

the development of physical anthropology in Serbia and Bulgaria before the First World War, or accounts of Austrian research in Bosnia and Herzegovina – its true “colonial Other” – after 1878), but I suspect that the book’s main influence in the field will be seen in the contributors’ explanation of the development of anthropology in German language. As put by Johler: “[the war] put an end to Europe’s common scientific culture, effectively killing off the evolutionism that had been popular until then, leaving the academic landscape fractured along national lines” (139). The contributions also present a variety of important (and some previously not very well-known, like the participation of Jews in the studies of prison camps) case studies that will influence the way in which our colleagues understand and develop a critical view of anthropology’s role and influence in the last century. This combination of carefully developed specific points of research and thorough reexamination of paradigmatic theoretical models should make this volume an indispensable reading and an important point of reference for years to come.

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Kazubowski-Houston, Magdalena: *Staging Strife. Lessons from Performing Ethnography with Polish Roma Women.* Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010. 264 pp. ISBN 978-0-7735-3749-1. Price: \$ 95.00.

Orta, Lucy (ed.): *Mapping the Invisible. EU-Roma Gypsies.* London: Black Dog Publishing, 2010. 191 pp. ISBN 978-1-906155-91-9. Price: \$ 29.95.

These two books share a common goal, namely, to help break down the barriers isolating European Roma from the surrounding society through artistic endeavours. Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston does this by pursuing a project in “performance ethnography” whereby victimized members of society, in her case a small group of Romani women, are encouraged to act out their problems on the stage of a Polish theatre. Lucy Orta and her team of collaborators, on the other hand, struck up partnerships with a variety of Romani participants in Romania, Greece, Turkey, Italy, and England that led to exhibits, art installations, conferences, and other events intended to illustrate the plight of impoverished and disempowered Roma.

Kazubowski-Houston, who had a background in experimental theatre before embarking in Canada on doctoral studies in anthropology, describes in her book the making of an ethnographic experiment. For her dissertation fieldwork she chose to return to her native Polish city of Elbląg where she gathered a group of Romani women willing to participate in the production of a play about their encounters with violence. Kazubowski-Houston practices “interpretive” or “reflexive” ethnography based on the premise that informants ought to be treated as “research participants” who collaborate with the anthropologist in the pursuit of “empowerment.” This lofty outcome was to be attained through the collective creation of a play about the challenges faced by Romani women in post-socialist Poland, whereby the long and intensive process of talking about and acting out shared problems was hoped

to result in increased self-awareness by the participants as well as greater understanding of their plight by ethnic Polish members of the audience. As the author reminisces: “I saw people in dire need and hoped that through my research I could one day help this community” (23).

Things didn’t unfold in the expected way, though. Kazubowski-Houston had a very difficult time recruiting “research participants,” and even after she had overcome numerous obstacles and had assembled a small group of women willing to collaborate with her, she couldn’t overcome their steadfast refusal to go on stage and act out their lives in front of an anonymous audience. In the end, then, young Polish amateur actors were substituted, and the play was cobbled together through an arduous process of collaborative rehearsals that reduced the Roma to the role of cultural advisors. This partial failure in fact provided the stage director-anthropologist with a wonderful opportunity to observe and describe the biases and stereotypes that influence the relations between Roma and ethnic Poles. As the young actors belittled the older women’s preference for melodrama and soap operatic kitschiness, and as the Roma reciprocated by putting impossible demands on the inexperienced actors, Kazubowski-Houston buckled under the weight of contradictory expectations and obligations. When she sided with the actors in their quest for a sophisticated portrayal of Romani culture, she suffered pangs of conscience, realizing that “Ironically, while my project sought to facilitate a ground for the Roma women to articulate their claims for justice, ... I actually denied their right to speak for themselves” (139).

The reader of this book gains few new insights about Polish Roma. It contains several interesting interviews with the author’s informants where they speak openly and engagingly about their lives and the impact of violence (refreshingly, Kazubowski-Houston doesn’t censor out accounts of violence within the family), but the bulk of the work addresses methodological issues. The experience of putting performance ethnography to the test has made the author doubtful about its emancipatory potential. She concludes that the mere act of empathic listening to the women’s stories may have been more empowering to them than the time-consuming and expensive theatre production that formed the centre-piece of her research.

The authors of “Mapping the Invisible. EU-Roma Gypsies” are far less critical of their marriage of art with scholarship. Like Kazubowski-Houston, they envisage the project as a catalyst for the empowerment of Roma, but unlike the playwright-anthropologist they tell us precious little about the process in which the project unfolded and its outcome. What the reader learns from explanatory notes is that “EU-Roma” constitutes a network of European “architects, artists, designers, urban planners, sociologists and activists” determined to effect greater awareness of the injustices faced by Roma through common artistic projects as well as personal interaction (9). Although there are some examples of this type of collaboration interspersed, seemingly haphazardly, throughout the book, its bulk consists of numerous case studies, some with the length of minor essays, others being mere vignettes, of Romani communities under threat. The au-