart Hall (8–9), as well as returning agency to performative subjects throughout the book in contradistinction to hegemonic mono-ethnic nationalism, in the same introduction, Szeman uncritically cites Ian Hancock, an unapologetic nationalist who has publicly claimed in lecture that the Roma's 'real religion comes out of Hinduism' and denies Irish Travelers their 'gypsy' identity, claiming they are a 'White population'.¹ Szeman presents the India-origin thesis for Roma identity without a cautionary framework problematizing its nationalist mythological elements, while ethnographers like Michael Stewart and Judith Okely, prominently cited in *Staging Citizenship*, de-center this narrative from their ethnographic work and frame it as a political intervention from academics and nationalist activists with only marginal value to their participants. Reading *Staging Citizenship* critically, I cannot help but think that Szeman might have extended her critique beyond the problem of 'mono-ethnic nationalism' within the state to nationalism itself within the multi-level strategy of identity construction that includes scholars such as Hancock. The tension between performative and primordial views of

¹ Ian Hancock, Gypsies vs. Roma. The Price of Identity, Lecture, College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of Texas – Austin, Austin/TX, 16 March 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EF_SNLdqDsI, accessed on 11 August 2020.

identity created by this alignment is especially frustrating as it remains undressed, much less resolved, and hangs like a shadow over an otherwise penetrating model work of critically engaged ethnography.

Staging Citizenship should be considered required reading for anthropologists and media students working on minority identity in Eastern Europe and the Balkans today. Szeman manages to accommodate

both readability and impressive detail into a relatively short book. Each thematic section empowers the reader with the tools to understand the next, and despite each chapter working as a self-contained study in its own right, the real strength of *Staging Citizenship* is in its ethnographic comprehensiveness.

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