

Berta, Péter, *Materializing Difference: Consumer Culture, Politics, and Ethnicity among Romanian Roma*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2019. 390 pages, 34 color illustrations, 6 black & white tables. Paper, \$41.95.

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In *Materializing Difference: Consumer Culture, Politics, and Ethnicity among Romanian Roma*, Péter Berta presents a thorough and engrossing study of the Gabor Roma community's cultural particularity of men collecting antique silver beakers, often dating to the Habsburg period of Romanian and Hungarian history, as a way of displaying and raising their status within the community. Berta provides a fascinating view into the politics and economics that pervade every aspect of the beaker buying and collecting processes. While this topic may seem far afield for many scholars, even those who work in the anthropology of central and east Europe, the intense attention to detail, the narrative skill that Berta brings to the subject, and his ability to connect this topic with some of the largest fundamental questions and theoretical ideas within anthropology as a discipline make this book well worth reading for a wide audience.

Berta's book is reminiscent of the classics of ethnography, demonstrating a deep and exhaustive knowledge of every factor that plays a role in the beaker trade. His focus on issues of exchange and status makes his work an interesting, recent work that offers a welcome new addition to the long, anthropological debates concerning Mauss' and Malinowski's notions of exchange.

He guides readers through these various aspects considering the material reality and specificities of the beakers; the aesthetic preferences that distinguish higher value ones within the Gabor community, the complex and ritual-filled process of establishing the provenance of a beaker; the arcane method used in buying a beaker; the decision to display the beaker, or more often than not, to not display the beaker; and finally the question of counterfeit beakers. For instance, the reader learns that the Gabor prefer taller footed beakers which they gender as masculine, as opposed to shorter handled, roofed tankards which they view as more feminine (62-3). In addition, certain designs are prized over others with depictions of bearded male figures increasing a beaker's value while depictions of frogs and snakes could lower its value (110, 112).

Through his exploration of the lives of the beakers, Berta captures essential details of Gabor Roma male life that are not accessible without understanding the context of this unique and

idiosyncratic element of material culture and exchange present within their society. Moreover, Berta is able to demonstrate the decline of the beaker trade as younger generations of Gabor turn their interests, attention, and resources toward different consumer goods such as electronics and vehicles (215-6). Documenting this shift in Gabor society provides an example of the ongoing transition of a post-socialist community into the global, neoliberal, capitalist economic system dominant around the world. As such, this book offers useful lessons that scholars can take in understanding other communities' shifts to new forms of exchange and relationships to money, value, and wealth.

Readers should know that this book does not provide a comprehensive view of Gabor society more generally. Berta makes it known at the outset that his study is solely focused on the trade and importance of beaker collecting. This activity is limited almost exclusively to men, thus there are very few perspectives from women in the monograph.

Those readers who find they want to know more about women's experiences in Gabor Roma society, will be pleased to learn that Berta's current research on the politics of arranged marriage among these groups will most certainly address those concerns.

One detail that Berta could have perhaps addressed in greater depth is the fact that many Gabor converted to Seventh-Day Adventism in the late 1990s (34). Greater engagement with how the conversion to this new faith impacted the role and importance of the beaker trade for the Gabor as well as how the Gabor were integrated into and adopted the customs of this global religious community. In addition, it would also be interesting to see how this religious conversion distinguishes the Gabor from other Roma communities in Romania and if this impacts the beaker trade at all. Thankfully, it appears that this topic too will be addressed in Berta's current research.

In sum, Berta makes an important contribution to our understanding of value, exchange, and materiality. Moreover, his work also is a much welcome addition to the study of the Roma people. He does a masterful job of bringing attention to this marginalized community and offering a respectful and insightful analysis of the unique elements of Gabor Roma life and connecting them with larger theoretical discussions within anthropology.