

Re-Negotiating the Public Image of Gypsy Musicians in the Polish Everyday Press of the Communist Period

Abstract:

The article discusses how the Roma minority was portrayed in the Polish press during the communist era, taking so-called Gypsy musicians as an example. Having analysed a number of articles, notes and reports, as well as reviews and editorials published before 1989 in the Polish daily press, the author identifies the main tendencies in portraying Gypsies during the communist era, identifying nostalgia for the romanticised Gypsies, and the inclination to homogenise their image, as prevailing trends. Focusing on the Roma musicians, the author examines how they were officially portrayed in the communist Polish press, deliberating on whether this portrayal was promoting the minority, as influenced by the romantic tradition glorifying the wandering Gypsy life-style, or rather subjugating them to serve as another proof of Gypsy backwardness. While claiming that the figure of the splendid Gypsy virtuoso was almost erased from the Polish post-World War II press, the author argues that the Gypsies' position in the public discourse was overtaken by the Roma folk bands. At the same time the author questions to what degree the musical stereotype associated with the Roma in general was exploited to re-create and to re-negotiate the place of the Roma people as a specific minority functioning within a Polish socialist society.

Keywords: *Roma musicians, Polish press, communist times, stereotype, Roma minority.*