

Uitgeverij Balans Non-Fiction List 2006 - 2007

DRIVE A NAIL THROUGH MY HEART

Romanian Roma after the revolution

By Mariët Meester

Who did we get within our borders when Romania joined the EU? In any case, two million Romanian Roma which meant that the Roma all of a sudden became our largest ethnic minority. All kinds of official reports have been published about the situation there, but Mariët Meester investigates the lives of the Roma from inside out, with great personal involvement.

Shortly after the fall of dictator Ceaușescu, in December 1989, Meester travelled to Romania to live with the Roma. Over the years she has returned frequently and in more recent years has noticed a move towards a gypsy-is-beautiful reassessment. But she still is told, quite often: "Don't write about us, we're bad people." These days the Roma, who make up 10% of the Romanian population, have discovered their own history, one of slavery and deportation.

The result of Meester's long experience is a richly drawn portrait of a people undergoing great change, a people on Europe's doorstep, for whom the gypsy stereotype falls short.

Reviews:

"A broad and many-sided view on the development of the Roma community in post-communist Romania. (...) Meester resists the stereotypical term 'gypsy' and paints in an emphatic way the cultural, social and professional diversity which characterizes the Roma community. (...) Sometimes the proverbial nails which are driven by her Roma-friends through her heart, reach so deep that she finds it hard to restrain the reflex of generalization which is detested so much by herself."

De leeswolf

"Meester's book is spirited, playful and passionate. Flamboyancy is the bread and butter of East Europe where poverty goes hand in hand with great dreams. The author sketches both. Her gentle self-irony makes the book sometimes comic."

Nederlands Dagblad

"Detailed, perceptive and written with an absolute feel for the absurd."

Literatuurplein

"Meester describes her travels in a compelling and penetrating manner." *Kro Magazine*

"The exciting, well-written book by Mariet Meester does not give just a picture of the situation of the Romanian Roma but also lets you see how the country itself has changed in the last fifteen years since the fall of the communist regime. It offers an important addition to our general knowledge about Romania and its Roma minority." *Roemenie Bulletin*

"This book makes your flesh creep." *VPRO-gids*

"A very touching book." *De Morgen*

Rights : All free

Format: Trade paperback. 335 pp
2nd printing.

info: mrs. Plien van Albada, Balans Publishers
vanalbada@uitgeverijbalans.nl