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Propaganda of Romani Culture in Post-Soviet Ukraine

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Propaganda of Romani Culture in Post-Soviet Ukraine

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Propaganda of Romani Culture in Post-Soviet Ukraine

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Abstract

This dissertation explored the collective experience of Romani educational and cultural leaders in Post-Soviet Ukraine, investigating how far and through what mediating structures they have acted as agents of cultural and educational change, implementing projects in the fields of media production they call the “propaganda of Romani culture.” These projects were aimed at constructing the “Roma of Ukraine” identity—battling prejudice by educating the mainstream about Roma and preparing for the move from cultural-educational pilot programs toward policies and systemic solutions governing Romani education and integration in the context of profound economic, political, and cultural transformations in Ukraine. Based on fieldwork (2002–2003) with Romani intellectuals, this dissertation adopted a cultural studies approach and chronicled the work of the first Romani poet, first Romani theater director, first Romani ethnographer, and a number of community activists engaged in the production of culture and knowledge that created the uplifting archetype of the “Roma of Ukraine.”

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Introduction

This story began as a journey to my country of origin, propelled by my desire to learn about Romani cultural history from the experts—media and knowledge producers of Romani origin who live in Ukraine and whom I variously call here Romani intellectuals, or educational and cultural leaders. In this quest, I became a witness and chronicler of their creative contributions to the process of educational and cultural change in Ukraine. Their role in the educational and cultural transformation currently underway is crucial because they have vanguard knowledge of Romani culture and community issues as well as the cultural institutions and audiences of Ukraine; furthermore, they understand the support they need to carry out their work. Their expertise is central to the development of strategic programs, momentous projects, and pedagogies that best meet the educational needs of Romani people and promote their advancements in teaching and learning. Before these educational programs are established, the culture of Roma of Ukraine must be understood.

My quest brought me in contact with the first director of the National Romani Theater of Ukraine, the first Romani Ukrainian poet, the first Romani ethnographer in Ukraine, the first Romani journalists, and many of the enthusiastic participants in this process of cultural change. Their creative work necessarily cohered with the generating of Ukrainian national culture—a process under way itself—in the context of profound political and cultural transformations in Ukraine and the world.

In Ukraine, I sought answers to the research questions, the most recurring of which were: (a) How do Romani intellectuals conceptualize their role within a process of transformation visible to them? (b) What specific beliefs, ideas, attitudes, and myths do they reproduce, or undermine? (c) Are the ultimate aims and strategies of the movement clear, or do the organizational methods become ideological ends? (d) Are there alternative visions? (e) What are the points of consensus? (f) How is the consciousness of Romani ethnic identity, bilingualism, and the transnational character of Romani culture reflected in Romani media? (g) What is the balance in Romani media between the preservation of Romani ethnic identity and worldview and the definition of values of the majority society? (h) How do media (re)nationalize Roma as Roma of Ukraine? (i) How

is the diversity of Romani communities reflected? The answers to these and other questions helped me to gain a better understanding of the ethnic uplift project Romani intellectuals call “propaganda of Romani culture.” In the uplift, or the creative ascendancy, they generated the cultural archetype of “Roma of Ukraine,” which challenges the racist stereotype of the immoral, lazy, cheating Roma.

Aware of a cultural aversion to the word *propaganda* in the United States, I nevertheless followed the media theorists who considered the word *propaganda* worth rescuing (Downing, 2001). I preferred using this word for the following three reasons: First, the word *propaganda* is widely used in Ukraine and other countries. I used it in a carefully restricted sense. By the word *propaganda* Romani intellectuals refer to the media battle for consciousness, or the dialogue between Roma and non-Roma they launch to advance Romani culture and education. Thus, I transliterated the word *propaganda* from Ukrainian, Russian, and Romani and used it in its strictly literal sense. Second, I contended that the expression *propaganda of Romani culture* signifies praxis, or “the positive dynamism of developing movement for change” (Downing, 2001, p. 69), more effectively than the more traditional nouns *information* or *communication*. And third, with the 20th century behind us, two decades since the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the simplistic Bolshevik rigid model of the Kremlin as the single source providing information to a mass audience “by the transmission belt” is no longer a threat. Therefore, I recycled the word *propaganda* to capitalize on its creative energy instead of discarding this word, native to Ukraine.

“Ukraine means borderland”¹—began the most comprehensive history of Ukraine to-date written by a Westerner (Subtelny, 1988) and translated into Ukrainian by my friend Yuri Shevchuk. “Slavic comes from Latin *sclavi* and means ‘slaves’”—was the phrase used by Westerners to describe the meaning of my origin in literature and private communication. “Slavic peoples take up more space on land than in history,” wrote Western scholars centuries ago (Kostenko, 1999, p. 26), and this attitude persists today as can be witnessed in analysis such as, “The heroic moments or periods in history from which Ukrainians can derive a feeling of pride appear to be sparse” (Janmaat, 2002, p.

¹ The beloved line of many a western author, e. g., Motyl (1993, p. 24) and Wanner (1998).

171).² “The paradoxes, ironies, and absurdities that color life in post-Soviet society make Ukraine an excellent site to undertake an anthropological study of the post-socialist state and its relationship to nationality,” announced Western anthropologists (Wanner, 1998, p.xxvi).³ Bolstered by half a dozen foundations, these anthropologists publish arid, inelegant, and faceless⁴ “ethnographies,” nevertheless praised for a “sophisticated command of social science theory with a firm grounding in the place.” In the meantime, their transliterations of a handful of basic cultural realia betrayed a not-so-sophisticated command of Russian and Ukrainian.⁵

Regardless of its etymology from the Western point of view, to me Ukraine means birthplace, where my roots are, where my loved ones live and create and my ancestors eternally repose, thereby a spiritual and cultural heritage rather than hinterland—an important perspective, or bias, if you will. I agree with those who consider Ukraine a cultural center at the intersection of the Byzantine, Catholic, and Muslim worlds and who face the challenge of building there a civil society and a democratic polity and creating a national identity while preserving civil and minority rights. “We want Ukraine to be developing⁶ in a normal way, at last, without this criminal leadership,” said one of my friends in Kyiv, Professor Alla Parkhomenko (personal communication, December 20, 2004), and I support these aspirations. “No one has heard

² Janmaat explained, “Ever since the collapse of the medieval state of Kyiv Rus’ in the thirteenth century, the Ukrainian lands were dominated by neighboring powers and the Ukrainian population subjugated to foreign noblemen and administrators. This is not to say that Ukrainians have nothing to fall back on...However, it is precisely on these few moments of glory that Ukrainian historiography clashes with the Russian/Soviet one” (p. 171).

³ Similarly, Wilson (1997) proclaimed Ukraine “a fascinating test case for alternative nation-building strategies in countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.”

⁴ This “ethnography,” claimed by the author to be “an anthropological study of the state,” is faceless because “unlike traditional ethnographies, which focus on a ‘people’ or a ‘community,’” it studied “how the state, through a negotiated settlement among competing interests and visions, attempts to establish the categories, periods, and events that give meaning to individual and collective experience” (Wanner, 1998, p. xvii).

⁵ To provide a small sample, out of four Ukrainian words cited on pp. 106–107, three are written with mistakes: In the author’s rendition *khohli*, a pejorative Russian exonym for Ukrainians, became “khakholi” which is Russian for “boyfriends,” school academic courses *krayeznavstvo* and *zemleznnavstvo* are also maimed, and the course of Beginning Military Training is absurdly translated as “‘War Preparation,’ a mandatory class for boys in the tenth grade” (p. 19). The Soviet symbol *Rodina-Mat’* (Motherland) is twisted into *Mat’ Rodina*, bordering on obscenity, and is repeatedly used in the author’s discussion on pp. 192–194. Truly, the author’s statement “All translations are my own, except where otherwise noted” makes a speaker of Ukrainian and Russian question the quality of such scholarship.

about Ukraine. They know only Russia, and if they talk about Roma, it is only about Russian Roma. Our task is to tell about Ukraine and to bring here as many development programs for Roma as possible,” stated Yulia Kondur (personal communication, January 2, 2005), the mother of a prominent Romani family and co-founder of an international Romani foundation in Odessa. From this angle, my point of view coincides with that of the U.S. geopolitical analysts Zbigniew Brzezinski (1997), Sherman W. Garnett (1997), and Alexander J. Motyl (1993) who considered Ukraine crucially important for a variety of reasons such as size, location, and stabilizing potential, which ensure it a central role in the future of Europe and thus in the foreign policy of the United States.⁷ I welcome this post-Cold War stance that regards the appearance of a new Ukrainian state as a profound and irreversible shift to which the new neighbors—especially Russia and the West as a whole—must adjust (Garnett, 1997, p. 135). As Garnett pointed out, despite Ukraine’s importance, the general ignorance and neglect of Ukraine by the West continued for most of the post-Cold War period. And although the bilateral agenda broadened after 1995, Western engagement with Ukraine has remained more tactical and opportunistic (p. 136).

My work is intended to fill in some of the gaps that exist in the study of Ukraine in light of new trends, prospects, and constraints. I explored both what has been praised as “an inclusive form of democratic nationalism” (Garnett, 1997, p. viii) in this multiethnic, multiregional country and the factor Alexander Motyl (1993) listed as the reason why Ukraine matters: “the high quality of Ukraine’s human capital.”⁸ However, I filled the category “human capital” with cultural studies’ humanistic sense. In this respect, a post-Cold War gray zone being dismantled is a story of Ukrainian nation-building in the key players’ own words. I enthuse over the double-challenge to introduce you to a formidable community of people to which I belong—the post-World War II

⁶ By development we mean a chance that the newly-created, Eurasian, medium-sized states have to organize the lives of individuals and of societies and states as a whole around systems more compatible with individual liberty and economic prosperity (Garnett, 1997, p. 135).

⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski (1997) described Ukraine’s pivotal geostrategic role; likewise, Sherman Garnett (1997) called Ukraine the keystone in the new security arch that stretches from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea.

⁸“The population is fully literate, and close to 90 percent of the employed population has a higher or secondary... education. More than 150,000 highly qualified specialists graduate annually from over 150 colleges and universities... The scientists employed by the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences are world-class theorists in such fields as mathematics, cybernetics, physics, chemistry, and electronics” (Motyl, 1993, p. 2).

generation⁹ of post-Soviet intellectuals found in millions the world over. I enthuse over this opportunity because I find our intellectual capacities admirable generators of art and learning in which many readers would take pleasure (Said, 1993). As the demographic changes of the past two decades have been altering the ethnic landscape of the former Soviet Empire, our collective entity, “the Soviet people,” has erupted into an extraordinary “ethnicization of culture” (McCarthy, 1998, p. xi). What still unites us, however, is first, the experience of socialization in the Soviet Union through the Soviet system of predominantly Russian-language education and the national Soviet media; and second, the phenomenon of “berooting.” “We were simply left without roots!” my 52-year-old friend Irina said in summation of our Soviet totalitarian cultivation legacy. She referred to the submerged languages, family histories, and diasporic connections that did not fit the standard Soviet *lichnost*¹⁰ format, and therefore, our grandmothers and mothers chose to lock up these skeletons in a family closet and make it easier for each of us to be molded into a Soviet *lichnost*’ by the Soviet school, to obtain higher education, and to integrate as “normal” professionals into the mainstream. It has been only recently that these stories have begun to reach us from our diasporic survivors and the more accessible archives, to crowd us, to haunt us, and to challenge us with new realizations that are bound to become public knowledge, even if our ethnicization causes these stories to emerge from each of our groups one at a time. These searches and revelations ushered in a “new phase of eruptive particularism” in educational and social life (McCarthy, 1998, *ibid*) in the former Soviet space, and like the similar processes in the United States and elsewhere, they are “marked by a revived investment in ethnic symbolism and an almost epic revalorization of the ethnic histories and origins.”

My forum in multicultural education calls me to advocate for the democratic rights of minority groups and to denounce the inequities that shape their (mis)education. Therefore, this project went directly to the heart of the matter of majority-minority nexus in Ukrainian state-and-nation building. I chose to represent the creative work of Romani intellectuals of Ukraine, with their blessing, toward changing the structures responsible

⁹ I.e., the generation born after World War II; for all of us in the USSR the history of the 20th century was dissected into the periods “before the war” and “after the war.”

¹⁰ The category of *lichnost*’ only roughly approximates that of “identity.” It can be explained as personhood, individuality, human agency. The Ukrainian calque is *osobystist*’.

for the grievances and the educational needs of Romani people for at least three reasons. First, as an honest intellectual I had to admit that we grew up in the Soviet Union and Kyiv¹¹, Ukraine's capital and my intellectual cradle, with no knowledge of Romani history and culture despite the distinctive Romani contributions to our cultural heritage;¹² second, "If not I, then who?" was the maxim that propelled my intellectual quest to address the present situation of this largest ethnic minority in Europe, which requires urgent intellectual attention; and third, my diasporic experience¹³ and cultural roots in Soviet and Ukrainian culture have inspired a bond of trust with intellectuals in Ukraine, and my commitment to our intellectual collaboration obliges me to carry out this project and make our experience and cultural heritage known to the world.

The dissemination of collective experience in the design of national education policies was highlighted as an important goal of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and a Roma Education Fund, supported by the World Bank and launched by the conference "Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future" held in the summer of 2003 in Budapest. Addressing the conference, the World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn said:

Roma are the continent's fastest growing and most vulnerable minority... Without better education, Roma aspirations for equal opportunities and a better life cannot be met. Breaking the cycle of social exclusion and discrimination requires active support for education as the single best way out of the Roma's current impasse... We must forge a better understanding of the Roma among other members of society and work with Roma leaders to realize their aspirations. This is a community with great potential and we all have a responsibility to ensure that this cultured people has the opportunity to realize its contribution to European society.

Reaching a better understanding of Romani and Ukrainian people by making the collective experience and intellectual heritage in Ukraine accessible to the world

¹¹ I use the Library of Congress system of transliteration when translating from Ukrainian and Russian. Place-names have been transliterated from Ukrainian (Kyiv, Odesa, Lviv) and Russian (Kiev, Odessa, L'vov), depending on the source.

¹² This statement is met with resentment and resistance among many non-Roma to whom I have talked about my work. They deny the existence of culture among Roma, the existence of Romani intelligentsia, or assert that they know Romani culture, which they understand as singing and dancing, better than Roma themselves. However, they are not familiar even with the basic facts of Romani history from reputable sources.

¹³ *Interesnaya sud'ba* (Russian), as Roma in Ukraine call it, literally meaning "interesting destiny" (e.g., Y. D. Kondur, 01.02.05). As with most Ukrainian and Romani families, 20th century dramas have scattered my

community is the goal of my project, which corresponds to the present stage of preparatory work at the Roma Education Fund. Apart from the educational policy concerns, however, the expertise of Romani cultural elites provides access to the Romani heritage of Ukraine, which has long been part of the world heritage. Therefore, in my view, a strategy of equitable educational transformation must take a careful account of the human actors whose creative energies fuel it. I went directly to the center of their thoughts, feelings, and actions, which I call experience, in an effort to afford some measure of understanding of this cultural heritage. Such understanding is the first step toward an enlightened, sustainable Western policy in Ukraine.

The double-challenge I referred to earlier consists first of all in dissecting and exposing the communicative mediations between the global and the personal and a whole complex of other processes in post-Soviet Ukraine while simultaneously presenting humanistic, intellectual life portraits (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 193) of Romani educators and their non-Romani collaborators who helped me chronicle the creative work they termed *propaganda of Romani culture*. The second challenge is to foreground their work in a post-Soviet intellectual milieu of Ukraine in a study sympathetic to Roma, but not exclusivist; to be attuned to the best theoretical and historical scholarship, sensitive but not maudlin about Romani experience; and finally, to make this a study that is in dialogue with, and contributes to, the political situation of Roma in Ukraine as well as the theory of equitable multicultural education in the United States.

Conceptual Framework

My conceptual framework was informed by the U.S. and British media theorists, sociologists, linguists, and ethnographers as well as by a great tradition of European philology. In particular, my work was grounded in the theoretical contributions of Mikhail Bakhtin and John Downing to radical media development. Bakhtin's (1990, 1996) concepts of creative ascendancy, heteroglossia, and the zone of contact as the ideological context in which to study the word served as the theoretical underpinnings of propaganda of Romani culture as the uplifting momentum. The pivotal heuristic role

relatives throughout the world—to Canada, the United States, Poland, Great Britain, Israel, Kazakhstan, and other locations.

these concepts played in theorizing the praxis of Romani media development in Ukraine was reviewed in the concluding chapter. Downing's theory of radical media (2001) provided a fundamental template in my analysis of Romani media in Ukraine. To grasp the full spectrum of these alternative media forms, I shed the restrictive implication of the term media, which tends to fixate us too much on broadcasting, newspapers, and cinema, and began with Downing's premise that the social base underlying radical media is radical communication (p. 104). Such blurring of communication and media brought me into the contact zones with Romani theater, song, dance, poetry, public speech, artifacts, oral histories, food, dress, print media, posters, film and video, and games. The analysis of these forms repeatedly made salient the questions of resistance, counterhegemony, and the aura—the interactive aesthetics of these examples of self-expression. The element of time became very obvious in the long-term memory impact these novel communication activities had. I used Downing's theory to analyze the uplifting power of such media genres as theater, festivals, poetry, oral histories, and cultural collecting. Downing's Hexagon media analysis template was modified to a pentagonal one, or a star-shaped template, to serve the purpose of a concluding review of the uplift or propaganda of Romani culture in the concluding chapter.

Research Design

My research design adopted a media cultural studies¹⁴ approach with its roots in literary criticism and social critical theory and a preference for qualitative and interpretative methods over quantitative. Sociologists' privileging of quantifiable information has resulted in their ignoring most literary or journalistic sources (Riggins, 1992) and the arid purist scientism in interpersonal and group communication research (Downing, 2003). Qualitative methods, on the other hand, allow deep analysis of small bodies of text, thick description of context in observation, and humanistic psychological portraiture in interpersonal communication and, therefore, enable a nuanced understanding, capturing in full the dynamics of politics, culture, and psychology.

¹⁴ “A field that holds enormous promise for progressives who are willing to address some of the fundamental dilemmas of our times” (Giroux, 1996, p. 42), which offered educators “a conception of the political that is open yet committed, respects specificity without erasing global considerations, and provides new spaces for collaborative work engaged in productive social change” (p. 55).

Language

Language is a crucial site for study, with a great tradition of that study in the Soviet Union (Bernstein, 1993, p. xv); therefore, the social educational role of language in the arts and mass media, particularly the ethnic minority media, was central to my approach. “Consciousness is cultivated not only by the school, parents, and environment, but also by the mass media and the arts,” wrote Lakshin (1994). “The art is the most humanizing...of communications, incomparable in this sense neither with political, nor with economic propaganda” (p. 118). Writing on both the social responsibility of humanities in an era of vast demographic change and on the task of understanding the post-colonial world’s cultures and their convergence into an organic whole, Likhachev (1981) saw the great ethical and cultivational role of the arts in developing the audience’s “esthetic, or mental receptiveness” (p. 190–1). Language and fine arts, if they embrace diverse topics and great “distances,” cultivate a person’s tolerance towards other cultures—of other languages or epochs, thus battling feelings of national exceptionalism and chauvinism by striving to overcome the distances and barriers between people, peoples, and epochs (ibid.). This “mental sociality, or receptiveness” that is intellectuality, the ability to understand a wide and diverse range of works of art and the ideas of one’s colleagues and opponents, is what the arts should cultivate (p. 191).

Investigating ethnic minority arts and media requires that a researcher be bilingual, as in Ukraine where Romani media are predominantly in the Ukrainian language and Russian, and occasionally Romani. As a proficient bilingual in Ukrainian and Russian and a translator of Romani, I analyzed Romani media material alongside with the recursive, reflexive, dialectical (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000) conversations with Romani intellectuals about knowledge, education, and the arts in Ukraine. To the extent that this led to dissemination and consensus-building, this was a participatory action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000) for ameliorative purposes (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 666) as I followed those who believed that “as researchers with a commitment to change, we must decenter ourselves from the ‘ivory tower’ and construct more participatory, democratic practices” (Benmayor, 1991, p. 172–173). This communitarian ethical framework “presumes a researcher [will build] collaborative,

reciprocal, trusting, and friendly relations with those studied” (Fontana and Frey, 2000, p. 666). My work contributes to the development of a new, authoritative academic approach to Romani studies, which leaves behind “the patronizing racism of experts in ‘Gypsy Lore’” (Acton, 2000) and locates itself in the problems identified by Romani people themselves.

I entered the field of arts and media from a Vygotskian standpoint of the sociohistorical interpretation of the human mind (Vygotsky, 1971, p. x) and relied on the psychological theory of portraits (p. 193) as a guiding technique in representing Romani intellectuals’ collective experience, understanding the latter as a collage of particulars. Lakshin (1994) said that a throng of celebrities—writers, musicians, artists—always holds something unnatural. “A creative *lichnost*’ is of value as a whole unit, while in a throng of those alike she swiftly shrinks, reduced to a decimal” (p. 117). The primary method here was Saidian: to focus as much as possible on individual personal narratives and the authored media texts, to read them first as great products of the creative or interpretive imagination, and then to show them as part of the relationship between culture and the changing society. I do not believe that authors are mechanically determined by ideology, class, or economic history, but authors are, I believe, very much in the history of their societies, shaping and shaped by that history and their social experience in different measure. Culture and the aesthetic forms it contains derive from historical experience (Said, 1993, p. xxii), and the author’s, or actor’s, life emerges as a transitional step from psychology to ideology (Vygotsky, 1971, p. x).

Careful attention to communication with Romani authors and diligent presentation of their personal narratives and the authored media texts, as well as the nuanced understanding and use of Ukrainian and post-Soviet intellectual heritage, was my point of departure from my predecessors in Romani and area studies. One of the first social scientists in the United States “to find purchase in the cultural landscape and historical narratives of Soviet and post-Soviet Russia” and describe the different but overlapping understandings held by Roma and Russians of some categories, including “blackness,” was Alaina Lemon (1996, 2000). The most valuable part of her study was Romani narratives about culture, however the hard data and microanalysis were diluted in the author’s own attention to theoretical grounding, for example in the American race

theory of Michael O'Malley or Agnew's writings on the theater and the market in the 16th century England. On the other hand, in an attempt to juxtapose the "relatively internal accounts of Romani cultures" to the external "categories that non-Roma commonly use to speak of Gypsies" and connect them "to other perceptions Russians have of society," Lemon inescapably reinforced cultural essentialism in at least three ways. First, cultural perceptions, especially in ethnic relations, are geographically specific, Lemon, however, projected the categories or "perceptions," wherever collected—perhaps only in Moscow, to the entire space of "Soviet and post-Soviet Russia," loosely defined. Second, the author repeatedly referred to Russians without specifying whether she meant ethnic Russians (*russkie*), or the Russophones, or the citizens of Russia (*rossiyane*). Third, in a rapidly changing and diverse society categories and perceptions are multiple, overlapping, and shifting, and perceptions need to be quoted, not generalized, to be credible. Some of the passages in Lemon's text, while written in expert's voice, are simplistic and make one question the validity of her knowledge about "the perceptions by Russians," as in the following example, "In recent times, Russians perceived that luxury goods, such as fruit and Italian shoes, circulated through foreign, "black" hands. To a Muscovite, these people must therefore have held the new wealth, must have been rolling in hard currency, since they were so visible at the newly multiplied street markets, with oranges and leather coats for sale. I agree with Verdery that socialism affected intersections of ethnicity and exchange, but the changes to everyday practices of marketing... also... changed the ways ethnic identities and hierarchies are racialized" (1996, pp. 56-57). Similarly reductionist are the following two generalizations, "Like many people in Russia, they were infatuated with the bananas that I always brought from Moscow" (1996, p. 39). Likewise, speaking of Lovara homes in Moscow, she cast another Orientalist look at "the Russians," "The overall effect was actually less bric-a-brac and clutter than one finds in a Russian house, even a large one, and certainly less of the dust that brick-a-brac collects" (p. 41). This is not to say that Lemon's study was not comprehensive, in fact one of the best to date, and her pro-Roma approach timely and innovative. Nor do I wish to devalue the antiracist aspirations of the author. Nevertheless, while the study was praised as groundbreaking, some of its generalizations and simplistic interludes were contested by Romani intellectuals and other insiders to Russian culture

familiar with Lemon's work. The study reproduced the cold-war legacy, still lurking in the American area studies, by falling into the popular genre, where a researcher produces a positive representation of a minority group at the expense of a simplistic portrayal of the majority—here “the Russians”—while grounding the study entirely in western theory, which is a form of Orientalism. Lemon's (1996) extensive “direct quotation” of Russian archival material and some Russian transcripts expose her low proficiency in the language at the time of fieldwork and point to the level of her dependency on the Russian and Romani specialists during data collection, left without due acknowledgement in the fieldwork description, direct quotation, or references to forms of collaboration—considering the large number of publications and the expert status stemming from this fieldwork. Therefore Lemon's study, however groundbreaking and best to date, conditioned my careful attention to communication with Romani authors, unobscured by the theories of presentation, American anthropological categories, and metaphors of racism.

I hope my project illustrates the advantages of weaving together media and non-media communication (Downing, 2003). In my work, I used transcripts of 45 hours of interviews and cultural events, documents from state and family archives, oral histories, field notes, and print and video material in Ukrainian, Russian, and Romani collected during my fieldwork in 2002–2003 in four regions of Ukraine. The structure of the dissertation is as follows.

Chapter One

Chapter one takes the reader to the center of the imaginary dialogue between the Soviet Romologist O. P. Barannikov's 1930s writings on the “battle for consciousness,” which the Soviet state waged among Roma, and a group of post-Soviet Romani intellectuals, launching the cultural educational movement they called “propaganda of Romani culture.” The battle for consciousness of the 1930s through education, coercive collectivization, and employment among Roma was aimed at assimilating them to the archetype of a productive Soviet citizen. In contrast, the post-Soviet intellectuals created the ethnic uplift narrative, or a cultural archetype of Roma that challenges the racist stereotypes of Roma and promotes integration without assimilation. Unlike the battle for

consciousness of the 1930s, the propaganda of Romani culture comprises not only the education among Roma, but actively engages the non-Romani audiences in a dialogue about Romani history, culture, and life in Ukraine.

Further in this chapter, the reader enters the dynamic, media-rich sociopolitical and cultural context during the year 2002–2003, proclaimed the year of culture in Ukraine. By attending the First Romani Congress, a parliamentary discussion on the crisis of culture, and by reviewing productions of the three capitals' theaters, this researcher was able to introduce the reader to the interpenetrating complexities surrounding ethnic mobilization, nation-building, and Euroatlantic integration and its implications for Romani intellectuals.

Chapter Two

Chapter two tells a story of “becoming” a “home-grown” Romani leader. The reader is introduced to a conversation between Romani intellectuals on what it means to be “Romani intelligentsia” in post-Soviet Ukraine. Where does a Romani intellectual come from? This question brings the reader to Bessarabia, the homeplace of the youngest Romani state official and the place in which a Romani grandmother shared her stories and maxims with granddaughters while passing to them the art of cuisine and housekeeping. The stories she told validated the family dignity, renewed the family members' cultural identity, and endowed the grandchildren with a wealth of heritage. The reader experiences the uplift of this communication. To be uplifting, it need not necessarily be a “propaganda” endeavor, nor need it be a protest framed explicitly against those in power. The glowing aura of storytelling suffices. The reader gains further understanding of the degree of integration of the grandmother's lore among various media in this Romani home as experienced by a teenage granddaughter.

This chapter also explores two autobiographic narratives produced by Romani educators, which in a way recounted complementary experiences. One of the educators told of the identity struggle he went through growing up in a Transcarpathian boarding school, where he put up resistance to racism and prejudice. Not having access to a rich cultural heritage of a Romani homeplace, he led his own discovery of it as a young adult through his work in Transcarpathia among children orphans and through his ethnographic

research. Another educator told of the rich family traditions in his homeplace. Coming from the large, influential family of a respectable Romani leader, he described injustice as individual prejudice to Roma rather than discrimination that is part and parcel of the sociostructural fabric of society. His life history instanced the upward mobility that opened up for the 1950s' generation of Roma, whose fathers—Romani leaders—facilitated sedentarization of Romani communities with local authorities. These encounters with Romani oral tradition enrich the reader's understanding of various non-linear trajectories of becoming a Romani intellectual in Ukraine.

Chapter Three

Chapter three invites the reader to the first Romani theater in Ukraine. It depicts the events of the Third International Romani Theater Festival, illustrating the festival's wrap-around effect of psychedelic spectacle, promoting greater equality between the stage and the auditorium through the physical participation of the audience in the action. The reader meets the theater director, Igor Krikunov, through a personal interview. In a comprehensive and engaging narrative, Krikunov described the theater's efforts in education of both Roma and non-Roma. His reflections were then followed by a 3-day report from the small office, which powered the theater's work. By following the meetings and conversations in this room, the reader gains a sense of the everyday action, thinking, and communication unfolding backstage. Finally, the description of a New Year's evening in the theater director's home conveys to the reader the warmth of this multigenerational theater family.

Chapter Four

Chapter four introduces the reader to the world of poetry of the first Romani poet of Ukraine, educator, and philosopher, the late Mixa Kozimirenko. Through encounters with him in his hometown, the capital, in Transcarpathia, the facets of his remarkable talent and fascinating presence become visible. Conversations with the poet and various events are complemented by my translations of his Ukrainian, Romani, and Russian poetry. Finally, Kozimirenko's autobiographic narrative recounts the tragic events of Romani genocide during World War II. This personal story made his poetry resound in a

deeper and more intimate voice, coming from the person responsible for keeping the flame of memory alive. Mixa Kozimirenko and I continued our creative communication until his last days in July 2005.

Chapter Five

Chapter five explores the innovative role of Romani media formations in generating the strands of cultural history of the Romani people in response to its exclusion and misrepresentation by the mainstream media. As this chapter demonstrates, the networks of Romani cultural elite are fitting their theories and perspectives into the master narrative of a monolithic culture of nation-state; thus, the culture of Roma of Ukraine is beginning to emerge as sets of practices of representation. Therefore, instead of trying to describe a coherent history of Roma of Ukraine, I examined the many forms of cultural experience shared with me by Romani intellectuals of Ukraine in their quest of recovering Romani history. This chapter introduces the world of cultural collecting where one discovers the cultural heritage of Romani people through the events and the objects Romani intellectuals consider important. They have been recovering the early history of Romani migrations while simultaneously generating the uplifting momentum for the Romani cultural movement. Their collections and stories exude enthusiasm, artistic flair, and punch. It is within these intellectual networks that the cultural heritage of Roma of Ukraine is brewing.

Appendix

The appendix serves as a useful supplementary source introducing the reader to the translated texts of poems by Mixa Kozimirenko and Nikolai Minesko.

Chapter One

The Battles for Consciousness and Their Media

This chapter intersects the imaginary dialogue between the Soviet Romologist O. P. Barannikov’s writings on the “battle for consciousness,” which the Soviet state waged among Roma in the 1930s, and a group of post-Soviet Romani intellectuals launching the cultural educational movement they called “propaganda of Romani culture.” We will enter the dynamic, media-rich sociopolitical and cultural context during the year proclaimed as “A Year of Culture in Ukraine.” By attending the First Romani Congress, a parliamentary discussion on the crisis of culture, and by reviewing productions of the three Kiev theaters, we will be introduced to the interpenetrating complexities surrounding ethnic mobilization, nation-building, and Euroatlantic integration and its implications for Romani intellectuals. Within this broad query about the state’s role in identity politics, we will explore how far the state-led promotion of national identity in Ukraine is inclusive of Romani people.

The Battle for Consciousness: Roma and Non-Roma Dialogue

In 1931, the Soviet Romologist Professor O. P. Barannikov¹⁵ published the first ethnographic monograph on the Roma of Ukraine, *Ukrains’ki Tsygany*. Supplemented with annotations in German, *Die Zigeuner Der Ukraine*, it was intended as progressive at the time in its application of the historical approach to the “psychology” of Romani people. However, in retrospect it appears to have been cursed by a menacing specter of the WWII genocide Roma call the *Porrhaimos*, or “Devouring,” due to repetitive stereotypes such as the thought that the development of positive characteristics in Roma was hampered “by terrible laziness—such that could hardly be found in any other people”¹⁶ (p. 36). “The involvement of Gypsies in the life of labor,” Barannikov wrote, “along with the elimination of those economic conditions that allowed them to be lazy, idle, and lead the life of a drone, is the best way of enculturation of Gypsies. Yet such

¹⁵ Barannikov was born in the town of Zolotonosha, Ukraine, where Romani poet Oleksandro Germano came from. Romani intellectuals in Ukraine are very familiar with Barannikov’s work.

¹⁶ Here and elsewhere the translation from Ukrainian (as in the present case), Russian, and Romani is mine, unless otherwise indicated.

measures cannot produce quick and real consequences without educational work” (p. 56). For the first time in the world, stated the author, the representatives of the Gypsies were participating in land management by the Gypsies themselves, which is part of the land management by village dwellers of the Soviet Union in general (p. 53).

Gypsy Komsomol members are being sent to *rabfak*¹⁷, as well as to the factories as apprentices. Thus the Gypsies are being involved not only in grain production, but in the industries as well. Certainly only such measures could have a tremendous importance for the re-cultivation of Gypsies, make a settled people out of itinerant Gypsies, and involve them in cultured life. Yet it should very well be remembered that this is a very complicated task, much more complicated than for any other people. For many centuries, Gypsies have never worked regularly [sic] and because of that do not have any habit of doing it [sic]. Besides, terrible ignorance [sic] reigns among the Gypsies, there are very few educated people among them, and they treat the outsiders with great suspicion. (Ibid.)

Barannikov stated that many times he heard from the Gypsies that grain production was not the Gypsy trade because they could neither plough nor sow and that their profession was to trade, “yet the new power demands that the Gypsies join the life of labor” (ibid.). In this connection, he reported that in several *okrugs* Gypsy collectives were set up. Indeed, before Romani activism was suppressed, the Pan Russian Romani Union, under the leadership of Aleksander Germano from the Ukrainian city of Zolotonosha, had been coordinating some 30 Romani-run artisan cooperatives in Moscow and 50 collective estates throughout the western Soviet Union. The largest of these, home to 70 families, was Krikunovo in Kuban,⁹ and bred horses for the Red Army (Hancock, 2002). As Barannikov wrote (1931):

In Kuban⁹, in Sal’sk *okrug*, there is a first Gypsy *khutor*-farmstead *Krikunovo*. This farmstead has 1900 *dessiatinas*¹⁸ (5,130 acres) of land and 40 homes. 50 Gypsy families live there, and they have [a] sizeable estate: horses, oxen, camels, one bull and small livestock. The Gypsy collective has been becoming self-reliant in the past years and is going to purchase a tractor. This first Gypsy farmstead is of great importance to the cultivation of Gypsies, not only those who live on it, but the itinerant ones as well. A Gypsy magazine reports that itinerant Gypsies often stop by this farmstead and many of them ask to be admitted into the collective. (p. 56)

¹⁷ *Rabochii fakul’tet*, educational establishment set up to prepare workers and peasants for higher education.

¹⁸ One *dessiatina* = 2.7 acres.

According to Barannikov, the educational work among Roma in Moscow was carried out exclusively by the educated Roma themselves. He emphasized this as an important fact, taking into account the suspicious attitude of Roma towards non-Roma. There were two Romani clubs and three schools in Moscow, and a few books were published for the schools and the adults. The teachers at the schools were educated Roma. Also, the first Gypsy magazine to be published, *Romani Zorya (Gypsy Dawn)*, was published in Moscow. The magazine reported “on the new forms of life, carried out educational and agitation work among Roma, and called them on to education and cultured life” (pp. 56–57). Barannikov pointed out that “Gypsy schools, where the Gypsies study and teach, Gypsy books, written by the Gypsies themselves, Gypsy clubs and a Gypsy magazine... have come into being for the first time in the entire world” and are “a tremendous achievement of the Soviet power.” At the same time, according to him, there was regrettably no such educated milieu among the Roma in Ukraine, and it was urgently needed.

A little over 20 years after the publication of Barannikov’s book, a boy by the name Igor Krikunov was born on the Krikunovo farmstead, soon to become an actor at Moscow’s Theater *Romen*. In 1983, he moved to Kyiv, where in 1994, he founded a Romani Theater. Thus, Ukraine received its first Romani theater—60 years later than Moscow.

In June 2002, I met Igor Krikunov in Kyiv, my former native city, at the First Congress of Romani Communities of Ukraine. In response to Barannikov’s report on the Krikunovo farmstead, he commented, “It was my grandfather and father who were the founders of that *khutor* Krikunovo, which still exists.” And he told its history:

Our family had traveled along the route from Kharkov to the Don and Kuban’ for many generations, since the 17th century for sure. This history has been kept in the memory of my family, and I learned it from my grandmothers, it comes from *their* memory. The men in our lineage were blacksmiths, and since their trade was in great demand in the region, the trade route had been worked out and remained stable. They migrated along that route, from village to village. When the work was finished in one village, they collected their equipment and moved to the next. In 1927–28, when collectivization reached Kuban’, my relatives settled and started a Gypsy kolkhoz exactly on the spot where they happened to be staying at the time. Our last name has been predominant in that farmstead. In the family pictures, my great-grandfathers appear wearing Cossak traditional clothing, and

my grandmothers and uncles *gutarili*, or spoke the Russian type of Cossak *govor*, or dialect. They spoke Gypsy language and the Russian Cossak dialect.

Critical examination of the works by Barannikov is a new departure in Romani studies, stated Romani anthropologist Nadezhda Demeter and her colleagues (2000): “Until recently it is on his writings that conclusions as to the criminality innate in Romani mentality have been based” (p. 328). Such “dialogue” as above between a “scholarly expert’s” text and Romani intellectuals on the subject of Romani “psychology” and culture, until recently, has not taken place in the history of the Romani people. Underlying this fact is the relationship between meaning and social control. As Henry Giroux (1988) reminded us, commonly accepted definitions about work, intelligence, mastery, failure, and learning are socially constructed categories that carry with them the weight of specific interests and norms (p. 17). This highlights how cultural institutions function to reproduce the cultural beliefs and economic relationships that support the dominant society and the larger social order. The giant citizen mill of the Soviet industry and agriculture capitalized on the large workforce of Romani workers. Missing from Barannikov’s work is the approach to Romani “psychology” as a consciousness-relationship, as the significance people have for their experiences (Leont’ev, 1978, p. 169). In Barannikov’s text, as in a larger society, no room was given for Romani intellectuals—let alone Romani students in schools and Romani people in communities—to generate their own meanings, to act on their own lived histories, or to share their critical thought. For many years, the writings of non-Romani anthropologists and other social scientists went unquestioned. Giroux assured us that “within this limited view of meaning, prejudices and social myths are relegated to the realm of unquestioned habits of mind and experience” (1988, p. 17). Thus the battle for Romani consciousness, launched by the dominant society, has been waged without interethnic dialogue of Roma and non-Roma and without profound knowledge about Romani people.

History teaches us that despite the periods of upward mobility that appeared from time to time for many Roma in the Soviet Union,¹⁹ 70 years after Barannikov’s report the tasks of education and integration of Romani people have not lost their urgency. In the post-Soviet space the “battle for consciousness” of Romani people has taken on a new

¹⁹ As in early the 1930s, mid-1950s, 1960s, and during Leonid Brezhnev’s “rule.”

turn. In today's Ukraine, the cultural and educational organizations of Romani intellectuals are generating their cultural identity as the "Roma of Ukraine" in dialogue with the developing "national idea" and the culture of the titular, Ukrainian nation, itself in the process of becoming.

In June 2002, Roma of Ukraine assembled in Kyiv at the First Romani Congress of Ukraine to discuss urgent issues such as the meeting of cultural and educational needs of Romani people. It was at that event that I met the intellectuals who were launching cultural educational Romani media work in Ukraine.

*First Romani Congress of Ukraine: The Tasks of Propaganda of Romani Culture*²⁰

Igor Krikunov was partaking in the event simultaneously on several different planes and in several roles, at times appearing as a lead participant, yet subverting the bureaucratic officialdom by laconic comments throughout the event. His speech was ideologically de jour and arguably the best performance among a few outstanding public speeches. He was the only one at the meeting to look beyond the more immediate and procedural tasks of the election of the President, the Vice-Presidents, and the Revision Commission of the newly formed Romano Kongreso Ukrainatar and the grievances about grant-writing skills, travel abroad accountability, and distribution of humanitarian aid in the regions. His speech underscored the important task of working towards the future, which he saw as caring for the children and youth today.

At the beginning of the meeting, the presiding biologist from Kiev, Peter Grigorichenko, read the resolution of the round table discussion from the day before to be adopted by the delegates:

A few heritage schools have not solved the problem. Non-existent are textbooks and reference books. Children virtually do not have any knowledge, having obtained at the most an elementary education. The social, pedagogical, and economic status of Romani families does not allow them to provide children with clothing, footwear, and food. Proceeding from the real situation that has formed in our state, the round table participants think that the state organs of power together with the national cultural organizations of Roma should create conditions for the comprehensive solution of the social-economic and national-cultural problems facing Roma. We are entering the new millennium with a belief in the development of the economic progress of mankind, with hope in the future

²⁰ All the quotations in this section are based on the transcript Romano Kongreso Ukrainatar. 06.08.02.

dobrobut-prosperity, with aspiration for raising the ideals of beauty, goodness, and harmony. Whether these expectations come true depends only on us, on our energy, on strength and unity. Hence, we propose:

- To develop a comprehensive program, *Roma of Ukraine*;
- To make provisions for the state and regional programs aimed at overcoming poverty in Ukraine to include sections addressing the aid to low income families of Roma;
- To create collectives of authors for the development of textbooks and curricula to meet the educational needs of Roma;
- To participate in conducting of research on the culture, customs, traditions, and everyday life of Roma in Ukraine;
- To give organizational, methodological, practical, and financial support to Romani communities in holding of congresses, conferences, seminars, and round tables;
- To take measures regarding instances of discrimination and violation of constitutional rights of Ukraine's citizens against representatives of Romani communities; and
- To promote the establishment and maintenance of contacts between Romani public organizations and international NGOs, as well as such organizations as World Romani Congress and their Parliament.

The goal of the meeting was the elections of the President, the Vice-Presidents, and the Revision Commission. Besides Grigorichenko, the nominees included: Aladar Adam of Uzhgorod, the editor of the newspaper *Romani Yag*²¹ and president of the legal association *Ekhipe*,²² Igor Krikunov, the Director of the National Romani Theater *Romance*; and the late Anatoliy Kondur, a veteran of cultural and educational work and a Romani leader from Izmail. In their different ways, the candidates used their speeches to underscore the lack of publicity of Romani cultural events and knowledge of Romani culture among the non-Roma, which was explained in part by the lack of outreach and contact of Romani media and the non-Roma.

Aladar Adam ended his speech with words of praise for Igor Krikunov's art. [Speaking in Russian] "Also, I want to talk about another candidate. About this candidate I will speak in the following words... There—*Rromanes shaj te?*²³" Krikunov agreed, "*Phen!*"²⁴ Aladar continued:

²¹ *Romani Flame* (Romani).

²² *Unity* (Romani).

²³ May I speak Romani? (Romani). Affective code-switching. This and other speakers switched to Romani as the language of solidarity.

²⁴ Speak! (Romani).

*Gida! Mangav tuxe baxt, zor, sastipe!*²⁵ A low bow to you *anda tirro iskustvo!* *Tumaro iskustvo lasharel po Ukraina, a pesa anda sia Europa.*²⁶ When I saw his performance in Mukachevo I felt myself a real Gypsy.²⁷ There was a performance. When Igor came to Uzhgorod, and to us in Mukachevo, there was not a single seat left! People were standing, applauded while standing, and they had to give another extra 30 minutes [storm of applause] to find seats for the people [another storm of applause]. But when Igor came to Uzhgorod, I was ashamed that only Roma came and *jekh gadzo nas.*²⁸ That was very unpleasant. Because he carries—free of charge!—carries our culture and the arts!

Krikunov responded, in Russian:

My art—it is the country in which I have lived my entire life. And you all know, all of my deeds and I are right in front your very eyes. You know the positive as well as the negative about me. This is the real class, this is the real battle, this is politics. Politics is *avantyura*²⁹. And *avantyura* is not a bad word. All the real politicians who have remained known throughout history, all of them were great *avantyurists*. But none of them was an *aferist*.³⁰ Therefore I want to offer this sort of advice to the person we are going to elect: Do not confuse those two. Because we Roma are, sort of, all living on the edge, the edge of *avantyurism*. And to this kind of deal we are electing the first person. ... This has to be done with clean hands, crystal-clean. Because if we subject this activity to profanation today, afterwards we would never be able to clean ourselves. Therefore I call upon everyone, call upon everyone, so that we, we took the voting and the comprehension,³¹ well, very seriously.

How, how can I describe my program if we do not yet have our national idea? It does not exist to date, this national idea does not exist in Ukraine! Hence the *bar-dak!*³² And we, naturally, are the *yacheika*.³³ This is why we have never thought, never realized that we must have our national idea, which would lead, it won't hamper, it won't destroy the structure of the state of Ukraine! [In a loud and clear voice] On the contrary, it will be useful! And if we do not find it, believe me—o-o-h! “the readings,” to read the paragraphs, well, we would keep rewriting

²⁵ I wish you good luck, strength, health! (Romani).

²⁶ ...for your art. Your art is making Ukraine and all of Europe better/more beautiful. (Romani).

²⁷ Most Romani intellectuals in Ukraine continue calling themselves *Tsygane*, when speaking Russian or Ukrainian, to a Romani ethnonym, *Rom*. They explain that it is the meaning one puts in the word that is important, and not the form of the word. This echoes Vygotsky's idea about the word as the mediator of meaning and one of various signs, “It is the meaning that is important, not the sign. We can change the sign but retain the meaning” (Vygotsky, 1983, 5, p. 74). This might explain a certain resistance among many Romani intellectuals of Ukraine to the use of the word *Rom*, *Romani*, promoted by many NGOs, and foundations perceived as “western.” Not infrequently the choice between the words *Romani* and *Tsyganskii* shows situational or stylistic switching and can be treated as an ideological indice. For this reason, here and elsewhere I translate each occurrence of the word *Tsygan* as “Gypsy.”

²⁸ Not a single non-Rom.

²⁹ “Gamble, venture, adventure” (Russ.).

³⁰ “Shady dealer, swindler, crook” (Russ., colloquial).

³¹ *Osmysleniye*.

³² ‘Whore-house, a mess’ (Russ., colloquial).

³³ In various meanings, a cell, a resistance unit, a working unit, etc.

and circulating paperwork, but this will not solve the problem, this will not solve the problem of the people. If each of us is separate, a leader or a team, we will not accomplish much. If here, look—all of us sitting here do not become one single fist... There should not be the interests of one, or another, or yet another one! If it is a fist, here should be the same interests! [Shouting out] Of the people of Ukraine! Of the Gypsy peoples!³⁴ Only then we could talk of any result! Only then we could talk of the idea and we would be able to accomplish anything.

Certainly, the major problem for our people today, I think, is the children. It is our youth. It is the major problem. If we do not save them today, tomorrow our people are doomed to degeneration. They will perish—look at what is happening today! I will not talk... The boys, 17–18 year olds, are dying out!³⁵ And this is the genetic fund of the nation! They are to reproduce! To carry on our blood! And there won't be anything to carry on with! Because they are *umir-r-r-rayut*, are dying! At a young age! And, therefore, I have a recommendation: First of all, we should be solving the problem of Gypsy youth. Children! Their *obr-r-razovanie*—education and culture! Ignorance will not lead to the horizon! Ignorance has been bur-r-r-rying us throughout our entire history! And our people—is of high culture! There, in its roots. Unfortunately, not today. Hence, all of our *negarazdy* [he injected a Ukrainian word for “disorders”]. Because, probably, everything would have been different if we all spoke one language.³⁶ But, again, these are futile words.

Thank you again, thank you for your trust, but I would like to say that I serve a different god anyway. I serve the propaganda of Gypsy art and culture [pause] in Ukraine and beyond its borders. And it is in *this* direction that I work as much as I can. But really there are leaders in our organizations, who have proven themselves in their work as administrators, as leaders, as intelligent, sophisticated people. I want to say this about Tolya Kondur. Because I would like my grandson—Help me Lord!—to be like people of such class! ... We are dumb, *nemyie*, one without another. ... I'm calling upon you yet one more time: take everything with great responsibility. ... Thank you! [Storm of applause].

In his speech, Krikunov evoked the image of a fist as a metaphor of unity to aspire to and called upon the diverse Romani peoples to work toward their national idea as the people of Ukraine,³⁷ thereby promoting national unity³⁸ and unity between

³⁴ Narodov Tsygan! (Russian).

³⁵ This was the only, and a very indirect, reference to the drug problem made at the congress.

³⁶ The ambiguity inherent in the expression “one language,” which could refer to a single Romani language, or Ukrainian, or Russian.

³⁷ The Ukrainian Constitution uses the term “Ukrainian people.”

³⁸ As a diasporic people, Roma are compared to other non-territorial peoples such as the Jews and Karaims. Lev Vygotsky, who belonged to a Jewish “minority,” is quoted as being seriously occupied with the history and culture of his people (Veresov, 1999, p. 54). Contemporaries recalled his definition of a nation, in which he regarded neither only territory nor language as a criterion of what a nation was, but a common historical destiny (Levitin, 1982, p. 20). Romani intellectuals in Ukraine saw the common historical destiny shared by various Romani groups, while at the same time emphasizing their belonging to the people of Ukraine.

different Romani peoples—the different fingers in a fist serve one goal. His emphasized loyalty to the arts and his perspective toward the future are important. The future-oriented power of the arts, widely mobilized by the Soviet propaganda machine,³⁹ is now being put to use in Ukraine to serve the national idea of “making Ukraine more democratic, Ukrainian, and European” (Pavlychko, 2002).

Anatolity Kondur, in turn, also underscored the need for a greater effort by Romani intellectuals to address the non-Roma through Romani media and cultural events centered on Romani people. In the middle of his speech he pointed at the audience and commented, “*Naj le gadje!*”⁴⁰ There are only us. That is, there should be information because our life depends on it. Not the *gadje*, but Romale should write about themselves. . . . The press, radio, television are absolutely necessary.⁴¹ This is how I see it.”

Thus, the three intellectuals emphasized the vital importance of arts and culture, their unifying, uplifting, identity-inspiring force, as well as the urgent need to come in contact with the non-Roma in the information field. They articulated their concern with the interplay between broad structural changes and the adaptive strategies of a threatened ethnic group of Romani people.

As it turned out, there was only one other non-Romani woman at the meeting, *Derzhkomnats* of Ukraine’s representative at the presidium table. Igor Krikunov was sitting next to her, occasionally explaining something to her. When I interviewed her after the meeting, she offered her perspective on the event, with a smile, “There, they will elect the president and will calm down. It always happens very turbulently” [Ось вони оберуть президента і заспокояться. Це завжди дуже бурхливо проходить]. I asked what ethnic group she represented, and she responded, “Ukraine, titular nation.”

Knowing about the negative perception by Romani and Russian intellectuals of the

³⁹Vygotsky (1987) and Bakhtin (1984, 1990) were among the first to comment on the consciousness-raising function of the arts. Bakhtin saw it in poetry and in the conception of dialogical consciousness. Vygotsky in his *Psychology of Art* considered art an “organization of our behavior in the future, an orientation towards the future, a demand that may never be realized but which compels us to strive over and above our life towards that which lies beyond it” (1987, p. 243).

⁴⁰No non-Roma (Romani).

⁴¹He noted that currently Roma in Ukraine have the newspaper *Romani Yag*, but they also need access to radio and television. Currently, they have access to a Ukrainian language radio channel, *Promin*’, and he suggested that there should be a weekly or a monthly Romani radio program about Romani accomplishments and issues. He reproached one Romani leader for not previously taking advantage of the opportunity announced by Krikunov of having 30-minutes of TV access.

recently adopted categories “minority” and “titular ethnos,” I asked whether “titular” implied the leading role, the privileged status. She denied that implication with, “We do not give preference to any ethnic group, all peoples are equal in our [state].” I asked whether there were any Romani employees in their institution. “No,” she said, “Because they are not proficient in the state language⁴² and do not want to work in the state structures.”

Touching upon the negative perception of the category “minority” Belitzer (2002) attributed it to the lack of knowledge of the international law among the general public and the minorities and recommended not to “offend” minority representatives “who do not wish to be acknowledged as such” and rather to replace the term with a more neutral “groups” or “communities” (pp. 153-154). At the same time she emphasized the urgency of informing the public about the status and role of national minorities in Europe. Then, she argued, minorities would not be perceived as something “second-rate” compared to the majority, but rather as the traditional structural component of European nations. The rights of citizens who belonged to such minorities, primarily the right to preservation of ethnocultural identity, were to be protected by the state and supported by society at large (p. 155). Thus unlike the totalitarian citizen mill, the ethnopolitical strategy of Ukraine aimed to integrate ethnic minorities instead of assimilating them. However, while the ethnic minority right to ethnocultural identity preservation was emphasized, their right to inform and educate the public about their history and culture was less readily acknowledged.

Clearly, the battle for consciousness was under way in Ukraine, both at the individual and the institutional levels; and unlike such battles in 1930s, this time it was unfolding in post-Soviet Ukraine, “a state in the process of transformation from totalitarian to quasi-democratic” (Yevtukh, 2002, p. 206). The pivotal concern was the negotiation of Romani identity in view of the intransigent character of Ukrainian nationalist loyalties in early stages of nation-building. In the age of postmodernity and globalism this also had to be the growing consciousness of an emerging and fluid world amidst the ambiguous and unsettling transformations. Next, we will review the

⁴² I.e. Ukrainian. Most of the Romani intellectuals I met were proficient in Ukrainian, even if they spoke Russian in the private domain.

ethnopolitical context in which Romani intellectuals carried out their work and addressed the tasks of national ethnopolitical development, mapped out by a team of Ukrainian sociologists of *Europe XXI* Foundation.

The Tasks of Ethnopolitical Development

The construction of the new Ukrainian multiethnic and multicultural nation to a great extent will depend on the general psychology of interethnic relations (Maiboroda⁴³, 2002, p. 35).

According to the 1989 census, the population of Ukraine included over 100 nationalities. In 1989 the total population constituted 51.4 million, including 37.4 million of ethnic Ukrainians, or 72.7%. All the other nationalities made up 27.3%, or 14 million, including 11.3 million ethnic Russians (i.e. over 80% of ethnic non-Ukrainians or 22.1% of the country's total population). Thus, two largest ethnic communities constituted 94.8% of total population, with the rest being distributed between dozens of other ethnicities, among them Jews (486,000), Belarussians (440,000), Moldovans (324,000), Bulgarians (233,000), Poles (219, 000), Hungarians (163,000), Romanians (134,000), and after 1989, 250,000-270,000 Crimean Tatars. The ethnic groups whose numbers fluctuated between 40,000 and 100,000 were Greeks (98,000), Armenians (54,000), and Roma (about 48,000). The ethnic groups whose numbers were between 30 and 40 thousand were Germans (about 38,000), Azerbaijanis (37,000), and Gagaus (32,000). From 1970 to 1989 there was an increase of Turkic peoples in Ukraine, and together with Crimean Tatars in 1989 they numbered over 500,000. At present the population of this group is much higher (pp. 9-10).

The present stage of ethnonational development and the national agenda were seen by Ukrainian social scientists as taking on the geopolitical dimension, with growing ethnic and national consciousness, and complex tendencies of interethnic consolidation and disintegration (Kresina, 2002). Such development was marked, on the one hand, by globalization, or a closer integration of the countries and peoples, and on the other hand, by political and ethnocultural fragmentation. These two tendencies highlighted the need

⁴³Oleksandr Maiboroda, Head of the Ethnopolitology Department, Institute of Political and Ethnonational Research of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

for the nation states and the world community to guarantee harmonious development of every ethnonational community as a self-sufficient and unique cultural entity (p. 72). The heightened interest to ethnic minority human rights from state governments and international organizations in the past decade was explained not only by the aggravation of ethnopolitical conflicts due to discrimination of minorities, but also by the growing desire of minorities, in response to the perilous globalization processes, to safeguard their uniqueness and to further the development of group's ethnocultural identity, that is to ensure integration instead of assimilation (Belitser, 2002). Underscoring the significant external impact on ethnopolitics in Ukraine, such as Ukraine's European choice, Yevtukh (2002) listed the forms of interethnic conflict regulation Ukraine was bound to consider, such as the affirmative action programs. Such consideration, according to him, was made due to the growing activity of ethnic movements and the increased role of the ethnic factor in international relations, in particular with multiethnic states in Europe (pp. 205-207). Overall, Ukraine's ethnosocial development was characterized as the mainstream integrating type, whereby the ethnic groups integrated into Ukrainian social context while preserving their ethnocultural uniqueness (p. 194). The notably high level of tolerance in interethnic relations in Ukraine allowed Yevtukh to predict the establishment of interethnic solidarity in the future, consolidating the multiethnic Ukrainian society and removing the conflict engendering causes in interethnic relations (pp. 195-196). However, to date instances of ethnic hostility were reported against Jews, Crimean Tatars, Roma, and to an even greater extent the immigrants from the countries of Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East (p. 199). Recent sociological research showed "a certain drop in the overall high level of tolerance," a shift from interethnic tolerance to exclusiveness and to a certain degree to xenophobia, as well as a 15% increase of isolationist preferences among the citizens of Ukraine (p. 206). This highlighted the urgency to develop a system of tolerance cultivation in interethnic relations, or measures that provided substantial knowledge about the interacting sides, through publications on the history and culture of ethnic communities, inclusion of courses on history and culture of these communities in school curricula, and joint multiethnic campaigns at the national and regional levels (p. 206). Another important factor of the conflict-free development of Ukrainian multiethnic society was the decentralization of power, in particular the

participation of ethnic community representatives in the decision-making process in ethnonational domain (p. 208). The decentralized model of ethnonational development could prove effective for Ukraine due to the predominantly dispersed ethnic communities, in particular those of Romani people.

These national tasks of multiethnic and multicultural development and the construction of common civic and cultural identity foregrounded the various forms of consciousness such as reflection, self-consciousness, self-identification, national idea, or national consciousness. All these forms of consciousness ultimately combined into a *national idea*, or agenda (Kresina, 2002). The national idea of Ukrainian nation-state was understood as the construction of political, social, economic, and spiritual foundations of a democratic, civil, politically and economically self-sufficient society. Such content of the national idea became the basis for social consolidation, including the consolidation of the multiethnic community around the national tasks. The consolidation around the national idea was the task the Ukrainian state set for the ethnic minority activists (p. 83). The development of the national idea, or consensus building, thus took on a form of “shared consciousness of the nation,” which acted as a stabilizing ideological factor in a socially unstable, stratifying, developing society (Pavlychko, 2002). Touching upon the geostrategic mission of Ukraine as a pivotal nation in the democratization process and its role in helping Russia get rid of the “imperial syndrome,” Pavlychko called this simultaneous belonging to the west and to the east with their different historical, cultural, and religious ways and thus ethnic, linguistic, and regional divisions, “a sore fissure of a wound” resulting in a potential source of societal conflict (p. 46).

In this ethnonational context, as we have seen during the First Romani Congress, Romani intellectuals formulated their political and ideological task as propaganda of Romani culture, which included getting in greater contact with Romani and non-Romani audiences and institutions and broadcasting information about Romani culture generated by Roma themselves as well as educating and raising consciousness in Romani communities. As we shall see further, in this understanding, propaganda was considered to be more like the living impulse or living force and went far beyond counter-information. In this view, questions concerning the production, distribution, and

evaluation of knowledge were directly linked to the questions of control and domination in the larger society.

Weakness of State Power in Ukraine

Ukrainian power was not democratic and the opposition was weak. The constitutional system of state power in Ukraine mirrored the image of the totalitarian Soviet rule (Pavlychko, 2002, p. 30). In supposedly presidential-parliamentarian Ukraine, the president had such privileges over Verkhovna Rada and the government that in reality the state system was presidential. In such context, all the grievances for the poverty and deplorable demographics were blamed on the head of state, who bore the greatest responsibility for everything that was happening in the country. The real power in Ukraine belonged primarily to the former “red directors,” *nomenklatura*, or executives, who held similarly high positions under the Communist regime:

In their hands are almost all the mass media, they build their own secret and non-secret trade and production enterprises, their material interests are in-growing into not only transparent but the shadow economy as well. They have banded into regional clans of oligarchs, where the national idea is interpreted as a stage decoration... The double-faced policy of the president [Kuchma] fits all of this [as he talks about the European choice of Ukraine on the one hand and then cooperates with Russia on the other] (p. 32).

The peaceful nature of the compromise between different factions during Ukraine’s transition to independence and the interconnectedness between national elites in the state-and-institution building process explained the strong post-communist continuities in the ethnopolitical, educational, and cultural state institutions.

These continuities became apparent in the report on strategies of state policy in interethnic relations by the officials of Ukraine’s State Committee on Nationalities and Migration (*Derzhkomnatsmigrtsii*) Raul Chilachava⁴⁴ and Tetyana Pilipenko (2002). One of such post-communist continuities revealed in the report was the traditional state support of Romani culture, the arts, and media through the Ministry of Culture, and their privileging over the support of Romani formal education in educational institutions through the Ministry of Education and Science. This would explain the greater focus on

⁴⁴ Deputy head of Ukraine’s State Committee of Nationalities and Migration, professor and poet.

the media formations as opposed to formal educational institutions in the work of Romani educators and culture workers.

The authors assessed the ethnopolitical situation in the country as positive. They commented on the visible ethnic mobilization of ethnic minorities: By January 1, 2002 785 ethnic cultural societies worked in Ukraine (p. 51). After the adoption of Ukrainian as a state language, the rights of every citizen to education in native language or the study of the native language were recognized. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine was implementing various measures to ensure these rights through a network of educational establishments, in which education was in the ethnic minority languages. The enrollment data in 2001-2002 listed fifteen different languages yet did not include Romani. Furthermore, no data was presented on Romani language courses for prospective teachers of Romani students, while such courses existed in Polish, Bulgarian, Romanian, Crimean Tatar, and Hungarian languages (p. 58). Romani language was not mentioned among other languages in the report on curricula and textbook development in 1996-2002 (p. 60).

The report glossed over the differences in the needs of various minority groups, the levels at which these needs were met, and the types of external support for various groups and programs. For example, the report made clear that the interests of some ethnic minorities were secured in international treaties with historic homelands, including the following provisions:

- To provide favorable conditions for ethnic minority students to study their mother tongue and in mother tongue at the elementary and secondary level;
- To organize joint academic and other contests among the students;
- To develop and improve methods of teaching minority languages in Ukraine;
- To set up bilateral commissions on content improvement of history and geography textbooks, as well as the commissions on ethnic minority education (p. 60).

According to the agreements with Poland and Slovakia, teachers from these countries worked at secondary schools in Ukraine. Representatives from foreign countries participated in conferences, seminars, and workshops. National minority students

received higher education in Bulgaria, Poland, Moldova, Russian Federation, Romania, Slovakia, and Hungary (pp. 60-61). In Kyiv, the Consulate of Poland supervised students' contests in Polish language at the gymnasium No. 48. The Embassy of Israel, Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture, and Israeli patriotic youth organization *Habbad* opened new educational establishments, such as preschool Happiness, specialized school No. 325, Technological Liceum, as well as Hebrew courses and special courses at secondary school No. 128 (p. 61). Romani communities did not have such opportunities. In 2002-2003 the state was only beginning to assess the educational needs of Romani communities in Ukraine and had not begun addressing them to the extent of other ethnic communities.

Most of the state measures in the field of Romani education and heritage preservation were directed towards the support of Romani culture, the arts, and media. At the Ministry of Culture the office of culture of ethnoses of Ukraine and Ukrainian diaspora was created in June 2001. Its tasks included "facilitation of the development of cultures of Ukraine's ethnic minorities, practical implementation of Ukraine's ethnocultural policy; preservation of the rich palette of languages, traditions, customs, and folklore of ethnic minorities of Ukraine as an inseparable constituent of culture of the Ukrainian people" (p. 61). The Ministry of Culture, together with other interested ministries, worked out The Comprehensive Measures on the Development of Cultures of the Ethnic Minorities up to the year 2005, adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

Meeting the needs of ethnic minorities in culture and the arts were 36 cultural centers, as well as houses of folk creativity, folklore and ethnographic centers, 1166 national amateur artistic groups, including 227 theaters and theater groups, 338 dance groups, 343 choir groups, and 258 music groups (p. 62).

Conceptually and stylistically the report of cultural support of ethnic minorities by the state showed strong continuities with the discourse of the bygone Communist era, except with a changed loyalty. To provide one example:

Concerned with the preservation of cultural traditions and heritage of the ethnoses that live in Ukraine, in every possible way, the state promotes their celebration of the days of their native culture, memorable dates, religious and ritualistic holidays, etc... Thanks to the New Year-Christmas artistic campaign "Gold-

domed Kyiv Unites” held on January 6, 2002, for the first time since Ukrainian independence, in Sophia Square carols sounded in Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak, Russian, and Polish languages, performed by carolers from Chernivechchyna, Khmel’nychchyna, Transcarpathia, Volhynia; in exposition halls traditional Christmas paraphernalia were displayed (p. 62-63).

Noteworthy are such markers of propagandistic and bureaucratic discourse as the personification of the state as caring for ‘ethnoses’ and promoting Christianity and traditions “in every possible way”; the impersonal constructions whereby inanimate entities such as carols assume the function of a subject, while human agents are either absent (e.g. “thanks to the artistic action”) or are reduced to the grammatical object function (e.g. “performed by carolers). The self-sacrificial role of the state was presented as “*podvizhnytstvo*, or selfless devotion to a cause, under the difficult economic conditions for the sake of national harmony” (p. 65). In this discourse typical of state reports, the agents are absent and numbers and celebrations gloss over the existing problems and shortcomings.

To provide another example, the authors reported that the state sponsored publication of over 500 literary editions for children and adults in over 60 minority languages: official editions, educational literature, dictionaries, phrase-books, popular science editions on the history and national-cultural development of ethnoses of Ukraine (p. 64). Most of these books were bilingual, thereby “having a positive resonance among the compatriots of different nationalities and thus consolidating society” (Ibid.). Such statements as “the interested readers had an opportunity to get acquainted with works of contemporary poets and writers of various ethnicities for whom Ukraine is Motherland and who write in their native language” (pp. 64-65) masked at least several facts discussed by Romani intellectuals in private communication and in press. First, Romani intellectuals⁴⁵ denounced the practice of presenting the works by non-Romani authors, such as Ilie Mazore cited by Chilachava and Pilipenko (p. 65), as native speakers. Second, Romani intellectuals discussed in press the problem of small circulations (500 or 1000 copies) and inadequate distribution of the works they managed to publish. Contrary to the state report (pp.64, 67), the books by minority authors were not distributed through

⁴⁵ E.g. A letter of protest in response to the first Romani ABC book published in Ukraine.

retail and libraries and did not reach the readers, ending up instead as rarities in the book collections of authors and activists (Danilkin, 2003).

The dilemmas of democratic state-and-nation building in multiethnic Ukraine demonstrated a range of complexities in both theory and practice. The tasks of nation-building should inevitably include the construction of tolerant civil society. In turn, it involves facilitation of political communication in society, real and not merely declarative implementation of ethnic minority rights, monitoring of central and local organs of power regarding ethnic minority rights and prevention of ethnic discrimination. The efforts of Romani intellectuals in tolerance cultivation as part of their educational and media work demonstrated the extent of their participation in the early stages of Ukrainian state-and-nation building. In interethnic relations, where competition for acknowledgement reached the fullest expression, the symbolic dimension played a very significant role for the formerly excluded groups such as Romani, explaining the emphasis these intellectuals placed on the urgency of recognition of Romani contributions to the larger community.

Barbarization of Society and New Agitprop

The central role of the arts and media and the leading role of the ethically oriented cultural elite in the cultural project of Ukrainian nation-building were termed “the humanitarian aura of the nation” (Kostenko, 1999). The state humanitarian policy aimed to create the mechanisms of effective influence and coordinate the efforts of scholars and creative intellectuals in sketching out the noble features of the national culture amidst the devastation of transitional stage (p. 22). At the same time, the post-Soviet freedom was blamed for the deplorable state of culture, aptly called “either the pornographic quackery or the ethnographic *gopakedia*⁴⁶,” thus referring to the widespread speculation in pornography and nationalism, “junking people’s heads with rubbish of philologically and morally unpolished productions in press, radio, and television” (p. 22). Some Ukrainian intellectuals decried the barbarization of society at the encroachment of globalization, with its preference of the utilitarian, consumerist, and cosmopolitan, as opposed to the national and spiritual, human life, “The states that supply the entire world with means of

⁴⁶ From *Gopak*, Ukrainian folk dance.

transportation and communication and high technologies of production of consumer products are unifying the spiritual life of the planet, reducing it to the sameness, to the primitive non-national forms” (Pavlychko, 2002, p. 42). Thus they saw the Communist totalitarianism being overtaken by the “globalization of Europe,” “a new Holy Roman Empire,” a superpower threatening the existence of the authentic national organisms (p. 41). In reality, however, it was often impossible to distinguish between the domestic rubbish and the cosmopolitan one among the eclectic cultural products.

Outside, the city confronted a person with millions of real-life pictures and images as a hilarious culture-jam, as one giant moving marketplace. Collage of sacred and profane was everywhere. The Guelman Gallery near Independence Square exhibited the *Xenophilia* art show, widely advertised in the media to be countering the raging xenophobia, the hatred of the Other of the early 21st century, with the expression of “boundless and dangerous desire.” “Love and hate of the Other—of a different faith or origin—it is on these psychological and esthetic overtones that the poetics of the exhibition is based,” stated the organizers. A white wall was lined with seven metal wire circles. Two pairs of black bikini were stretched across each circle creating the shape of the Star of David, thus an entire wall of them with luscious red lips on the first pair of bikini. The author of this installation, titled *Kosher Intime*, was Tatiana Krivenko. Next, on the three giant paintings by Vasyl Tzagolov titled *Oriental Beauties*, three nude young women with veiled faces stood with AK-47s, perhaps as “a display of their sexual-political activeness” according to one critic. The centerpiece of the art show was an oversized patchwork application stretching from the ceiling to the floor *Pushkin and a Jewess* by Irina Val’dron. “Golden Pushkin” and Rebekka, as labeled next to each figure, were depicted having a conversation under a sign in giant black and red capital letters: PUSHKIN and JEWESS and a yellow-and-blue Star of David. The mixed Ethiopian origin of the Russian classic was accentuated in golden brown hues and black curly hair under the Orthodox Jewish hat. Bare-busted Rebecca was depicted turning away with aversion from a pink phallus rising vertically from a bowl of painted Easter eggs. With a broad smile, Pushkin was extending this gift to Rebecca with the words written below the images in black, block letters sewn to the white linen in a metered verse mocking Pushkin’s style:

Christ has risen my Rebecca! Today, soulfully following the law of God-human, I am making out with you, my angel. And tomorrow, grateful for this kiss, without timidity, I am ready to convert to Moses' faith—and even to hand you that which distinguishes a rightful Jew from the Eastern Orthodox people.

A critical review in the Ukrainian weekly *Politics and Culture* presented the photographs of *Pushkin and the Jewess* and *Kosher Intime* and offered the critique of this “art” (Prut, 2002).⁴⁷ Capturing a possible range of reactions the critic predicted that some would react with laughter, while others with offense. She called this display “the art-makers’ pathology of love,” albeit a European one. The definitions of complex words with phobia and philia as the main roots, she argued, generally point to the fields of psychiatry and sexual pathology. And it is in this sickening direction that the present art-makers took. She pointed out that despite their emphasis on the equality of ethnoses and religious conceptions, seemingly very appropriate, witty, and profound, these artifacts could adorn the cover of any Anti-Semitic edition. Her analysis underscored the display as a common occurrence in Ukrainian culture, when in the free hands of the artists their creative search and reaction to the frail balance of contemporary world and ethnic conflicts resulted in ubiquitous Ukrainian “roasted duck, the decoration on the holiday dinner table”.⁴⁸

The visitors left the gallery in silence, looking down at the ground. That overwhelming feeling of being lured by a catchy title and then violated was commonplace in Ukraine. What we saw on display at the gallery violated with cynical laughter the quiet family histories we knew as real and sincere. Cynicism rose from the elaborate artistic investment; the means violated the ends. Apparently, not all art teaches us the privacy of the human condition—just as not all history welcomes exploration of why we are here and who we are.

The critical review of the *Xenophilia* exhibition titled *Pushkin's Rod in the Panties of the Young Jewess* was published in *Politics and Culture* next to the article “We Are Learning to be the Citizens,” in which Olesya Goncharuk reviewed a new textbook *We—*

⁴⁷ Prut, M. 2002. “Pruten' Pushkina u maitkah evreiky molodoi,” *Polityka I Kul'tura*, N45(176), p. 51.

⁴⁸ This figure of speech mocks the language of typical advertising during frequent holidays and festivities in Ukraine. Advertising in Ukraine is almost entirely in Ukrainian language and is developed and supported by the West. The food products advertised are not infrequently produced by the companies owned by political elites.

the Citizens of Ukraine, published by the collective of authors at the Ministry of Education of Ukraine, Mershon Center of the University of Ohio (USA), and the Civic Education Center (Poland). As an epigraph, the author, Goncharuk (2002), quoted the essay of a Volhynia high school student as follows:

Not every generation has the honor of receiving in its own hands a tiny baby—a Ukrainian independent state, to be swaddling it into the newest swaddles of not tested by time laws and to be teaching it to walk under the complex social conditions.(p. 50)

The textbook authors offered “new methods” calqued from English into Ukrainian: brainstorming, discussing, role-playing, modeling, case-studies, cooperative learning, role-playing, and portfolios on a range of topics including “The coexistence of representatives of different cultures, nations, and ethnicities in Ukraine,” “How not to fall victim to the mass media manipulation,” and “Where to get the money.” The textbook “will help [students] to learn to critically assess reality, defend one’s perspectives and listen to the other’s arguments, to unite with the like-minded and work towards a common goal” (p. 50). The photos of schoolchildren under the title *We Are the Citizens of Ukraine* next to the picture of Pushkin handing phallus to Rebekka and that of the kosher bikini (pp.50-51) instanced the intense Bakhtinian hybridity and interanimation of cultures—the heteroglossia of the Renaissance marketplace.

Standing in a subway train packed with people, wherever one turned, there was an advertising leaflet for condoms, chocolate, foreign language courses, weight-loss programs, anti-cellulite crème, boutiques, and tourist agencies. One ad pictured a photograph of a condom stretched over a giant, phallic cactus with sharp needles, encouraging protection. Another condom ad showed a bottle of champagne with an outburst of foam and a slogan in Ukrainian, *Enjoy your freedom!* My 12-year-old son took the subway at least twice a day. There was nowhere to escape this collage before one reached one’s final station, and even upon exiting the subway, this endless film-strip played again in the streets, in the print media, on TV, on the radio, at bus stops. The advertising of alcohol and tobacco products was very aggressive.

Oftentimes advertising unrolled spectacular scenes before us. One morning, Anton and I were approaching the open Livoberezhna subway station on the way to school. The train flew across the rail-bridge and pulled over at the platform. The entire train was

painted bright red. Across each car swelled a giant green pickle, and above it in white bold-faced type curved the brand name of the vodka *Pervak*, owing its name to the first sampling in the moonshine production process. In surprise, we watched the train fly across the sky in front of us. Ukrainian advertising has forged a new technique of agitprop and created a new style of dynamic montage.

Such a spin off of the famous agit-train as a highly mobile and effective weapon of Bolshevik propaganda and the creation of a fleet of metro trains in Kyiv used to advertise beverages was fresh. As Taylor (1985) reminded us, the first such train, named after Lenin, went into action among Red Army units in 1918. It proved to be so successful that Trotsky ordered five more. Each train was distinctively and brightly decorated with paintings and slogans, Cossaks and horses, by artists of the caliber of Mayakovsky, El Lissitsky, and Malevich. Each train carried a small library, a printing press for the production of pamphlets, newspapers, posters, an exhibition room, and a film section fostering a new branch of art and education (pp. 195–197). The fathers of montage admired the realistic pictures cinematic techniques were forging: “The hum of the unfolding film is like the hiss of a troika passing over the potholes as it rushes along life’s road with the poet of our imagination seated in it” (p. 199). Now alcohol and tobacco manufacturers borrow both the mythic universality and the claim to the received truth originally brought about by the first agit-train: “From illusion it becomes reality, truth and even the norm” (Ibid.).

The principal task of the Bolshevik propagandists was to achieve the transformation of the media from an instrument of amusement and entertainment into a means of education (p. 200). Now Ukrainian entrepreneurs were reversing this task. However, both types of propaganda rest on the same principle of harnessing “the natural curiosity and thirst for knowledge of the masses to the advantage of authorities” (p. 200). And if the Bolshevik media was “an indispensable tool which, in 5 to 10 minutes, would provide audiences of all nationalities with an unforgettable illustration of the benefits of the October Revolution,” the new Ukrainian media is acting under the new political conditions. This break-away from Communist propaganda is now in the lax control of those who also control the media, therefore, making the crucial question in our analysis “Whose point of view prevails?” In respect to our topic, the immediate answer is—that of

the non-Roma. However, to search for more specific answers, we will complicate the question by mapping it against a broader global backdrop. In Ukraine, many said that those who prevailed were at “the powerful top, at whose fault the bitter and striking watershed was formed—a people as a pauper versus a handful of oligarchs—the treasury robbers” (Stepovyk, 2002)⁴⁹. As parliamentarian and artistic director Les’ Tanyuk, the Head of the Culture and Spirituality Committee, laid this idea out in *Segodnya’s* 2002 interview:

People of creativity started this process and formed Popular *Rukh*. Then they recalled their calling, went to create, and in their place came those people who at the word “culture” grab the spot where Gering used to carry his gun. Look at how the committees are distributed. They were divided into four tentative groups. Group A: committees on budget issues, B: financial, C: clear thing—it’s a “gas pipe.”⁵⁰ And finally group D⁵¹ is our committee: education and research, childhood and motherhood, physical culture and sports, the veterans committee, and health care. If all of those make group D, then it’s clear what we should be expecting in the nearest future. (p. 25)

At the Fall 2002 parliamentary hearings, many considered prevailing President Kuchma’s regime and blamed it for the crisis of culture in Ukraine. In response to the crisis, President Kuchma proclaimed the year 2003 a year of culture in Ukraine. A brief review of the speeches at the hearings would give us a spectrum of views and reactions.

*A Year of Culture in Ukraine*⁵²

The goal of these parliamentary hearings was to review the problems and issues in each of the cultural branches and find ways to reform the cultural-artistic field. Some of the delegates, such as I. D. Mikhovyi, Director of Shevchenko National Preserve in Kaniv, underscored not only the urgency of the meeting, but to a greater extent its belatedness, reminding that the last such hearings by the Verkhovna Rada Commission

⁴⁹ Stepovyk, M. 2002. “Braty-tsygany.” *Stolytsya*. 04.08.2002. Theater Romance archives.

⁵⁰ Reference to President Kuchma’s son-in-law Viktor Pinchuk, “the pipe and media king” (*Korrespondent*, 03. 18. 2003, p. 24). Cyrillic letter corresponds to the first letter of his first name. Pinchuk, one of the wealthiest people in Ukraine, owns the media empire and the lion share of Ukrainian pipe production; he has founded and controls the Interpipe Corporation and is quoted as saying, “I think that in general no one could be bought with anything. Not with any ornaments or something non-real. It might be enough just to try and demonstrate a real desire.” (Ibid.).

⁵¹ D as in “dung” [from Russian: Г—ГМНО].

⁵² All the quotations in this section are from the Transcript. Parliamentary Hearings on Culture. 11.2002. Ukrainian National Radio and TV.

had been held 11 years before, in June, 1991. Many were skeptical about fixing the crisis as a result of the meeting, noting that the parliamentary hearings by Verkhovna Rada practically never resolved anything and had “turned into a way of letting the steam out of the boiler of the branch most threatened to burst.” As Stanislav Semenovych Skidenko stated at the meeting:

Today it has been said quite a lot from this tribune about the horrible state of culture in our beautiful, “free, civil, and lawful state”—I am quoting the words of the Constitution as to what kind of state we have. But knowing our beautiful state leadership, under the patronage of which culture is developing, knowing the psychology of our brother Ukrainian, it is easy to predict that we will merely talk this important problem over yet another time, and the matter won’t go any farther.

One speaker, Mykhailo Vasylyovych Golubovych, the Head of the Culture Department of Lugansk *oblderzhadministration*, described the post-Soviet crisis of culture and education professionals in a market society as moribund: “The writers, artists, and painters, most of whom today do not have jobs, go to trade at the farmers market, they take any job.” The moribund state of culture in Ukraine was well captured by the poster he brought home from a local art exhibition. The poster depicted a vandalized, ruined monument at a cemetery, with an inscription: “On the culture of those alive the dead will speak eloquently.⁵³” There were opponents of culture, Golubovych said, who did not consider culture to be of importance in society:

I wish that person could just come to a village, just for once, to take a look at a *rayonnyi* final review concert of amateur arts⁵⁴ in a 30 below⁵⁵ weather. And there is an ensemble from a remote village—of 18 performers, the youngest 78 years of age. And when the business manager did not give a vehicle or a bus, they grabbed some MOONSHINE [the speaker’s voice signaled rough resoluteness], gave it to a tractor driver, bought diesel fuel, got in a trailer and in that freezing weather arrived to participate. I wish those opponents could sometime visit a club without any heat: Where should the *children* go, tell me? Where should people go? A village club, library, school—do you understand? This is the very same *SVITLYTSIA*, a living room, which every one of us has at home. And if we keep treating culture as we do now we will arrive at that poster.

One after another, representatives of different fields of culture in various regions of Ukraine took a stand and gave a 5-minute-long comment, some with disappointment,

⁵³ “Про культуру живих добре розкажуть мертві”.

⁵⁴ Звіт районний художньої самодіяльності.

⁵⁵ -30 C.

others with sarcasm, on the role of the Ukrainian government in what they repeatedly called “the crisis of culture in Ukraine.” We will review the common grievances expressed under the six overlapping headings: (a) low budgetary allocations; (b) the struggle of cultural institutions in rural Ukraine; (c) the crisis of the state archives and museums; (d) the predicament of Ukrainian cinema; (e) the damaging effects of the black market, shadow economy, and corruption; and (f) the maverick Ukrainian literati.

Low Budgetary Allocations

According to an unidentified speaker:

Ukrainian spirituality and culture have never been a priority. What dominated in Ukraine and still dominates is the *Sovkovy*⁵⁶ *approach* to the model of cultural development. First there was *industrialization*, then *collectivization*, now *privatization*, and culture is somewhere over there at the margins. The topic of our hearings is the *state* of Ukrainian culture... A symbol of the state of our culture and a reality is the Vernadsky Library where the water has flooded invaluable manuscripts; it is Sophia Kyivs’ka near the walls of which a foundation pit is being dug out for the fitness center, because it is on this very spot that someone wants to do aerobics and shaping; it is the historic Andriivs’ky Street, which now has been opened to cars with special license plates to drive through, and those who drive through it do not care that they are ruining the unique Ukrainian Monmartre. There has not been a single government program, a single message from the President were spirituality was a priority. On the contrary, it is the culture that becomes hostage of political game.

Mykhailo Vasylyovych Kosiv, representing libraries and library service, the National Archival Fund and archives, and museum and museum services stated:

When during the entire past year culture was financed at 62.8% of the planned budget allocations, and in 9 months of this year only at 39.8%—these are actions aiming at culture’s death!

Stanislav Semenovych Skidenko:

Which culture can survive without money? Perhaps only Ukrainian... A club worker and a librarian receive salary of 20–30–40 hryvnas; one salary often supports five, three, or four culture workers. Where else could it happen? In what state, what country? ...In this context—and lately we have eliminated 12,000 clubs and libraries, just taken them off record, and almost as many have not been taken off yet because that would be too many for one time—and in such context “a year of culture” is established for 2003! Esteemed friends, do you believe that it will be cultured, that year? I do not believe it! I do not believe! Because ...Out

⁵⁶ I.e. Soviet (colloquial, derogatory).

of 30 village libraries only in one or two a fire in a wood stove is burning!— which is barely warm and the rest of them are all cold! Fungus! Mice! Nothing else there! People do not go there! Because there is nothing there to read! No newspapers, no magazines—there is nothing there! Such are our cultural establishments!

Lyudmyla Fedorivna Prolygina, Head of the Central Committee of the Trade Union of Culture Workers:

For sixth year in a row, for 36,000 professional employees in our field we have only 15,000 budgetary salary allocations, and thus the employees in the village club-and-library institutions work in a quarter- or half-salaried positions.

The Struggle of Cultural Institutions in Rural Ukraine

The work of cultural and educational institutions, especially in the villages, has been “acutely” affected by the complex economic situation in the state, as was pointed out by the following speaker:

With each consecutive year, the material and technical supply of *all* cultural institutions, especially those in a village, has been deteriorating catastrophically, with small exception. There is no allocation for their maintenance, heating, for acquisition of necessary equipment and musical instruments. Libraries in their majority have long forgotten the last allocation for books purchasing. The situation with salaries in the field is deplorable, because the salaries of the culture and education workers are the lowest.

The Crisis of the State Archives and Museums

Mykhailo Vasylyovych Kosiv, the State Archives and Museums Representative, reminded the audience of the crisis in these institutions: The archives of the Vernadsky Library and the archives in Vynnytza were flooded with hot water from bursting pipes because “these establishments do not have elementary financing.” “No need for beautiful words, no need for pathos. Two words suffice: RETURN THE MONEY.⁵⁷ That’s it.” [A storm of applause]. The speaker assured those who might have thought the state was poor and simply did not have money that each quarter he and other deputies received reports pointing to abuse of the state budget allocations: “They [the funds] are simply stolen! And this is up to 5 billion, billion! Is anyone held accountable? No one is held accountable!” The mechanism to deal with this existed, he said: “Criminal law.” “However, no one holds such high gentlemen accountable before the criminal law. There you have a complete answer to what is happening in our culture.” [A storm of applause]. This situation cannot but project on the spiritual and moral

⁵⁷ “ВІДДАЙТЕ ГРОШІ!”

state of the entire society: “Our society is under a rule of *mimicry*. ... We are playing in terminology, we are playing in conversations, yet in reality we do absolutely nothing.” If the state attitude to culture does not change and if culture does not get the financing it deserves, nothing will be accomplished. [A storm of applause].

The Predicament of Ukrainian Cinema

The Deputy General Director of the National Dovzhenko Center, Sergiy Vasylyovych Rymbach stated, “The movie theaters have been gradually coming back to life, however mostly as provincial stands selling the product, titled *Hollywood, Naked Babes, and Guys With Dolls*.⁵⁸” Therefore, the arguments in support of the renaissance of a national cinema industry hardly stand because “our leaders are far remote from culture.” Rymbach continued along this vein:

The absence of motherhood, from morals to language, creates a situation in which the seeds of the world culture do not have where to fall and in what to germinate. Merely a superficial processing is taking place, and the native cultural layer does not grow. The screen image of Ukraine and the Ukrainianness is not translated not only into the surrounding world, but what is more crucial, into our own spiritual windows⁵⁹ and pupils. In the meantime, the world is undergoing a radical modernization of national images: Everyone is striving to renovation. In this context, the Ukrainianness would lag behind even more, and in the eyes of our children and grandchildren would look at least 40 years old, from a day before yesterday, as something one does not want to be identified with. And one would have to just wolf down⁶⁰ the foreign.

To avoid this scenario, the speaker urged the parliamentarians to pass the law “On the State Program of the National Cinema Industry Development,” which would be a significant, but not decisive step, because “the implementation of our laws is notorious.” And here it is not enough to adopt a law on the tax collection off all available forms of screening of foreign cinematic and video products; “what is also necessary is to make all the colossal money that rotates in the shadow come to the surface...so that the executive power demonstrated us its willingness to work, finally, not only for the ruling power, but for our common interests as well.” The speaker reiterated the questions repeatedly asked by others: “Why aren’t yet adopted the laws on philanthropy and arts patronage? Why are

⁵⁸ “Голівуд, голі баби і мужики з куколками”.

⁵⁹ The speaker alluded to a popular Russian TV show *Okna*, or Windows, analogous to Dr. Phil.

⁶⁰ Вовкулати.

not encouraged the civilized forms of capital investment into the culture infrastructure?” With this, he offered his answer: “Without the legislative changes in the actions of power structures, the well-known everyday life reality would remain unchanged: *Money laundering is more profitable* than launching it into the orbit⁶¹ of the production of cultural and artistic values,” meaning that the present non-regulated patterns of financing were profitable to the powerful top. In conclusion, the speaker assured the audience that the young cinematographers had the capital of artistic ideas, which in the long run had to come into union with financial capital, “otherwise we would have no future.” There would be no future if we “do not understand one simple thing: He who does not want to feed his own army, will sustain the foreign one; he who does not give a darn about the destiny of the national culture, will forever chew the gum⁶² produced by a foreign intellect and a foreign talent.”

The Damaging Effects of the Black Market, Shadow Economy, and Corruption

The damaging effects of the black market, shadow economy, and corruption were condemned by many representatives, but perhaps the speakers most directly referring to the “black business” were first, a historian and a would-be deputy head of the Committee on Culture and Spirituality reporting on the cultural heritage preservation, and second, a woman-delegate representing over 500 book publishers in Ukraine. Thus, prominent historian academician Petro Petrovych Tolochko stated that the archeological heritage “preservation” has become a “profitable business”: “In Ukraine there are many wealthy or perhaps just rich people who are fond of antiques, collect good collections, the demand engenders supply, and the *entire army of black archeologists* reigns in Ukraine.” This problem exists not only in Ukraine, but also in Russia and in the entire post-Soviet space, and “even in civilized Europe, where such archeology is called ‘illegal,’ but nowhere did it take such scale as here.” No normative law regulating this situation exists in Ukraine, and the leadership procrastinates with finding solutions. Tolochko argued that there would be no use in creating a preservation committee as part of the Ministry of Culture, pointing to its dependent role from the ministry and calling it:

⁶¹ Perhaps an allusion of the President’s personal interest in space programs.

⁶² As in the U.S. action movies.

A pocket committee under the Minister of Culture... We need to create a central organ of preservation [that] would be independent from a phone call of the Minister of Culture, or the head of *Derzhbud*, or anyone else, and to entrust this organ with the duties of preservation of our heritage as a whole and archeological heritage in particular.

Maverick Ukrainian Literati

In retrospect, while unfolding this collage of speeches by Ukrainian intellectuals, I was striving to convey a wide range of presentation styles and modes of expression. The rhetorical extremes of this range are represented on one side by the stylistically arid speeches of the Head of the Central Committee of the Trade Union of Culture Workers,⁶³ a book publishers' representative, the Director of Rivne Oblast' Academic Library,⁶⁴ and a deputy from the Peoples-Democratic Party.⁶⁵ On the other end, a few Ukrainian maverick-literati subverted this bureaucratic dryness, such as Ivan Dzyuba and Ivan Drach, who, along with Anatolii Pogribnyi and Mykola Zhulyns'kyi, had played an important "spiritual" role in Ukrainian government in the first years of independence and who were characterized by one of the speakers as *the spiritual aura of the nation*, using Lina Kostenko's⁶⁶ words, "Highly spiritual people are the consciousness of the nation because they carry the ideas of goodness. For them Ukraine is a priority, but these are the very people whom the present leadership does not need." This overview would be incomplete without our encounter with a Ukrainian intellectual who maintained spiritual resistance to the Soviet and post-Soviet bureaucratic propaganda for the past two decades. Ivan Drach took the podium following the "official" speakers with no notes, his confident, loud voice breaking the monotony of dry readings. His deceptively simple, colloquial-style speech was studded with a series of comic yet poignant piques against the governing regime and served as a great example of speeches by literati in Ukrainian parliament:

⁶³ Lyudmyla Fedorivna Prolygina.

⁶⁴ Valentyna Petrivna Yaroschuk. All of the women presenters adhered to the traditional stylistically non-marked style of *nomenklatura* presentations.

⁶⁵ Anatolii Volodymyrovych Pastunko. Peoples-Democratic Party is the party of the Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma.

⁶⁶ Lina Kostenko is a famous Ukrainian poetess, whom Romani intellectuals of Ukraine call "our Gypsy muse" for her poem *Tsygans'ka Musa*, which was staged as a play with the same title at the National Romani Theater in Kyiv.

The eternal question of an intellectual: Who is to blame and what is to be done. Who is to blame for such state of our culture? The higher a person is in the government hierarchy, on a state ladder, the greater is her fault. This is a holy truth. And let us think and take a look: Who was there right from the beginning, on that ladder, which people stood there? These were Kravchuk and Plyshch. What happened, happened, right? Then who else? Kuchma and Moroz. Did it happen or didn't it? Then Kuchma and Tkachenko. Was it so or wasn't it? It was. Then who else? Kuchma and Lytvyn. Was it so or wasn't it? *It is!* Thus, the blame. And when one thinks which person is to be blamed *the most* for such a state of culture, it becomes clear that it is the person who was named the most often.

Then let us think how many prime ministers there were. And all of them, those 10 prime ministers, including the latest Yanukovich who is still sniffing out and eyeing the situation so this is why, perhaps, he is not here at the moment yet, so his is the smallest fault, but all of them are to blame. At fault are to a great extent also the people who were in charge of the Committee on Culture in Verkhovna Rada. That is, perhaps some blame had to be admitted by Les' Tanyuk and Mykhailo Kosiv because they kept either switching positions or resigning. But now, at last, the greatest responsibility will come into effect [sarcastically], now the coalition government will take charge, and tomorrow the head of the Committee on Culture will be Ivan Fedorovych Kuras, whom I hold in great respect, and his deputy will be Academician Petro Petrovych Tolochko. It is they who will finally propel that culture! Everything will be fine, as it should be. And if Mrs. Perelygina said that at last culture would not be left all alone, I think that it would stay the same: *dishonored, abashed, unhappy, and poor*. How can we manage to get out of this?

The most important for us is to be heard! Thank Lord something—at least something—can be said about this situation, which is *tragic* in its essence! Because when people *dishonor* their culture they are dishonoring their *soul!* [He shouted] When they do not care about their soul, they are bastards, they are the people who practically have no idea what *future* would be *allotted* to them. Today, right here in our parliament I bought a CIA—Central Intelligence Agency—book about Ukraine. What does it say about Ukraine? There is no chapter on culture there. None. Not a word there about it. It only mentions that [reading in Russian] “the country is rich in resources” and so on, “Its struggle for independence is not yet finished.” There you have it, my esteemed friends! Such is a view you know from where! This is who we are, whether you want it or not.

Perhaps I am not original in this statement, but this is who we are in Ukraine. We are: Ukrainians and Russians, Jews and Crimean Tatars.⁶⁷ And if we do not learn to be tolerant of one another in this situation, there would be no progress. We are such as we are: Communists and Rukhists, Centrists and others. And if we are not tolerant of one another in the situation that came about nothing will come out...

⁶⁷ As other members of the *Rukh* movement, Ivan Drach connected the Renaissance of Ukrainian culture with the mobilization of all ethnic cultures of Ukraine.

Next year will be a year of culture because they say the American president made up his mind and took over an entire park! And that French one made up his mind and took something away from the railroads and turned it into a museum! [He switched to farce, to anecdotal style.] And *our* president made up his mind and announced the 2003 year *a year of culture*! And, you know, it will be also a year of Russia...—Movchan and Dzyuba [Ukrainian literati] are arguing whether it will be the 349th or 350th [year of Russia in Ukraine]—as if it were the greatest problem of our existence. And everything is done to put the blame on the *system*.

With the latter Ivan Drach addressed those nostalgic for the Soviet past, and therefore critical of the present system, and perhaps he also addressed those who were too quick to denounce the past. He exposed the intellectual insularity of the current leadership of Ukraine who, not unlike the previous Communist leadership, were far from appreciating the arts, literature, and culture, but savvy in amassing their assets, often in trade with Russia. Thus the speaker took full advantage of radical communication in his spontaneous performance. His speech not only ridiculed the leadership and its censorship regime, but also served as a call for organizing as a united front against the corrupt leadership. As a forerunner of the Orange Revolution of 2004, this public speech combined situationist impulse, riotous flavor, and wisdom, thus instancing radical communication (Downing, 2001). This was a form of democracy a long way removed from the formal and dead-dry democracy of other representatives. Such intense immediacy and interactivity between the writer's public performance and audience closely mirrors Benjamin's notion of aura, of the reduction of art's distance from the public and the intensification of interaction between artwork and the public (Downing, 2001, p. 135).

The analysis of these and other presentations on the critical state of culture in Ukraine reveals that the factors and agencies condemned by the speakers are (a) faulty laws, (b) the representatives of executive power, (c) legislators, (d) local authorities, (e) central government, and finally and most unanimously (d) President Kuchma's leadership, with some holding it responsible for ignoring the tasks of cultural development and others not seeing much difference between Kuchma's leadership and the previous regimes, including the Soviet. Kuchma's leadership was criticized as being a dictatorship, practicing censorship, and holding culture hostage in political game: "Culture and spirituality will never develop in the atmosphere of dictatorship, censorship,

and lack of freedom,⁶⁸” said one unidentified speaker. “Everything begins with the head...Something is rotten in the state of Denmark,” stated Igor Dmytrovych Mikhovyi.

The corruption and shadow economy of Kuchma’s regime were also condemned. A Socialist Party representative offered his response to the question of where to find money for cultural development.

If we were able to grow our own oligarchy, if we were able to grow them, then the president who is able to raise billions for his own elections could raise it for the *cul-ture* as well, but he is not doing it! To announce a year of culture is the top hypocrisy. Clearly, culture won’t get *anything* out of it!

He pointed to another source of culture financing: “Stop financing artificial formations like the Ukrainian National Committee of Youth Organizations, which is only necessary for Medvedchuk⁶⁹ and no one else! No one else needs it! Take these billions and then... every village and school library would have a complete edition of Shevchenko.”

The sentiment of nostalgia for the Soviet past ran through many speeches, although the word “Soviet” was consistently avoided, or self-censored. As several previous speakers, one culture representative contrasted the cultural crisis in a primordial market society with the Soviet past when cultural institutions were supported by the state:

I wish we had not forgotten what was in those laws on culture—normal laws, previous laws: when an artist could retire, and his union collected all the data on his creative output, and he could retire on the pension they secured him. Today he is deprived of his status, today he does not have such right. Today a culture worker is at the center of public attention, yet today he is not even able to dress with dignity.

Stanislav Semenovych Skidenko connected culture to education and remembered the time when secondary education was universal and compulsory:

Where did our great achievements in Ukrainian culture go? Do we even need culture today? Why did we turn from the most reading nation into that one who can hardly put together the syllables of a church psalm? It is a fact that the number of those who do not attend school or do not have a secondary education has become threatening today. And if there is no education, where would the culture come from?

⁶⁸ This speaker accused Kuchma’s leadership, as well as all the previous leaderships, of ignoring spirituality and sacrificing culture in political games.

⁶⁹ Victor Medvedchuk, the Head of President’s Administration, leader of the Social-Democratic Party, “political hawk” (Korrespondent, 03.18.2003, p. 19), was blamed for seizing the power levers, pressuring the parliament, and political censorship (Ibid.).

A representative of the Socialist party recalled the “high culture” of the past, for example the famous Ukrainian Hrygoriy Veryovka choir, and contrasted it with the “mass artists” of the present and the lack of state support for culture and learning:

The state, no matter how we characterize it now, *that* state nevertheless cared about the culture of its people. Today we speak of this state as, as it were, our native, but it does not care about our native culture. In particular, the culture in a village has perished. No matter what we say today, but if in a large *raion* only five-six clubs survived out of 50–60 before, then what are we talking about? If before in a village school library I could read all of the Ukrainian magazines and all of the Moscow magazines, then what can our student read now? Nothing! I do not even mention an adult. He does not have anything to read either! Not to mention the newspapers.

As instanced by these speeches, the word Soviet has been expunged, and reference to that time period is made as “previous,” “that,” and “the past.” Likewise, no label is given to the present state other than “this” or “today.” Ukrainian was the only language in which speeches were made, and the ethnic conceptualization of Ukrainian culture prevailed. The only ethnic minority group represented by their speaker was the Crimean Tatars. Their speaker told of the past persecutions and repressions against the Tatars and expressed solidarity with the present government.

This review of the crisis in culture and education in Ukraine highlights the urgency of the external sources of funding and support as the condition for further development of Romani media and education programs in Ukraine. It explains the maxim of Romani education and culture workers, “Nothing could be done [only] nationally [*Natsional’no nichego sdelat’ nevozmozhno*],” meaning the international support of their movement is vital. The deplorable state of the cultural field, which was supposed to get five times less budgetary spending than education or health care, according to the 2002 plan,⁷⁰ received only half of that; this fact heightened the competition for scarce funding. When in February 2003 Kyiv city council granted Romani Theater Romance the status of municipal, adding it to the 20 municipally supported Kyiv theaters, the press was quick to react, stating that many other creative groups had been waiting in line for that funding

⁷⁰ 109 mln grv. *Stolytsya*. N 8, 02.21-27.2003, p. 23.

opportunity from the city budget.⁷¹ A similar tone of resentment was expressed a year before in the same newspaper. Reporting on the theater's new production, *Gypsy Muse*, performed on the eve of the International Roma Day, the author seized the opportunity to highlight the heightened attention of the United Nations observers to the problems of racial discrimination and "the Gypsy question." "However," continued the author, "for the sake of fairness the same UN observing organs should acknowledge that not only the Gypsies struggle on the territory of our nation. And the main reason has nothing to do with racial or interethnic 'shortcomings.'" The author, Mykhailo Stepovyk, blamed top government officials for leading the people to misery. At times the press highlighted the minority status of Romani culture as a patronizing juxtaposition to the titular Ukrainian culture: "Igor Krikunov's theater is a perfect example of creative yearning and convergence (approximation) of the ethnic minority art towards the continental culture of the titular nation" (Mlinchenko, 2002). Romani cultural intellectuals were made to compete for the meager state and external funding not only with the "titular nation," but also with other "minorities," and are treated with patronizing condescension and prejudice. Thus in 2001, journalist Eduard Amurskii covered the presentation of the first Ukrainian ethnographic work by a Romani scholar, Aleksey Danilkin's *The Culture of the Gypsies of Ukraine*, sponsored by Renaissance Foundation. The presentation was held on the Theater Romance stage. Instead of interviewing the author, Amurskii interviewed the coordinator of the Roma of Ukraine Program of Renaissance Foundation, Oksana Voloshenyuk, who stated:

It happens to be that a certain hierarchy exists among the ethnic minorities of Ukraine. The high spiritual development of the Russian and Jewish communities is *apriori* considered beyond competition. Bulgarians, Germans, Armenians and some other minorities also uphold their reputation as intellectuals. The Crimean Tatars have been given a legitimate niche: For a decade an attempt is being made to implement the program of their adaptation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Unfortunately, the Gypsies cannot yet boast any significant success on this list, and such outsider status of theirs could perhaps be explained by several objective reasons at once. The main of them, to my mind, is the prejudiced attitude to the Gypsy itinerant way of living among the indigenous sedentary

⁷¹ Mlinchenko, Fedir in *Stolytsya*. N 8, 02.21-27. 2003. The brief neutral statements were also carried by *Segodnya*. 02.11.2003. and *Stolichka* 02.10.2003. The longest and most positive article with photos appeared in *Khreshchatyk*. 03.12.2003. and *Govoryt' I pokazuye Ukraina*. 02.13.2003. Theater Romance archives.

Ukrainians. Our program Roma of Ukraine is aimed at denouncing these unjustified popular stereotypes⁷².

It is not clear why the program coordinator chose to represent Romani intellectuals in her patronizing discourse as standing in the lowest position of the stereotypical, humiliating grid, thereby perpetuating the stereotype in press, instead of presenting the author Aleksey Danilkin and his groundbreaking work. Such condescending discourse about Romani intellectuals is common among the non-Romani managers, state officials, and “experts” involved in Roma-related projects, as will be instanced further, and it is common not only in Ukraine.

To continue this topic, in the next section, we will sample the flavor of the theater milieu in Kyiv in the autumn season of 2003 and the Theater Romance place in it. To do so, we will explore the creative use of media in the “caged bird” theme running through the performances on stages of three theaters: the private Theater Bravo, the Theater of Drama and Comedy, and the Theater Romance during the Third International *Amala* festival, which it hosted. Theater may play an important role in the identity-generating and nation-building processes. Garcia Lorca, held in high regard by the Romani intellectuals of Ukraine, described the flexible and sensitive theater as one of the most effective and useful tools in nation-building and the barometer marking the nation’s greatness or decline. Theater, he wrote, was a school of tears and laughter, the free tribune from which people could expose the false morale and explain in living examples the eternal laws of human heart and human feeling (Stepanov, 1979). Therefore, let us examine how far or how close the three theaters of Kyiv are from the cutting edge aesthetically and politically and how sensitively they negotiate this cultural crisis with the audience.

Caged Bird Does Not Sing

On my birthday, an evening tea party at my friend’s and the trip to the Bravo Theater sweetened the bad aftertaste left from the cynical *Xenophilia* art exhibit. My long-time friend Irina ran the leading translation agency in Ukraine and was amidst the bohemian life of the capital. “On channel *Inter* they showed El’dar Ryazanov celebrating

⁷² *Pravda Ukrainy*, No. 99. 08.14.2001. Theater Romance archives.

his 75th birthday at the Theater Romen [in Moscow],” she reported hanging up my coat and handing me a pair of slippers. “The Zhemchuzhnys were there, and it was marvelous,” she continued in her cozy red-tiled kitchen. We drank sweet Turkish apple tea from British teacups with the delicacies Irina had waiting for me. Joe Cocker’s hoarse serenades from his latest CD and Irina’s stories about his recent visit and their joyous collaboration sent us to the theater directory. We agreed on *Zhozephina and Napoleon* at the Bravo Theater,⁷³ the first private theater in Ukraine owned by a woman and actress. In the cab, Irina updated me on the new service the theater started—a real TV marriage proposal:

A young man who wants to propose buys two tickets to a Halloween performance at the theater and asks his fiancée’s girlfriend to convince his fiancée to go see the show, explaining that he will be out of town. Both women go and are stopped by a Gypsy woman played by Mila Krikunova. “Have you got a light? [*Ogon’ka ne naidyotsya?*],” she asks. Predictably, she leaves the fiancée with the prophecy, “You will see a kind monster tonight.” At the height of the Halloween party the young man proposes from the stage in front of the national TV audience. In an interview after the show the young woman says she needs the time to think it over for a couple of days.

Irina and I commented on the flexibility of this small theater, “converging” with American tradition and capitalizing on Halloween’s entertainment possibilities. Remembering it was Thanksgiving night, we joked, “Let us see if tonight they offer us Thanksgiving dinner.” Irina and Mila Krikunova, Igor Krikunov’s wife, grew up in the same yard in central Kyiv, where Irina still lives. It was the heart of the ancient city where we spent most of our lives and which we loved. The cab ride offered an entirely different type of montage than the everyday strip viewed by the subway passengers. Instead of the tasteless ad-prop on the train walls and the miserable beggars and street musicians in the passages, the car ride montages a dynamic tour of spectacularly lit buildings, curving streets opening up to amazing squares screaming to be European, the sound effects of Mercedeses and BMWs flying by, and the privilege of comfort and speed. The beauty of old architecture, sculptured parks, and the terraced Kyiv landscape, often called baroque, is at the full disposal of this type of montage, unfolding in a different life dimension.

⁷³ www.bravo-t.kiev.ua

At the Bravo theater, for 30 grivnas (about \$6, a quarter of an average monthly salary) we each got a first-row seat on a hard, small, black chair. The theater was full. The velvet stage curtain, the color of ripe cherries, tastefully matched the gray stucco walls. Either the draft or the air-conditioning kept us awfully cold. The leading actor of the Russian drama theater played the stubborn Napoleon. Our seats offered us an awkward eye-level close-up of Napoleon's crotch in white tights. Imprisoned on the island, Napoleon is scolding his two ragged unshaven generals for fighting over a sack of eggs. The Russian word for "eggs" [*yaitsa*] is homonymous with the word for "testicles" and this fight scene—"my eggs, no my eggs, the size of my eggs, your eggs"—serves as a comic prelude for the audience. From our privileged seating such language and costume synergy seemed part of the director's intent to engage the audience more actively with the play's narrative and the actor's body as medium. "Shame on you," Napoleon scolded them, "you are acting like the Gypsies, merchants, paupers in front of the prison guard!"⁷⁴ Throughout the performance, the front, central part of the stage was occupied by a giant cage, passively sitting there, empty, until the very end. The audience gratefully applauded to numerous poignant allusions to the corruption of the government and the leaders. Zhofefina—the cook of a charity institution, played by the theater owner herself—stated, "If the emperor steals from and deceives his people, then what is left to say of a simple house-keeper!" [Applause] A general proclaimed, "The governor is a thief, murderer, and swindler!" Napoleon responded, "Rudely but fairly." [Applause and laughter]. Throughout the show, continuous references to poisoned wine sent by the governor alluded to the assassinations as well as to the liquor production and distribution controlled by the political elite. Zhofefina complained that no one was buying her son-in-law's cognac, "Let's call it Napoleon! People will remember it!" The audience laughed, recognizing the play with "the cognac of my son-in-law," an allusion to the sons-in-law of a few Ukrainian government leaders who are powerful businessmen. The plot allowed for a continuous critique of the government's corruption. Exchanges about diplomacy carried references to sovereignty and honesty or dishonesty. The conversation revolved

⁷⁴ Mila Krikunova responded to this line in a conversation with me at the Theater Romance the next morning, "It's good that you told me. I know the owner of *Bravo* very well. Last year when Dolganov said to the miners on strike, squatting in Kreshchatik and Independence Square, "What kind of *tsyganshina* are you starting here [Chto vy tut tsuganshinu razvodite!], he was sued."

around the uniforms, which become the symbols of the distribution of lucrative positions and rewards. Imprisonment on the island offered a utopian existential view of the corruption of the real world, represented by the empty cage. The prisoners, living outside of this cage, find the meaning of being and the joy of life in giving themselves fully to the everyday and the basic, “You are a hot chick, you are a hot stud [*Ty klassnaya baba, ty klassnyi muzhik*]” or “Fresh carrots are better than a stuffy uniform.” At times, these conversations of “outsiders” reminded me the full-blooded life in some of the communities I have known, including Romani, breaking away from the hypocritical moribund of the officials.

The play culminated in a silent last scene, bringing meaning to the giant empty cage resting on the stage throughout the performance. The actors were saying goodbye to the audience, when suddenly the last of them, captain of the British army, lingered behind the cage. Silence—a moment of waiting. Then he stepped inside the cage, nodded to the audience from behind bars, and stepped outside, thus connecting the cage metaphor to the real world where he and the audience lived. A storm of applause welcomed that final allusion. Through its vitality-filled and forceful language, this production addressed hierarchy, power, repression, and fear, and simultaneously induced mocking laughter. Underscoring the liberating role of the raunchy “town square” laughter, Downing (2001) recalled the Bakhtinian vision of laughter as a victory over the oppression related to all that was forbidden; laughter was the defeat of authoritarian commandments and prohibitions: “Through this victory laughter clarified man’s consciousness and gave him a new outlook on life. This truth was ephemeral...but from these brief moments another unofficial truth emerged, truth about the world” (p. 108).

A month later, I witnessed a similar evocation of prison metaphors through stage effects and narrative allusions to government corruption during a performance of the comedy-mystery *Foolish Woman* [*Dura*], based on the French play, staged at the Theater of Drama and Comedy. The plot revolved around the court and justice. The black paint on the walls and the door made the stage resemble a prison cell. An enormous justice scale in the middle was behind metal bars. On each end of the scale stood a chair, one being a broken red armchair—sinewy with wire around it. The other was a wooden chair with metal bars. The old, broken chairs hang on the walls as history’s continuity. Many

objects on the stage reminded one of instruments of torture. A huge metal hook in the middle of the scale represented a rack for torture. In several scenes of the play, the prosecutor, who was supposed to frame a victim, hung a pair of boxing gloves on the rack as his personal method of intimidation. Behind the scale hung a giant punching bag, which played a dual role in the play. One scene showed the prosecutor and his wife punching it together as a team, alluding to the famous Ukrainian boxing brothers, the Klichkos, promoting the trademark of *Chernigivs'ke* beer produced by Ukrainian parliamentarians. The punching bag was also an indirect allusion to a particular parliamentarian, the soccer team owner, rumored to be a racketeer, or as some people call him, a *bandit*. In another scene, between the legs of the accused woman being framed, the punching bag becomes a giant phallic symbol of violence and injustice—rape. The allusion to Ukrainian leadership was further intensified by the reddish hair and the suit and tie of the deputy prosecutor leading the intrigue, in whose appearance the audience recognized their current president with applause and laughter. Phones in this show played a significant role. A phone was fastened with a long, heavy chain to the restraining board with holes for the arms. There were a number of such boards on the stage. The phone conditioned the judge's agreement; when the phone rang, he picked it up, agreed, then hung it on the chain. The phone on the chain was an interesting allusion to the wireless communication in Ukraine, owned and developed by a few leadership families. People with money have the last say in this court of physical force, with boxing bringing to the surface the literal meaning of “punching out the testimony” [*vykolachivat' pokazaniya*]. Privileges are distributed only between those who are loyal. Just as the Bravo performance, this production connected the French play with the sinister local, however not as much through the narrative as through the brilliant metaphoric detail of stage decoration and costume. Such creative subversive communication in both theaters was rewarded by the collective expression of irreverent laughter.

Finally, the “caged bird” theme ran throughout the performances at the international Romani festival held on October 24–27, 2002. Although the complete story about this important event is forthcoming in chapter three, let us explore here how closely the Romani stage productions cohered with the artistic overtones of the larger theater family of Kiev. The first instance was the stage lighting in the theater's performance of

the new play *Gypsy Muse*; this was a nonce occurrence and was never repeated again. In a scene where the lonely, misunderstood-by-her-own-people, under-appreciated, Romani poet Papusha slowly circled in the middle of the empty dark stage—standing between the two fiddlers—a yellow light projection in the form of a giant, yellow cage suddenly cast its beams upon them. Now they were going around and around inside that golden grid. This was a brilliant allusion to Lina Kostenko’s concept of the golden aura of the nation. Kostenko (1999), the author on whose poem the play was based, posited in her other pivotal work that every nation should have its humanitarian aura, or “a powerfully emanating complex of disciplines that embrace all the spheres of public life, including education, literature, and the arts, in their integral relation to the world culture and, naturally, in their uniquely-national invariant” (p. 8). Kostenko’s search through the Latin etymology of aura resulted in about a dozen meanings, all pointing to a light wind or gold and hues of gold. Her reference to *aureolus*, or halo, and aura as divine wind, as in *kamikaze*, indicated the messianic roles of those who emanate the humanities tradition. In sum, she likened the bio-field of a person to the aura of the entire nation (p. 9), and thus asserted the leading role of the humanities in nation-building. The giant cage of golden light, enclosing the lonely performers circling in place on the dark stage, cast a shade of doubt on the possibility of messiah, or prophet, in Ukraine under the present regime. The allusion to the spiritual crisis under Kuchma’s regime was also made in the market scene, which Igor Krikunov and Ada Rogovtseva took from Lina Kostenko’s poem and developed in their play. The state’s censorship amidst the spontaneous cornucopia of the primordial market of influences and artistic movements, or the regime of truth policed by the Kuchma’s clique, was represented in the book vendor’s lines, which Krikunov and Rogovtseva added in the play text. In a marketplace, a young book vendor walked around with tray full of books, shouting, “Keep up the music! Cut down the worries! No arguing in vain! Buy books, ladies and gentlemen!”⁷⁵ As it became obvious to very few in later scenes, the books on his tray were limited to the two editions written by Ukrainian authors about the Gypsies. They ended up tossed around and torn by Roma in the play.

The second reiteration of the caged bird maxim was made at the festival in the performance by the Romani theater *Chirikli* [Romani for “bird”] from Macedonia. Their

⁷⁵ Побільше музики, поменш хвилювань! Всує не рассуждать! Купуйте книжки, пані та панове!

play *Birds* was based on the stories *Seagull* and *Ward Number Six* by Anton Chekhov and the works of Khristo Botev. According to the theater director Orhan Jasarovsky, the play portrayed the miserable life of Roma in Macedonia today, where the loyalty was not to Moscow anymore, but to Strasbourg. The misery and daily absurdity of life there unrolled as the action in a monastery turned into a hospital. Jasarovsky explained the meaning of the play:

We, Gypsies, have such music and dance because we know it and we love it, we do it like the birds. Why such title, *Birds*? Because if a man is locked up behind bars, he looks through these bars at a bird and admires, oh, how it flies! How it does it! When he leaves the prison, he does not even remember that the birds exist. A free soul. In India it is called *makhadma*, which means “free soul.” Through this play, I wanted to say that a Gypsy soul is free. If it is not free, it just cannot sing. It cannot live without another bird, it just dies. Hence more questions: When? Why? Where? Now?

The third instance of the free bird maxim at the festival came from the concert program of the Moscow group Russka Roma in which silk shawls and the women soloists’ dresses flew and flapped like the wings of elegant and colorful birds. The group performed a well-known song with a refrain line, “Caged bird does not sing!” [*V kletke ptichka ne poyot*]. Thus the stage effects of the two play performances and the text of the song became narratively connected in the image of a caged bird. The theme ran through the Romani festival in synergy and unison with other theaters of the capital. The three theaters creatively used media to carry a “between the lines” conversation with the audience, thus engaging it in rebellious cultural expression about the governing regime. These small theaters showed greater flexibility than most of the Ukrainian mass media controlled by the state, or more directly, by Kuchma’s regime. The situationist impulse seemed to be “alive and kicking” in them, with messages updated daily to develop subtle ideological negotiations with audiences (Downing, 2001).

A curious incident in connection with Romani festival will introduce us to the last instance of the battle for consciousness we will discuss in this chapter, namely, the question of Romani mobilization for European integration.

Roma and the European Union: Battle for Consciousness

The following episode serves as an illustration of the urgency of propaganda of Romani culture among the non-Roma, and not only in Ukraine. On October 18, 2002, as an interpreter for the Second Secretary of the EU Delegation of the European Commission, I participated in the round table discussion *Ukraine in the Euro-Atlantic Space: Achievements and Prospects*, held in Poltava and supported by the National Endowment for Democracy. During the meeting, Dr. Manfred Lomann, Director of Conrad Adenauer Foundation Representation in Ukraine, took an opportunity to call upon all the participants and the mass media to advance the propaganda of European integration and to spread greater awareness of it in Ukraine. Various handouts displayed on the information desk propagated the idea of integration: brochures, plastic bags, and flyers. One of the information flyers in a project supported by the USAID and the Renaissance Foundation was titled *Ukraine and the European Union: “For” and “Against” Arguments*. I will list a few arguments to convey the flavor of this discourse.

They say that politically Ukraine has never been part of Europe and does not belong to Western civilization.

Really Ukraine was an influential European state even when it was considered Kievan Rus, and the democratic traditions of Ukrainians historically connect them with European civilization.

They say that the most effective role of Ukraine in the international arena is its role as a buffer between Russia and Europe.

Really such a buffer would be condemned to receive the blows from both sides, while a role as an active member of a united Europe gives Ukraine opportunities to implement economic policies, increase security interests, and strengthen its leadership potential in the region.

They say that Europeans are too fixated on the questions of democracy preservation, human rights protection, and freedom of speech in Ukraine.

Really the protection of civil rights and freedoms, strengthening of democracy, and the development of public sphere institutions are needed first and foremost by us—Ukrainian citizens

Further, Dr. Lomann, speaking in front of the gathering’s participants to Ambassador Boris Tarasyuk, the Head of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on European Integration and the Director of the Institute of Euro-Atlantic Cooperation, pointed out that the historical exhibition of the Poltava museum, which he had toured, shocked him as

“dinosaur-old.”⁷⁶ He emphasized the use of every media opportunity to propagate European integration. In turn, in this context, I used the opportunity to invite the EU Delegation to the International Romani Theater Festival held the following week. Through the Press and Information Officer whom I met at the round table, I extended numerous invitations to the delegation to attend the festival events, until on October 23, 2002 I received the following final response from her, verbatim, “I asked here the delegation and unfortunately nobody is interested. It’s something very specific, you know.” By “something very specific” she referred to Romani culture. The EU delegation was not willing to model the very same practices they preached. Ironically, both events—the round table and the Romani festival—were supported by the same International Renaissance Foundation, even more appalling was the delegation’s refusal to attend. As will be shown further, this incident also instanced the predominantly top-down approach to propaganda of European integration in Ukraine.

This battle for consciousness included the mobilization of Romani organizations and communities for European integration, among other causes. A very telling example came from the transcript of the round table discussion “Roma and Mass Media,” hosted by Romani newspaper *Romani Yag* in Uzhgorod, February 15–16, 2003. Specifically, I will focus on two issues discussed: first, on the “investments” into Romani intellectuals, and second, on the mobilization of Roma for European integration. After the opening speech by the elder, Romani poet Mixa Kozimirenko, the next speaker was the Director of the Carpathian Foundation⁷⁷ Igor Il’ko. He called *Romani Yag* “a unique exemplary organization that grew from a table and two chairs into a powerful team of people” (2003). Furthermore, he credited *Romani Yag* for the “formation of new Romani intelligentsia”:

Romani people were entering the 1990s practically without their own intelligentsia that would represent their interests, from the power institutions to the city social mileu. In the last decade—7–8 years—a *new very powerful Romani intelligentsia* came into being. “New” in the sense that it thinks in a new way, and

⁷⁶ He most likely meant the Poltava Battle museum. On June 27, 1709 the Russian army of Peter I, the Great, defeated the Swedish army of Charles XII at Poltava. The meaning of that victory and defeat has been revisioned by the Ukrainian social democrats (nationalists).

⁷⁷ Carpathian Foundation has been providing funding to Transcarpathian public organizations of ethnic minorities since 1994. The foundation provided funding to *Romani Yag* to publish Ukrainian-Romani phrase book, Romani ABC, and to host the round table *Roma and Mass Media*.

it possesses the theories and knowledge without which no organization would be able to survive [*sic*] today. Therefore it is no surprise that having mastered the latest Ukrainian theories and knowledge, this organization has entered to a very powerful level of activity.

The repeated reference to power and “survival” in the context of growth and development, as well as the previous listing of other ethnic minority organizations in the region point to the intensity of competition for funding. This conclusion was confirmed by the statement immediately following the previous one:

It is no secret—often among the Romani organizations⁷⁸ as well as the donor organizations, which provide money, there are discussions as to: Up to what limit could *financial support* of Romani organizations last. The reference is made to the fact that the amounts of money which Romani organizations receive is obviously greater than the average amount of other organizations. Why finance them? Perhaps it’s all going into sand. It is only after the span of a decade that we can conclude—the work of Romani organization such as *Romani Yag* confirms that it was necessary. It was necessary because it was [an] *investment into people*, and today *investments into people* are the ones that give the greatest return. Today here as well as in the West, *in business-circles* and in general, the major bulk of the *investments are made into people*.

Such intense focus on managerial discourse—investment into people, money, return—surprisingly came from a historian, playing a new role of manager. This discourse continued throughout the speech, for example in his discussion of the generation of positive Romani image:

Very few people understand *the structure* of Romani organizations and *community*. And I consider it this seminar’s task: *It is necessary to break the stereotypes and show the positive image of Roma*. In Ukraine, at the state level a lot is being done right now *to improve the self-image; the big money is paid, paid to Western companies*, to special ones, which do it...positive... it’s a normal kind of work. The same work should be done among the Romani organizations as well... It should be done constantly—to form the image—every day, every month, every year. Then the *attitudes* will change—and not only towards Roma.

Such focus on image-generation in the battle against prejudice, as in public relations and show business, was very common in Ukraine. The logic was simple: pay money, change image, attitudes will change.

⁷⁸ Romani leaders in other regions of Ukraine spoke critically against the practice of one organization or one region of Transcarpathia “eating up” most of the funding. As we shall see further, Romani organizations in Transcarpathia are viewed as playing the role of the “bridge” to European integration, thus most of the funding going there.

The second speech piqued interest as a propagandistic speech by an expert-ideologist who arrived in Uzhgorod from Kyiv to lay out the tasks of European integration, to make Romani leaders openly express their support of it in the media, and to enlist their minimal participation in the Romani language development law, which the non-Romani experts were drafting. Natalya Belitser of the P. Orlyk Democracy Institute (Kyiv) began her top-down speech stating that she thought it was extremely important, especially for the leaders of Romani organizations, “for this new Romani intelligentsia . . . to adequately realize what exactly is happening in our contemporary world, and what those changes are about—very rapid and very-very unexpected, still, for some.” The task was to understand this current moment and to:

use it in the future tactics and strategy...that is for the *real improvement of the Romani condition*, Romani people in Ukraine and in the neighboring countries and at the same time to achieve the so-called *INTEGRATION*, still understood in different ways by the leaderships of various countries and various minority representatives, including Roma [*sic*]. That is, very briefly: how to make possible that the *integration process took place but without assimilation*, that is, with preservation of all the culture, uniqueness, and self-identity of Romani people.

Most importantly, from the outset, Belitser connected the improvement of Romani conditions with integration, which is understood as integration of Ukraine into the EU and not just integration into Ukrainian society. Furthermore, Belitser defined the present historic moment as follows:

We are facing the moment when Europe, on the one hand, is truly becoming a common home for most of the countries, nations, and peoples, which historically inhabit it; and on the other hand we are witnessing that, at the wish... of the most powerful states of Europe, a new IRON CURTAIN is being created: between the countries that are not only defined as the candidates to the European Union, to that circle of officially the most democratic, the wealthiest nations of Europe, but even the dates are defined...May 2004.

She stated that the efforts of Ukraine to join this “most powerful European structure” still remain in vain and asked the question, “What follows, from all of this, for Roma?” Not just heightened attention from the most powerful European organizations and leaders, she said, but the actual politics as well, including the *terms of ascension*, which include guaranteed minority rights protection—with a special paragraph concerning Roma. She stated that “at the surface” this policy was explained by the following:

Those countries that are now candidates have for a long time been in the non-democratic camp, that is, under the power of totalitarian regimes, united by the most totalitarian power of the Soviet Union, for a long time. Therefore, clearly, the foundations of minority and human rights protection was incompatible with what has naturally evolved in Western European countries. This is what's at the surface, what serves as an obvious reason of such very *carping* attention to the condition of Roma in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

She stated that the second explanation might be that according to reports from the mass media, Romani centers—including the center with the most powerful and extensive information networks, ERRC—and reports from individuals, “there are allegations of *considerable deterioration of Roma's condition* after the break up of the Soviet Union.” “So to say,” she continued, “the new big brother is trying to enforce these democratic standards of human rights and minority rights protection in other countries.”

Next, Belitser quoted a “paradox conclusion” from a *Guardian* article dated January 8, 2003—written by “a well-known and influential British journalist-analyst”:

The main motivating force behind imposing or enforcing the regime of Roma protection in those countries does not have anything to do with the love of democratic norms or love of Roma—it is the fear that EU members have of a massive migration of Roma on their territory.

She explained the free-travel regime between the member-states and the economic contrast between the richest countries and the poorest, along with economic migration and discrimination—thus creating strict monitoring and pressure on the countries-candidates. She concluded:

Therefore for the ROMA it is an important and advantageous moment to be able to really achieve positive change in their destiny. It is at that moment when the decision about joining the Union is made and the ACT of it has not happened yet—this is the moment of maximal attention to the Roma's condition. It [this stage] is constant monitoring.

After listing the examples of the improvements the governments of Hungary and Slovakia introduced to be able to join EU, she pressured Romani organizations to make an official statement about their support of European integration:

The aspiration to European integration is not just the formally expressed wish—strategic course of institutions of power of Ukraine, it is shared by most of the Ukrainian society... On the extent to which this aspiration is supported by all the layers of society, and first of all, the ethnic minorities and Roma: Romani organizations, Romani leaders of Ukraine—on that would largely depend *the real*

mutual understanding and mutual support of Roma and non-Roma, and of the representatives of that democratic majority without whose support the situation and the prospects of real integration and real improvement of Romani problems in Ukraine will not be achieved. That is, this is the principal and the most important position, in which the *understanding* not only *MUST* be achieved, but also to *EXPRESS* somehow directly, perhaps by some statements in press, some statements that Ukrainian Roma too support the *IDEA* and the very measures of Ukrainian integration into Europe.

Next Belitser read the results of the December 2001 census to the participants, and from them she derived the role of Transcarpathian Roma as “the bridge” in the process of European integration. According to her data, the total number of Roma recorded in Ukraine was 47,587 (the participants objected to such a low figure). In Transcarpathia 14,004 Roma live. As few as 21,266 Roma acknowledge Romani language as native to them; that is about 42%, less than half. The remainder of the Roma population spoke Ukrainian (about 10,000), Hungarian (9,000), Russian (about 6,000), and Moldavian (571). She noted that the proportions were different in Transcarpathia: Among the 14,004 Roma there, Romani was claimed as native tongue by 2,871, which is a much lower proportion than the national one. At the same time, the proportion of Hungarian to other languages spoken by the Roma population was very high: 8,736 in comparison to 2,335 for Ukrainian and only 28 for Russian. Belitser drew three conclusions from the data, focusing only on Transcarpathia. First, she stated that these data, however underestimated, confirmed that

The *historical conditions* of Transcarpathia, the *influences of those states, nations*, under whose jurisdiction this region had been in an absolutely natural way have been reflected on the self-consciousness, self-identification, including the language regime and *perception of a language as native*.

Second, she said, that location itself is a significant factor in creating possible connections for Transcarpathian Roma; for example, Hungary—the closest neighbor “with whom *traditionally* connected is not only the *Hungarian* minority of Transcarpathia, but the Romani as well, and what’s *extremely important*, it is like a *bridge* in this process of European integration [*sic*].” These extensive contacts, she said, facilitate this general movement to European integration.

The third conclusion she reformulated as a request to everyone present. It had to do with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which Ukraine

attempted to ratify, unsuccessfully. In the previous two drafts, Romani language was not mentioned among those that needed protection within “this powerful European institution” because Romani was considered an ex-territorial language, and Ukraine did not feel any obligations towards its protection and development. As an independent expert, Belitser (the former natural scientist) was invited to participate in the third draft of this document. In a top-down discourse she informed the participants:

I brought *our* third version of the draft, in which you will see Romani language, because after the discussions at many meetings of our working group we acknowledged that, first, it *really is a language, which traditionally and historically existed on the territory of today's Ukraine*. And second, that this language *really deserves and needs state support, so that it was not lost, but preserved and developed*. Thereby, *for the first time the opportunity arose to support Romani language in Ukraine by the ratification of that international agreement*. So the reason I am addressing you—is that *the most democratic approach*—to HOW EXACTLY to ratify it, there are s-s-so many-many various paragraphs there [said with condescension] . . . would be to *take fully into account the vision and wish of the language speakers themselves* . . . And because *there are not so many Roma who consider Romani their native language*, I would just ask those present here to *describe in writing their vision: In what[way] would they like to see the state support of their language development*. . . The support of the language could include the schools, textbooks, teacher training, preschool institutions, opportunities for language use in the relations between the person and state, and *many other possibilities*. That is, the scope could vary, and *what exactly it will be*—it would be better if it depended not on the *will of the power organs*, not only on the *experts* of the working group, but on *Roma themselves, as the most interested subject* of all these processes.

These examples illustrated the carrot-and-stick policy the state extends to Romani leaders through the “independent” institutes to mobilize their communities for various causes, such as the advancement of European integration and the development of Romani language as planned by non-Roma. Without conducting an opinion poll among Roma as to whether their language needs protection, without the broad participation of the speakers in language planning, and without Roma’s representation among the “experts,” the references to “the most democratic approach” and “the most interested subject” sound nothing but cynical. Such manipulative mobilization of Romani intellectuals suggests that today’s battle for Romani consciousness might not be that different from the struggle of the 1930s.

In a similar fashion, Romani participation was encouraged in the Ukrainian nationalist independence movement in the late 1980s. As the first Romani ethnographer Aleksey Danilkin recalled, “At that time the *intense struggle* of lower strata against the state in defense of their rights started in the country. Normal human rights.” Romani poet Mixa Kozimirenko was a member of the Ukrainian nationalist movement *Rukh* and participated in many oppositional events. After 15 years, some Romani leaders expressed their disappointment with the state leadership:

Kozimirenko: At the present stage it so happened that the self-consciousness of the people was awakened, but then once again someone at the top has taken it under control. Before that the processes were unpredictable. You, too, remember: tents, student hunger strikes—this led to the change of government. The UNPREDICTABILITY, *unpredictability* of all this—We did not know we could achieve so much—there was so much BRAVERY, so much COURAGE, we felt the support—Then all of it somehow was quietly *wrapped in cotton wool*—as if everything is still fine and yet at the same time everything is smothered! Everything seems normal and yet—those *expectations have not come true!*

Danilkin: I, too, feel disappointed with the *state*, which we were creating. We began creating this state and we—

Kozimirenko: Perhaps we elected the wrong *people*—

Danilkin: *We have not created* the one we wanted. In essence, there is no state in the country but only a ruling clique.⁷⁹

Thus the state-building task facing Ukraine’s elites, including Romani elites, had to be understood in the political context of the weak state and its governing class. State-building is defined as a process that occurs in the absence of a strong state (Garnett, 1997). As Aleksey Danilkin noted, essentially, there was no state in Ukraine, but just a ruling grouping. The weakness of Ukrainian civil society, particularly of the mechanisms of the press and public opinion meant there was no effective constraint on governmental decisions and relatively little influence on governmental decisions from the institutes and analytical centers in Kyiv. While the state no longer dominated society, civil society had barely begun to stand on its own feet (pp. 29-30). As the Dnipropetrovsk group controlled the state, and the state was a weak instrument, the danger posed by this dominance came from the dominance of this group upsetting the balance of power between old and emerging elites. The regional groupings wanted their share. As Garnett aptly commented,

⁷⁹ Transcript 06.30.2002.

disgruntled elites, regional leaders, and elements within the military and security services joined forces with a weak civil society and “black economy” to give this group a run for its money (p. 32). Far-reaching social and international problems also forced decisions on elites, compelling them, if they wished to hold on to political power, to come to terms with the key social and political questions of the day, including the ethnopolitical issues facing Romani people. It was in these turbulent waters of Ukrainian politics that Romani intellectuals had to navigate. In the next chapter, we will meet these intellectuals and others. Their trajectories of creative ascendancy in dialogue with non-Romani further elaborate how the identity of the Roma of Ukraine is being generated.

Chapter Two

The Art of Storytelling: “Tales of my Romani Paternal Courtyard” or Ethnogenesis of a Romani Intellectual

Where does a Romani intellectual come from? This story of becoming a “home-grown” leader highlights the process of the cultural struggle that Romani intellectuals wage between adapting to the dominant society, yet preserving the old ways. This struggle is a story of *ethnogenesis*, the process of fusion between cultures resulting in a rich, dynamic culture, the complex mix of tradition and innovation (Foley, 1995). This group of cultural and educational leaders, whom you will meet here, has taken Romani communities of Ukraine in some new directions.

Part One. Education, Media and the Post-Soviet Romani Intelligentsia: Who are Romani Intellectuals, or Education and Culture Leaders?

Romani educational and cultural leaders are key figures in the social change process, and others perceive them as successful and respected. Their leadership is defined as having social influence. They call themselves variously as intelligentsia, elite, or *spodvizhniki*. Culture field specialization is an important part of legitimacy of their leadership position due to the ideological role of the arts—poetry, drama, and other artistic media—in the post-Soviet space. Their front-line knowledge of Romani community issues, including Romani educational needs, and Romani cultures is sought for education reform. Throughout my collaboration with them, various dimensions of their leadership emerged, such as expertise in their artistic or media fields and pedagogy, collaboration, reflection, and social influence. Professional expertise anchors them in non-Romani communities and shores their credibility as Romani education and culture leaders of Ukraine.

“How Much Can You Give up Without Giving up Your Identity?”

The fundamental features of the Romani world-view as stated by Romani intellectuals are the clear boundary Roma—non-Roma and the major role of family values (Demeter et al., 2000, p. 115). In today’s rapidly changing societies, Romani intellectuals are contemplating the challenges of ethnogenesis. “They are straddling two

worlds,” said Ian Hancock, “and any kind of ethnic self-advancement requires such contemplation.” In the process of ethnogenesis, an ethnic group preserves and renews its culture through life and death struggles with the dominant culture. Traditionalists lament the passing of old practices with a discourse of decline. Conversely, the group’s progressives welcome the adoption of new practices with a discourse of renewal (Foley, 1995, p.120). As Hancock explained:

Romani *survival* over the centuries has *depended upon constant reassessment and adaptation*. You have to *consider* with *each generation* what can we *retain* and what can we *give up* and *still remain Rrom*. When you adapt in order to *survive*, it means giving up some *old* stuff and learning *new* stuff. For example, learning to read and write—road maps, road signs, how to work *a computer* and use *e-mails*. Literacy. The old people will say that is *gadjikani buti* [non-Gypsy stuff], right? That’s not Romani. Well, we have leaders who know how to do *that* and they *are*, unless they are very *good* at it, they are called *gadje* [non-Roma]. Like Nickolae Gheorghe, for example. People know he’s not a *gadjo*. They know his *family!* They know him! But in the eyes of the traditional culture he doesn’t live that way anymore and he’s gone over to the other side and the skills that he has are *not traditional skills*. I remember I was at a Romani conference in England and I was challenged by a Romanichal leader. He was clearly *intimidated* by the fact that I was a *professor*, and so he sort of in a gentle way tried to attack me. But it was in a room full of *people*, and he said, “Do you know how to *cook a hedgehog?*” I said, “I don’t eat hedgehogs! I could do it if I had to, but that is not the *test* of who is a Romani. That’s not what *makes* you a *Gypsy*.” And I have said a couple of times, that when we abandon our horse-drawn caravans for motor cars, people say, “Oh, what a shame!” But when *gadje* leave their horse and carts for motor cars, they call it progress. Why isn’t it progress for us? But it’s progress for them! Why is it a *shame* when we abandon *old-fashioned outdated* stuff, but we *have* to! And the *big question* that is *always* there *whenever* we are together, even when it’s spoken or unspoken is ***how much can you give up without giving up your identity!*** You remember what the Dalai Lama said, I told you. He said, “Give up the customs that hold you back, but keep the ones that hold you together. **Keep your family, it’s your strength.**”⁸⁰

“Now, how do we, as Romani people, begin to make the changes?” asked Hancock, and he suggested, “Parents, even if they have other priorities in their lives, should be aware of the value of education for their children. They might not see changes within their lifetime, but their children will, and their children’s children will, even more.” He saw education as the key to improving the socioeconomic status of the Roma and said it was

⁸⁰ Transcript. 06.22.2004.

equally important that the community do more to help itself, including raising funds. He regretted that many “Roma initiatives” were organized or run by non-Roma.

Romani intellectuals of Ukraine are pondering the same intergenerational issues of cultural heritage, survival, education, and cultural continuity, as evident from my conversation with Mixa Kozimirenko and Aleksei Danilkin in 2002, yet their perspectives bore continuities with the Soviet tradition. They explained to me their conceptualization of “Romani intelligentsia” as a “vanguard layer of socium” (Danilkin), with the notion of intelligentsia stemming from the Soviet understanding of the noun *intelligent* (a person from the layer of intelligentsia), with its more “organic” and civic ideologized emphasis on commitment to society than that of a Western “intellectual.”

Danilkin: Romani intelligentsia, that is, the representatives of this people who have education in the humanities and technology and work in the intellectual field have been developing very rapidly in the past decade in Ukraine.

Kozimirenko: Does intelligentsia necessarily presuppose education, or can one be an intellectual without specialized higher education?

Danilkin: Well, if a person is a historian, it does not in itself mean that he is *intelligent*. One can be an ordinary worker and have good education simply by self-education. *Intelligent* is first of all a person who consciously realizes *what* he is doing and who is doing it with high quality and honestly and for the benefit of the people. This is who the *intelligent* is.

Kozimirenko: To my mind, an *intelligent* is a world-view, which does not depend on education. Certainly one cannot be an *intelligent* in the full sense without education. However, although my mom and dad did not have higher education, they nevertheless had good enough sense to ask profound questions and take a normal approach to life. They gave education *to me*, and they saw which way the events were developing. That is, one can be an *intelligent* in one’s *soul*, without formal education. Self-education, plus the *life itself* teaches them. The philosophy of life. That is, they can compare the facts, they can find their place in this life and see the perspective—the possible outcomes. My father always insisted, “You must study by all means.” He *understood* that it was no longer possible to remain at the same education level [as he] and consider oneself an elite, intelligentsia. To be an intelligent is much broader than expertise, it is a *way of life*.⁸¹

Thus Kozimirenko and Danilkin explained that for their fathers’ generation of those born before World War II, the notion *an intelligent* hinged on the Soviet world-

view, experience, and commitment to society as a life-style, or using bell hooks's (1990) term, habit of being, considered more important than merely formal education and the flair of expertise. That generation of Romani leaders carried out their leadership roles in a post-war Soviet society, relying on their talent, life experience, self-education, and the knowledge of Romani communities, in the absence of formal higher education, the latter being of lesser significance to the authorities than the leaders' loyalty to the Soviet state and their organizational and people skills. Importantly, however, the pre-World War II generation of Romani leaders made everything possible to ensure their children at least specialized or received technical post-secondary, if not higher, education. That gave rise to the present generation of Romani intellectuals in Ukraine, born in the 1950s and '60s, which Danilkin and, roughly, Kozimirenko represented. For this post-war—late-Soviet generation of Romani intellectuals, socialized in Soviet formal educational institutions—loyalty to Soviet society, high social moral values, and active social stance were of great importance, especially if most of them worked in educational and cultural fields. In the following excerpt, Kozimirenko and Danilkin highlighted the importance of social and moral values to a Romani intellectual of their late-Soviet generation.

Danilkin: The notion of intelligentsia for me is first and foremost the spiritual, moral stance of a person. Where there is morality, there is an inner culture, and the inner culture, or spirituality, requires of one to be educated and hardworking. Because first of all intelligentsia is distinguished by being hardworking.

Kozimirenko: Not only as hardworking, but probably intelligentsia is distinguished by its responsibility to the society.

Danilkin: It is the same thing. Being hardworking requires one to be responsible for actions, for quality.

Kozimirenko: To be hardworking for the sake of what—for one's own profit or for the benefit of the development of society?

Romani intellectuals emphasize that their being first generation college-educated specialists does not diminish their expertise. They reject the stereotypical view that there is no stratum of intelligentsia among Roma and that all Roma are uneducated. They state that from their people they inherited the great philosophical wisdom of endurance, perseverance, and resilience, as well as a tradition of competitiveness rooted in Romani culture.

⁸¹ Transcript. 06.30.2002.

Kozimirenko: Let us admit that Roma are to date the least educated population group of Ukraine and Europe. But what allowed them to survive through the centuries, through the suffering, throughout all the countries, having preserved their ethnos, their language, their traditions—to remain themselves? I see in it a great philosophical *wisdom* and vitality! There were many peoples that had their military intellectuals and technical and so forth—but they lacked that *vitality*, endurance—

Danilkin: Let's call it *passionarity*.⁸² I will add to what Mikhail Grigorievich has said about the stereotype that there is no intelligentsia among the Gypsies and that all Gypsies lack education. Yes, there are non-educated ones. But I will note as the ethnographer who has studied this. In Gypsy psychology there exists a notion of *aggressiveness*, social aggressiveness—“If you do not perceive me to be somebody, I will show you all!” The Gypsies have a good quality: If they embark on a certain project, they will try to prove that they are better than anyone else—be it the best card-player, best physician, best poet, best ethnographer. And this is what makes the level of Gypsy intelligentsia very high. And I am saying it not because I belong to this ethnos, but as a scholar—it is very high. Everyone is trying to be HIGHER than someone else, better than someone else, that is, it is the workings of this caste stereotype, this mentality—to be BETTER. Better, and HIGHER, higher, and higher. Therefore, to say that there is no Gypsy intelligentsia is incorrect. That it exists is already known, that it is highly developed is already clear to everyone.

Kozimirenko underscored the process of becoming the first generation [Soviet] Romani intellectual as beginning not with formal education, but rather with the conscious realization of being a people's representative with a sense of belonging and responsibility. This illumination, in turn, is the first step to the acquisition of knowledge, which can come as formal education, “spontaneous” learning, or as a life experience.

I think that the first intellectuals—the first intellectual—can be considered a person who has realized⁸³ himself as being a particle of this people, who has realized that he is a persona,⁸⁴ a representative of a certain people, and he is finding *his* place and sees his people and sees himself in this people, his place in this people. And he sees himself separately, and he sees that he does not stand out or stands out in some better sense. That is, to find your *self*. And to realize yourself as a particle of this people. These already are the first steps towards

⁸² Passionarity theory, developed by Leo Gumilyov in the earlier 20th century, has been resurrected among today's conceptions of ethnic development in Ukraine. Passionarity by Gumilyov is a “dominant” trait that appears as a result of mutation [*sic*] in a small population of people, imparting to them developmental energy—a tremendous impulse or yearning to action to reach a certain socially-meaningful goal, for the sake of which often people's lives might be sacrificed. It is by this force that the evolution of ethnos is accelerated (Kresina, 2002, p. 74).

⁸³ Осознал

⁸⁴ Личность

being an intellectual, that is, the first steps to *poznaniye*, knowledge. It may come as a result of [formal] education, spontaneous learning, or as life experience.

Kozimirenko explained that with limited access to formal education among the Romani people, self-education, which he called “spontaneous learning and life experience,” is very important, especially for the traditional Romani *baro* leader of older generations.

Danilkin, among a number of Romani intellectuals born in the 1950s and socialized in state educational institutions more than family, highlighted the loyalty to the state as crucial for a Romani, as any other intellectual.

Danilkin: For me the worldview was formed by the very favorable environment: friends, neighbors—*tovarishchi*. Perhaps even the working collective where he works. He realizes that he is *working* at a certain factory and makes parts for the spaceships, he understands that he is doing it for the benefit of the country, for peace—and *pride* comes. Intellectual, first and foremost is a *patriot*.

Kozimirenko: This is a later definition. This is a later Soviet approach.

Danilkin: No, he is a patriot. A patriot of his job, his region, his home, his ethnos, his country, his CAUSE [*dela*]. And first of all the person who does everything with high quality. It is one of the traits of Gypsy intelligentsia and any intelligentsia.

Kozimirenko, about 20 years Danilkin’s senior, saw the responsibility towards his people as a cross an intellectual bears and carries—a metaphor used by Igor Krikunov at the First Romani Congress of Ukraine and repeated by other Romani intellectuals since. A Romani intellectual by Kozimirenko’s standards bears the most important ethnic trait of his people, *Rromanipe*, or Romani spirit.

It seems to me that any person, and even more so an intellectual, carries within himself a *load of responsibility* towards all his people. He carries in himself the historical information. It’s not that he carries it, it is more like he is a *posterity* continuing the historic path that this people has come through. At present he is the very dot, the dot of a process, which will go farther. He carries in himself certain ethnic foundations, which have been laid for centuries. [Danilkin prompted, “The so-called ethnic stereotype.”] And his sons will carry on the same way, maybe in part, but by no means they will cast away that which has been, that which has been laid genetically.⁸⁵ That is, he carries it. Also, he carries certain stereotypes specific to the country, because Roma, say, in Poland are different from Roma in Russia. Roma of Russia are not the same as Roma in Argentina, that is historically. That is, there are very many accumulations. But there is something

⁸⁵ This is a widespread view in Ukraine today, even among the scholars.

which is the most important that he carries within—*Rromanipe*, that is Romani spirit, which all Roma have.

Within the intellectual's role as an ethnic representative, Danilkin highlighted the civic ameliorative aspirations such as alienation from the traditions he calls "the worst."

Yes, but this spirit—When the person begins realizing himself to be a particle of that layer, he *alienates* himself from the *worst* traditions. Every people has some worse traditions—he aspires only to the *better* traditions of his and the other ethnos.

The rest of our discussion focused on the complexities of loyalties—ethnic traditional and civic ones—spanning the ethnic and civic dimensions of an intellectual's identity, which Ian Hancock formulated as an ethnogenesis dilemma: How much can one give up without giving up the identity and what should be retained by a Romani person with each stage of modernization? Romani intellectuals agree that the vital traditions that carry moral principles, such as family, language, and important ceremonies, should be retained. The tradition of purity and pollution, central to the Romani worldview, is cherished by Roma against all odds from the outside world. This tradition requires Romani intellectuals to balance carefully the ethnic and civic loyalties, maintaining the Rom-non-Rom boundary and weighing the ethnic and civic commitments and responsibilities.

Kozimirenko: What to consider the better and what is to be considered the worst traditions? [*sic*—what is good and what is bad—there is an immediate approach which [*sic*] considers something as good only for the present moment.

Danilkin: Wait a minute, you are talking about a social level, and I am talking about traditions. There are traditions in—let's say the lower classes [*soslovie*—such as swindle. This is a bad tradition, but it has social roots characteristic of the present, stage of the country. But the better traditions—language, ceremonies—carry moral principles. In the tradition of purity mixed are the traditions of Gypsies of the Central Europe and the general Gypsy traditions. But I would not call it the FUNDAMENTAL for the Gypsies. As a matter of fact, we have various groups, marginal groups, for whom the notions of moral purity, social purity, or any everyday life purity do not exist. None. They do not have a division into the upper clothing and lower clothing, or the sacred [*sakral'nyi*] and the everyday. For them it does not exist. But in the other, non-marginal groups, those who are not beggars, swindlers, thieves, in the other groups, which are more socialized, integrated into this Ukrainian society—for them such notion exists. They would never allow cigarette butts scattered around the entrance to their apartment house. Or that someone in dirty clothes was

sitting next to them. They would never call someone a bad word, because they realize that this bad word could then affect them or their children—the law of karma. It is a tradition. So the tradition of purity exists, but in the lower castes—not because they are lower than the others but because by their way of life they are at the bottom—for them this tradition does not exist.

Kozimirenko: And it is in wedding ceremonies that this tradition is especially strictly observed [Danilkin agreed]. Here especially: There has to be purity of preparing the wedding apparel, wedding tables, food, and the address to the guests. Here everything is adhered to very *traditionally*. The division between gadje and Roma is fundamental. But because Gypsies are people of small numbers and life requires continuity, mixed marriages do occur. Mixed bloods are of course an evil for the nation's purity, racial purity. Although we do know that for the primitive people survival required blood mixing—to renew the genotype with fresh blood. But the Gypsies disapprove of mixed blood. However if a [non-Romani] woman who came into a Gypsy family observes all the traditions of this family and has learned the language, then with time—at first with caution, and later—watching her behavior closely, they accept her.

Danilkin: She becomes a white Gypsy. As to the ethnic *purity*, the Gypsies somehow aggressively take it when a Slavic person enters their milieu, but with time everything effaces.

Thus from the tension and cultural struggles in the cultural borderland of Roma, interactions with non-Roma and the issues surrounding Romani family spring an ever-shifting cultural consensus, resulting in a complex mix of tradition and innovation.

Media as Agent of Social Change and Developmental Power

As evidenced by the discussion among the Romani intellectuals, the notion *social change* implies changes in attitudes, behaviors, customs, habits, manners, and values of people. This notion also implies change in the styles or ways of living. It may also imply changes in the structure of social institutions. The factors of social change in today's Ukraine include modernization, westernization, urbanization, and industrialization, just to name a few.

Throughout centuries, all social reformers have stressed the importance of education as the agent for bringing about changes in society. The past generation needs to convey activities and experiences to the rising generation; older generations also have to ask younger ones to make necessary changes in these activities and experiences to meet new conditions that will emerge. An integration of the old must take place with the new.

Communities live in the present, on the past, and for the future. Thus education is a continuous reorganization and integration of activities. Although various agencies might participate, ultimately it is the national system of education that should be the main instrument reaching all the people in the nation. In today's Ukraine, however, Romani cultural education associations, which are outside the national system of education, carry out most of the educational and cultural work among the Romani people.

Therefore, the most important agenda for Roma concerned with unity and uplift is the prefiguration of the future: construction and lobbying the adoption by the Verkhovna Rada of a visionary model of Romani liberation—the strategic national program for the development of Romani people. Before this goal is reached, Romani education and culture leaders must use the alternative Romani media as developmental power agents,⁸⁶ reinforcing awareness that knowledge can be disseminated and shared on a number of fronts (hooks, 1990; Downing, 2001). The media centers created by Romani cultural associations thus serve as what Raymond Williams (1977) termed “formations”—the effective movements in intellectual and artistic life that have decisive influence on the active development of a culture, and that often have an oblique relation to formal institutions. Romani cultural associations and media centers carry out their tasks on a number of fronts.

First, on the educational front, Roman cultural associations and media centers popularize the change of attitude to education inside their own Romani communities and encourage active participation of families in knowledge exchange and education processes. This work is aimed at a creation of Romani cultural and political elite. They also promote the fundamental changes in attitudes among the dominant ethnoses inside

⁸⁶ Downing (2001) recovered back from 1973 and recycled C. B. Macpherson's concept of developmental power, central to understanding of the basic purpose of power in a democracy, and applied it in his pivotal schema by which he interpreted the roles of radical media. Developmental power is understood as the opportunity for members of the public to use and develop their capacities. Developmental power represents the positive possibilities for human achievement inherent in cooperative social life, which the construction of economic and political life most often sidelines (p. 43). Downing suggested that the concept of developmental power may be used to build on the notions of counterhegemony and alternative public spheres and that it has an easy symbiosis with hallmarks of many social movements (p. 44). He argued that radical alternative media serve as developmental power agents. The multi-task work that Romani intellectuals of Ukraine accomplish in their cultural associations and media centers illustrates the argument that “what media could be is often much better realized in alternative public spheres” (p. 45). Their work is similar to the much welcomed by bell hooks (1990) work of the U.S. Black intellectuals in being “primarily

the educational institutions and encourage the state to fulfill its basic obligations toward its Romani citizens. Second, on a cultural-propagandistic front, they work to change the negative attitude of the non-Roma to Romani culture and history as well as to support Romani culture and talent, to organize wholesome cultural leisure, and to overcome the stereotypes and the negative self-image among Roma. Third, many of them additionally become embryonic legal aide centers, heritage schools, charitable food centers, construction sites, small production facilities, and a host of other happenings to break the shackles of human rights violations, illiteracy, malnutrition, homelessness, and unemployment.

These developmental power practices no longer require Romani intellectuals to be confined by narrow state institutions with no meaningful connection to the everyday world. Instead, they have spearheaded the educational and cultural movement in the arts— theater, music, visual arts—and other forms of Romani media production— literary work, museum collecting, critical writing, etc. Such engagement with culture and education “emerges from the yearning to do intellectual work that connects with habits of being, forms of artistic expression, and aesthetics that inform the daily life” of Romani culture leaders as well as Romani population (hooks, 1990, p. 31). The arts and Romani media cultural production have thus become the powerful realms of cultural resistance, a space for awakening to new knowledge, consciousness, and new vision. “Literacy,” said the first Romani ethnographer, Aleksey Danilkin, “is learning to read between the lines.” On this terrain of culture they participate in critical dialogue with the uneducated poor—the Romani underclass—to help with creating art that reflects passionate engagement with the Romani people’s culture. It is this cultural terrain that hooks proclaimed “the” central location of resistance struggle, a meeting place where new and radical happenings can occur (Ibid.). At last, the Romani cultural educational movement enables creative, expansive self-actualization, and therefore, the uplift—to become, to make oneself anew.

Along with this aspiration to renewal, the visionary model of Romani liberation necessarily includes the construction of the collective memory as a way of knowing and learning from the past. Hooks (1990) called upon such retrospection to gain a vision for

directed towards the enhancement of ...critical consciousness and the strengthening of [the] collective capacity” (p. 30).

the future, a “catalyst for self-recovery” and “collective self-recovery” (p. 40). The leaders of the Romani movement in Ukraine and elsewhere give tremendous attention to the importance of learning Romani history through various media productions. For now, however, due to the limited circulation of such media material in Ukraine, the learning of history in Romani communities takes place primarily through storytelling. In Romani families, a very important practice is the sharing of stories that teach histories, family genealogy, and facts about the Romani past. In these oral exchanges of human experience the conceptions of social identity are born. Similarly to the collective critical black gaze of the 1970s in the U.S. (hooks, 1990, p. 5), in today’s Romani communities in Ukraine, the cultural politics of resistance and resilience is orally transmitted. Stories of those who “make it,” passionately holding on to Romani culture, validate identities and provide models of strength and empowerment. Behind such stories lie the memories of human experience. History, after all, is said to be a renaissance into memory, and thus, the exploration of why we are here and who we are. All of this is to say that knowledge of Romani history comes out of human experience shared in oral performance.

The Storyteller’s Aura: Experience and Media’s Interactive Aesthetics

Roma, especially persons of distinction, are masterful storytellers. And as any art, the art of good storytelling teaches us the privacy of the human experience. It was precisely this private memory that the totalitarian state could not allow, and therefore, it was censored. This is why the collective story of becoming a Romani intellectual in Ukraine, which I am conveying here, takes account of the complexity of individual experience and of the complex self-reflexive life, thus mediating between the social and the self. The promise contained in this focus consists in a cross-cutting view of how historical forces of oppression have systematically distorted the conditions in which Romani individuals were able to reflect and speak in their own name, and how today Romani intellectuals are “brushing history against the grain,” to use Walter Benjamin’s words (Benjamin, 1969). My approach to the conveying of Romani intellectuals’ experience was influenced by Walter Benjamin’s writings on storytelling and the storyteller’s aura.

Experience is understood here as layers of memory, tradition, and narrative. Experience, by Benjamin, is that by which one yearns in vain for a seamless meshing between private sensibility and the larger patterns of heritage embedded in ritual, tradition, and myth, or between and identity and culture. Storytelling is the ability to exchange experiences (1969, p. 83). Thereby, experience is that which is passed on from mouth to mouth (p. 84). This explains the centrality of face-to-face interaction and narratives in my work.

Each Romani intellectual featured here is approached as the storyteller, that is, someone who has counsel for his audience. Counsel woven into the fabric of real life is wisdom (pp. 86–87). The storyteller reaches back to a whole lifetime, which comprises not only his own experience, but that of others, and fashions the raw material of experience in a solid, useful, and unique way (p. 108). Seen in this way, Romani intellectuals join the ranks of teachers and sages.

My communication with Romani intellectuals was interactive, dialogic, inspired by what Benjamin called *perceptibility*—a kind of attentiveness: The person we look at looks at us in return (p. 188). It is in this dialogue process between two individuals who return each other’s gaze that aura is being experienced to the highest extent (Ibid.).

Romani intellectuals use this literal dialogical “looking” in their educational and media work. This aura illuminates the narratives of Romani intellectuals as storytellers when they “let the wick of [their] life be consumed completely by the gentle flame of the story. This is the basis of the incomparable aura about the storyteller” (p. 108–109). Following Benjamin’s counsel in the art of good storytelling, I used minimum editing, presenting the narratives of Romani intellectuals (p. 84), letting the layers pile on top of the other as in oral tradition (p. 93).

I agree with bell hooks (1990), who insisted that racism is perpetuated when blackness, and by extension “gypsiness,” are associated solely with concrete gut level experience conceived as either opposing or having no connection to abstract thinking and the production of critical theory (p. 23), and I look forward to introducing you to the autobiographical narratives of Romani intellectuals featured in part three. However, before we approach them, we will explore the tapestry of media of socialization in the Romani family, which gave the Odessa region its first and youngest Romani state official

(*chinovnik*). The purposes of exploring this tapestry are multiple: On one level, these examples give a sense of flavor and the sparks of Romani homeplace as a space of care and nurturance; on another, they demonstrate the amazing multiplicity and richness of intergenerational exchange, mediated by multicultural and multilingual media; and finally, they illustrate how the political commitment to ethnic uplift, the philosophical core of dedication to community and home (hooks, 1990), is reared and mediated in the Romani homeplace. The feelings of self-empowerment and transcendence emanating from the narratives of overcoming the obstacles of daily life pulsate here. From a Romani perspective, the individual strengths encompassing talents, practical knowledge, positive coping and others, are grounded in the strengths of family and community relationships.

Part Two. Romani Homeplace: Media of Socialization Tapestry. From Swiss-Roll to Turnover: Grandma Luyba's Lore

Through a green, iron gate with white curlicues, let us enter the Romani courtyard shaded by grapevines and quince trees to sample the rich flavor of oral tradition stored and passed to grandchildren by the 68-year-old Lyubov Markovna Kalderar, or Grandma Luyba as everyone called her. Widowed years ago, Grandma Lyuba was in charge of questions related to the extended family and dealing with morals, marriages, ethics, and internal relationships⁸⁷ in the community, especially when her son-in-law and older daughter were working at a large market in Odessa, known as *na sed'mom*, that is, 7-km-market. In Romani culture, the elderly are respected as carriers of experience, dignity, and strict morals (Demeter et al., 2000, p. 64). The influence of an old woman in Romani community can be very high (Ibid.).

During my four visits to this homeplace,⁸⁸ I became a participant in many intergenerational events when Grandma Lyuba played the role of the custodian of oral tradition and oral memory. It was her grandson Rustam who told me during our first meeting at the First Romani Congress of Ukraine in June 2002 that he was grateful to his remarkable Grandma for all the stories in Romani language she had told him and other

⁸⁷ Marushiakova and Popov (1997) identified this “the mother of the family” (*phuri dej*) role among the itinerant Kardarashi in Bulgaria (p. 161).

grandchildren. Rustam, a 23-year-old, was the first college student in the family, a wrestling champion, a leader in Romani community of Tatarbunary, and a would-be first state official in the Odessa region. With enthusiasm, I accepted Rustam's invitation to visit his homeplace in Tatarbunary. Of all the memorable moments with this family, I will only recall a few, which instanced the media use and intergenerational exchange and socialization in a Romani home. Two days, Saturday and Sunday, August 10 and 11, 2002 would be very illustrative.

On Saturday, Grandma Lyuba had been working since dawn. She sprinkled the courtyard with water and ethyl alcohol⁸⁹ and swept it, brought buckets of water from the large, round, tiled, concrete water container across the yard, and bought several whole large perch from the fishermen. Now she was standing in the middle of the wide street, cleaning fish over a large bowl she put on a stool. Two cats with raised tails were making nervous circles around the stool, knowing better than to come too close to Grandma.⁹⁰ Apparently, Grandma did not want the fish scales scattered in the courtyard, and here in the street even if some fell down they got lost in the dust and tire tracks. The street was unpaved, rocky and bumpy, with lots of potholes, and cars rarely went by. Across from the line of courtyards behind the tall, iron, neatly painted gates and fences on one side of the street was a large truck shop hidden behind a tall, iron fence. A separate entrance led to it somewhere else, so the entire wide street was used by the residents as a neighborhood yard or playground. Many of the residents here were Roma. The drivers giving us a ride from the bus station cursed when driving through this street. One time the driver did not recognize the name of the street and was following my directions, until turning into the street. "You should have said right away 'the Gypsy street,'" he reproached me, "the Gypsies live here, our Indians." He took off as soon as I handed him the money, leaving me wondering what exactly he meant. Aleksey Danilkin, always

⁸⁸ First visit, with Romani ethnographer Aleksey Danilkin: August 9–12, 2002. Second, with my 12-year-old son Anton: October, 2002. Third and fourth visits, with Anton: before and after the International Roma Day, April 2003. Each stay was 4–7 days long. Quotations used in this chapter come from the fieldnotes.

⁸⁹ Ethyl alcohol is used against the mosquitoes, abundant in the lower Danube region.

⁹⁰ Cats are regarded unclean animals by many Roma; however, I have seen some exceptions to this.

working hard to save Ukraine's image in most difficult circumstances, assured me he meant "people from India."⁹¹

Showing us the large fish, Grandma Lyuba explained:

Every morning, a motorcycle with cart drives through our street. They deliver fresh fish. They yell [in Romani], "*Masho, masho!*" and everyone knows it is fish and buys it. Today it was the Gypsies who have bought most of the fish, *gadzhe* have not bought any. I have bought 12 grivnas worth [about \$2.50].

There was a sound of pride in her voice when she mentioned how much she paid. With high unemployment in the region, buying power was one of the few ways to determine how a neighbor was doing. Roma must have been the patrons of fish sales for some time if its delivery was announced in Romani.

One of Grandma's durable maxims⁹² mediating her daily work in the courtyard and kitchen was, "I cannot sit still. I like everything to be as clean as in a drugstore [*chtob bylo chisto kak v apteke*]." Whenever I expressed surprise at seeing her up in early hours, she recounted a biographic story of growing up as the oldest child in the family:

My mom taught me to get up at dawn. As soon as the day was breaking, she woke me up, "Go check behind the tent!" Someone could have dumped a corpse there, to make the Gypsies deal with it. "Get up early, go look behind the tent if there isn't a dead body there." Why not? If there was a fight between the drunks in the village... I get up early and tidy everything.

Another durable genre of verbal art was the detailed description of meal preparation, either as prefiguration of the meal to be cooked or as a good memory of meals at a wedding, baptizing, or other Romani celebration. Grandma Lyuba drew tasteful pictures of delicacies and derived pleasure from her layered masterpieces. Though she repeatedly reminded me that she was an "illiterate grandma," she produced creations beyond the reach of many literates, imagining, drawing out the image, repeating and rewording for emphasis, showing supreme skill in managing flashbacks and episodic techniques. One of such legends was about a Christmas Swiss roll with quince marmalade and walnuts. Shady walnut trees, known in Ukraine as Wallachian (Wolos'ky), and quince trees with large, yellow, fragrant, hard-fleshed fruits framed by

⁹¹ In Russian *Indeitsy* means American Indians. To interpret it as "people from India" was too much of a stretch. The word would have to be *Indiitsy* and not *Indeitsy*.

⁹² Throughout this chapter I use Walter Ong's (1982) orality and literacy terminology.

deep-green leaves, fuzzy underneath, grew all around the yard. The fruits were jawbreakers when raw, but delicious and beautifully pink when cooked. Grandma Lyuba called quinces *gutuli*⁹³ and used them as cold medicine, “For sore throat and cough, just cut it and eat it.”

Good meals were this family’s medium of get-togethers, especially before the older members of the family left for the Odessa market for a week and when they returned home. Grandma Lyuba ran the homeplace, cooked, and mentored the younger granddaughters, who learned from her by apprenticeship.

On Friday, before her daughter Mandolina, son-in-law Grigory (Grisha), and granddaughters Rosalina, 15, and Duduya, 16, left for the market, the family got together in the courtyard for a family supper. Grandma Lyuba explained to me that every Friday the family observed Lent in the memory of two of Grandma’s granddaughters who had drowned in a lake. The tradition began after Grigory had an enlightening vision. The supper consisted of a cold Turkish eggplant sauce and bullhead fish sautéed whole with green bell peppers. The white bread⁹⁴ was served in thick, square slices. Homemade red wine from the cellar was served with the meal. Deep purple bunches of ripe grapes hung above the courtyard. Cake and Nescafé instant coffee concluded the meal.

The conversations were about the past: how *baro* leader was elected, what his insignia were, how marriages were arranged between families. Grandma Lyuba was quiet, until the conversation turned to the topic of elopement. “But when we traveled,” she repeated a few times for emphasis and greater attention, “the girl was stolen at 13, even 12 years of age [today it is 15–17].” “Yes, at an earlier age in those days, yes,” agreed Grigory. “Mandolina was stolen at 13. Grisha was 15. And look: They are still together,” added Grandma. Her recurrent story was about Mandolina and Grigory living and working happily together since the days of their early marriage. They had six children: three boys and three girls. They lived in the house in Tatarbunary for many years, first it had only two bedrooms, but as the children were growing up, they added another two bedrooms. They have worked together all these years. Today it is even

⁹³ From Romanian *gutuj*, (m.), “quince.” The plural *gutuli* (and not *gutulia*) is used in Russian speech in analogy with Russian plural ending –i.

⁹⁴ Roma in Bessarabia do not eat rye bread as do the Servi in northwestern Ukraine. Like Roma in the Balkans, they prefer white bread.

harder to be a trader. In the past, they traded in the villages and went to the Baltic republics to purchase wholesale goods. Today everyone has a car and can travel. Everyone sells today. A trader has to pay for the place at the market, but the sales are down. Racket is high. Recently a bus of Gypsies was stopped and they had to pay \$3,000. Grandma Lyuba drew pictures of rough everyday reality at the market: the rise before dawn, the winter cold, the fall rain, and the summer heat. Yet the family has always been working together.

On Saturday morning, Grandma's grandson, Ruslan, gave us a ride to the downtown farmers' market. From Grandma, I knew that when Ruslan's father was serving a term, his mother abandoned the boy, and Grandma Lyuba raised him. Grandma often settled Ruslan's fights with his wife. "She is *klizma*," Grandma did not mince words, using the Russian equivalent for "enema." "She does not teach her kids. They swear and show a finger. He batters her." We witnessed one of Grandma's appeasements of the fighting couple the next night.

We were crossing the bridge over the Kogylnik to get to the marketplace and could already see it in the upper city, looking like an ancient fort. The 18th-century German historian Tunmann (1991) described Tatar-Bunar (Tatar-Well) as a small city on the Kogylnik River. Situated on a hill, it used to be the main city of the Koman (Polovets) princes and perhaps an important fortified city. In ancient times it was called Kara-Buna ("Black Well" in Turkic); the Greeks called it Carbona. The Russians took it over in 1770 (p. 57). After the peace treaty of 1774, this part of Bessarabia, called Budzhak, belonged to the Crimean khan, with the exception of Akkerman, Kilia, Izmail, and Bendery, which were under the Ottoman rule (p. 52). Even back in the 18th century this area was extremely arid in the summer months, when the Kogylnik dried up. Today, too, it experiences shortages of water. Tunmann told of the very deep wells that were dug out to overcome the summer's water shortages. Here, he says, as in the Orient, well-digging was considered a religious ritual and a matter of honor (Ibid.). Today, there is still no running water in the part of Tatarbunary where Roma live and there are no wells either. Water is delivered by tank trucks to fill a large, round, concrete water tank each family has in its yard. This water has a salty taste, and even such water is not free.

At the big and abundant southern market with its many pavilions, some brick under Roman-style tiled roofs, we loaded up the car with meat, beautiful produce, aromatic home-pressed sunflower oil, fruit, and dairy. Grandma began painting pictures of the dishes she would make, “I will make you borshch, hominy with cream, and turnovers with cottage cheese [*platsinta*].” In the kitchen she fried perch, making cuts from head to tail through the side of each large fish and sprinkling them with salt. Then she cooked pork in a three-stage production. First, she fried fresh bacon. Separately she sautéed large pieces of pork in water. Finally, she browned them in the frying pan with bacon. She served meat, fish, sheep’s milk cheese (*brynza*), and tomato and cucumber salad. Granddaughters, 11-year-old Oksana and 10-year-old Laura, cousins, helped her. “*Bala! Bala!*” she reminded them in Romani [“hair, hair”], and they rushed to cover their hair with scarves. The girls sliced up the bread. The work wore Grandma out, and the rest of the meal she had visualized was postponed until Sunday. She cut up the goose in neat portions and put it in the fridge and then she carried two large, round watermelons down to the cellar. The meal preparation and consumption well into the late afternoon and was mediated with conversations and storytelling.

Two of the durable stories repeatedly told at later times were about people helping Roma get through the hard times. In the first one, she recounted how they left Moldova during the ravaging famine [1946–1947] and trekked Transcarpathia in search of food. Thousands of farmers died of famine in those 2 years in Moldova. “Skinny, cold, wasted, desperate, we kept asking people for food,” she repeated, “and people would give us food.” She must have been about 12 years old at the time, Oksana and Laura’s age. Another story was about renting a house in Novosibirsk from a [non-Romani] “grandma.” “She would give us everything and buy us stuff, too. We paid her.” Repeating these stories later, she would sum them up with a maxim, “People helped us when we traveled. We paid them. I know what it’s like to be on the road.” Interestingly, she never called the non-Roma *gadze* in these two stories. She remembered Novosibirsk as one of her favorite cities, “It is beautiful.” When asked what year they went to Siberia, she said, “It was a long time ago. My oldest daughter was still a one-year-old baby,” meaning Grandma would have been in her twenties. The granddaughters told me later that Grandma always remembered the events in her own way. Grandma’s younger

daughter Zoya, Laura's mother, was born north of the Arctic Circle, in the permafrost mining city of Vorkuta "when Tereshkova flew into space," that was in 1963, when Grandma was 29. One of the maxims repeated with dignity was, "My brother served a term and my husband served a term [*Moi brat sidel, i muzh sidel*]. Zoya was born in Vorkuta. That entire city was built by convicts." Then Grandma would add, "The working people needed the goods we were selling." There was profound wisdom and truth in these words. The only way for us to get the goods unavailable through state retail was to buy them from traders, known as *s ruk*. But in the Soviet Union, private sales were against the law. Demeter and colleagues (2000) reminded us that Soviet laws, grounded in communist ideology, violated the right to the freedom of movement and the right to private enterprise. While aimed at all the citizens, it was primarily Roma who suffered the greatest from these laws because they contradicted their traditional way of living. The so-called "speculation" became the most "Gypsy" article, and many Roma were exiled to labor penitentiaries for "trading *s ruk* in an unauthorized place" (p. 146).

Apart from the memories of hardships, many of Grandma's stories were about the good old days of solidarity, when Roma supported each other. One of these joyous accounts told of a trainload of Gypsies going to Moscow to purchase wholesale goods, "We crowded one compartment and served food and drinks: sausage, bread, tomatoes, and cucumbers. We invited the train attendant. It was fun." In the capital, those Roma who were lucky to find good deals in large specialized department stores selling imported goods shared information with the others. Such stories were usually told with nostalgia and were contrasted with the present times, when "no one could be trusted" and when a neighbor would walk away with your iron-gate and take apart your metal fence, to sell as scrap metal, if no one was home. A sad sight of taken apart benches in the parks of Ukraine and the beautiful iron fences stolen from historic downtown Kiev confirmed Grandma's fears.

Saturday was the family bath and laundry day. After dinner, Oksana hauled buckets of water from the container, and the water was heated on a kitchen stove. Grandma organized everyone to take turns and wash up in a separate room with the strict etiquette of Romani tradition observed. Helping each of us, she said, "I know what it's like to be

on the road.” Grandma and Oksana washed the family clothes by hand well into the night.

The next morning, on Sunday, Grandma bought small carp and fried them for everyone. She cooked borshch with large pieces of meat and beautiful southern tomatoes, light red and flat. She also made turnovers with cottage cheese for all the women-relatives and children. Women and small children came back from the seashore and gathered in the courtyard. At dusk, Grandma received a phone call on the cordless phone in the kitchen. One of the Romani leaders was calling from Odessa, “by Gypsy mail,” to notify her of an earthquake warning and the necessary procedures in case it happened that night. Grandma sent Oksana to inform the community and ordered everyone to stay up and *sidet’ na atase*, which in specialized jargon meant “to be on the look-out.”

In the evening, we lounged like sultans in the enormous pillow thrones on two couches in the living room with oriental rugs and watched TV. With a remote control, Grandma found the Mexican soap opera she and her granddaughters loved watching. They quickly briefed Aleksei and me on the coming episode. After the show, Grandma switched the VCR wires and showed us a video of a wedding, followed by the video of the *Amala 2000* festival. When I showed the tape recorded that summer across the border in Braila, Romania, Grandma identified the Romani musicians featured in it as Ursaria. The last movie we watched was Laura’s favorite Indian film dubbed into Russian as *Narodnyi Sud* or *Public Court* with her favorite actor, Jimmy. Oksana and Laura seemed to know every song and dance from the movie by heart. Soon it was time to go sit on the *atas*. The girls let the fierce Rottweiler, Eve, out of her cage to run loose in the courtyard. Knowing I was a stranger, Eve would not let me out the door. Dragging the hoarsely barking dog away, the girls talked to her in Romani, “Eve, sit! *Mudarav-te* [or I kill you]. Don’t touch the *rakli* [the young non-Romani woman]!”

We sat on a wooden bench out in the open behind the house. The menacing stillness of the night was filled with dogs barking and howling, and livestock could be heard mooing all around; the animals must have sensed the people’s anxiety. The Danubian mosquitoes were feasting on us. “Bad *tsintsaria*,” exclaimed Laura, “may Siberia take you!” [She used the word *Sibir*’ in analogy with Devil, imparting it masculine gender—

Chtob vas Sibir' zabral! I have heard another invariant from her: *Sibiri na vas netu!*] This instance of intergenerational transmission made me smile.

Above us was a dark, starry sky, many of which were falling stars. Grandma told the girls in Romani those stars were the dying people. “These are *mule*. People are dying,” she repeated in Russian. She recounted a story about a relative who passed away shortly before. After a long pause, she said slowly as if telling a legend, “People say, that a huge fish lives down on the bottom of the sea, the big fish. When that fish begins to move, earthquake happens.”

Having waited well into the morning and not feeling an earthquake, we went to bed. In a couple of hours Grandma was already up cooking goose for the road. She kept talking about it, calling it endearingly *goosochka*, “Everyone has seen her—she is so good-looking, so meaty!” [*Takaya horoshen 'kaya, zhirnen 'kaya!*]⁹⁵ She served it with potatoes and cottage cheese turnovers. Grandma Lyuba knew what it was like to be on the road.

My memories of this and other stays in Tatarbunary, including a later one with my son, Anton, whom Grandma Lyuba affectionately called Antoshka, have remained aglow in my memory as vivid images—bunches of deep purple grapes and fragrant yellow quince fruits. In phone conversations, Grandma used to prefigure my next visit with kind words, “When you come over, I will give you some grapes and *gutuli*. I will make [quince] marmalade to give you. Say ‘hello’ to your mom. And how is Antoshka?” There is a small jar of quince jam in our Austin kitchen, a sweet amber flame of memory about the tough and gentle aura of Babushka Lyuba.

*Duduya's Media Tapestry: Growing up in Tatarbunary*⁹⁶

Thus, Romani homeplace is very rich in oral tradition (Hancock, 2002). Through Grandma Lyuba's maxims and stories, wisdom is codified, and the Romani language and

⁹⁵ These conversations about the goose reminded me of the traditional songs and conversations dedicated to the goose during its preparation in traditional Romani celebrations of St. Basil Day, Vasilica, in the Balkans (Marushiakova and Popov, 1997; Zlatanovic, 2003).

⁹⁶ Duduya, a 16-year-old, helped me write this story in May 2003. Over the phone, she served as a mediator-spokesperson for 12-year-old Oksana, 11-year-old Laura, and 16-year-old Rosalina. Duduya gave her own descriptions on the topics listed as headlines below, asked questions of the girls in Romani, collected responses from them, and translated them back to me in Russian. I wrote down the responses in shorthand and connected them in a written text.

rules of social behavior are passed to the younger generation. Feelings of self-empowerment and transcendence emanate from her oral histories. Each family communication event endows the participants with the sentiments of compassion and respect, awareness of discrimination and group solidarity, and the feeling of being able to overcome the obstacles of daily life. Such intergenerational communication within the family may strengthen the family members, validate their dignity and renew their cultural identity. The tapestry that this section will weave is drawn from the stories of Grandma Lyuba's 16-year-old granddaughter, Duduya, and three other granddaughters, sharing with us memories of their childhood and their mediated lives. I will devote this section, then, to surveying the extensive spectrum of media of socialization in this Romani family. Whereas the previous section allowed us to sample Grandma Lyuba's lore observed and retold by me—though a welcomed guest, yet still a stranger—in this section, the examples are drawn from the grandchildren's stories and are presented in the words of Duduya. Such an approach was chosen precisely to illustrate the influence of Grandma Lyuba's oral tradition on the granddaughters and its integration within communication and media of socialization in the family. In organizing what follows, I have given the word to Duduya and categorized examples mostly by format and/or technology, although some of them represent hybrid format media and socialization activities. Thus, shedding the restrictive implication of the term media (Downing, 2002), we will proceed to review, as media of socialization in a Romani family, language, games, movies, print media, grandmother's stories, clothes, music, dance, favorite foods, favorite places, and dreams, with the help of 16-year-old Duduya.

Roma have been living in Tatarbunary for over 40 years. First, our 15 families lived in another small town, the life there was bad, and the leader decided they should move. First, they bought five or six big houses and moved into them, until they built their own. In Moldova we attended a Russian school. I have completed 7 years, Rosalina 8, Inga 6, Arthur 11, Rustam graduated. The boys have completed more years of school than the girls. Now we help our parents at the market *na sed'mom* and on the trips to purchase goods. But when the work is finished and we have a couple of free days some of us are watching movies, others are dancing, still others are drawing, and we are communicating a lot. Laura likes to play cards, Rosalina, Oksana, and I like to watch Indian movies.

Language.

In our family we speak Romani. We don't speak Romani around the Gypsies who do not speak Romani; around them we speak only Russian or Ukrainian.

Games.

Our childhood was very joyous. Our childhood has passed in Tatarbunary. Here there were many-many children at the time, ages 6 to 10. We played various games together. The boys usually played in war [*v voinushku*], and the girls played with dolls. In the morning, as soon as we were finished with our breakfast we were already out in the street, playing and catching frogs. We played the games, such as "Colors," when the players take turns guessing the color pre-selected by the Wolf. Whoever guesses it right, becomes the Wolf and with closed eyes gives various orders to those who did not get it right, such as to fetch a bucket of water, or to pick flowers. Some of those are pretend, humorous orders, which the players have to act out, such as to break one's nose or to break one's leg. Another game we played was called "Sorcerer." The Sorcerer is chasing other players, and whomever he catches remains in his power, chasing and catching the rest of the kids, until the last one. Also, we played hide-and-seek and its variations. The boys and girls played these games together. The age of the girls who played ranged from 7 to 12. Usually there were more boys in a group than girls, and they were older—11 and 12. The group leaders [*glavari*] were those who could understand various games well and who could run fast. Samir, Rustam, Tolya, Artur were usually the leaders, and Oksana among the girls. At night we got together in the street, the boys made a bonfire right in the street and we baked potatoes in it. From the age of eight to nine we liked electronic games such as *Dendi* and *Tetris*. Back then our parents brought them from Moscow.

Movies.

Since childhood, all of us have loved Indian movies. Our favorite movies are as follows: Oksana likes *Innocent Lie* [*Nevinnaya Lozh'*], Laura—*Pleasant Memories* [*Priyatnye Vospominaniya*], Duduya—*Bitter Honeymoon* [*Gor'kij Medovyj Mesyats*], and Rosalina—*No One Will Break Us Apart* [*Nas nikto ne razluchit*].

[I asked, "How do you ever agree on which movie to watch?" Duduya laughed.]

The reason we like different movies is because we like different actors and plots. We understand many of the words in the movies. We like Indian movies because they are very similar to how we live. We order the videotapes from *Korporatsija Arena*, or buy them at *sed'moj* market, or in downtown Odessa. Russian and Soviet movies are not very popular with Romani audiences, except for the oldies, such as *Love and Pigeons* [*Lyubov' I Golubi*], *A Wedding in*

Malinovka [*Svad'ba v Malinovke*] and other comedies.⁹⁷ At the same time, American movies—most of them dubbed into Russian—are watched by many. Our favorite American movie stars are Van Dame, Sylvester Stallone, Julia Roberts, Jim Carrey—he is the funniest—and Tom Cruise.

Print media.

We seldom read magazines, and if we do, it is mostly about Hollywood stars such as Julia Roberts and Claudia Schieffer. Rosalina and I had a favorite book of Gypsy fairy tales, *Rossijskije*,⁹⁸ which we always read together. We would get in bed with the book and start reading. She reads one page, and I read the next.

Grandmother's stories.

A few years ago, when our parents and the older boys were gone, we, including our older sisters, about six or seven of us all together, stayed home with Grandma, so we were all girls together at home.

At night, when we finished all the work, we sat down with Grandma and listened to her stories. Most of her stories were about her life. Grandmother comes from Moldova, from Kagul, and that is where her mother and father were from. Their nationality was Moldavian Roma, the smiths.⁹⁹ All the men were smiths, and the women were traders [*torgovali*]. Grandmother was the oldest of the children. She had four sisters and three brothers (one of the brothers passed away, and only two are still alive). Many of the stories were about her walking around with her brothers, hardly ever with her sisters. Most of the time she did men's work: cutting wood, taking something down or apart with men, and building chicken coops.

One of the stories was about how, when she was young, her grandfather and her father killed a flying dragon [*letuchego zmeya*]. My mother and other relatives say that all the Gypsies saw that flying dragon, he was not large. After this, grandfather and father became very ill, and grandmother said it happened because

⁹⁷ According to Duduya, such Soviet movies as *The Irony of Fate* [*Ironija sud'by ili s legkim parom*], *Moscow Does Not believe in Tears* [*Moskva slezam ne verity*], and various Ryazanov's movies popular with the post-Soviet audiences, are not watched by Romani audiences.

⁹⁸ *Rossijskije*, as opposed to *Russkije*, implies Post-Soviet independent Russia and the multiethnic population of Russia. The adjective *Ukrainskii* does not have such dual form.

⁹⁹ This family called themselves *Kishinevtsy* Roma. Demeter and colleagues (2000) described this group as formed relatively recently, in the mid-1800s, explaining their origin by Bessarabia's becoming "too crowded for the Gypsies living there," thus their migration to Ukraine and Russia (p. 103). It is since the moment they extended their aerial of migration to those territories that the group began calling themselves *Kishinevtsy*, "thereby preserving the historic memory of their roots" (Ibid.). Moldavian ancestors of *Kishinevtsy* were craftsmen (e.g., blacksmiths, shoemakers, basket-weavers, etc). Once in the Russian empire though, those crafts were abandoned. According to Demeter et al., *Kishinevtsy* differed from the other Balkan groups in that it was mostly men who earned a living (pp. 103–104). Grandma Lyuba's experience proves to be an exception to this. After the 1956 sedenterization act, *Kishinevtsy* switched to commerce, in which they engage to date. In the past the women sometimes engaged in fortune-telling, but now they primarily sell (p. 104).

they had killed him [the dragon], it is a sin to kill. Grandfather and father could not walk. It was the type of disease modern medicine could not treat.¹⁰⁰ To be cured, they had to jump in water—into a well. Grandfather jumped into a well, and he became better.

At night, Grandma often told us fairy tales. I remember one of them very well. Rosalina and I must have been about 5 or 6 years old, and our brother was with us. It was a tale about the boy who drank bird's milk.

Grandma's other stories were about their life when they traveled, and they traveled to so many places, such as Kagul, Romania, and Moscow. They lived in many places, for example, in Russia. My mother was born in Vorkuta, where Grandma's brother and husband had been exiled. Grandma could not read and remembered the events in her own way. I would ask her, "When was my mother born?" And she would say, "When Tereshkova flew into space."¹⁰¹ And Rosalina would ask her, "When was my mother born?" "Yours—when they already started mowing."¹⁰²

Clothes.

We dress with fashion. Today the girls wear high-heeled boots and tight skirts below the knee. Only the small girls wear jeans. When we go to a wedding, we wear a cocktail dress or a beautiful suit. Traditional wide skirts we wear only to dance practice and performance. My aunt makes traditional Gypsy skirts and blouses, but now she cannot see very well, so she does not do it anymore. My mother and aunt went to Moscow, to a nine-story store of Indian goods, and brought us Indian shawls. The national costumes are needed for our national pride. But nowadays people seldom wear them. The boys do not wear traditional clothes, not even the shirt. They wear sweaters and sweatshirts. Everyone has cell phones, the boys and the girls. Young people use the Internet. Young people get together in a bar or disco club and talk to find out how everyone is doing.

Music.

Everyone likes different music. Right now *menoli* is popular, Romanian music, such as Adrian.¹⁰³ Some people like Turkish music, others American. Some like rap. Some like Russian music. Among the Romani groups, *Cabriolet* from Rostov-on-Don is popular among those 30 and older; they listen to it in the car.

¹⁰⁰ *Meditinoj ne lechat*

¹⁰¹ Kogda Tereshkova uletela v kosmos

¹⁰² Tvoya—kogda uzhe kosili

¹⁰³ The previous year *menoli* music (Turkish-inspired music) was very popular in Romania. Two Romani women and I went to a concert of popular Romanian music near Constanta. Adrian received a long, standing ovation. My Romani friends told me Adrian was Romani, which made them very proud. They also named a couple of other popular singers of Romani origin. However, none of the pop stars sang in Romani, "because the audience would not understand them," explained my friends. It took about a year for *menoli* to become popular in the Odessa region.

The young people seldom listen to it. Laura likes the new Indian rap group called *Panjabi*. Rosalina and I like sound treks and video clip collections.

Dance.

When we go to dance practice or performances we put on wide flower-patterned skirts. We have been learning to dance since early childhood. Aunt Mandolina was a good dancer, but we have learned mostly by ourselves from the videotapes of weddings and baptizing. We learn by watching them. At home, we put on traditional skirts, watch the videotapes, and learn. At our celebrations the entire families are invited to demonstrate a dance. But with Tatar Gypsies and *Proshovato*—white Gypsies—only one girl has to dance, to demonstrate. The best dancers are the Tatar Gypsies. We watch the dances of the Tatar Gypsies, *Proshovato*, *Lovare*, *Ursare*, and *Serbiane*. *Serbiane* Gypsies dance in a different way, by tap-dancing.

Favorite food.

Laura's favorite dish is fried potatoes with pork, Oksana's is mashed potatoes with pork chops, and Rosalina and I like *shtriuli* and meat salad. *Striuli* is meat and potatoes stewed over *vertuta* with cheese. *Vertuta* is like *placinda*, which is *brynza* (sheep's milk cheese) spread on dough, rolled, and cut into pieces. Pieces of *vertuta* cover the bottom of the pan, and potatoes and meat go on top. Meat salad is prepared like the *Olivje*,¹⁰⁴ but with meat instead of sausage. Everyone likes big fish, but not the small ones because of the bones. All of us like desserts and sweets. Laura's favorite dessert is homemade doughnuts with chocolate filling. Oksana likes chocolate with pigeon's milk. Rosalina's and my favorite is sponge cake with pie cherries, which is hard to make at home and only comes from the store.

Travel.

All of us like to travel in summer. In winter we help parents [at the market] and in summer we travel to other cities. We travel to the Crimea in our van to purchase goods. In the Crimea our favorite city is Sudak. We cannot swim, but we love the sea. That first time we got in the water it seemed we'd drown. They opened a new park there with a waterfall—just like in an Indian movie—very beautiful: the flowers, the dolphins. Entrance was 10 roubles [about \$2], and we went there. Sudak is a very welcoming [*privetlivyi*] city with an ancient fort—people used to live in it. It stands on the sea-shore—very big. You can walk around and take pictures. Many Gypsies live there, the Tatar Gypsies. The language of the Tatar

¹⁰⁴ Popular Russian salad, similar to the American potato salad, but with sausage, pickles, onions, and green peas.

Gypsies is the most difficult. It is very difficult to understand them, perhaps only 10 to 15 words can be understood in their language.

Dreams.

What we want to be? Oksana wants to be an actress of the Indian cinema [*aktrisoj indijskogo kino*], Laura—a model [*manekenshitsa*], Rosalina wants to be a traveler-explorer [*puteshestvennikom*; masculine gender] and travel to various countries.

[I asked what Duduya's dreams were.]

We, Rosalina and I, have the same dream. We always think the same and want the same things. We want to become travelers and travel. We are always together, except those days when Rosalina takes a break at the market and comes home, and I stay working, or when I take a break, and she is at the market.

Summary

Perhaps the primary lesson of the examples in this part has been the complex cultural identities produced in this Romani homeplace, a place of fusion between various cultures and creative adoption of various cultural elements from several Romani cultures, as well as Russian, Ukrainian, Moldavian, Romanian, Balkan, Turkish, Tatar, Mexican, American Hollywood, and Indian Bollywood, just to name a few. This creative adoption process remains rooted in the Romani tradition of purity, the everyday household routines, ceremonies and celebrations such as weddings, baptisms, Christmas, and others. The Romani grandmother plays the role of the custodian of Romani traditions, ethics, language, medicine, cuisine, and historical memory and she endows the grandchildren with these things. She is working to create a homeplace that affirms the family's Romani identity and everyone's love for one another as a necessary support of family's resilience in a non-Romani surrounding. Grandchildren learn degrees of pride, dignity, and critical consciousness from her. This visit of Romani homeplace has captured the complex mix of tradition and innovation in just one family where part of the new generation of Romani intellectuals is reared.

A series of issues have also surfaced—the rich experience with various multicultural media, in which the oral tradition is but one, the importance of dance in Romani community celebrations, and the pivotal role a woman plays in a Romani family. These will be further, and differently, illustrated in the next part.

Part Three. Two Narratives of Becoming a Homegrown Leader

Let us explore some issues of ethnogenesis of Romani intellectuals here a little further, once again with the aid of oral tradition. To bring the story full circle, I propose to review two autobiographic narratives of Romani educators, which I have selected among the number of life histories Romani intellectuals have shared with me. These two particular accounts were selected for the following reasons:

- Each of them instances an individual memory of a remarkable person, recounting the long way they have come to obtain education and become leaders in their communities; they recall those places, times, and people that gave them a sense of direction;
- Each of these individuals had to sacrifice their artistic talents to focus on the more momentous tasks of education and survival in Romani communities;
- Each of these autobiographies was told to me as a 2-hour or longer story with the title “How I have become an educator and how our association was created,” with the narrative topic and format chosen by these individuals independently of me and of each other; and finally,
- Despite these congruencies, these stories represent the collective experiences of various groups of Romani intellectuals in Ukraine: those raised in a traditional Romani leader’s family and those who grew up in an orphanage and boarding school; those who were part of the Soviet generation, born after 1950, and the late-Soviet generation, born after 1980; those who were Russophone and Ukrainophone; and those who were Bessarabian and Transcarpathian, among others.

In sum, the two instances were chosen precisely to illustrate the extraordinary tenacity and versatility of human beings under the most extreme circumstances. The focus on different genesis narratives, or the stories of becoming, is intended to teach about the various individual, family, and community strengths these Romani educators have mustered. We will meet the two individuals in a moment, but before we can do so, I must first set the scene for them.

With few exceptions, the Romani intellectuals I have come to know in Ukraine were first generation college or professional school graduates. Most of them had graduated from professional schools long before they were admitted to college, and even that happened with special provision. Their pathways in formal education, therefore, were not without thorns and many have practiced life-long self-education. Most of these individuals from my generation and those from older ones came from the families of Romani elite that rose to prominence during the periods of upward mobility that opened up in Soviet society, such as during collectivization and the Civil War, the Second World War, or the post-war sedentarization processes. Their formal education was grounded in the rich Romani cultural heritage of extended family. Though the reception of their commitment to higher education among relatives could range from doubt and apprehension to blessings and sacrifice, ultimately it was from their families that they drew the continuing support, solidarity, and strength needed to overcome the obstacles and persevere in their unprecedented educational endeavors. However, apart from these triumphs inspired by the individual, family, and community strengths, there were other life trajectories. Some of the Romani intellectuals I have met embarked on their educational journeys in orphanages and boarding schools, outside of a traditional Romani homeplace. They relied on the supporting structures other than Romani family in “making it” in education. Moreover, to be able to claim Romani heritage they studied Romani language and culture later in life. These different ways of becoming a Romani educator and leader are instanced in the two autobiographical narratives below. Romani autobiography as a literary genre does not exist in Ukraine. Filling in a very significant gap is only one reason for focusing on the autobiographic narratives and life histories of Romani intellectuals. The other is related to the uplift: the urgency of collecting and learning from life histories and autobiographies of important Romani leaders, keeping the memory alive as a way of knowing and learning from the past, as a “retrospection to gain a vision for the future” and a “catalyst for self-recovery” (hooks, 1990, p. 40). This urgency is vital: Three of the Romani educators I worked with have passed away in a little over one year. Roma of Ukraine have lost two prominent leaders, choreographers and artistic directors—Anatoliy Kondur of Izmail and Oleksandr Karafetov of Kharkiv—as well as the Romani poet Mixa Kozimirenko.

The two autobiographical narratives I will present here belong to Denis Varodi, 23, the chairman of the Destiny Society of young orphans in Transcarpathia¹⁰⁵ and the late Anatoliy Kondur (1951–2004) who created one of the first Romani associations in Ukraine and pioneered many other firsts in Odesa oblast'.¹⁰⁶ The transcripts of both narratives have been translated by me as closely to the originals as possible to approximate “the author’s own words” and presentation. Varodi recounted his life history to me in his supervisor’s office at a Headstart-like Romani daycare in Uzhgorod, where he worked as a music instructor. His command of literary Ukrainian and skill in oral tradition struck me as phenomenal. His entire narrative flowed smoothly and sounded like a well-written epic, but sadly, we only met two times. Surprisingly, during my stay in Ukraine, Varodi was not invited to any of the Romani meetings or workshops, including the *Roma and Mass Media* round table in Uzhgorod, where he lived, despite his striking literary talent. Conversely, Anatoliy Kondur played a very visible role among Roma of Ukraine and in Odesa oblast', and was one of the few candidates to the chairman position at the First Romani Congress of Ukraine. He told me his entire life history in the car, as he was giving my son and me a tour of his place of origin [*rodina*]*—*the town of Kilia on the Danube, where we visited his relatives and sites of special importance to him:

I wanted you to see this. Splendid countryside here! We come here to spend time outdoors. Guys, Anton! The spring and summer here—something else! The air is such here! Look, this is the small branch of the Danube, it is not even the main one! I will show you in Kilia—you will see how wide it is! [with nostalgia] It used to be navigable: the hydrofoil boats, people went on tou-u-u-urs! Splendid countryside!

Both intellectuals opened their life histories with a monolithic, free-flowing, uninterrupted narrative of “becoming,” supplemented with more eclectic and less coherently structured life histories and reflections. We will review the opening coherent pieces first. Both of them opened with a scene of arrival, of homecoming, with the individual entering the yard of his new home, where his childhood would pass, his schooling would begin, and where he would find the support to move on and further his education. However, each arrival scene opened up to a different feeling: one of fear and

¹⁰⁵ Interview in Ukrainian. Transcript 06.06.2002. Uzhgorod.

¹⁰⁶ The Kondur extended family is the most prominent in various Romani organizations and projects in Ukraine. Anatoliy and Julia Kondur and five of their six children have managed and represented several important national and international projects. Five of their children have higher education.

one of safety—the fear of being pulled away from a familiar mentor and the safety of resting on father’s lap. One homeplace was a space of care and nurturance, another—that of prejudice and stigma. In one homeplace the family members affirmed one another, learned to love and respect themselves, and nurtured each other’s spirits. Another “homeplace” inflicted the wounds of racist domination. Let us see for ourselves. Let us hear Denis Varodi’s narrative of becoming:

In a picturesque corner of the Carpathian Mountains, in the valley between two rivers, the Uzh and the Turya, rests a town of Perechin. There, in the town of Perechin, is located a boarding school for orphans and children whose parental rights had been revoked. Every autumn, on the first day of the new academic year, two buses from the Lyshenadiiv and Vinogrady orphanages pull into the school courtyard. Out come small kids with tan-hued faces, black hair, black-brown eyes, all of which suggests that these are Roma-children. They press close to their former mentors and look with timid little eyes at the school walls and huddle, talking to their mentors whom since their early days they got used to calling “mom.”

These are the children who make up the student population of the boarding school. This is where they begin to be in charge of themselves and search for their identity, in a few years: where they are from and who they are. Such was my fate, as well.

To this day I remember how I longed to find my mother, how I longed for someone to caress me, stroke me, and for the first time call me “son.” Years went by. I began to wonder—who am I and where am I from? Where are my parents? Who are my ancestors? And everything was telling me that I was a Rom.

A nice woman appeared on the school’s threshold. It was Zhanna Oleksandrivna Sukholid. A Pedagogue with a capital “P.” A teacher by calling, she gave me warmth and caresses, and noticed me among the other children. She was the first person whom I called “mama.” It was she who saw my talent, saw how beautifully I could perform on stage, and that I could play various songs on the *bayan*. And it was she who insisted, “Denis, go to the school of culture. Apply to the artistic director department.” Somehow I also wanted to explore what it was like to be a carpenter, but she decided my destiny, saying firmly, “No, to the artistic director’s!” Oh!

Upon graduation from school, I enroll in the artistic director department at the school of culture. It was hard for me to adapt there, because when the children come out of schools not knowing how to talk beautifully, how to behave in society beautifully, they have a hard time adapting to the environment. Freshman year begins. Freshman year is an extremely difficult year. Because you meet your new peers, new instructors, and everything starts anew. The years at the boarding school come to memory.... Year by year, and 10 years are gone. And I become a fourth-year student, defending my diploma project, and here I am an artistic director, an actor, and an extra-curricular teacher. Yet the heart does not cease to ache. You begin to worry. You begin to think of your former classmates... You

begin to think: Lord, how to help those people? Lord, help to do something, at least something small! You see them at a train station hungry, ragged, and sick. And you cannot help them with anything. You are just terrified at the words, “It’s better in prison than out in the free world.” After these words the Transcarpathian *Destiny* youth organization of orphans was created, and the young orphans elected me as the organization’s chairman.

The “becoming” narrative of 52-year-old Anatoliy Kondur is much longer and therefore will be presented under the following six headings: (a) Arrival, (b) School Enrollment, (c) My First Teacher, (d) First Jobs and Desire to Study, (e) Work for the Office of Public Prosecutor, and (f) How our Association was Created. From the outset, Kondur’s narrative named the person missing in Varodi’s autobiography—father—and emanated the feeling of security, confidence, and power, rooted in the father figure’s role. With joy and pleasure, Kondur described the scenes of family life, which little Denis could only dream about.

Arrival

My father traveled [*kocheval*] right here in Bessarabia. He was the leader [*ataman*] of this region. I was born in tabor [in 1951]. So I was still a small child [in 1956]. I just remember dad riding on horses to this house of ours. I remember I was sitting on his lap and holding the reins. The horses were strong, and it was already autumn. The sky was gray and the rain was falling. And he drove to this house. It is since then that we have settled.

Father got married at 27. He had three wives. He married the first wife and a son was born. Then something went wrong between them. This was in one tabor. Then he took a second wife from another tabor. They too lived together for a year and another son was born. Then he married my mother and I was born, the oldest. And when the General Secretary Nikita Sergeyeovich Khrushchev issued the law that Roma had to stop traveling and adopt a settled way of life, he arrived in Kilia with my mother. Those other two wives did not know that he was married and came as it were to join their husband. When they arrived—he loved children very much—he said, “You will live all together!” He built a big house, three entrances, a long house. And so this is how we lived. One, forgive me, gave birth in September, the second—in October, the third in November—thirty children like this! [laughed]

In general, polygamy was illegal, neither was it practiced among Roma. But he was the ataman of this entire land [*krai*] and a very handsome man. One day they summoned him to the regional party committee [*raikom*] and said, “Fyodor Ivanovich, you have three wives. How can it be?” He says, “I am not officially registered with them. And I love my children. Why would I brood poverty?” [laughed] All three women were very beautiful. All of us got along very well. Even though we were more like cousins, we had one father! The wives,

certainly, were sometimes fighting with each other. They were young and beautiful. But later on they got used to it.

My mother was born in 1920. And it so happened that my mother was the only daughter, and she had one brother. It was very unusual for a Gypsy family, where usually there are from 4 to 10 children. She buried her mother, alone, during the famine after the Second World War, and it was tough.¹⁰⁷ It's interesting how dad married her [smiles] when he saw her. He came to a wedding to one tabor. My mom was so beau-u-u-tiful, very short, and she was dancing! BAREFOOT she jumped out there! [smiled] And it was already cold! And he saw her—and dad was such a ha-a-a-andsome fellow, ataman—and he grabbed her and rode away with her! [laughed]

Gradually, father began buying houses for his sons. For example, when the first wife's son became 15, 16, or 17, then for the second one, and so on. And my mother and I—my mother was the youngest—stayed with him in that house, in the big one. My mother died at a very young age, when she was 49.

Our father was ATAMAN. A very serious person. Wonderful blacksmith! When he arrived here and settled, he worked in three smith shops of the town, because there were few blacksmiths in town and he was a Gypsy. *Ex-cel-lent blacksmith* he was! And he made us work too. I am very grateful to my father for teaching me to work hard. He woke us up at 4 a.m. to go to the shop. My brothers and I worked together. [laughed with pleasure]

School Enrollment

In 1959, the time came for us to go to school. The teacher, Ludmila Stepanovna Ivanova is still alive. God give her health to live to 100! Wonderful woman! She was walking around town signing up the kids for school. And back then we still did not have either electricity or running water—they were digging the ground for the pipes and there was such an eno-o-o-ormous trench. And someone yelled to me, “Kotya! They are signing up for school!” And that year I had already begun taking newspapers, circling the letters, looking at them and thinking, “How could I learn to read and write?” Back then they made organizations and individuals subscribe to many newspapers. Father worked as a blacksmith at a cooperative and brought home newspapers from there—and *no one could read!* Imagine that! It was my dream! I don't know why. Maybe *God* was somehow prompting—leading through life? *When no one could read or write—can you imagine how awful it was!*

When I heard them calling me, I ran, tripped over and fell into that ditch! My scratched nose was bleeding. But I quickly sprung up, wiped myself and came up to that teacher, “Write me to study!” I could not even say it right. We still could not speak Russian well, because we had been traveling, and it was still the very beginning of change. “And what is your name?” Well, I told her something or other—what my name was. “And yours?” When she said that it was Ludmila

¹⁰⁷ This was during the same famine in Moldavia Grandma Lyuba remembered when their family had to go and seek food in Transcarpathia.

Stepanovna, I said, “Vidmila Stepanovna.” I could not even say such things—understand? It was *hard* for me! This is how I went to the first grade.

My First Teacher

That person, that teacher was a wonderful woman! She was young then, about 25. That would make her 82 now. She used to take me to her *home* and *feed* me, give me food. To this day, I have remembered her *soups*, *bullions* [he laughed], *rassolniks*¹⁰⁸ because we *did not have* such food in our cuisine! We were Gypsies—people who had just traveled—we had our own specific cuisine, and here you are suddenly handed a spoon! And then maybe even a napkin! The teacher was—oh!—it was splendid, of course! This is how I’ve learned. I wanted to *get education* [*zakhotel vyuchit’sya*]! When it was *hard for Roma*, **when I saw all the injustice, I told myself that I would always help Roma and defend them.**

First Jobs and Desire to Study

I finished eight grades. I began to play at weddings. I had self-taught myself music. I brought money home. Mother was sick—breast cancer. They performed a mastectomy. And I began to earn money. I was 15 at the time and gave my father 600 or 800 roubles. Imagine that! I saved up money and said, “Go get treatment for my mom.” There. Father had the money, but still—was not able to—1967, in 1970 she got sick and died. Imagine the oncology treatment back then, even more so in Kilia.

But when mom was still alive and I finished eight grades, I said, “Mom, I want to go on to study.” I wanted to go to study to become a geologist. Perhaps because of my nature—I am Rrom, in my veins the *traveler’s blood* runs [He laughed], Romani traveler’s blood. I say, “Mom, I will go.” “Well, go then.” It was after the eighth grade. It would have been hard to go and study in the 9th and 10th grades because mom was sick and I wanted to get educated faster and begin to make money. And at that time, I attended our palace of culture, the amateur dance group—Yulia¹⁰⁹ and I. When I came to get a letter of recommendation from the director, Bella Grigorievna, she says, “Tolya, I will give you the letter of recommendation, but go apply to *kultprosvetuchilishche*.¹¹⁰” I ask, “What is it? Is it where—I’ll be an *actor*?” [laughed] For me it was s-s-so—! She says, “No, you will be a performing arts *director*. You dance and sing well, go ahead and apply!” So they gave me the letter, I came to the guys and say, “Guys, I won’t apply to be a geologist, I will go to the school of culture.”

Mom says, “Come on—what are you gonna do with it? Will you be walking down the streets, dancing? Like some kind of clown?” Dad would not even listen. He *did not want me to go to study at all*, “You will finish school and

¹⁰⁸ Meat soup with pickles. Kondur added suffixes of endearment to the names of soups: *soupchiki*, *bullionchiki*, *rassol’niki*.

¹⁰⁹ Yulia Kondur, Anatoliy Kondur’s wife.

¹¹⁰ Abbr., cultural-educational school; prepared culture workers, directors of amateur performing arts groups for the palaces of culture across the country.

become a driver. You are not a drunk, you are a good guy. You will be *making money*.” It was fashionable back then.

Mother gave me 10 roubles—I remember it well. The bus ticket to Odessa cost 3 roubles. And so at midnight I ran away from home to go study! She *gave me her blessing*.

In Odessa I stayed with some *good people*. They let me stay in their apartment because their relatives lived in Kilia and were our neighbors there. So I just moved in and did not have to pay for anything—no rent. I passed all the entrance exams with excellent and good grades. This is how I enrolled in *kultprosvet*. Certainly I am very *grateful to mama* [*mamochke*], God bless her memory [*tsarstvo yei nebesnoe*]! Later father was *proud*. Mom would say, “See!”

I replaced him as *ataman*. And in general I was the *eldest*—to take upon myself all the Romani issues and problems. I graduated from culture school and came back to Kilia. First I taught choreography. Then in 1973 I served in the army and came back as a cultural director. Before the army, in 1972 I wrote a play about the Gypsy life in our Bessarabia, and it was staged in Kilia. I lacked the stage director’s expertise so I enrolled in Kiev Institute of Culture, by correspondence, because I was married.

When I came to apply [to the school of culture] in Odessa, they said, “Oh my God, we don’t have a Gypsy! You are a Gypsy and have 8 years of education? You have education?” Yes, I got in! A squirt this short, I came to apply, imagine that! When I came to apply in Kiev, they say, “We do not have a Gypsy.” I don’t know, for some reason I was lucky, my friends, that is non-Gypsies, were normal, wonderful people, clean: such teacher I had and the director of the palace of culture, a Jewish woman, I worked with her. She knew each of my children and came to visit us often. She absolutely *adored* Yulia. So I’m saying, there are such people. In cities, in big cities, where there are educated people who know about the Gypsies and love them—but in other places... It certainly depends on the people and the officials.

Work for the Office of Public Prosecutor

When I studied at the institute, I worked for the Office of Public Prosecutor of Ukraine. The investigation was in progress of a very big case on Moldavian Gypsies, who were vagrant for 12 years.¹¹¹ There were even *homicide* and *burglary* there and so on, and when they began looking for a literate Gypsy with at least secondary education, who would not be related to them—and I was a student at the Kiev institute—somehow they perhaps called there. Then suddenly they called our prosecutor [in Kilia], “Does so-and-so live there?” And they summoned me to the prosecutor’s office here in Kilia, “Anatoliy Fedorovich, how would you look at this: Are you a student?” “Yes,” I say, “a sophomore. Pretty soon I will have to go there to take the final exams.” “We will help you. We need you to work for a month, to interpret.” And I spoke Moldavian and Gypsy. And according to the Constitution—human rights—they are from Moldavia—even

¹¹¹ That is, who had not followed the 1956 act and continued to be itinerant.

though they understood everything, still they had the right. “If you need it,” they were told, “you will have an interpreter.” And so I took the job—I was lucky—it was a *v-e-e-ery* big job. Instead of one month I ended up coming to Kiev for a year and a half [laughed]. The investigation lasted for a *year and a half*. The hotel was free, provided by the Ukrainian Office of Public Prosecutor. It was in Reznitskaya Street. I used to take my brother Yura with me—he came back from the army—and my wife, Yulia. And it was a very good *school of life*—it was of *great help*—I have learned a lot about everything. Certainly, there was even *death by a firing squad* there. Ye-e-es. But such is life.

How our Association was Created

In 1973 I joined the Army. I served in Odessa, directing amateur performing arts, an artistic director. I was lucky. When I came back, they immediately hired me as an artistic director of the city and region. I worked there [in Kilia] for 15 years and transferred to Izmail, as an artistic director. Here I had my own group—[six] children were born, grew up, and I stayed here and worked. Then in 1987—then in 1992, when the Soviet Union collapsed, I had to be involved in Romani issues. All the Gypsies were coming to me, “You are educated, go there and there, help, write...” And willy-nilly when we were allowed to create these associations, it became legal, we created this association of our own. And here again [my wife] Yulia was the initiator. She is more aggressive. This is how I went to study and how our association was created.

Further Comparisons

Ultimately, Varodi’s and Kondur’s opening narratives lead their authors to a more elaborate statement of their mission and goal. For Denis Varodi, the mission was to represent the young orphans, Romani and non-Romani, as their leader and give guidance to the young Roma, especially after they leave boarding schools and have to fend for themselves. He explained that orphans need adults meaningfully involved in their lives. Unlike the family, which nurtures the child’s cultural identity, the orphanage broods prejudice and stigma. Varodi wanted to alleviate the pain of stigma by getting more people involved with and participating in the lives of orphans, Romani and non-Romani.

Today, there are 15 boarding schools in Transcarpathia. Year after year, 15 to 20 Roma graduate from them. Leaving these boarding schools; they know neither Romani language, nor culture, they are ashamed of being Roma, and they speak Ukrainian language only. Say, they see their Roma walking at the market, or walking in the street—sooner or later they always run into them—but they are ashamed, they say, “My God! Go away! You are so filthy, Gypsies!” And he is a Gypsy himself, yet says, “Go away, you Gypsies! I am not a Gypsy. I am a

Hungarian, a German.” It is with these children that we need to work, to them give our efforts, so that they did not feel like children-orphans, so that they felt as already [emphatically] RROMA, ordinary Roma.

Sometimes I ask my co-workers, “Girls, take at least one home, one of the small kids-Roma, small Roma. Take them home, so that they felt less *inhibited*, so that they did not feel as the BORDING school, but as the HOMEPLACE kids! They have been growing up in that *inhibiting* orphanage and won’t know anything of what it’s like—moreover, they are ashamed. And I would like them to spend time in Romani homes, so that they could see how Roma live, how Roma cook food, how Roma go to bed at night, how Roma get up in the morning and how at dinner they dance and how they gather around the fire at night.”

The way I have come to understand it, in this world [sighs] it makes no difference to a child-orphan whether she is a Rom, or whether she is a Ukrainian, or whether he is a Jew, or whether she is a Hungarian, Romanian, Moldavian, Tatar, it is hard for her to make her way in the world if other people do not help.

Anatoliy Kondur, in turn, formulated the goal of his association, as well as of the central bodies of Roma of Ukraine located in Kyiv, as “Not to rule but to help.” The goal of his family was philanthropic work among Roma:

I have always had to go and *defend* Roma. And so I have a *goal*. I do not know the future—how much longer I’ve got to live—but I want to engage in—precisely this: we, with my spouse, *our family, our organization—in marketing in this direction*, this is what I consider it, or *philanthropy*. We want to *help* people. We *feed* these children. At times *at our own expense*. If there is funding, we pay [for the meal kitchen], if it’s gone, we would not be explaining that we do not have money and we can’t pay—therefore we pay our own money.

He explained his mission as a dream of his for the future—the betterment of Roma’s condition and alleviation of prejudice among the non-Roma as follows:

I would like that the time came when Gypsies lived a normal life, so that these [traditional] communities were like—I don’t know, perhaps like a *décor*, like the preservation of traditions, as *a club of sorts*, without the problems. So that they could get together simply to talk in the Gypsy language, to communicate, but now when they get together—it is always to solve certain problems. Constantly for some reason the Gypsies have to go and ask something of someone. Constantly someone takes *a stand* like, “Sorry but—“—this kind of *position*: that always he has to be down *on his knees*, but why? You have traveled all around—*what talented people!* [with pride] Take any ordinary illiterate Gypsy—how many languages he speaks! And the literate Gypsies—how beautifully they communicate their thoughts! How well they can lead a dialogue with people! At times you meet a [non-Romani] office holder who does not even want to talk—the people *do not even have spirituality [dukhovnosti]*! I always repeat: *All Gypsies are very hospitable [khlebosol’nye]*, very amiable. Gypsies are never traitors. Yes, there are certain misdemeanors, but excuse me, there are outlaws

among people of any nationality. But a Gypsy has never been a *traitor*. If this person has faith and if people—there are intelligent people—the non-Gypsies, who understand and are friends with, and love and visit us, to them we are always open with our soul, as well as our home and our families.

This leads us to the supplementary, less monolithic, and more loosely structured part of each life history, the part developing and providing detail for the opening piece. In some ways, Varodi's and Kondur's accounts are complementary. Varodi's narrative illustrated the identity struggle in the stigmatized space of the boarding school. In turn, Kondur drew vignettes of Romani family traditions and rituals Varodi could not experience.

Let us bring into focus Denis Varodi's story, which chronicled the development of his identity struggle in boarding school, the awakening of his ethnic self-awareness in college years, and the desire to learn Romani history, language, and culture evidenced in his passion for ethnographic collecting. The years of dramatic experiences, personal searches, communication with old Roma in various Transcarpathian tabors, and Denis's literary talent have filled his imagination with stories that have aged and matured enough to be transformed into several volumes, as we shall see.

Denis's stories of his journey through the boarding school years invariably began with the gratitude he expressed to the person who was the first to notice his talent and strengths, his teacher, Zhanna Oleksandrivna Sukholid.

Because as a child I had a very ringing little voice, naturally, I loved music. I loved music because it gave me an advantage, an edge—though I could not play by the music sheet—but I began to hear: The teacher sometimes did not play as it should have been. I already felt that somewhere there he messed up one little note and he was looking at us, wondering, “Has Varodi noticed something? Have I misplaced a key?” Naturally, I loved music. I loved all the subjects. I loved Ukrainian Literature and Ukrainian Language. Literature I loved because if I read Taras Shevchenko or if I read Ivan Franko, they too wrote about Roma-Gypsies. Taras Shevchenko's poetry was translated by Kozimirenko into Romani: *Dumi mire, dumi mire, xasiuvav tumentsa*. Shevchenko described Roma, Gypsies. And, naturally, I recited those poems, many poems and all the time, because I had such—I can't say that it was such a trained voice, because as a youth I was not yet conscious of it. Now, having graduated from the School of Culture, I can already say [with dignity and pride], “I can recite a poem as it is recited on stage.” But back in my young years, I just recited the poems. I recited in class, among the children, my classmates. For some reason, I've always been a leader. Though the teachers were always alarmed by this: “Why is Varodi a leader? He is a Gypsy!

Yet he takes such great attention upon himself.” And I noticed that perhaps had I not been able to sing—although I sang Ukrainian songs—Had I not been able to recite poems so beautifully, perhaps, I would not have drawn such attention to myself. First and foremost, this big attention was created for me by the woman who was the first to notice me, when I was 7 years old. To this day, she cares about me. On the weekends, I go to Sarychyno, where her home is.

From the first days in the boarding school, Romani students experienced prejudice and discrimination. Denis’s efforts in learning were part of his daily resistance to bias and racism. Racism is very strong in Transcarpathia. It was the only part of Ukraine where I heard the non-Roma routinely and openly refer to Roma as “the blacks,” and in turn Roma called the non-Roma “the whites.” Such strong racism must be dating back to the anti-Gypsy policies of Austro-Hungarian Empire that extended here, as well as the patterns of population distribution in this mountainous region and the history of competition over scarce resources, with thousands of Roma living in segregated settlements in the dehumanized conditions. Thus Denis’s stamina to succeed was nurtured by the desire to prove most people wrong.

Over half the students in our class were Ukrainian kids, and about seven to nine were Gypsy kids. All of us tried to stay close. We stayed close because there were conflicts between the white kids and the Romani kids in class. I remember how the Ukrainian kids—white kids—sat in the front rows and we—in the back rows. And they even called us *the donkey desk*. That is, we were the asses. But all the same: you tried hard to prove that you were not an ass, but that you wanted to study, you [swallowing]... At times I don’t even know whether I learned that subject or whether I simply crammed it. So much I wanted to prove to them that I was not an ass. Sometimes it happened that by the end of one class I would have learned two to three lessons ahead. While the teacher explained, I would go on and go on reading, or crammed or just read and placed it into my head—how exactly I can’t remember now. Because by this very principle you wanted to prove.

His love of reading and the importance he placed on reading and knowledge was imparted to him by his favorite teacher, Zhanna Oleksandrivna.

I learned to read rather soon and enjoyed reading because it was imparted to me at an early age, at age seven. As early as in first grade, you are told, “Boy, watch it and study. Because you will finish school very soon. And you are to live long, and long, and long. As you sow, you shall mow. As you make your bed, you shall sleep.”

But one teacher could not reverse all the racist practices and the injustice of the boarding school. The Romani students received the inferiority message in the classroom even from the old books they had to use and the way the teacher handed them.

It hurt that the books we got were dingy. Well, all the time, it got in the way that we were Roma, that we were Gypsies. Naturally, the white kids came first—at the front desks, beautiful books, nice-looking notebooks with all kinds of pictures. And what about us? Well, Varodi, no matter whether you guys will learn to read or not—but there, have an ABC so that you wouldn't say later that I did not give you anything. And I wouldn't even recall whether it was an ABC that I was reading, or whether I was reading another kind of book, just to keep me quiet looking at those letters. This was the only way they gave it: Take it and be quiet.

These racist attitudes and practices conditioned the students' into a repressed behavior. However, Denis recounted his early resistance to discrimination and resilience, which gave rise to his leadership yearnings:

Naturally, in grade school I was quiet. Sat quietly. Was trying hard to copy something from the chalkboard, though it was hard to see from the back, because the chalkboard was small and shiny. If it was not wiped clean, it was impossible to see from the back desk what to write. I tried to look in my neighbor's notebook: What is he writing there, how is he holding that pen? Learning calligraphy, I was trying to follow the teacher's hand, tried hard to learn whatever I could so that they could not say that Varodi did not know. Since very [early] childhood, it was abscessing in my heart: "Denis, you must! Denis, you must prove it. No one is paying attention to you. You little tar boy¹¹² walk around, and no one is paying attention to you. And I wanted them to pay attention to me. Since very [early] childhood, leadership was germinating in me. No matter what, I had to do it right!

For those in Ukraine whom the word "racism" makes cringe and who uncomfortably discount it as an unnecessary concept importation from the United States, Denise's words might be once-and-for-all eye opening. He condemned¹¹³ the festering institutional racism of his boarding school as follows:

This is another thing that still nauseates me: that even SCHOOL. You would look: Under one roof they live, as brother and sister—white race and black race. And still some kind of conflict is going on between the black kids and the white kids! That conflict starts as soon as the first grade. As soon as a child walks out of the

¹¹² The analogy with the *The Uncle Remus Tales* here and later is interestingly coincidental, however not intended.

¹¹³ This condemnation of racism complicates Varodi's previous statement about the Romani and non-Romani orphans equally needing the attention of adults interested in their lives and highlights the urgency of the involvement with Romani students' lives.

bus that brought her from an orphanage to the boarding school, the older peers stand in the yard and point a finger: “Look, this one getting off is a *tsigan* [Gypsy], and this one a *gadzo* [“non-Rom,” a Romani label].¹¹⁴” This is when it is “deposited.”

It was in Denis’s dialogue with media—television programs and the Ukrainian children’s literature—that his search for identity began:

When I was reading a book or watching a TV show, I was trying to find myself in various shows and various literature. If you happened to watch a play on TV, *Othello* by Shakespeare, “Have you prayed tonight, Desdemona?”—When I first saw it, for some reason it seemed to me that an ordinary Gypsy is playing, not an African, not anyone else, not Othello. For some reason, it seemed to me that a Gypsy Yashko is playing. Or Gypsy Beylo, and [dreamily] he is in love with such beautiful woman! At first, I did not understand the workings of it, but nevertheless saw myself in various plays, in various works of fiction. When Shevchenko described various scenes about Katerina, it seemed to me I was there. I am looking for my mom, and I have found my mom. I was in such literature that was connected with destiny, the destiny of a person, or even with destiny of those animals. When [fast] that rabbit is crying even in the fairy tales, in the fairy tales he cries and says, “Uncle Bear, I have lost my mom. Find my mom for me.” I would go deep into that role of Rabbit, so that Bear could find his mom. And I began to think, “And who would find my mom for me?” I was looking for myself in various works of fiction, in various shows.

Denis recalled that he was in the eighth or ninth grade when he “felt himself Romani,” when he finally saw himself in the photographs. Through dance, traditional costume, and song his awareness of being Romani and of having a positive Romani identity began to develop:

At first I [with pathos, building up the image]: You are performing on stage, reciting poems and dancing. In a Ukrainian shirt! White shirt with various embroidery, everything, *kozak* trousers! To look, it would seem you dance as that Ukrainian. [Proudly] You speak! You sing! And they take pictures of you. I began to ask for a photograph [imploring intonation], “Give me that photograph. I will hide it away for myself...I want that photograph to be with me after I graduate.” And it is then that you begin to look at that photograph, bend closely over it, examining it—that stuff is not yours. [Emphatically] This stuff is not yours! You begin to look: My God! A strong contrast has started! You have a black face! You have big curly hair! Even then, lo, a moustache was beginning to grow. And you look: God all mighty! This stuff is not yours! You are not Denis! These clothes do not befit you! And when later I finally put on [proudly] a Romani costume and STOOD!—like this with a stretched arm, in the middle of the dance, and they took a shot of you on that pa, you look: It’s clear that yours is here, it befits you.

¹¹⁴ Using the non-Romani and Romani labels, Denis implied that the conflict is a two-way street.

No matter what condition they were—That worn out Gypsy shirt for the dance, but it makes you feel more yourself on stage. It DEPICTS you, that you are— Even when you dance, your hands go [showing], or sing some Romani song [Singing]: *Ge-ej, la-la-la-la-la-ly!* And INSTANTLY people get goose bumps! And when you sing in Ukrainian language on stage, something like [singing]: “Ukraine, my mother!” Nothing happens. Well, somewhere there they would applaud you [clapping], but you do not get the same feeling as when they applaud you when you dance [with pride] *Tsy-gan-sky!* Certainly it was then that I began wondering who I was, who my parents were, and then for the first time I heard that I was the son [slowly, proudly] of the freedom-loving great Romani people. Even back then was beginning to awaken such pride that I was a Rom. I am Rom. And also when I heard that I was the son of a GREAT freedom-loving people. Not fully comprehending the meaning of these words I already was becoming proud. Because the people were great and freedom loving.

Although others considered him Romani because of the way he looked, Denis could not speak Romani language and did not know any Romani songs. He remembered the episode that made him aware of the necessity to begin his search through Romani culture, to be able to claim his Romani heritage:

At the school of culture, in my group there were 11 girls, and I was [the] twelfth [boy]. The girls did not mind that I was Rom-Gypsy, they were drawn to me, and took me with them everywhere. We had dinner together, and we went to the disco together. They were not ashamed of me. And this is when they started telling me [impersonating], “Denis, come on, say something in Gypsy language! Well, sing a Gypsy song! Then we would begin to believe that you are a Gypsy.” I said, “No, girls, but I AM a Gypsy.” “No you are a mulatto, you are a Pakistani, and you are lying about being a Gypsy because you do not want to say that you are from a foreigner!” “No, I am a Gypsy.” [sighing] And when they made me this ultimatum: that [I] must sing a song to [them], I began to look for such material... I remember how I found the first song. The girls are standing with me, and Roma are walking by and yell to someone: “*Ara more, de-de, te-re-re-re!*” So I remembered those words and said one day: “By the way, girls, I already know how to sing.” “Come on!” And I [singing], “Ala-de, ala-de, more-da-da-da!” I did not know a thing, but I memorized some Romani words, put them to melody, and sang! I would have sung anything just to prove that I was a Gypsy. [laughing]

Denis began to travel to tabors looking for Romani folklore: songs, proverbs, tales, legends. He found such material and shared it with younger Romani students in the boarding school:

I even found Romani material on the orphans’ theme, where they poetize the orphan lot. Something like: *Why am I alone, there is no one in this world.* Such songs I began finding. And tales. I even give those to my younger Roms to read and always blockhead in their psyche that you are not a Ukrainian, you are a

Gypsy. You are a real Gypsy. And sometimes I even see that they are trying. Yes, they are ashamed of their Romani nation and culture, but all the same it is obvious that this guy walking over there is a Gypsy, Rom, because he has some mannerisms. There are Gypsy mannerisms.

Denis graduated from the school of culture, majoring in artistic directing. His first position was of an “organizer” in a boarding school in Bereznyj.

But I did not see myself just as an organizer. I saw myself as *vynahyshchyk*. To *vynahyshch* something means to search for something. First of all, it made the children curious and wondering. We started walking around villages: You look and [with pathos, pride] I’m walking as a person IN CHARGE, followed by many Gypsy kids. I tried to stick around them mostly. For some reason, I began pushing the Ukrainian ones away: If you are Ukrainian, see there is your white woman teacher over there, go to her. And with them, we began looking for material, which we could find. We found Gypsy bellows, and we began looking for the objects that Gypsies worked with, for example, the blacksmiths, to shoe a horse. Sometimes I invited the kids to go with me and asked that old Gypsy, “Please. Help me. I want the children to see how you shoe a horse.” For them, too, to begin to feel. For them to see that Romani culture is reviving itself, that it is not stagnant, that it was and it is culture. And then I saw that they are giving me the Gypsy bellows, and I do not know that it is a bellows, and they begin telling me that this is how it was hooked, this is how it was pulled, this is how it would keep up the fire, everything.

Through his work with Romani children-orphans, treating them as family, Denis gained knowledge of Romani culture and collected some cultural objects. As in a family, he learned from the old people:

I have learned from the old people of Transcarpathia in various tabors: Mukachevsky, Zarichivsky, Perechinsky, Vynogradivsky. I still have my handwritten notes. You see, *more valuable is not the material, which is in the book. More valuable is the material passed to you by the eldest sinewy Romani woman*. There. Because it is being forgotten. And here you have SATURATED LIVE material. It is *saturated*.

Once more, the free-flowing ease and depth of Varodi’s metaphors moved me. *Zhilova Romka*, or a sinewy Romani woman—as close as one could possibly render it in English—evokes the image of a sage woman, like Grandma Lyuba, with strings of prominent veins. Wisdom, stored in her mind and passed on to younger generations, is as one with the old blood in her veins. The expression “saturated live material” captures the phenomenological materiality of the cultural knowledge one receives from the old sages. Hardly a surprise, the time spent among Roma in tabors changed Varodi’s vision of them:

You have seen how they live. How they speak. How they treat one another. How they find themselves in society. How they speak with other people. How they teach their children. How they make their children study their language, so that they did not forget their native language, although they also need to know Ukrainian as well, and someone also requires Hungarian, and yet another one has a Slovak grandfather and requires that the child speaks Slovak as well. But nevertheless they should know Romani language. They do not forget their Romani language. This is when I have seen [distinctly]: Yes, no matter what, Roma in life are not WHAT (objects, mass), but WHO (individuals).

In his work with children-orphan at the same institution in Perechyn where he was raised, Denis sought to combine his passions for the theater and drama and other media with his passion for ethnographic collecting, thus shedding the restrictive implications of the terms *media*, *pedagogy*, and *communication* and blurring them in performance art:

I have found my interest through drama, through various performances. Through various *children's* concerts. I saw that I had those tales that I had collected from the people—proverbs, tales, and legends—I can [excitement in his voice] stage them with these small children! With these small children I can stage them! I've made a connection between stage directing and pedagogy. Had I majored in stage directing proper I would not have had access to children, because then I would only have access to the [pathos] THEATER, with prominent people. Yet I am more attracted to the children. Had I gone to work with the children [official, dry voice] “in pedagogy proper”—I am a little drawn [playfulness in the voice] to ORGANIZING. [Further voice modulations, as if talking to small children]. To organize a little performance. A little play. To organize such play which has connection to life. [Dreamily] A CON-TEM-PO-RA-RY play, there! I would have liked to show it to people. But had I worked “with children proper,” they would have said [impersonating a voice of authority], “Denis, you are working in pedagogy, so please do not stick your nose in stage directing.” Had I worked in the “theater proper,” in stage directing, they would have said: “Denis, you are working at the theater, so keep working. And please, do not interfere with the school.” You see? I have taken such wavy road so that I could easily run over to the theater and then easily run over to the children. To direct, manage, run, govern! I always say that life is a stage and people are actors on it. I must [playful voice] PLAY with people. The actor puts on a mask, and I do as well. To direct, manage, run, govern! Because I have young people here, whom I must *direct*, because there are 15 orphanages, including the school for handicapped children. This is why I say that people on stage—in life—are actors. I do not forget my orphan youth, that is, that I have children-orphan with whom I have bound my life.

Denis has used his passions for media, collecting and directing in a new venture, benefiting the young orphans. This is how I found out about some of his work: In

September 2004, a curious newspaper clip fell out of a letter from a friend in Kyiv. Cut out from the newspaper *Kievskii Telegraf*, it was titled “Not All Roma Tell Fortunes”:

The first tabor museum, Romani Manor, opened in the village of Zarechevo, Perechin *raion*, Transcarpathia. For now it is a small log home under a thatched roof and a smith shop. Some exhibits—a crib, sieve, and dress clothing—are 200 years old... The museum has been funded by the Carpathian Foundation within the Carpathian Euroregion, and its founders assure that the residents will now have a supplementary source of income thanks to this tourist attraction. A trail with two campsites for hikers will lead to the Romani Manor. Catering to the accompaniment of folklore music and fortune telling will be included. However there is a problem with the latter, since most of the tabor’s residents attend one of the Christian churches and consider fortune telling a great sin. The tabor in Zarechevo exists 115 years [i.e., since 1889] and now has about 100 residents¹¹⁵.

On February 25, 2005 Denis Varodi called me from his favorite teacher’s house and told me it was he who started the Romani museum in Zarechevo, where Zhanna Oleksandrivna lived. The teacher and student were happy to be working on this new creative project. Also, Denis married the daughter of the local *baro* leader and was living in tabor with his new large family.

With the hope of soon reading the first book authored by Denis Varodi, I will bring our encounter with him to an open-ended conclusion. In June 2002, he told me about the four titles he had in mind:

If I had a chance to publish a book—there has been no such book yet. Let me first tell about the orphans. On the pages of the book I would like to describe the ROAD of children-orphans. What is in store for them after the boarding schools? What is in store for them BEFORE boarding school? [Distinctly. Every word] What is in store for them at birth? Why do women GGGIVE BIRTH to kids and why [do] they abandon them? To state the PROBLEM. To give [gasp] SATURATED BIOGRAPHY of children-orphans. To take not just one child-orphan, but to take se(!)veral of them! [Fast] For each of them to tell her biography and for each biography to be published WORD-FOR-WORD! [Emotionally] What is the PURPOSE of their life? For the sake of what she LIVES! That child-orphan. And to entitle it either *Mom, Respond!* Or *Orphan in Trouble and Pain*, or *Let’s Open Hearts To Kindness*. Understand? The titles are different. The title itself would tell about the book. *Let’s Open Hearts To Kindness* would address those who are not indifferent to the fate of children-orphans, and such person could go to any boarding school and adopt a child. The second book *Mom, Respond!* is a collection of autobiographies of the children, who tell [emotionally] about their orphan life, how hard it is for them, how

¹¹⁵ No. 37. 09.10.2004.

difficult it is for them without their mother's love, without their native mom. Because in such a book you would want to express the REVENGE of a child-orphan on the mother. Maybe even to exaggerate your ideas, to write so strictly that the women were afraid to abandon a child as an orphan. Because it happens that a child-orphan has already obtained education, can support herself and suddenly mom comes back [impersonating]: "I am your mama." [emotionally] But where were you in childhood?! When I needed your motherly care! Where were you? You have come now, when I am already an adult, when I have a lot of girls around me, when I have a lot of people around me, [fast, emotion] when I have found myself in society! This is when you have come to me! Do you understand? To publish such book. Then to publish the book *Orphan in Trouble and Pain*. [Fast, emotionally] This is its structure. A day. A day of school. [impersonating child's voice] And what will happen tomorrow? And what awaits me the day after tomorrow?" Such child's thoughts. Child's dreams. Child's dreams at night. Understand? And then another one—I would like to make such a book: all these proverbs, tales, legends—to collect all of them in one book—Romani—and to title it *Proverbs and Sayings of My Paternal Romani Courtyard*. It is FROM THE STREET, it is not made up by some authors, but people wrote it, people recalled various customs, and to write this book exactly the way they say it, word for word. Romani sayings. Proverbs. And to collect all of it in one such book of *Romani Paternal Courtyard*. The street is a courtyard.

Denis Varodi is currently enrolled in a correspondence university department of Ukrainian philology. Roma of Ukraine will have a remarkable new Ukrainian and Romani author.

It is time to get back to the place where we paused in Anatoliy Kondur's autobiography. Having received higher education, he replaced his father as the traditional Romani leader in the region. His narrative next shuttled between the traditions, societal changes, and innovations that marked the changes that took place or not in his generation's lifetime—since 1956. Just as the opening monolithic narrative of becoming, the second part, too, was rooted in the figure of Fedor Ivanovich Kondur, his father. As an old-type traditional Romani leader, like a powerful tree, he was shown to have given rise to the new leader—his son Anatoliy [and Anatoliy's wife Julia]—then the tree branched out and continued through Anatoliy and Julia's children. Thus, the Romani leader theme running throughout his narrative wove threads of continuity and innovation. The father figure was idealized as a healthy tradition represented in the image of a strong Gypsy blacksmith. The loss of this traditional craft became narratively associated with

the development of losing control and creating an imbalance in nature, leading to human suffering.

My dad was such a Gypsy: very STRONG! A handsome guy he was! BLACKSMITHS—all of us as children lifted weights—we took an anvil and lifted it, dad showed us how, taught us. There were no dumb-bells then! And Roma-blacksmiths competed in tabor. All the anvils were portable, and they kept training everywhere! People back then—free people—were like Tarzan! Their mother was NATURE! They knew NATURE! Nature HELPED them! Roma were always connected with nature! Nature *accompanied* them everywhere! Good luck. They *did not violate the laws of nature*. This is why we suffer, all people—we *are violating everything!* We are meddling with *nature!* They are cutting down forests! They are digging!

Within the same theme of the Romani leader, Kondur's intermediary role between the state, international funding organizations, the local authorities, and the Romani community became apparent with shifting perspectives and, as instanced above, in the refocused use of the personal pronouns "we" and "they." Further, his analysis of the new requirements of the Romani leader in sovereign Ukraine illustrated the pride he took in the media development within the internationally supported Romani associations as opposed to the less modernized and westernized organizations. With modernization and westernization he associated a "more Ukrainian" Ukraine, as evident from his comment on the essential use of Ukrainian language in the mayor's office as the mark of a new style. This instanced his loyalty towards European integrative processes in the predominantly Russophone Ukrainian south, especially Izmail.

Gypsy baron, or as Roma say *baro*, or as *gadje* call him, *ataman*—was the person who could decide the *destiny* of the people who were in that tabor. It was not necessarily inherited. We have many cases when the father was a baron and it seemed like the son could have remained too—he was rich and everything—but the son was left out. Perhaps he was *unable* to defend his people, solve a problem, settle a case, and so on. Today's leader—what kind of person should he be? It has to be a *literate* person, for sure a literate person, because he has to deal with office holders [*chinovniki*]. Such leader has to be able to *communicate*, to communicate his thoughts, to resolve problems, to negotiate with authorities, individuals, Roma and so on. This is the kind of leader of today. He had to be *always*, in *various times*; it's just that at different times there were different requirements.

Today if one *goes to a mayor*, what needs to be discussed? To find them jobs, to give them medical assistance, to write a letter professionally well. This is not a small thing. [with pride] Today the *Gypsies submit* [letters] on our own firm letterhead, with our own seal, with our contacts in English, Russian, and in Ukrainian language [*Ukrainskoi move*]! And the other organizations—this is

ridiculous!—other registered public organizations bring theirs on a scrap of paper with a seal—unbelievable! And I bring them a letter in Ukrainian language and the secretary asks me, “Why is it in *Ukrainian language*?” I say, “Are you serious?” In *mayor’s office*—a secretary! I ask, “In what language do you need it?” “Well, true, yes, yes.” She became *embarrassed*. I say, “How can you! We live in Ukraine.”

Another theme running throughout Kondur’s narrative is the challenge involved in the task of integration, such as the reproduction of poverty in some Romani communities, especially in the congested settlements in Transcarpathia. This poverty has not been eliminated in the 50 years since sedentarization. Kondur stated that one generation was too short a time to see the change and predicted that for some families it will take longer than for the others. In a discourse typical of international development organizations, he criticized these Romani families for “pulling the [Romani] nation back.” Similarly to Ian Hancock, he wanted Roma to take greater charge in making change happen, including the change in attitudes towards Roma among the non-Roma.

I think that the time will pass—I do not know how many years—when the mentality, the thinking about the Gypsies will change. But all of it—much—depends on Roma themselves. So that they somehow rehabilitated themselves, because unfortunately—you would come to those families, especially in Western Ukraine, living in congested tabors, such that it is awful to go there. They beg all over Ukraine, when you ask them where they are from—“Western Ukraine.” We have them here, too, in Odessa oblast, Izmail *raion*. There are such settlements that it’s SCARY! No windows, no doors, they just raised something made out of clay, out of adobe, or something else. They just erected it and nailed, and that’s all, as I showed you in Izmail. And they think it is normal. Even if he made some money somewhere, he went and spent it on booze, pardon me, on grub—all this money, on carouse. For these families—it will take long, because this is reproduced: their children see how they live and they will live the same way. This is why there is a category of Roma who are [very] much *pulling* the nation back, negatively.

Kondur explained the stable environment in Romani communities in the Kilia region, which now has the lowest drug use in the oblast’ as the result of his father’s many years of leadership there and his successful diplomacy with local authorities and among Roma. “He always made sure people had jobs back then,” pointed out Anatoly. Anatoliy’s younger brother, Yuri, was trying to follow in his father’s footsteps, being a successful entrepreneur in Kilia and providing Roma with jobs in several of his businesses. However, Anatoliy was quick to point out that the situation in Kilia was a good

exception, thanks to his father's leadership, in comparison to Izmail where he dealt with some Roma involved in drug business:

In *Kilia*, for instance, the families are such—that even if he is some kind of *poor or something*, he is normal—but here [in Izmail] out of 35 families with many kids five are stealing and the other 30 are suffering because of them! They are pick pocketing. I tell them when we hold meetings, I tell them, “Do you understand?” But they do not come to us because they've got *narcobusiness*, say they are dealing drugs. They think that we are paupers and that we work only with paupers. But when something or other—when they *get caught*—I told them, “Do not come to me. Go to the police and buy your way out. I do not work with drug dealers.” Why don't I work? Because these are people who cheat and do not understand. One time I came by and signed for him. Then a second time. The only thing that we have done is among these kids or those who quit that way and adopted a new one—we help them out and conduct prophylactic work. These are, forgive me, finished people! Do you understand that you are pulling the nation backwards? It is not enough that you, now your children—I know that in big cities there are Gypsies who are selling this disgusting stuff and their children sooner or later try it! Made a shot one time, or took a smoke—and that's it: farewell forever! And today—look: How many are registered and so forth. And it is very disappointing, and I say it is because of the *wrong way of life* that Roma, too, get into this.

Kondur explained that the disappointing rise of drug use among the Romani people was because of the loss of the traditional way of life and generational changes—and this is all a result of an imbalance in nature, of meddling with nature and struggling with the dominant culture. “And again, it's coming from the *gadze*”—some Roma are trying to emulate them, to fit in better, to be accepted. Therefore, he emphasized the urgency of educational and cultural work among Romani youth and drew on his years of experience in educational and cultural fields and the support of his family—his wife Yulia and the children—all of whom were involved in his educational and cultural work in many ways. In his conversations with youth at heritage schools and other projects, Anatoliy helped them go through a healthy ethnogenesis process by easing their identity struggles with the dominant culture and helping them to find the positive balance between tradition and innovation.

Today, certainly, the youth is a little—like everyone else. It is disappointing that among the Gypsies appeared drug addicts, prostitution, AIDS and everything that it is among us. Perhaps, as they say, because they *have forgotten God*. All this came out because such transformation occurred: Outside is the 21st century—technology, development and so forth. Again, it is all from the *gadje* [*vsyo ot*

gadje-taki]. People want to be on equal footing, I mean the society, young people. I always tell them, “Guys, you are Roma, *we do not have this sort of thing.*” And so I tell them [the young people], “You are forgetting, you are forgetting what? *Our people—It is a very ANCIENT people! It is a SPIRITUALLY rich people! Rich with its traditions!* These are thoughtful, very respectful people. And when all of this *is being LOST, it makes one wanna CRY*, understand? And this is why I tell them [young Roma] that *this must not be forgotten.* Therefore, [in heritage schools] the lesson must by all means be taught *in Romani language!* We must work as teachers, *prosvetrobotniks*—educators and culture workers. It is close to us [our family], because we have always worked with an audience: culture groups, performing arts—we have worked *with people! It must be given to children!* I tell them, “From *the very way you look* you must—that you are Roma, Roma, Gypsies. So that they did not look at you as some museum rarity, but so that they looked at you and knew that you are intellectual, that you are very amiable, joyous, physically fit—that is normal, so that they could say—here are *Roma!* As Gorky said, “*So that it sounded with pride!* [*Chtob zvuchalo gordo!*]¹¹⁶” We must lead our good fortune! [*Nado vesti nashu udachu!*]

Repeatedly, Kondur returned to the task of integration, which he understood as Roma’s participation in such integrative and socializing institutions as the school and the army, among others. He did not problematize the issues of institutional racism as Denis Varodi did. What likened his discourse to Varodi’s was the way he mobilized his experience to promote his agenda. Denis relied on his experience of growing up as an orphan to press upon young [single Romani] mothers not to abandon their children in orphanages. He considered it necessary to aggrandize the experience and turn it into “the orphan’s revenge” upon his mother to get the message across more effectively. At the same time, he was not willing to question the role of the father or complicate the picture by investigating or interrogating the circumstances of the child’s conception or birth. The focus was on the mother, the rest was kept out of the frame, which could easily be a “blaming the victim” approach. Similarly, Anatoliy Kondur mobilized his experience of being born in the tabor of traveling Roma to promote the integration of Roma who today live as the Ukrainian underclass. Although he was only five when the tabor settled, Kondur summoned his past to give him authority to problematize Romani migration as anti-social and, thus, promote greater integration. This coheres with the Euroatlantic integration strategy discourse.

¹¹⁶ The complete golden line, “A person—it sounds with pride!”

The *Gypsy* who did not serve in the army, was not in school, was not socialized—they are their own clan. And especially when they were itinerant—it was WILD when they used to go into the society! They were like *wild primitives* [*dikari*!]! And they always walked in groups of 5, 10, 15—those who traveled! What have they got? They are living right here in the *field*. There seems to be a *village* here, but they do not live in the village. They might come to the village to get water, obtain food, but mostly they are over there. And to the village they only come in the winter, for the winter *hibernation*, to the winter apartments. *Small* kids! And when this kid *turned* 7, 8, 10, especially when they stopped traveling [i.e., approximately the age he was at that time]—*that generation*: IT WAS SCARY! Why did they *spook* with the Gypsies, why were *people* afraid. And look *today*, unfortunately—it is here. *50 years* soon since the Gypsies stopped traveling—it is a short time! It is only that one generation. I was still born in tabor. This is why they have to be *adapted* into society and rehabilitated at the same time.

Kondur tended to discuss the issues of prejudice in terms of individual prejudices rather than discrimination that is part of the sociostructural fabric of society. He avoided the word “racism,”¹¹⁷ but rather explained prejudice by the deficiency of education and the small-town peripheral mentality. It was a few months before the family left Izmail for Odessa that he said:

What I’m saying is that there are people [who love Roma] and there is the majority. It seems to me in big cities the attitude is different, where there are literate people who know and love Gypsies. But in other places—of course it depends on the people, on the office holders. Because these [Izmail, Kilia] are *small cities*, the population is smaller, these Gypsies—I tell them “You are *always afloat*.” You should—because the attitude is such—therefore, you should watch yourself, how you live and control your actions. Yes, in a *big city*—so what, you can be a Gypsy, a Gagauz, or someone else.

The third and last, and perhaps the most important, theme in Anatoliy Kondur’s narrative was the thread representing the genealogy, or past, present, and future of his family. The image of a powerful tree served as a convenient metaphor for us to review how Anatoliy conveyed his family’s genealogy, rooted in the images of his parents and family cultural traditions—the present, respectable status of his family stemming from that dignified past and branching out into the successful future of his six children. It is with distinct pleasure that I approached the task of drawing out this theme. Three years of communication with these family members have inspired in me great respect for the wise pedagogy, love, and consideration reigning in this home. I have never heard anyone in this family speak about

¹¹⁷ He disagreed with me when I used the term.

another family member without a suffix of endearment: Kapochka (from Kapitolina), Zolushka (Zemphira), Yulianchik (Yulian), and alike. The love and respect in this family are not surprising considering that both parents were pedagogues and cultural educators, and this is only one reason for focusing on the story of this family. The other is the fact that the family became internationally prominent well over 10 years ago; today five of the six children have higher education and are carrying out large-scale projects in Romani communities. It is from this family and from the families like it in Ukraine that the Romani leaders of tomorrow will come.

Let us then enter the family circle through Anatoliy's stories about (a) the oral tradition in Romani families and his home, then (b) rituals and celebrations, and finally (c) his hopes and visions for his children.¹¹⁸

A. F. Kondur on the Oral Tradition in his Family

Storytelling is *very* developed among Roma, because few of them were literate, in tabors there were hardly any people who were literate. Therefore the stories were passed from generation to generation. They told very many stories in the families; there was no TV back then, although we did have a radio, but it was considered a luxury item. Dad was working and bought a square radio as one might see in the old movies—before WWII. And there was no light. We were small [*khurde-malen'kie*], and there were many of us kids, “Mom, tell us a tale.” She, poor thing, is already tired. Or dad. And so father lies down [voice conveyed dignity, distinction] and be-giiiiins, say, singing an old song. For example, about his brother. His brother was hung by the Benderovtsy [Ukrainian nationalist troops of Stepan Bendera]. He went to Poland to trade horses and was coming back—they say that there was a Rom who informed them—was bringing back many horses; they met him and hung him. Yes. Took the horses. He implored them, saying, “I have three kids.” He is our uncle. And so he [father] lies down and is imploring them and crying. There were songs like this one [Anatoliy sang a slow lugubrious song], “*Ahul'-ahul' mro ilo pala murdo phraloro-o-o.*” Something like this, “*pri sardoj-pe, pri sara-pe—I Gretsija—a boalian mande jakha,*” that I, say, am looking in the window or “*a dikhal' diajo mungo koj*” and do not see my brother coming. And I do not even believe that he is no more. There were many songs and stories like this. In fact *Romanian* Gypsies here in Bessarabia—life was ha-a-a-ard [*tyazheo-o-olaya*]. In that time when they traveled—it is no secret that PO-O-O-OR! Miserable! They were looking for some *shelter* somewhere! That kind of thing. And they could not wait—as soon as the sun [He used the suffix of endearment: *solnyshko*] came out shining in March—look, it is April already and it is not that warm—but they, “Ah! That's it! Let's go!” And then—a snowstorm!

¹¹⁸ Kondur's narrative here is presented as close to the transcript as possible.

Blizzard! Rain! And because of that this kind of songs and stories were born. And those Gypsies that were better off, naturally, their life was a little more joyous. Certainly, their songs were different. These songs were *passed on*. And the song that *touches the soul*—one does not have to be rich or poor to appreciate it—it is coming from the soul. And the happy songs were kept for the holidays! [His voice changed to convey the happy tone] They never lost heart! Songs! Dances! Joy!

A. F. Kondur on Rituals and Celebrations

Through Kondur's descriptions of celebrations, it becomes very clear how important these family practices are for Roma. Kondur's specific examples revolved around the act of baptism and the holidays.

Baptizing.

My mother-in-law says, "I baptize all of my *grandchildren*." What could I do? What could I say to her? She did it—and we began eating, drinking, having a good time. Done—has been baptized—*thank her*. But look: I am the employee of the palace of culture. If it were me who baptized, the next morning everyone in town would know. They would say, "Kondur is fired." That's it. I was the artistic director of the regional palace of culture, a branch of executive committee [*ispolkom*], the third secretary there. No kidding. But later, when everything changed, we baptized our children as usually. We baptized Yulianchik [the youngest son] on a ship, we reserved a restaurant on a ship—oh! And Fedya and Kapochka were baptized in Izmail. By then everything was already allowed. Very many *Gypsies* came: from Nikolayev, Kishinev, Kiev, Russia. It was beautiful! Our ceremonies and celebrations are held in a *distinctive* way.

Celebrations.

Gypsies especially celebrate Easter. Gypsies celebrate Christmas and Epiphany. They celebrate New Year's Eve, the new and the old style. And on Christmas especially: If somebody *comes to a Gypsy*—here in our Bessarabia—especially to any *Orthodox family*—he would never just let him go. Be it a gadjo, alien, a foreigner, he would most certainly *give him food, treats*, for sure. My father always used to say, "Son, if someone comes to your house, first *give him food and drink*, give him the soul's warmth,¹¹⁹ and only then ask, "What brings you to me?" They were wise people, the nature taught them.

I have very many gadje friends, and there are always some of them at our celebrations. When the celebration begins, all are sitting separately. Women are sitting separately. Men, naturally, are sitting separately. Well, the kids are running around, they find a place for them. Now of course it is more civilized, and for the kids even a separate table is served. Although we do not consider it right. I always take my children with me and give them a seat. Next to me sits my spouse,

¹¹⁹ "Soul's Warmth" was the title of the first collection of poetry by Mixa Kozimirenko.

because they all know that I am sort of *ataman*, and if Kotya [Anatoliy's nickname] is sitting next to his wife, it is not a violation, but on the contrary some sort of—not honor, but they are happy—the host—that I came to them with her, because my Yulya too plays a significant role here, even in Ukraine one could say, among women. And we are highly respected. Thanks to the Roma, of course. But she is not always there; she tries to go to the women, when there are some nuances—

And when music starts, singing, dancing, then everyone is together—women and men. Usually like this [impersonating], “We are inviting such-and-such family! Anatoliy and his family!” The family comes out and dances. “We are inviting, say, Rustam with his family from such city—Sergey, Petya, Vasya! Whoever, the names are announced. But as you see, our names are like Russian and Ukrainian. Although many are trying to give Gypsy names or the names they like. Gypsies even called their son SHTIRLITZ from “Seventeen Moments of Spring.”¹²⁰ They like it and that's it! It is their *free will*! I feel like calling him Shtirlitz! Or Budulai—that one at least sounds more like a Gypsy name. And here then everyone dances and sings together. At times the host is running around almost crying, “Sit down and eat!” And the food—listen! So much, so much! [With joy] When singing and dancing begins, they forget about everything! Here is *another national trait* of Romani people—that sitting at the table, eating, and drinking is not as important as really having a good time.

The *elders, respectable*, they usually remain staying at the table. [Impersonating] They are sitting, talking, in such good atmosphere. They are having a drink. They are having some food. Everything within wise limits. And if he gets up to dance, the whole wedding would stop, the crowd would give way and open up a space. And he would take the center stage, and let it be just *one pas*, even if he just claps [he beat his palm on his thigh]—or they might announce, “Dad, or, say, grandpa—Come out and open this event.” There is a play by Moldavian dramaturges Ion Drutse, titled “The Birds of Our Youth.” In it I played a young fiddler and my director played Auntie Rutsa. And there is a scene there where I started playing the fiddle and everyone *got quiet*. Even this—a signature—[Impersonating]. I put down the fiddle, come out and dance. A tiny movement only! She says, “Why did you *stop*? Such beautiful *dance*! You began so beautifully!” I say, “My task is to *set people in the mood*. I've done my part. I came out and gave a BLESSING to this party tonight! And to raise dust with feet is not my thing!” There. The dramaturges made a great observation—that a *respectable person* can just *come out*. And if his spouse comes out too and children—they are allowed, the entire *family*, with relatives, and he could come out to just move a shoulder, or do one clap of hand, one *pas*—that is a *blessing*, and the whole WEDDING dances! The whole party!

A. F. Kondur's Hopes and Visions for his Children

In 2003, Kondur had an alarming premonition after his diagnosis and was

¹²⁰ A popular Soviet sequel about a Soviet spy in Vermaakht, named Shtirlitz.

concerned about his family's future. The family was about to leave Izmail for Odessa. Kondur noted that unfortunately there were no Romani people to replace him in Izmail, "They are not ready. Someone from the younger generation has to be trained. How would he get in college or even technical school if he does not have 8 to 9 years of schooling? School number five [for mentally challenged students in Izmail, where many Roma study]—3 to 4 years and that is all. They can hardly read and write." Anatoliy explained that he could rely only on his family to head and direct various Roma-related projects in Odessa oblast.

But if it is us, from my family—I'm not afraid. My wife, you know is, [pausing] POWERFUL in this business and, as they say, TEETH [laughing]—HAS EATEN A DOG [i.e., knows the ropes]. Lina, Kapochka [daughters]. That Kapochka is the most hardworking among us, she reads a lot, more than anyone else. Fedor, Volodya, Zemfira [other children]. These are—yes. And from Roma—I am very sorry [no one].

[I] hope to see daughter Zola become Romani anthropologist. I want to talk about Zola.

First, Anatoliy recounted how Zola was lucky to become a college student, "In 1993 a person from Switzerland came to Izmail to write a report about the Gypsies." He put pressure on the rector of a pedagogical college:

And what? Without a bribe, without anything she was accepted to college, just like that. ...She was accepted without competition. Today this person is in Kiev, working, helping Roma to create the uplift [*vytyagivat'sya*]. And if not for this, perhaps never in her life she would have been able to enroll—a Gypsy woman. I say to Zola, "Zola, you should be writing dissertation now. People make—even if money—on it. Go ahead—make yourself a career! You have such co-los-s-sal opportunities! You've got the Odessa region! You've got all the regions! Our Bessarabia is here! *Amari chxib Rromani. Tu sar chachi Rromni!* [Our language is Romani. You are a true Romani woman] And you are letting it go. You have higher education! And you must get now—I do not know any other philologist who—Demeter,¹²¹ you know, what a beauty she is! A beauty meaning education! She is—oh! They go around collecting all of this! These tidbits. Everything has to be videotaped, photographed, examined! Later on it is all studied—But to be doing this one has to know all the Gypsies. One has to know it profoundly. And who would do it better than us, the Gypsies, us who were born in a tabor?

¹²¹ Nadezhda Demeter, Romani anthropologist in Moscow. A. Kondur hoped to see his daughter Zoya follow Demeter's steps.

The last words Anatoliy Kondur left on my tape were about time, change, and age: “*Therefore my native land is not far [laughing] from Izmail.* But once I move to Odessa—oj!... Time, I understand that it is age. I still consider myself a young person [laughs], and I will turn 52 this year, on September 17. But the time, understand—”

“We miss him,” said Yulia Kondur 2 years later. “He and late Sasha Karafetov used to appease the viciously competing Romani leaders. It was their role. Our ranks are thinning rather than growing. The only hope is our young people. We must raise them and educate them” (personal communication, July 9, 2005). The Kondur family is carrying on just as their father hoped. They live and direct Romani projects in Izmail, Odessa, and Kiev. The powerful tree is growing in Ukraine.

Summary

These examples of individual, family, and community strengths are just a few of the multiple kinds of focuses that should be brought to the foreground of research on Romani culture. Despite the diversity of experiences described here, there are many similarities between the presented ideas and arguments. All of them demonstrate an appreciation for eloquence, as well as for formal education held in high value by Romani intellectuals.

Romani educational and cultural leaders propagandize the educational and family practices that led them to success, especially espousing “pedagogy of hope” for Roma. They are involved in more than one restructuring effort simultaneously. In their discussions, they are conceptualizing and re-conceptualizing a Romani cultural identity—dynamic, constructed notion of identity, underscoring more flexible, multiple, shifting identities as a necessity in current societal change. Their oral histories highlight the adaptability and resilience of Roma and explain the complex, hybrid, multicultural identities of Roma, as well as portray the linguistic and cultural diversity of Romani groups. They show that despite a racist environment, Roma hold their families together and raise their children to be proud of their cultural roots. Their cultural pride creates good, productive multicultural citizens.

All of these stories underscored the role of non-Romani power and privilege in disenfranchising and marginalizing Roma. All of them, explicitly or connotatively, saw

the traditional cultural-difference perspective as too sharply drawn and, ultimately, pointed to the historically porous quality of Roma-non-Roma relations, while expressing frustration at the pervasiveness of prejudice in non-Romani individuals and throughout Ukrainian institutions. And finally, all these accounts were inspirational in that they stressed the importance of having an identity and standing for a mission in the quest for justice.

Romani “homegrown” educational and cultural leaders came to leadership roles in the mid-1990s with significant teaching and cultural work experience, a knowledge of the artistic profession and cultivative work among people—including knowledge of the curriculum specific to their cultural field and strong administrative and organizational skills—and excellent interpersonal skills. In the cultural field, they have developed a strong sense of self-awareness and gained an understanding of the cultural and political structure, having honed the skill of working within the organizational system.

These leaders reported on their daily use of communication capabilities in dealing with Romani and non-Romani community members and audiences, police, courts, and other power representatives, managing multi-task work, building skills and confidence in others, and building rapport and trust. Their role in the educational transformation underway is crucial because they are the experts who have vanguard knowledge of Romani culture and community issues as well as the cultural institutions and audiences of Ukraine, and they understand the support they need to carry out their work. Their expertise is central to the development of strategic programs, momentous projects, and pedagogies that best meet the educational needs of Romani people and promote their advancements in teaching and learning.

As experts, Romani culture workers attempt to influence decision-making structures by voicing Romani-specific needs in regards to education and curriculum development. They model effective education and media management practices and collaborate with cultural and educational organizations, the state, and international organizations. Through such interactions, they developed and improved professional working networks with a greater inclusion of Romani communities. Acknowledging their expertise and contributions and providing opportunities for growth and influence is crucial for further intellectual reinvigoration of Ukrainian education, culture, and society.

I have come to know these figures as hard-working, talented, innovative, creative, gregarious, and collaborative with non-Roma.

Chapter Three

To Our Roots: The Theater *Romance* Family

This chapter invites us to the first Romani theater in Ukraine. First, it depicts the events of the Third International Romani Theater Festival, illustrating the festival's wrap-around effect of psychedelic spectacle, promoting greater equality between the stage and the auditorium through the physical participation of the audience in the action. Next, it introduces the theater director, Igor Krikunov, in a face-to-face encounter. In a comprehensive and engaging interview, Krikunov described the theater's efforts in education of both Roma and non-Roma. His reflections are followed by the 3-day report from the small office, which powers the theater's work. By following the meetings and conversations in this room we will get a sense of the everyday action, thinking, and communication unfolding backstage. Finally, a New Year's evening spent in the theater director's home will convey the warmth of this multigenerational theater family.

International Romani Festival Amala—2002

The Bolshevik Palace of Culture faces the busy Victory Avenue. Behind it stretches the 20-hectare Pushkin Park. The park was elaborately designed in 1901 by a gardener, I. A. Zhukovsky, with groves and groups of firs, larches, oaks and lindens. All the construction and planting was carried out by the soldiers of the 129 Bessarabian Regiment, whose summer camps were located nearby. Across Victory Avenue lies a shady park of the Polytechnic Institute, founded in 1898. A little farther down is the 40-hectare Zoo Park, founded in 1908, but only in that location since 1913. On the other side of the theater, a block from A. S. Pushkin Corner with a large monument to the Russian poet, is the Dovzhenko Film Studio—overgrown with apple trees—where the innovative film-director and writer worked in 1928–41. The Bolshevik Palace of Culture was built in 1931–34 in constructivist style. It was first founded for the workers of the large machine-building factory, but was open to everyone. In 1985, it boasted a 525-seat theater hall and a 200-seat lecture hall, two rehearsal rooms and gyms, and a library. Before the early 1990s, many cultural amateur facilities and art schools worked in the building, such as the famous Ukrainian G. Veryovka Choir, the orchestras of folk music for adults and for

children, amateur drama theater, folk dance groups, folk choirs, brass bands, fine arts studios, the office of technical propaganda, etc. The Theater of Poetry was also located in the building (Kudritsky, 1985). After the transition turmoil, the building and the park, were both abandoned, until part of the space was rented to the Romani Theater Romance, known as the Gypsy Theater.

The heart of the theater is located in a small office with one backstage computer. To get there on a regular day, one has to walk through one of the side entrances. One entrance leads from a small cozy restaurant, which is “part of the theater.” The other entrance starts as a busy currency exchange office. An armed guard was walking back and forth outside its entrance. The rest of the building was desolate. Past the woman doorkeeper, sitting at the telephone by the staircase, we went down the stairs, through the dark hallway of the basement, past the choreography classrooms with mirrored walls, and came up the dark stairs into a large, empty foyer. A second woman doorkeeper, wearing a coat and a hat, was sitting there at the large desk. The building was freezing cold. Walking across the dark stage of a 550-seat dark hall and along a narrow corridor, I had to watch out for a mannequin. We were almost there. By the cigarette smoke on the other end of the corridor we would know if “everyone was home.” At times, the two doorkeepers were sitting together, talking. They would know where we were heading, but just to take a break from their conversation one would ask in Ukrainian, “Where are you going?” “To the theater.” Before I could finish, the other doorkeeper said, “*Vona do Tsigan,*” meaning “she’s with the Gypsies.”

The Romani festival at the beginning of the performance season, in the fall, is an entirely different story, especially on its last day, the day of the gala concert. According to its president Igor Krikunov, that year’s theme was an “homage to the roots” [*obrashchenie k kornyam*] of the Romani people. Approaching the theater from afar one could see a chaotic stream of cars, dropping off family members in black leather coats and jackets. Two young male guards in suits were checking the tickets by the front entrance. Few people checked in their coats. We proceeded to a large foyer already jammed with people. This is where we wanted to be—the air was thick with human voices. It was hard to see what was around, but the bar was to the right of the entrance. To the left, stood the reminder of the festival’s “to our roots” theme, the tree of life—on

its dry branches hung red silk ribbons, a pair of men's "Gypsy" boots, a cartwheel, a bottle of champagne, and a guitar—a picture opportunity, were it not so busy. Somewhere upfront there were more scenes—mannequins dressed as Ukrainians and Roma, a wagon, a Ukrainian cottage, sunflowers. The first *Amala-2000* festival was held 2 years before, outside in a beautiful park by the Dnieper. *Amala* means "friends" in Romani. On a large track field the simultaneous show lasted for several days: It was complete with equestrians, blacksmiths and woodcarvers, cauldrons with seething potatoes, martial arts, fortune tellers, troika rides, and of course the main musical show on stage with people dancing in the grass field. That legendary festival still lives in people's memory and on family videotapes.

The 2002 festival, however, was a theater festival, held at the Bolshevik Palace of Culture. On its last day the concert hall was packed—people were standing in the aisles. The atmosphere was festive and joyous, yet relaxed, homey: Some children and adults walked in and out of the hall and up and down the aisles, families talked, friends laughed. The curtain rose and the show began. Everything was on display from white fountains, white retro-style candle-stands, and Ukrainian flowery shawls to the large festival emblem: a right-handed palm bearing cosmic constellations, a wheel, a swastika, a Star of David, and other mystical symbols on a cosmic background.

My childhood friend, ethnic Russian but re-inventing herself as a Lithuanian, asked me, "Did you notice the Aryan features of the guards at the entrance?" She had been upgrading her image as a Communist Russian minority by practicing German philosophy and rigorous dieting to conform to the "lean and tall" stereotype. "Ukraine has to get rid of a few million of the poorest residents, they just have to die out, for the country to have the optimal development, 42 million is the calculated optimal number," was one of her "theories." Another one was, "*Khohli* [derogatory for "Ukrainians"] could be made silk-obedient. But to achieve this, a certain measure of violence, cruelty should be administered. By the German system." "Don't preach me, your country is too liberal," she barked at me during one argument. "Do you see that wide-open mouth?" she pointed once at a woman Flamenco dancer in the *Amala-2000* video, "It's the genetically coded shriek of the centuries of persecution that is coming out, as in a stalked animal, an instinct." Now she carefully looked around the performance hall full of people and

assessed, “A rich organization.” Then she noticed the emblem of the festival and commented, “They have been warming their hands by the fire for centuries now; this is coded in the genetic memory of their people. Their hands are genetically coded by these fires.” Importantly, statements like these were coming from a professor of sociology and philosophy teaching at a leading higher educational establishment. Unlike her, however, my other intellectual female friends in the audience, most in their 50s and 60s, were very enthusiastic about the festival because of their fond memories of the Moscow Theater *Romen*.

The first to perform were the young students of the *Amalyata* studio. “Obba-na!” exclaimed one of my friends in fascination when a long line of 10-year-old boys in white dress shirts, black custom-tailored trousers, and shiny black shoes appeared on stage. The soloists projected confidence and pride and did not show any sign of stage fright. After the foot-tapping and hand-clapping boisterous boys, the barefooted girls with long, wavy hair and dressed in beautiful silk green, blue, and purple dresses performed a soft, sensuous dance, carefully stepping on their tiptoes. “Like kitty-cats,” their teacher reminded them during the rehearsal.

The Theater Romance presented a scene from its new play, *The Gypsy Muse*. Igor Krikunov and the merited actress Ada Rogovtseva created the play, and its cast was composed of Rogovtseva’s graduating class of the University of Culture and the theater actors. The play’s text was based on the brilliant poem by Lina Kostenko, first published in 1980 and dedicated to the Romani poet of Poland, Bronislaw Wajs, known as Papusza, of whom Ian Hancock (2002) wrote:

A poet with more than [30] collections to her name Papusza, who was born in 1910, was a source of strength and hope for Romanies during the Second World War, when she survived by hiding in the forests. She wrote about this experience in her book *Krwawe Lzy* (“*Bloody Tears*”—its subtitle was “What we endured under the Nazis in Volhynia in ’43 and ’44”). Sadly, she was shunned by many Polish Romanies for revealing too much of the culture to the outside world. Her works were published by Julian Tuwim, Jerzy Ficowski, and others. She died in 1987. (p. 138)

The play’s text included poetry by Papusza in Polish and its Ukrainian translation, as well as the poetry of Mixa Kozimirenko in Romani. Kozimirenko was the only child in his family who survived the genocide; the Nazi executed 37 members of his larger family

in 1942 in Chernigiv. The play masterfully expanded the image of Papisza to the archetype of a poet in society. Likewise, it conveyed the diversity of Romani people by modifying the representation of Romani characters from Polish to Ukrainian Roma, and the Roma of Spain. Some of the scenes polyphonically evoked several time periods, geographic locations, and events at once, thus portraying the persecution of Roma, among other people, throughout history. For example, the music and dance of Spain transformed us from the contemporary to the Inquisition period, with the women's arms, in a dance, tied behind their backs with Ukrainian shawls. Similarly, Papisza's and Kostenko's poetry, recalling the genocide in Volhynian forests, simultaneously spoke of multiple experiences in Poland, Ukraine, and other places with a poet's voice—called upon as a representative voice:

Well, you can punish... and you can finish me off...
I will shut up, stop, and will be mute, just for you.
Then what—everyone would think that we're just fortune-tellers,
Without pride, without memory—that we don't have anything?!
But who will tell the people about those bloody tears
In those Volhynian forests, where the memory screams,—
When we were walking into a dead end, into famine, into freezing,
Running away from the beast, called—the genocide?!

This poetry and drama affirmed the personal and collective memory at the same time, hence their archetype potential. Such relocation, use of dialogue, and fusion of the symbolic resulted in greater polyphony and expansion of the archetype.

In the scene shown at the festival, the sound, stage effects, and masks conveyed the greater global and historical perspective, expanding the image of Roma through time and space. The masked actors moved across the stage under streams of multicolored light. Their voices were distorted by the techno-eco and mixes of other sounds, which produced a polyphonic effect.

First woman: We are illiterate—so what? Are we loose? Not quite.
At the same time, we do not have apostasy or treason.
What would we betray?—the sun, the steppes?

Second woman: We are free!

Igor Krikunov: And we've got the forests. We have the ancient songs,—

The old wine of the soul! And what does one care about us?
 Whom and what do we owe?
 We are a golden wind in the history of the nations.

Mixed women's voices: We are a copper fall of leaves, the glottal gurgle of pain,
 we appeared as a dream and the trace of us has vanished.

First woman: As to the literacy—don't we read lot by the lines of the hand, the
 stars, the eyes?
 Have we wrongfully sentenced anyone in our life?
 Have our people annihilated anyone in the world?
 The only thing: stole a chicken from mankind.
 Has any Gypsy served in the police?
 Throw away your pen. Fear the press like the Devil.
 They might come and study us, and it will be a trap for us.
 [Through the noises of the universe:] They will drive us into the buildings,
 Those concrete shells. To grow into the production tools, brigades, and
 trades.
 Do you want our souls to wither in slavery?
 For the Gypsy bonfire to overgrow with mosses?!
 [Very high-pitched eco repeats:] to overgrow with mosses?

Igor Krikunov: We are a tribe, we are the peas, we roll throughout the world.
 And we would be cramped on a small piece of land.

Papusca in a beautiful young voice: Sad birds of the dead, the owls yelp in the
 forest.
 [Shouting out] "Mushrooms have already grown over the Gypsy
 bonfires!"
 [Every word distinctly] One thing I know: that you need the Word—
 [Through the sounds of mixed voices]—Just like the bonfire, the lot, the
 line of destiny. [Applause]

Importantly, Papusza was played by a non-Romani actress, and the personal pronoun “we” in Kostenko’s text was substituted for “you” in the play, alluding to the top-down promotion of Romani language programs by non-Romani institutions, which some intellectuals resent because it might be less urgent in comparison to the more immediate tasks of daily survival in some Romani communities—as will become apparent in the next section with Igor Krikunov’s interview.

The scene broke into loud accords of music, similar to a powerful crescendo of wind. The Romani dancers flew out onto the stage in effective costumes: The black dresses of women and the shirts of men were covered in swirls of white polka dots, varying in size. The Ukrainian and Russian word for this pattern being “peas,” the powerful dance that followed, set to an old Romani song, illustrated the diasporic power

of the Romani nation, and thus, supported the previous narrative. Igor Krikunov, who played the Father in the play, participated in the final part of this dance.

The press highlighted Krikunov's tremendous organizational skills (2001), with one journalist, Lana Roksi, noting that she was under the impression there were several Krikunovs:

There he is singing with Mila on stage, in a minute he is already sitting in the judges' panel, next—he is solving some organizational issues on the phone. Simultaneously, he manages to make sure his daughter Zhanna went on stage on time, as well as to say hello to everyone.

On that last and most eventful day of the festival, Igor Krikunov's voice was hoarse. When all the gala participants appeared on stage, Igor hugged his little grandson, "To the happiness of our children! We must do everything in our lifetime so that our children were happy! Thank you!" The participants performed the beautiful Romani prayer-like anthem of the festival, written by the young Romani musician Dima Klimashenko for the symbol-rich lyrics by Mixa Kozimirenko: *Romani luck is a heavy cross—the fires burn, the earth moves—what a destiny to find—oh Lord!—We will go forward, friends!*

Igor Krikunov explained the symbolics and significance of the festival, as well as his main goal.¹²² His goal at once reflected the dilemma and struggle of tradition and innovation in a time of cultural change:

My main goal... first of all, is to awaken the consciousness in our people, which would make the people live in a different way. If everything that the Gypsies have now passes away, then tomorrow it is not to be returned, it is the irreversible process. Then what? If our people remain in the same state as now, then the Gypsies would disappear as an ethnic group. Because the brutal time is coming... The great majority still cannot see for themselves what is happening. This is why the festival movement should grow. It should include the artists, poets, [and] politicians who would hold simultaneous talks, workshops, educational events. We should take advantage of the festival to do everything possible to preserve our traditions, culture, customs, and language.

The meaning of the festival symbol—the open palm—according to him, speaks of the Roma's readiness to open their heritage to the world, a heritage reaching deep to their roots:

¹²² Unless otherwise noted, Krikunov is quoted here from the author's field notes, October 2002.

You know that our fortune-tellers read hand. Hand is a person's book. A hand is very telling. Gypsies pass the art of fortune telling by hand from generation to generation. A fortune-teller does not pass it to just anyone. Of 15 children she might pick only one, if she sees he is talented. Gypsy traditions are very strong. If they were not preserved, the Gypsies would have disappeared as such, dissolved [into] other peoples. Thanks to the conservatism in our laws and rituals we still exist.

The main idea of the festival, according to Krikunov, is in its name, *Amala*, Romani for "friends."

We wanted to get everyone together, not only our Gypsy family, but the big family of artists, because it is international. After this event, our creative work became visible in a completely new way. Such holidays draw the attention of all those who rule our destinies.

In ethnicity-focused nation-building discourse, the Ukrainian press commented on the importance of the festival in battling prejudice towards Romani people, "Such events help not only the new talents to open and the well-known stars to shine more brightly, but they help everyone to become kinder, uniting people of different nationalities" (Kondratenko, 2000, p. 8).

The importance of the Romani festival movement is in the intense immediacy and interactivity it allows between performers, audiences, politicians, and media; through greater physical participation from the audience, the festivals turn into community-oriented cultural programs, which creates alternative public spheres for dialogue and conversation. The festivals produce the sensory, wrap-around effects of psychedelic spectacles, with events before and after the performance engaging people and promoting greater equality between the stage and auditorium on the one hand, and between various cultures on the other. Such interactivity closely mirrors Benjamin's notion of aura, of the reduction of art's distance from the public and the intensification of interaction between artwork and public (Downing, 2001, p. 135). This same aura bridges communication between Romani and non-Romani performers and Romani and non-Romani audiences. The memory sparked by the spectacle lives long.

In the Zone of Contact: Romani Theater Director

Igor Krikunov was born in 1953, in Taganrog, on the Russian-Ukrainian border, in the family of the director of one of the first Gypsy collective farms. The Krikunovo *khutor*, or large estate, named after Igor's ancestors, is still there. His father's brother was a school principal. The younger generation of Krikunovs was comprised of actors, artists, and musicians. There were 14 children in Igor's father's family, and he had two, a son and daughter, who were both college students. "My mom was a housewife," recalled Krikunov, "and was involved in the children's upbringing."

She did not have any formal education, but God gave her plenty of talent. She drew beautifully, made figurines out of clay, embroidered, and played the guitar. She was the best singer around. Perhaps, I have got some of her talent. When I was a high school senior, Theater Romen came on tour to Taganrog, and they announced a casting to their theater studio. I tried my luck and passed the contest. This is how at the age of 17 I joined the studio of the Moscow Theater Romen. There were about 40–50 of us from all over the Soviet Union. After graduation, I performed on the theater's stage for 12 years, from 1971 to 1983.

In 1974, Igor played his first role in the Soviet-Lebanese film of the director Jean Betar, *Three Voices in One Shriek*, followed by the role of "Vasyl" in the films *Gypsy Asa* and *The Death Bay*, both Dovzhenko Studio's productions. He also appeared in the TV films of Ukrtefilm: *The Smoking Mountains*, *Nazar Stodolya*, and *The Moon Is Like An Earring Above the Shatras*.

From the many interesting episodes Igor shared about his life and work at the Theater Romen, I will recount the following one, about the subversive irreverence of some Roma in the times of the Soviet regime:

We were playing *Hot Blood* in Cherepovets. There is a big Gypsy community near Cherepovets. And somewhere in the middle of the performance about ten Gypsies come in. They are carrying heavy boxes of champagne, vodka, and wine. One after another, the whole procession is heading straight to the stage. In front of the stage, they stack all these boxes. And the performance is very serious, dramatic. The Gypsies sit down right there and begin discussing something very loudly. They pour the beverages they brought. Then, at last they look at what is happening on stage and noticing Slichenko yell to him, "Kolya! Come on! Quit that stuff! Enough. Better do this song, this one—*Zaznobile*, and come down here—*po piatdesyat!* [an invitation to have a shot of vodka]

Romani factory workers felt they deserved closer contact with the director of the only Romani theater in the Soviet Union and did not want to miss that rare opportunity.

In 1973, Igor met Ludmila in Kiev during the theater's tour there, and they got married. In 1982, after a decade of performing on the stage of Theater Romen, they moved back to Kiev, where Igor worked in Estrada Theater for 12 years, then in a small theater in Podol, until he started his own Romani group in 1994.

What follows is Igor Krikunov's story about the theater, recorded by me during our conversation in January 2003.

*Mind, Spirit, Beauty, Fortitude, Chic*¹²³: *An Image of the Idea*¹²⁴

“To burn the human hearts with word!”¹²⁵ First question,” Igor Krikunov launched our conversation as we were sitting down in the cold and drafty foyer of the desolate Bolshevik Palace of Culture where the National Gypsy Theater *Romance* is located. I had volunteered here for 8 months by then and had come to appreciate Igor's creative way with language. In this case, a quote from Pushkin was framed by a clashing context, producing what Bakhtin would call a certain deliberate ironic alienation “of another's quoted word” (1996, pp. 68–69).

Theater's mission.

Our theater's mission is the awakening of the social consciousness of people to the ultimate goal—the integration, if that's the right way to call it. As *profoundly* as possible to reveal and show the *essence of the people*, their *culture*, through our plays and concerts. Comprehensively. To show it comprehensively, as our theater is not fixated on just one type, or one theme. We employ folklore, folk songs, folk dances, drama, and through all that we are trying to bring the essence of our culture, our people to the mass audience, and not only the Gypsy one. I understand that not all the Gypsies are globally competent in the culture of their people, but first and foremost we need to fight against the social perceptions the non-Gypsies have about us—not always *litsepriyatnye*, or “pleasing to our face.”

We have existed since 1993, first as a musical group, which then evolved into a serious work and the casting of actors, which allowed us to start a theater. To date, we have a small repertoire of about four titles. It is Pushkin's “Gypsies”—we have united Garcia Lorca and Pushkin in one musical play. It is “Gypsy Muse” by Lina Kostenko, a story of a Gypsy poetess Papusza, who lived in Poland. It is her autobiography, her *life* history, her relationship with the world: her own Gypsy, as well as the other milieu. Further, it is the concerts, in which we

¹²³ *Um, Dukh, Krasota, Krepost', Chic* [The nominal descriptors by which Krikunov expresses Romani culture].

¹²⁴ This entire section is based on the interview with Igor Krikunov. Transcript. 01.29.03.

¹²⁵ *Glagolom zhech' serdtsa liudey!*—quoting A. S. Pushkin.

use folk music, folk *songs*, and urban romances, that is everything which has been created since the 18th century and that we know to a better extent, so to say. As to the *musical culture* of the Gypsies themselves, all these works are represented in our concerts. The latest performance we are working on is based on Gypsy romance and is a challenge to the contemporary *popsa*, an attempt to lead the people away into that silver age, into that high poetry, which is also connected with the Gypsies, where the Gypsies occupied not the last place. This is the goal and the idea of our latest performance, to let the audience hear the high poetry, the high culture of performance of the Gypsy urban romance. The authors of the lyrics are the classics, from Apollon Grigor'ev to Pushkin, Bunin, Yasinsky, Shakespeare, Garcia Lorca, Blok, all those who were connected with Gypsies on their creative path. Each of them wrote about the Gypsies with *such* inspiration, and so well and captivatingly, that it is precisely this that gives an opportunity to today's spectator, an *obyvatel'*¹²⁶ in his consciousness, to discover Gypsy culture in a yet more interesting, figurative, and profound way.

“The play about romance,” I asked, “why did the idea to produce it come precisely at this time?”

Here the greatest irritant for me is this *pop chaff* that *pores*. There is no text there, no music, nothing to capture either an ear or an eye. Understand? To juxtapose. And the silver age has so much good to offer. So the wish to counter this chaff with something entirely different. To think of it, today people do not make a declaration of love. He does not say to me, “I love you!” and then produces such a tirade of figures of speech—a poetic image in words. Today it is *gilra v nature*, [impersonating] “*Ya krutoi* [pause]. *Nakatim?* [pause] *Vinischa*. [pause]”¹²⁷ And how could he say something like, “My darling. And I to her in whisper, then in half-whisper, and then in silence—my darling, my darling, fall asleep, fall asleep, fall asleep.” Who would say anything like this today? “In whisper, half-whisper, and then in silence.” This is the main irritator in the production. But here it is also important that everyone [pause] *v'ekhal*, dug it, and to make it in half tones, pastel. Gypsies! Emotions! It is not necessary to work *na grani*, on the edge¹²⁸ all the time.

Yes, all of these authors themselves were the spectators with their own perspectives, and whatever *infected* them was what they wrote about, as the on-lookers, from the outsider's perspective, they were not *inside* the material. The *inside* is delivered by the Gypsy *folk* song.¹²⁹

I questioned the effect of that classical corpus, “Yet 200 years later, have all the written volumes and the wonderful romances changed the life of the Romani people

¹²⁶ An average Joe, philistine.

¹²⁷ I am cool. Let's rip off. With booze.

¹²⁸ C. f. Krikunov's speech at the First Romani Congress in Kiev, where he said that Roma are the “terrorist act on the edge.”

¹²⁹ C. f. Kozimireko's verse: “The soul of the Gypsy people is in their songs—search there.”

themselves? That is, how has it affected the life of Roma, if at all?” “Well,” responded Krikunov, “if we begin digging that deep, then certainly not. Certainly it hasn’t. Affected was only a separate group, the foremost group, the vanguard of the Gypsy people. It is they who know it and understand, while the majority mass has not been affected.”

In response to a question on how the idea to create his own theater was similar to or different from his previous experience at the theater *Romen* he said, “I, personally, would not have wanted to deal with—,” he swallowed the word “politics” and continued, “because the theater *Romen*, especially in that Soviet period, was to such great extent connected *with politics*. Constant *flirting* with the need to stage that dramaturgy about communists, collective farms, oil drillers.”

—And your theater is not connected with politics?

—No, I do not think it is.

—But isn’t the time of the creation similar? The theater *Romen* was created—

—During a transitional period. Yes. Yes. Therefore, I think that during this complex time, when many *spiritual values are being lost*, it is *our very mission not to descend in this muck*. Well, certainly, because we are the so-called “representatives of the Gypsy people” it means that the problem of *natsmenshiny*¹³⁰ exists. Therefore, certainly it crosses over with politics. But I wouldn’t want to be dealing with this, because in any case—*We should be doing something else!*¹³¹

—But it looks like throughout history the elite have *taken advantage* of the Romani art. If that art has existed for ages to entertain the elite, it should work for the development of culture and education of Roma—

—It *should* work, it *should have been* working.

—Yes, yes.

—*Yet it is not working*.

I asked Krikunov what prompted him to create his own theater while he was an actor at the Theater on Podol.

You understand—I at the Theater on Podol: It is a *Russian* theater. I played the *non-Gypsies*. I played Shakespeare, Goldoni, all the dramaturgy and that kind of roles. Yet nevertheless I remained a *Gypsy*. And in the *theater group* I was a *Gypsy*.¹³² And when the audience found out that I—let’s say I was playing—

The subject appeared to have struck a sensitive chord. Igor got up and walked to speak to the workers whose hammering noise interfered with our conversation, then he

¹³⁰ Ukrainian abbreviation of “national minorities.”

¹³¹ My *dolzhny zanimat’sia drugim!*

¹³² I remembered my friend’s first description of him as a “very conscientious Gypsy.”

came back. “What were we talking about?” I perceived his desire to move on to the next question.

70 years of the battle for consciousness. Why?

First of all, the *inertia of the people themselves*. Just take a look, you already understand what is happening in Ukraine. Understand...[emotionally] *The people themselves are not willing. See? The people themselves are not willing. There are those few who are trying to break through, break free out of this ignorance. But they are few. And there has to be a people's will. I understand that it has to be cultivated, right?*

—What is the role of Romani language, of studying Romani language, does it play a role in letting *to break free*?

—Romani language is a *code of the people*! If a people has its language it means there is a *people*, there is *culture*. If there is no language, there is not a people. Romani language is important to me when I go to Europe, meet with the Gypsies, and I am able to speak with them, and we understand each other. We do not have to speak English or French, we speak our native language. Yes, there are dialects, but we are representatives of one people.

But I do not think that language is a *major problem* [latter said with irony]. The *people* know their language. Another story, *there has to be the idea*. Idea. Idea. Around *which* the people would solidify. Understand? I do not think that *knowledge of a language* would solidify the people. A *real Gypsy* knows her own language and won't escape it: It will be passed on from generation to generation, as an oral tradition. At least, all this time, except those rare Gypsy editions, this is the way it *has been*. Certainly, this has to be changed. But to do it, the *language* itself has to be *transitioned to a different status*. *Books* have to be published. There has to be a *necessity*. *What* kind of books should they be? These have to be *textbooks*. So there has to be a *methodology*. Why is the dispute going on? There exist *several groups*, several Gypsy languages, or dialects. Lovare do not get along with Servi. Kishinevtsi do not get along with Lovare. Servi do not get along with either of them. The Vlaxhs keep aside. Whenever there is a talk of creating a common language, at once all these groups begin to reject the idea. It has been happening in Europe to date. And notice: A dictionary is created by Kalderari, another one by Lovari, yet another one by Servi. Whatever is done in other countries is done artificially. I do not think it is necessary. Again [distinctly]: *Time can determine everything*. But *now, schools*—therefore there have to be the schools. If the *schools*, therefore there has to be a *system* of education, if they are to be *Gypsy separate* ones. But nevertheless, *math* has to be studied, *history* has to be studied, both of one's own people and not of one's own people. The *language*. In class, you would have representatives of ten groups: Lovare, Russka Roma, Vlaxhs, Kotlyare. How would you teach them? In what language? Certainly there has to be some kind of *scholarly Gypsy council*, but not the kind that only *pulls over onto himself* and to date they can't reach consensus [Drawing in smoke, pause. Suddenly he shouted]. UNDERSTAND? If perhaps,

perhaps—but then again today is different—perhaps if there was a *country*, a *country*, then perhaps there much of this would have been solved in a different way. In a natural way. That what was to live would—and all of the *husk* would have *gone aside*. Were it done naturally, a sea of mistakes, but without these trials, without mistakes—[yelling] And there is *no*—the most *important* is missing, understand? *There is no all-world consolidation*. Understand? There is *dissociation*.

I asked him whether this solidarity existed at least in the artistic field, internationally, whether it was feasible.

Again, everything depends on—as in a saying, *po odyozhke rastya-* [He paused and improvised, inverting the stable word order] *nozhki rastyagivai*, meaning that the roominess of one's clothes determines how far out one should stretch his *legs*. If the resources existed—material ones! Believe me, the least we could do would be to *unite all* the theaters of Europe, carry out an interesting project, and find the *idea* of today's Gypsy theater. What? It's *purpose*. What is it *for*? And it would be *super-interesting* if they were *not the same*. They are not the same anyway, but it would be possible to make one theater purely *political* [with excitement], which would raise the issues the Gypsies are facing and would produce such dramaturgy that it would *sbivala mozgi—knock down the brains* of those sitting in the audience! By the way the issues are stated! By candid *conversation*! By *forms*! That is, it would be possible to do this. That is, that theater could function as in its own time the Theater on Taganka—the *Tribune* theater, where people hurried to hear [whispers], “What's there? What's there?”—to get food for *razum, thought*. That kind of theater the Gypsies *must* have. They must have *ballet*. Dance group. Just a dance group. A big one. They must have a Gypsy choir. A big one. A *symphony orchestra* there should be. A Gypsy one. Imagine what it would be if they are all united in one action!

I asked whether he felt a similar kind of synergy with theaters in Kiev. “Well,” he said, “we certainly cooperate. But nonetheless, understand, in this kind of *s-s-s-s-k-oo-dnost' zhiznennaya* [his voice hissed and howled up]—*s-s-s-k-a-a-a-r-c-c-c-ity* of life—everyone, everyone is dealing in his own *bog* and is *sizzling* in his own *juices!*”

I wondered whether what he called the “bog” and the “juices” applied to other organizations, including Romani.

“Understand—once again—the springing up of Romani organizations and the *idea*? [He impersonated someone questioning] Why did you? And why did you? And you—why did you ‘organize’ yourselves?” Unfortunately, why are they becoming organized now? They have found out that there are some sort of foundations out there and they could *urvat'—snatch* something for themselves. This is the reason for the proliferation of these organizations. There is *nothing*

else there! What is there, in essence? Well, Aladar is doing a *super-useful thing*: a newspaper, magazines. But then again—the *nation does not appreciate* it. And what about other organizations? The only reason they are there is because they found out that, “Aha! There are some funds over there—we could *dyornut*’—jerk something out of there.” But what is the result of all these projects? The accountability of implementation? The outcome? Look, they have created in Prague the all-European Gypsy Parliament. So how do we cooperate with them? Should we be feeling their presence? What is their chemistry with us? Do we seem interesting to them or not? As to me, I think *emu do feni voobsche*—he *doesn’t give a damn*! And ideally it would seem that it should reach out to everyone, especially to such cultural centers. Or there, in Germany, in Heidelberg, Romani Roza, they have created a stunning city with offices, exhibitions, concert hall, but they are closed in their own shell of Roma-Sinti problems, understand? He does not give a damn¹³³ about dealing with someone else. He is trying to prove to the entire world that Roma-Sinti are superior... Romani Roza is at the head of that center and he was in charge of the exhibition that was set up in Oswiencym in one of the barracks, which was dedicated to all the Gypsies who perished in Oswiencym. But even there he is trying to prove that it is the Sinti who bore the greatest loss. He is on that wave over there.

Romani spirit is what makes us Romani theater.

What makes us Romani theater? You do, as a spectator. But first and foremost, *dukh*—the spirit that we carry. *Faktura*. We do not need to play Gypsies: Real, true Gypsies come out and show what they can do.”

I asked him whether “Romance” has the same tradition of artistic dynasties that Theater *Romen* is known for.

But you understand: Theater *Romen* is 70 years old and we are 10. Theater *Romen* was staffed by the artists, descendants of the Gypsy choirs that worked in Strel’na, throughout Moscow, and in Piter. Those dynasties had been formed *before* Theater *Romen* was founded. As to my theater, first of all, in Ukraine there aren’t as many dynasties. In Uzhgorod, there are dynasties of musicians. And here, who is here? The Korzhovs have a deep dynasty, from grandmothers and great grandmothers, who worked in Gypsy choirs. They all worked in Russia, but they are considered to be here in Ukraine. The entire Slichenko line is a dynasty because there are many artists there. Zhemchuzhnye also come from Ukraine, but they have left for Russia and lived their entire lives there. Our Lida Limanskaya is a fourth or fifth generation in a dynasty, but she is also from Russia. Igor Portanenko is also from a dynasty, but they have worked in Russia *all their lives*. Arkasha Yurchenko is also from artistic family. These are some *representatives* of dynasties, but here the dynasties still have to be *created*, they have to be created

¹³³ *Emu na-hren* (Russian).

here. Our studio *Amalyata* has existed for 2 years. There are two boys and one girl whom I think I will transfer here, to the senior group.

Studio, too, needs an *idea*. I am *against* the present practice of focusing only on dance. So now I have given them a play by Mixa Kozimirenko and we will try to stage it, with songs, with dances—a musical play entirely in Romani language. We will see how it turns out. But here again are problems. There are kids there from different Gypsy groups: Kishinevtsy, Lovare, Servi. They all speak various dialects. Go ahead and try to *zagnat'*—*drive them all in one language!* This is why I'm saying, why do we need to think up *one* language? The books can be published in Lovari, in Kotlyari, the main thing is there has to be *as many as possible*. And most importantly, they have to be *read*. Not like it is now. For instance, I give Mixa's book to my pedagogue and say, "Here's a book, take a look, in Romani language. Read this play." "Oh!" he makes a face. Such is the pedagogue's attitude. If I see a Gypsy book somewhere, or a Gypsy author, my interest is of entirely *different* kind. The language does not matter to me. A *Gypsy* wrote it.

The staff.

We have 15 actors, one accountant/administrator, and one stage worker/light technician. We have a manager and we work with theater agencies that organize tours, but unfortunately it is far from the desired. We participate in international European festivals, but mostly it's Russia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Poland. Unfortunately, here is our weakest spot, because we *do not have an international office*, which would deal exactly with this—information, correspondence, translation, that is someone who could sit there for 24 hours a day, competent in foreign languages, that is, like it should be.

Our actors' education varies widely. Some have graduated from conservatory, others—some schools such as dance, and others do not have any formal professional education, except for what they learned at home, visually, as in a dynasty. And those without such formal education constitute the majority, they obtain education here, after they join us.

Theater's audience.

Thank God! Our audience is very diverse, of various generational and national groups. That is, we do not target only Gypsy audience. One can see an American, French, Gypsy, Ukrainian spectator, that is, any. The same is true about age, which I like: that we do not have only the so-called *moth-balls*,¹³⁴ or the old guys, 70–80 years old¹³⁵ who come to hear us. Audience includes the *young people*, the middle-aged, and the elderly—all, all, all, all ages. It is very delightful that the theater is beginning to have *its own* audience who *love* us and come to see *us*.

¹³⁴ *Naftalina netu* (Russian).

¹³⁵ In Ukraine, free tickets to certain otherwise unpopular performances and some movie theaters are distributed among the retired.

The non-Romani audience discovers our culture for themselves, and it seems interesting to them. Our own come here *as to their own home*. And if the non-Romani spectator focuses attention at the action on stage, the Romani spectator can at that time share impressions or... say [He impersonated, imitating harsh timbre and Romani prosodic features¹³⁶], “*Man’ka, vo dzhilia pala Rrom ta sia abjav avela. Tu aves e chinia?* [Yelling] *Na aves? Then dzha tu proch!*”¹³⁷ Understand? This is what can go on during the performance. Or someone has bought a beautiful *fur coat*, and they need to *make a statement!* There [He got up and demonstrated]. They can get up and *hang out* in front of the stage like this [demonstrating], in that entire fur coat, with all those [demonstrating] *chains*, and yell [Yelling], “Lyalya! Shunes?”¹³⁸ Tomorrow I am expecting you for a glass of tea. Come by.” And would turn around like that in front of everybody. *Otval*—Cool. That, that, that kind of thing. But there is no point in being offended by this. Again, everything depends on culture [laughing] and other things. There are very many Gypsies who watch in a normal way and perceive it. And there are like those I described.

In the past 5 years, we have shown performances throughout Ukraine: in the western, Poltava, Donetsk, and Dnepropetrovsk regions. How do the locals treat us? Well, *to date they haven’t beaten us up*¹³⁹. After we leave, there are only the best impressions, wonderful reception. Although before that, on the phone, they begin, [impersonating, with disappointment, emphasizing the Ukrainian pronunciation of “g” in the word Tsygane, Gypsies] “Well, but they are Gypsies.” But then [“the Gypsies”] arrive, and they *see*—the behavior, the concerts, the performances—then certainly the attitude *changes absolutely*. That is, they think, “The *horde* will arrive, brin-brin-brin something there and then will scam.” And here arrive normal, cultured people, who do not rob anyone, *do not get drunk*, do not fall down.

Why Igor Krikunov dislikes the word “emancipation” and how he targets young audiences.

Igor Krikunov laughed, took a long pause, smoked:

One answer could be—I personally, I would [sighing—Oh!]*—I wouldn’t want that*—Again. The nation could dissolve and perish. [with difficulty] *I don’t know!* Understand? A *politician* might have an entirely different view of it. As to me, a *person of creativity*, I don’t know! If the people *dissolve*, the *poetry* would be gone. To me, the *colors* would be gone. Look, I receive *pleasure*, when I see Gypsy women wearing dressy *skirts* walking in Kreshchatik, understand? Just that—that’s *beauty*. I’m leaving out the fact that now they are going to start

¹³⁶ What Bakhtin called “parodic stylization,” which verges on a rejection of any unmediated seriousness (1996, p. 312). The stratification of language, its speech diversity, is indispensable for comic style.

¹³⁷ Man’ka, she is going to get married to a Rom and there will be a wedding. Do you have the earrings? [Yelling] You don’t? Then get out of here! (Romani).

¹³⁸ Lyalya! Do you hear? (Romani).

¹³⁹ *Nu, poka ne bili* [humor].

fortune-telling there. But just *that* is beautiful. In this *concrete* of today [his voice pitched high. The entire Bolshevik palace of culture is a huge monolith of concrete], in this *drabness*, suddenly appears [with endearment] *something like this*. But it is *great*! At once there is *dukh—spirit*! There is at once *history*, everything! Just in that, understand? But that has to be *reinforced*. Understand? *Krepost’—Fortress*¹⁴⁰.

So I don’t know, I am the other way around, I am trying to *preserve* [sighing], instead of *crawling* right in that [emancipation]. It has *never originated from the inside of the people*. Perhaps because there has never been a will do deal with it. In the *mass consciousness* it probably still does not exist [the will]. [I asked whether it existed in any layers or groups]. Well, look—Last year was the very *peak*—all the Gypsy young people started singing *soul*, completely breaking away with their own individuality—by singing *soul* while getting information. But then again: that soul is not from here. Understand? It came *from over there!* From *your* country. Understand? And sure enough, their *appearance* has begun to change. That *style* does not only affect their music. They undergo metamorphoses. They also begin finding out: What is it *around* soul? What’s behind it? What kind of people? Aha! *African Americans*¹⁴¹. Blacks. What is *Black fashion*? Aha, it is like *this*. And the *clothes* they wear? I see. And the mannerisms, movement? Aha, like that. And they themselves begin to *behave* like *that!* [he shouted, very emotionally. I asked what’s wrong with that.] But why do I have to behave like an *African American*?! [he tossed a match box] What attracts them is that *zalihvatstvo—devil-may-care attitude! Unbridledness!* Such *freedom*, which even the *Gypsies* do not have! Understand? Which is *propagated* through video-clips and everything! Look, they are all like this [he demonstrated, even with the tone of voice] all *stebayutsya*¹⁴²—are *defiant, raskreposhchennye—emancipated/unshackled*¹⁴³. Understand? And naturally, this is what the young people *like!* But then again, it is the *outsiders’* perspective: *gadje* think that *ame Roma*—free, unshackled! That’s it. But as a matter of fact it turns out all are *oppressed*, because *ignorant!* Understand? And here they see *naglyadnuyu agitatsiyu—visual agitation!* [impersonating, changing voice, mixing languages, mocking tone]. Aha! O! *I vone kale i ame kale!* They are black and we are black! Aha! Understand? And here something in the subconscious begins, some sort of *pupovina vyazhetsya—belly cord ties up* with that.

Terminology aside, the theater has to appeal to the young audience. *Willy-nilly*, the play based on Pushkin’s “Gypsies” we made at the *time juncture*, that is we took a *story* from the century before last and transformed it into *today* and today’s *relationships*. Further, along with folk music we included *contemporary* arrangements, remixes, and performance style. Then dance: on the *folk*

¹⁴⁰ *Krepost’* in Russian is a polysemantic noun. Other meanings are: stronghold, strength, solidity, fortitude, strength of spirit.

¹⁴¹ *Negry* [Russ.].

¹⁴² To mock, to defy, to fight, to tease (Baldaev, 1997, p. 60; Nikitina, 1998, pp. 422-423).

¹⁴³ Krikunov played with layered semantic meanings here. The Russian equivalent of “emancipated” is more transparent of the original meaning dating back to slavery, or in Russian culture—serfdom. Another meaning is “without fortress/stronghold/strength/fortitude,” i.e., without what Krikunov thought should reinforce the beauty in a Romani woman.

foundation, we included contemporary movements in the Gypsy dances. During the performance, a *car* drove out on the stage instead of a wagon, and the *motorcycles: tabor of today*. Our wish here was to reach the young audience as soon as possible and to establish contact with them. Only speaking *their language* one would be able to *find contact* with them. [Excitedly] That is, when they see these contemporary movements, contemporary text, all that contemporary *slang* that we use in our performance, and songs, including the *soul* style, they *immediately* allow contact with you, *they like it*. The Gypsy and Non-Gypsy youth alike *vedutsya odinakovo*—are *digging it*.

*State language on Romani stage: Double intenders.*¹⁴⁴

[Igor admitted that Pushkin's "Gypsies" was no longer performed.] It's been about a year since we froze it. *Derzhavna mova*—*State language*. Our new production and the *original text* on which it was based have attracted attention. The fact that even our actors¹⁴⁵ perform the play in Ukrainian *mova* is important. And I think that [he switched to Ukrainian and played with pronunciations and meanings] *DERZHAVNOY movoyu* [the state language] *ty povynyen, povynyen, povynen, yes?*—[he switched back to Russian] you *must* be proficient in [the word he repeated with changed vowel sounds brought to the surface an otherwise opaque meaning of obligation, debt, and guilt, as among vassals of a lord, the latter not infrequently foreign in Ukraine]. You see? [The following has been pointed to him many times by state representatives in charge of culture¹⁴⁶]. This is a *minus*. If you live in the state which has its own language, you must know *it*, as well as *your own*, if you are a representative of [pausing] *natsmenschyna*, or *bol'shyna* [he coined a word for the majority by analogy with the abbreviation by which all non-Ukrainians are labeled in Ukraine today]. There. Therefore conclusion: I will be working *not among the barbarians all the time*, but towards *civilization*—to *Germany*. They speak their own language and simultaneously switch to Spanish and then to French. Why, is it bad? [Sarcastic tone in the last few lines].

¹⁴⁴ In this section, as in a few other cases above, Krikunov employed what Bakhtin called the "intentional bilingual hybrid." It is compounded of two orders: one linguistic (a single language) and one stylistic. In parodic discourse two styles, two "languages" (both intra-lingual) come together and to a certain extent are crossed with each other: the language being parodied (here, the language of the Ukrainian state) and the language that parodies (familiar conversational language). This second parodying language, against whose background the parody is constructed and perceived, does not enter as such into the parody itself, but is invisibly present in it" (1996, p. 75). Every type of intentional stylistic hybrid is more or less dialogized. This means that the languages that are crossed in it relate to each other as do rejoinders in a dialogue; there is an argument between languages, an argument between styles of language. But it is not a dialogue in the narrative sense; rather it is a dialogue between points of view, each with its own concrete language that cannot be translated into the other. Thus every parody is an intentional dialogized hybrid. Within it, languages and styles actively and mutually illuminate one another (p. 76).

¹⁴⁵ All Romani actors of the group are Russophone. They perform in Ukrainian and not Russian or Romani.

¹⁴⁶ Mila Krikunova, his wife, private communication.

Gypsy Muse: First Ukrainian play on Romani stage.

There is simply no other material of such *class* in the contemporary literature, where it would be *told* about the Gypsies in such way, such *Gypsy problem* discussed, with such deep *penetration* inside this problem. In contemporary literature, of non-Gypsies, I do not know of anyone who wrote what Lina wrote. Although she has taken just a story of a poet. Perhaps that was the *irritator* that prompted her to write.

I play the stepfather. On the one hand, he is supposed to *guard*, to be *Cerberus* of the Gypsy tabor *laws* and moral principles, to protect that Gypsy institute. On the other hand—When a *heretic* on a ship yells that the ship is sinking—right?—exactly what Papsuca does... She says, “The nation is perishing because...” and gives *convincing evidence*. And the father, on the one hand understands that he should staunchly guard [the laws and moral principles] and on the other he understands that it is *new life*, *new trends*, and it is clear that one would not survive by the *roadside*, only *there*, by keeping one’s laws and traditions. No matter what, sooner or later that life would *interfere* and would *trample* you, if you are *not ready* to establish *contact* with it. And so, certainly, *inside him* too the *lomka-breaking* is happening, and he too is *thinking* and *is tormented* throughout the play. He is a *normal person* who is beginning to *discover* and he understands the Gypsy people, Gypsy life, all the principles and traditions.

I shared with Igor, “It is my personal perception, but when I watched the play, and especially when I saw you yell, ‘*Nenavydzhyy yogo...*’” Igor picked up, “*bezmirnu temnotu*.¹⁴⁷” “It is *mine*, *lichnostnoye-personal*. It is Krikunov who *krichit*—yells [he played with words]. It is *not the character*. In *this*, in *this* particular *phrase* I—my *personal* one, and *not the character*.”

Romani theater in Kiev’s cultural milieu.

There are 22 theaters in Kiev. So long as they are here, *people come*. Children’s and puppet theaters for kids, children’s musical theaters, opera and ballet theater, Lesya Ukrainka Russian drama theater, Ivan Franko Ukrainian drama—academic, national, everything here is clear. And the *small* theaters seem to be doing fine, such as *Koleso—Wheel, Bravo, Theater on Podol*. There are quite a few. Since they have from 20 to 60 seating capacity, they are fine. I would have looked at them if they had large concert *halls* like ours. Had we 90 seats, we would have been working at *pere-anshlag*, *over-full* house! We have 550.

We are still *conquering* positions for the theater in our theatric Kiev. Everything depends here on the future plans, on the plays we *are going to produce*, on the *level* of our entrance into this *common theater family*. [I asked

¹⁴⁷ I hate their boundless darkness/ignorance.

whether it has become any easier to establish a Romani theater after the Soviet collapse].

What are you talking about! You know how much, how much [he used a euphemism] *bad stuff had to be eaten* to get the status of just the *municipal* national theater! And even so, now it became a merit of those who had *signed* the paperwork. I *dealt with it* all by myself from the very beginning, and there were people there who *wouldn't stir*. Luckily, the right situation came about. My good acquaintance at one time was received in one office. I gave him that letter because otherwise it would have never reached the addressee. And he just entered and stated the fact. Read. Signed [he made motion and noise of signing something]. After that, when everyone saw [he brought to life the “showing the document” scene] the *signature* [pause] of the Chief [pause] there was nothing they could do about it. Only then they began to stir. And had I started a proper route through all those instances? What are you talking about! But now everyone is going to use it as his own political accomplishment and yell: “We took an active part in the creation of...” No one had even raised a finger!

Now that we exist, we need to *keep proving*. Every day. Every minute we need to keep proving that you [switched to a non-literary style of vowel pronunciation to portray a typical not-so-sophisticated state representative] *can do something*, can show something interesting. There is no other way. If tomorrow you stumble, everyone would defecate all over you.

In this sense, perhaps it was easier for the Theater *Romen* because of the existing structure—it was created within the state. A totally different thing—Understand, the theater's *level* is determined by its *repertory policy*. Despite being of Jewish nationality,¹⁴⁸ Barkan, who directed theater *Romen* for 25 years managed to create complex productions. Certainly, not without politics—that would have been impossible back then. [He illustrated the official discourse of the time] *Romen* is the only in the world Gypsy theater of the Gypsies, and as such it could only come into being in the Soviet Union and only under the Soviet power, because over there, there is nothing of the kind. Capitalists would not create anything like this over there because they do not like the Gypsies, and we, on the contrary—It's just that back then it was *clean politics*. Nevertheless, *he* somehow managed under those conditions not to produce purely constitutional¹⁴⁹ plays. True, we did have plays that crossed revolution and crossed the war, but they did not have that bogus *placatnost'*—*posterness* that Slichenko introduced later. On the contrary: His performances [expressively]—it was such Gypsy *dukh*-spirit! Such *faktura pyorla otovsyudu*—character willed out heavily from everywhere! And there were comedies—how many comedies there were! Just from the contemporary life of the Gypsies—in cities and in villages. It was more the Gypsy theme that was explored rather than something like “I am a communist,” “I am an oil driller,” “I am this and that—intelligence agent-Gypsy.” Later they tried all the time to sort of—“Look, we are not dogs, we have *razvedchiki*-scouts—those that were in the enemy's rear, resistance heroes, exemplary collective farmers, and other heroes” [Long pause]. Barkan managed to collect the best actors. As soon as

¹⁴⁸ Krikunov meant “as compared to Romani Slichenko.”

¹⁴⁹ A hint at the new constitution of Ukraine as a binding discourse regime.

in a Gypsy ensemble somewhere a boy or a girl popped up, those blazing with talent, he immediately picked them up to his group. At that time, at the theater he collected the very best from all over the Soviet Union. And imagine: To keep them all in the group, to motivate them, so that no one—because in Estrada they could earn more than the salary at the time—and he [with great emotion] kept them all, and no one left, he motivated them, inspired them with love to the theater, to the parts they played. There. And from this one [Slichenko] everyone scampered about.

Funding and fundraising.

Well, the festivals are funded by the Renaissance, to cover our own needs now we will begin getting a kind of minimal subsidy from the state, no other funding, the rest we earn ourselves. [with emphasis] *Roma do not fund us.* [long pause] How do we do fundraising? You knock on the door, who opens, gives, who does not open—just keep walking. Right now all this is *very problematic*. In the past, a few years ago, it was easier because then there was a total *whorehouse*. Now, whatever they steal, they manage in a different way, because everyone wants it. In the past, for instance, once I came to one businessman, about 6 or 7 years ago. [impersonating] I say, “We need stage costumes.” “How much does it cost?” I say, “I will bring you the bill from the tailor shop.” “Bring it.” I brought him the bill, he, “Aha. Good. I will pay it.” That’s it. As soon as he paid, we dressed ourselves *s shikom*—with chic. Why? Well, he is *God*. He saw us in concert, he liked us. I think *this is* the only way it can happen, because all the big patrons have already been *divided* and each of them works according to their own schemes. Many of them reject us explaining that *we do not fit the format*, as they say, “Gypsy is not ours.” They sponsor gay ballet, Pugatcheva, Kirkorov—all those *vodka magnates*, “Yes, we will pay. And Gypsy—it’s not ours.” Mostly, this kind of attitude: “Gypsies.” [Long pause].

Two priorities: staffing and materialnaya baza.

First and foremost, the *staffing, staffing*. To give our theater an interesting and full-bloodied life, of vital importance is the staff,¹⁵⁰ therefore we need to attract as many *professionals* as possible. This is the first issue. And the second is *materialnaya baza*, which would allow us to work [sigh] as self-sufficient. Because with bad equipment, you won’t make anything of good quality; with bad decoration, you won’t surprise the audience; without the up-to-date super-light, which exists in today’s world, you will not create a masterpiece. [with inspiration] The video-row, the atmosphere that you need—it cannot be achieved with one light-bulb—in four—the atmosphere of one scene, one event would transcend into another—it has to be *drawn*, with *color*, the atmosphere of performance. Apart from what the actor creates, it has to be beautifully framed. Beautifully and

¹⁵⁰ He recycled the old communist slogan, *Kadry reshayut vsyo* [The cadre solve everything], giving a new spin to this staple of the communist cadre policy in the context of Romani theater.

precisely. Beautifully. Everything depends on the dramaturgy and the tasks. There. *Materialnaya baza. Materialnaya baza.* Not even the salary, but *materialnaya baza.*

Theater as media.

Everything depends on the *dObycha*-booty.¹⁵¹ Right now we do one-two new productions a year, but if we adapt ourselves well, we could easily stage three new plays a year.

The idea of festivals—it is an absolutely special kind of *festivity*. Every festival has a different theme. The idea of the first festival, where participants flocked from 12–14 different countries, was to show the art of the Gypsies who lived abroad. The second festival focused on the youth, to put the youth in the lime-light. At this year’s festival, the idea was to make the emphasis on the theater, but we could not do whatever we wanted, to finance the theaters.

In general, the meaning of festival movement is *mutual enrichment*. *Each of us shows one another what we are capable of to date*, and from that we get *food for thought, because information is progress*. This is what makes festival movement very useful. For example, we come to Poland and work out a program, and when we come to the next festival, the Polish group is synergistically working with us in our program! The memory of the festival lasts for a long time, and now they are already thinking, “What will the next one be like? What will it be?” The video programs about the festival can be transmitted and copied. Everyone wants to make a copy; everyone has them at home, thus the enormous significance, thanks to television.

Radio performance as a genre, unfortunately, is dead. It is only now that it is beginning to come back in Ukraine. About two attempts were made recently by Ukrainian theater directors to produce radio performances. And I have been considering it for a long time, we have about two plays ready to be produced as radio performances.

Also, I would like to make a TV version of our entire stage production to show on TV to a broader audience. For the younger students, a video program could be created of Mixa Kozimirenko, with his children’s poetry and riddles, and it would be better than the so-called *nedel’nye*-Sunday¹⁵² schools that everyone is arguing about. This will be more *accessible* and easier to *retain*.

¹⁵¹ By displacing the word-stress to the first syllable, Igor created a colloquial rough effect, which alongside his profound reflection and expertise created a humorous effect in conversations with him. Here the noun he used might also mean “predator’s prey.” He used to repeat a Russian proverb to illustrate the difficult times for his theater group, such as frequent trips and private concerts, *Volka nogi kormyat*, or “Wolf eats off his feet.”

¹⁵² A word-play, perhaps an intentional coin. Because all the grant applications to Renaissance foundation have to be written in Ukrainian and most Romani leaders speak Russian, they often use Ukrainian project names in their Russian speech, as was the case here, *nedil’ni*, instead of Russian *voskresnyie*. By pronouncing it as *nedel’naya shkola* in Russian, a second meaning creeps in, from the verb *ne delat’*—not to do, meaning the schools where not much is done.

Artistic plans.

First of all, it would be nice to increase the company to at least 25 people, because now all of us are *mnogostanochniki*¹⁵³—we sing and we dance. It is good, for a musical play, but not for a good ballet, which requires 8–15 people. Actors, we need at least *seven*. Actors proper. Then we could plan high goals and take up dramaturgy. There.

Certainly, certainly, we need to be working closely with *children*. First of all, to move beyond just the ballet or just vocal lessons. We need to do something to include Gypsy literature and history. As to language, we shall see, the process will show. Actor's mastership. Movement on stage. Speech. Everything that a *contemporary actor* needs—to equip them, to arm, and to teach. We need to introduce all these courses.

Everything else follows. Everything hinges on the dramaturgy and the *strength of the company*.

Dreams and visions.

My dream is to create an international theater center, here in this building—since we are becoming *khoziayeva*-proprietors here—where *the roads* of all the existing to date in the world theater musical companies *would intersect* and where they could be united in certain joint projects. And then from here we could work out itineraries and actions. To set up workshops where we could invite to the round-table all the *directors* of Master-class, ours as well as non-ours. So that it *burililo-sizzled* here! Certainly, the *ideal thing* to do would be to create a *cinema center* here, so that we could produce video, from clips to films—that would be *shikarno*-with chic. I have a lot of talented friends who could implement all these ideas: directors, technicians, both young and not so young. The artists. [with emotion] I know tremendous guys—the artists, who could—everything here! Dramaturges, poets! It could all churn here *tomorrow*! Yes, it would be great to create such Gypsy cultural center, operating 24 hours a day, so that everyone could come here—Roma and non-Roma—as if to their own home to receive any *information* they need. Libraries, video-libraries—I'm saying *everything*. To some extent, it already exists, but it should work full-bloodily. Understand? Danilkin should not *come* here, he should *live* here. Kozimirenko here should not come. He should *live* here.

I recalled another dream Igor sometimes mentioned, “And to Spain and throughout Spain—walking, on foot”—Igor intercepted it, “*To Hungary, to Spain*. Yes.” [He sighed].

¹⁵³ Workers, operating a number of machines simultaneously. The term goes back to the communist competition or movement, which encouraged simultaneous operation of a number of machines in the factories to raise the production effectiveness and cut the costs. Used here, produces a humorous effect.

*Plays by Igor Krikunov not to be produced.*¹⁵⁴

I take the literary material—be it dramaturgy, prose, or poetic genre—which helps me expose *the idea* on which I want to stage a performance [pause].

I have two plays I wrote myself, as a dramaturge. One is a purely *narrrodnaya*-folk comedy, *rrrrraunchy* folklore.¹⁵⁵ Characters are such *picturesque narrrodnye*, that is, *lubok*-grotesque.¹⁵⁶ And the other one is a tragedy, which I cannot stage, alas, because it could be quite a spectacle. *The Fire*¹⁵⁷ is a tragedy all tied up with sinews of a problem of religion—Catholicism. And how the Gypsies collided with this *monster*. And the whole story takes place in a *monastyr'*.¹⁵⁸ Well, the precise location is not specified. It could be on the border of Ukraine and Poland or—or—it could be in Western Ukraine. In those bygone years. Four comrades—what kind?—who make a living performing at the *fairs*, such *dzhigity*—daredevils, the lovers of bonfire and the sun, play various skits, criticize, ridicule whomever they want, sing and dance. They ride from town to town and from village to village—the romantics as they are, thus making a living. Well, simultaneously along the way *where something is not lying properly*—to lead a good-looking horse—away with them—they like it—the *artists*¹⁵⁹. And so in one of the towns they stopped and on the town square staged their performances, their concerts they staged. And they ridiculed human vices, and one of the locals, from the leadership, took it personally, and they have to be imprisoned. And they are chased. And they are trying to get away and save themselves. Well, *monastyr'* is where [pause] the entrance for the strangers is [pause] *prohibited*¹⁶⁰ [he sang out each of the three “Os” in this Russian word as in the Old Church Slavonic]. This is where they are forced to get in. They plead refuge. And it is a *nunnery* [I laughed picturing the plot possibilities the latter detail allowed]. Naturally, everyone there, as one, is *against*¹⁶¹ [tone of irony]. To put it short, here are the main events: They end up staying in the nunnery. They talk the *abbatrise* into it [he impersonated, in a pleading voice], “We will do any kind of work! What do you need to have done here? This-that-that—Only, only—that—”. *And they give them*¹⁶² [pause] *shelter*,¹⁶³ provided they do not get anywhere else: *in the dungeon*¹⁶⁴ they *sit* and carry out their *jobs*. Willy-nilly they

¹⁵⁴ As in pure production, “destined for a market restricted to producers” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 121).

¹⁵⁵ *Fol'klor razgooyai* [Russ]

¹⁵⁶ Cheap popular print made on linden board and sold in large numbers at the fairs in the early 1900s. Here equivalent of kitsch.

¹⁵⁷ Pozhar

¹⁵⁸ Abbey, either monastery or nunnery (in Russian both are *monastyr'*)

¹⁵⁹ Hudozhniki

¹⁶⁰ Nepozvolitel'no.

¹⁶¹ Among other meanings, an allusion to the unanimity of a Communist Party meeting, simultaneously with a Freudian theme.

¹⁶² Im dayut (this expression is double-edged in Russian, with a sexual connotation)

¹⁶³ Krov (*Krov* is an archaic synonym of *krysha*, i.e., roof, “To give roof” has become a widespread slang expression in the post-Soviet entrepreneurship, meaning to give patronage, to protect from racket, etc.)

¹⁶⁴ V podval'chike (the diminutive suffix -chik might impart the semantic meaning of confinement, that is small size, simultaneously with endearment).

come to witness the life of the nunnery. And there, all sorts of collisions begin, all sorts of conflicts, everything. Finally, the nuns revolt and everyone breaks out with the Gypsies outside, into freedom, into a *field, to the sun, to give birth to children*.¹⁶⁵ That's it. Having seen that these people are depriving themselves of *the most important, spiritually*, in a spiritual sense, they are convincing them, teaching them, instructing them. And this entire huge *hole Dom*¹⁶⁶ [pause] converts [pause] to Gypsies.¹⁶⁷ There. But this is a concise version I made for you to have an idea. There it is much more complex, with tragedies and, well, with death, of everyone. But it requires 15 actors, and what *powerful*¹⁶⁸ actors, because the roles are *such!* Why can't I stage these plays? Well, I have only two choices: Theater Romen—and Slichenko would never stage them! And here they would revolt, and the *clergy* would revolt against such play.

Certainly, I would have liked—it's good, because on top of everything inside the nunnery there is its own theater, canonical, which plays their *acts* very *pppowerfully*. And *this is where* the conflict begins, when the guys come there with *their own* theater. An interesting parallel conflict is played out, because that theater influences *to cloak, to clam down* the souls, and this one, on the *contrrrrrrrrrry*, to open up.¹⁶⁹ An interesting conflict between those two theaters.

Summary: Homage to the Roots

The returning of culture to its own roots is the striving to descend into the depths, in the engendering soil of the past, to comprehend one's archetypal truth. Bakhtin, focusing on Rabelais and Gogol as the portrayers of popular consciousness, particularly stressed the importance of a return to the origin (*iznachal'nost'*), as in a return to the vivid popular speech. Rejecting the normative vision of development as linear movement ahead, he proposed that every significant step ahead was accompanied with a return to the origin, "or rather the renewal of origin." "Only memory can move ahead, not oblivion. Memory returns to the origin and renews it," he wrote (1990, p. 533). The terms "ahead" and "back" in this sense lose their closed absoluteness, revealing in their interaction the vivid and paradoxical nature of movement. Applied to language and literature, such a return means the restoration of active generated memory to its entire

¹⁶⁵ *Rozhat' detej* (Russian). Bakhtin on Rabelais' imagery (1990): "The movement in time is guaranteed by the birth of new and new generations... Not the biological body which only repeats itself in new generations, but the body of the historic, progressing mankind is at the center of this system" (p. 406).

¹⁶⁶ Mahina

¹⁶⁷ Uhodit v Tsygany (creatively broke away from "ujti v monastyr"—to take the veil or to take the vow).

¹⁶⁸ Moshchnyh

¹⁶⁹ A conflict similar to Latin *parodia sacra*, or what Bakhtin called a never-ending folkloric dialogue: the dispute between a dismal sacred word and a cheerful folk word (1996, p. 76).

generated heritage of significations (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 533; Likhachev, 1989, pp. 145–146). The act of laughter is one of the means of such restoration-rejuvenation (Ibid.). “The grotesque leads one beyond the limitations of the seeming (false) singularity and stability of the existing world... A person returns to oneself” (p. 57).

Besides laughter, the cultural heritage the Romani theater director brings to the contact zone is expressed through Romani songs, sayings, and poetry from the past and present. He created an uplift narrative by turning to the poetry of such Russian classics as A. S. Pushkin, admired for his “elevation of the spirit” (Likhachev, 1989, p. 153), “transforming and elevating force” (p. 154), “theater of word and thought” (p. 158), and the “elevating role of memory and reminiscences” (p. 152). Some of the plays cannot be staged as they “do not fit the format” of the Ukrainian national idea¹⁷⁰ and repertoire politics.

The cultural and creative consciousness, as Bakhtin reminded us, lives in an actively polyglot world (1996, p. 12). Languages throw light on each other: One language can, after all, see itself only in the light of another language. Bakhtinian clash, or the sense of a duel between more widely implicated forces, came to the fore in the conversation with Igor Krikunov, finding its reflection in juxtaposed Russian, Ukrainian, and Romani further diversified by the socio-ideological stratification and heteroglossia that lives “so long as a language is alive and still in the process of becoming” (Bakhtin, 1996, pp. 290–292). Throughout the dialogue, Krikunov’s idea revealed its various facets, nuances, and possibilities; it entered into relationships with other life-positions, thereby acquiring the contradictory complexity and comprehensiveness of an idea-force, being born, living, and acting in the great dialogue and calling back and forth to kindred ideas of other epochs. Before us rises up an image of the idea (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 89).

*Three Winter Days at the Bolshevik Palace of Culture*¹⁷¹

Igor Krikunov is said to have referred to his theater group as the Family. Working there, I never heard anyone mention the word, but my son and I felt surrounded with a familial spirit. A spirit of closeness and warmth powered the theater. Rather than theorize

¹⁷⁰ As described in Pavlychko, 2002.

it, I have used the next sections to introduce you to some of the action backstage. Each of the following three sections chronicles the events of one day. Together, they span over two months of the long winter holidays in Ukraine, a busy time for the Family. At night they gave concerts in the homes of the new rich and in their nightclubs; on the weekends they went on tour in the theater minivan, and during the day they were back at the Bolshevik Palace of Culture, where we will go next and discover the Family.

Day One. December 16, Monday. In the Depth of the Centuries

It was -15 C outside and not much warmer inside, the building was barely heated. I came to the theater to talk with Igor about the Biennial Festival in Greece the group wanted to attend. By the cigarette smoke in the hallway I could tell “everyone’s home.” Sveta and Mila greeted me in the office. Sveta was the theater’s accountant and administrator, very dedicated to her job. Because she and Mila were always together at the office, for some time I thought they were sisters, and I was surprised to find out Sveta was not Romani.

Sveta was typing the list of addresses for the officials and organizations scheduled to receive the New Year greetings from the theater: President Kuchma, Mayor Omel’chenko, parliamentarian Poplavsky (the Rector of the University of Culture that many Roma attend), *Vidrodzhennya* (Renaissance Foundation), parliamentarian Surkis (the owner of the Kiev *Dynamo* soccer team), Moscow Theater *Romen*, restaurants, and TV and radio stations. Having translated the e-mail accumulated over the weekend, I showed Mila the new photo prints. Igor appeared in the doorway wearing a big Russian hat of silver fox. The three of us shared the small space of the office—two desks and three chairs—and took turns, moving from chair to chair to get to the phone, seemingly like the game musical chairs. The small heater cranked up the heat. Mila poured water from the German electric boiler and made us strong, sweet coffee in elegant cups. “Good coffee has to be sweet,” she always said.

We looked through an article in the *PIK* magazine I brought about the Fund of Intellectual cooperation, created by Bogdan Gubsky and aimed at “preservation and

¹⁷¹ This section is based on the author’s fieldnotes.

augmentation of Ukraine’s greatest treasure—intellect.”¹⁷² Igor recognized Bogdan Gubsky’s name, commenting, “We used to be very close before he got into politics.” He read the names of the award recipients, Miroschnichenko, Olyalin.... “They are the titans of culture, legends. Children’s fund? Are there talented Romani children? All children are talented. Yes, certainly we could find... There was one girl who was very talented, before her breasts became too big.”¹⁷³ I wondered whether Igor or Mixa Kozimirenko could participate in this intellectual think tank. “But do we fit?” Igor asked, “the format?” he added. “Because everyone is telling us that we do not fit the format. We are beyond the format.”¹⁷⁴ Igor and Mila stepped out into the hallway to have a smoke, and I joined them. Igor continued, “As soon as someone mentions the Gypsies, he is told that they are beyond the format. Nothing can be done nationally.”¹⁷⁵ I remarked that it was obvious at the Romani Language Day, held at the University of Culture, where the theater made a presentation, in a very “controlled” environment. Igor nodded, “And that time management. What was it?” He impersonated the woman-professor and began pulling me by the sleeve with impatience, saying in Ukrainian, “There, enough of this gab. Finish up!”¹⁷⁶ How is it possible? You are a professor at the University of Culture! Here is our Gypsy poet, our national pride, and you are not letting him say what he has to say!” He copied her again, “*Dosyt’ balachok!*—Enough of the gab! Now show us your singing and dancing! What culture are we talking about?”

I went back to the Romani language day and recalled how the professor-hosts highlighted that it was their idea to hold the festival. Igor agreed,

Yes, because only *they* can be the initiators. “WE did it.” It is always like this. *Dlya galochki*—For the record. In the Minorities Council, when they hold a meeting, it is only *dlya galochki*: *Chto my takoye meropriyatie proveli*—That we held such event. It is impossible to work on a national level. [*Natsional’no nichego sdelat’ nel’zya.*] I have a new play. It needs costumes, decorations. Where to get money for this? And our TV. Do you know how much they are asking to be put on TV? The national TV is creating a New Year’s Eve gala show, and they want \$1,500 to be included! Where would an artist get such an amount?

¹⁷² *PIK*, 2002, N45 (176), p. 39.

¹⁷³ Igor alluded to the cruel reality of show business.

¹⁷⁴ А мы вписываемся? В формат. Нам ведь все говорят, что мы в формат не вписываемся. Мы вне формата. (Russian)

¹⁷⁵ Национально ничего сделать невозможно.

¹⁷⁶ Ну, досить вже балачок! Закінчуйте! (Ukrainian)

[*Razve u artista est' stol'ko deneg?*] And it's the First National—the Dead Channel.

“When I asked them,” Mila said, “‘Why do you put us on *Gravis*? No one watches it,’ [She impersonated the media manager in Ukrainian] ‘Because you are outside of the format [*Тому що ви поза форматом*].’ [Mila switched back to Russian] It would be different if you sang Ukrainian songs.” And I retored, “But we sing Ukrainian ones ALSO. Only Taisia Povalii can perform with them, and the others have to pay SO MUCH!” Then Mila remembered a point and said to Igor, “Igor, by the way, people from the M1 channel¹⁷⁷ called. They keep getting phone calls about your program. Their ratings went up, and viewers say this was one of the best shows in a long time.”

The TV show Mila mentioned was *Guten Morgen*, the newest interactive morning show on weekdays from 7 to 9 a.m. On Friday morning, December 13, my friend Irina called to ask me to turn the TV to *MusOne*¹⁷⁸ Channel. I immediately saw a group of young theater performers and Igor Krikunov sporting a Kalmyk *khalat* and hat, his friend's present.

I present the transcript below as an example of the theater's work with young audiences. Krikunov bridges the generational gap with young audiences through humor, slang, self-parody, and other attributes of pop-culture.

The young hosts Slava and Kuz'ma, from the group Skryabin, are taking telephone calls to the studio.

A young male caller asks how long the Gypsy wedding lasts, Krikunov responds, “A month, in general,” to sighs of surprise. The same caller asks Igor what musical groups or songs he likes, contemporary or not contemporary, and he answers, “I've been reared on *Beatles* [*Ya na Beatles vospitan*]” [laughter in the audience] And I like BLACK music. As to the guys, they have their own tastes, say Vanya [he looked at Vanya, paused and laughed], he can't stand any music.

A young female caller asks Igor who writes the songs for them and what they want to express in their songs for the people. She adds, “How should I say it—what do you press upon the people [k chemu vy ih podtalkivayete]?” Krikunov responds with amazing immediacy, “*Creativity* [*k sozidaniyu*].” And then explains, “As to the songs we write, contemporary songs are *few*. Mostly, we dig up the *old folk* songs, *music* themes—this is our *source* [*ottuda u nas dzerelo*—he uses a Ukrainian word for source, *dzherelo*], and we are trying to keep up with the pace of today and make them in *arrangement* and in *thought* [*v mysli*].

¹⁷⁷ M1, a 24-hour music channel founded in 2001.

¹⁷⁸ In Russian this creative spelling is pronounced *muzone* and means “music” in the language of the new generation.

Because the *Gypsy* songs that are all the way from there, from the depth of the *centuries*, by their *meaning* and *text* are *so philosophical* and so wise that today people do not even *think*, reflect in such way as in *that* time. Therefore we do have nourishment. As to the contemporary Gypsy songs, the young people make them too, but unfortunately—“

A young man interjects, “Even about the police!” perhaps referring to Leonid Sandulenko who has sung many Soviet songs. The female host interrupts the conversation to view music video clips. When they come back to the Theater Romance, they pull off a dynamic introduction with fiddles, drums, and a tambourine. “Pokhel, pokhel!” shouts Igor to the refrain, that is “dance, dance.” A woman supports, “A-shti! O-o-oh!” And the singers support the dancers performing a “butterfly” move with their skirts, Shti-shti-shti-shti! Op-op-op.... The music goes faster and faster: shti-shti-shti! Op-op-op—then VERY fast! “Bravvv-o-o-o!” yells everyone in the studio.

The woman host takes a call from the caller named Sveta, “Sveta, let’s ask a question quickly and cheerfully!” Sveta asks, “How do you rest after concerts?” Someone in the studio laughs. “Just like you’ve seen them,” the host attempts to respond. Krikunov takes over, “The concert finishes—and everything starts again! [*I po novoj vsyo poshlo!*] More songs! More dancing! 24 hours-a-day like this.” A young male caller asks in Ukrainian how the Gypsies take it when someone “e-e-eh wants to meet a Gypsy woman.” “O-o-oh!” sighs Krikunov, “God forbid! In such case—at once my fur stands on end! [*srazu sherst’ dybom!*]” “Whoa! Easy now. I get it,” says the caller.

Then a young host sits down, and beautiful Lilya Limanskaya looks at his hand, “Oj-joj-joj-joj!” she shakes her head. “Only quietly,” the guy begs her, “do not say everything for them to hear.” “Aj-jaj-jaj-jaj!” she continues, “a BI-I-IG love is awaiting you, such love that you won’t believe yourself.” A fiddle softly suggests a Moldovan Romani tune. “A guy? A woman?” wonders the host. The audience laughs. The “fortune teller” continues in a sweet voice, “You know, I cannot see who.” “Take a better look!” suggests the host. The beautiful fortune-teller is choking on her laughter, “Either a man or a woman—I can’t tell,” and she continues, “Good career” [the fiddle played another tune]. “Awaiting?” wonders the man. “Good future. Look what a clear line you have here, do you see?” The man responds, “Is it interrupted right here or what is it? Is it interrupted?” he is alarmed. Lilya calms him down, “No, nothing to worry about. It means that something must have happened in your life, some sort of transformation. How much longer you’ve got to live? You will live a very long life!” “Really?” “Yes, you will live very long and happily.” “Can you see anything about potency over there?” “Everything will be fine with you.” “Normal?” “Everything is fine!” “Oh, Lilechka, thank you! [Exhaling very loudly] For such information...” Igor Krikunov is making him signs. The host comments, “Igor seems to want something...” He announces, “We will have a short commercial break here, while we settle our inner small problems [laughter in the studio]. Commercial, and then we will conclude.” The fiddle passes into a techno beat.

The six Ukrainian commercials filling the break are a small sample of the daily torrent targeting the young audience, especially during the pre-holiday season.

- **Five Drops Vodka.** [Macho voice] So what: five drops each? Trademark *Five Drops* presents! The contest: The Best Avto! Write down and send us your New Year's toast by December 27! If it becomes the best, you will address the nation on live television on New Years' Eve! And you will receive a video camera! Trademark *Five Drops*! RE-VO-LU-TION! OF YOUR WORLD!
- **Excite Chewing Gum.** [Dynamic music of drums, Spanish guitar. Yelling, a man coughs, then yells, A-a-a-a-a! Music stops. Male voice] *Excite* is a peppermint drop and then a chewing gum. New! [Drums] Feel the wild excitement! [Techno music accords]
- **Dar Fruit Juice.** [Seductive female voice] Love! Your Dar ["gift"].
- **Five Drops Vodka.** [Male voice] Priom,¹⁷⁹ priom, priom. Another priom. And we begin a RE-VO-LU-TION! On December 31, live, only on M-1. Elections of Santa's Helper!¹⁸⁰ [Happy voices: Yeah!] The best non-stop! And a distribution of elephants! Until four in the morning, call to the studio and congratulate whoever you want and however you want, staying in the boundaries of FIVE DROPS! Trademark Five Drops. RE-VO-LU-TION! OF YOUR WORLD! [Jingle Bells melody in the background].

Concluding this commercial break was an advertisement for a fashionable and prestigious new LG telephone and a commercial for a classical coffee from Brazil, MacCaffe Classik, set to Salsa music.

After the commercial break, the theater group sang *Shatritsa*, taught everyone to say "thank you" in Romani, wished everyone health and happiness, gave presents to the show hosts, and responded to the girl, Sasha, calling from the Donetsk Region with the question on where the audience was the most welcoming and where else the theater would like to perform. Igor responded,

I am simply grateful, grateful to the audience. After all, it is for the audience that we work, live, and perform. I would say that there wasn't a city where we would receive a bad reception. Our concerts always end with such emotional explosion of the audience, such applause, that we feel like repeating the concert anew. Therefore, a low bow to our audience, thank you, we work, live, and create for you!

And in conclusion, Igor cleared his throat and commanded, "*Poyekhali!*—Rip it!" And the group concluded the energizing show with a vibrant performance of *Baxt tumenge*

¹⁷⁹ Priom has several meanings one of which is 'a shot of alcohol.'

¹⁸⁰ Usually a young, pretty girl.

sastipe.¹⁸¹ The female host captured the effect of the theater's appearance in the studio with the language of her generation of Kievvites, "We kinda have such a super-great atmosphere here! I kinda don't even know—I didn't go to bed last night and I'm not even sleepy! I'm almost ready to fall on my knees!"¹⁸²

Luckily, the theater fit the show's "format." In the *PIK* article about the channel,¹⁸³ the word "format" is mentioned several times. The channel founders admitted that their notion of *formatnist*' was subjective (p. 55). One of the shows was titled *Your Format* and was a broadcast of live performances of Ukrainian performers and leading musicians from post-Soviet countries filmed within the channel studio.

The office door opened, and two actors came in, Arkasha and Kolya, both in their early twenties. Mila showed them the photos of the *Amala* festival, and they discussed them in Russian and Romani. One of the photos pictured Romani teenage girl wearing an Indian sari and Mila commented, "Gypsy children love India to death [*Tsyganskie deti umirayut za Indiei*; she meant Indian culture and media]. Mila told us about their trips to Israel and Egypt, to what Igor called "the depth of the centuries." There were a few pictures of Egypt in the stack. Kolya pointed to the picture of a Beduin woman with a covered up face and wondered aloud where that tradition came from, he likened it to Romani traditions.

Mila: It is only recently that the rules got a little lax. I remember the time when in Kiev no Romani woman would go outside without a scarf.

Arkasha: And a skirt should have been down to here [he pointed to the floor].

Mila: Well, now it is important that the knees do not show. The skirt should be below the knees. The arms should be covered.

Tania: The arms? But the concert dresses are open.

Mila: The concert dresses are a different thing, especially now. But not so long ago a woman had to walk around a man holding her skirt like this [showing] and God forbid touching a man with a skirt! And her feet, she had to keep them away from the guy. [Arkasha and Kolya nodded understandingly]

Arkasha: I remember the time when our Gypsies did not accept our theater performances and now they are more used to them. But not so long ago—they would come with their families, and you know how girls sometimes

¹⁸¹ A Romani song usually sung on birthdays, "Good luck to you and good health..."

¹⁸² Вот как бы у нас тут супер-такое настроение. Как бы я тут вообще не знаю! И спать не ложилась, и спать не хочется!... «Щас» бы на колени упала!

¹⁸³ *PIK*, 2002, N46(177), pp. 54–55.

ran away with the theater—the men would hold the young girls like this [showing], by the upper arm during the performance.

Mila: When I was a little girl, my father—Russka Rom from Siberia—did not let me watch ballet on TV. He turned off the TV at once, saying, “No watching of this *lubipen*, these whores.” And when I started to perform and go on performing tours he used to say, “So what, are you beginning that *lubipen*?” But we toured only with our family [*u nas byli vse svoi*]: my mother and her brothers, we did not have that sort of thing. . . . But imagine when I was 16 or 17 and came to Theater Romen for the first time. My eyes became wide open like this [she showed wide open eyes], imagine.

Arkasha and Kolya left for the stage, while Mila and I joined Sveta in the office.

Day Two. December 28, Saturday. A Toast to the Mind

It was 1 p.m. Igor Krikunov was sitting by the window outside of the office. Mixa Kozimirenko, wearing a long coat, was standing with his back towards the window. They were talking. I waved “hello” and entered the office. Sveta and I got to work. I translated, dictating to her, and she typed very fast in Russian.

In a couple of hours, Igor walked into the office with a large tray full of plates, beautiful long forks, and napkins from the “theater restaurant.” On a white oblong dish lay chilled herring fillet—portioned in elegant rectangular pieces and sprinkled with thinly chopped green onions. On a white, round plate lay the big, white globes of steaming hot potatoes, sprinkled with butter and fresh green dill. On the tray are also three smaller plates: One was full of tiny pickled gherkins, the other was layered with slices of lemon and sugar, and the third was covered with slices of soft, fresh white *baton*—Ukrainian French bread. The aroma this arrangement sent throughout the room was indescribable. I knew we would now be “seeing off” the old year and welcoming the new one, in a Slavic and Romani tradition. “Eat, eat,” invited Igor, while pouring us vodka from a plastic water jug into small shot glasses. Kozimirenko protested with a line I have heard many times, “I have not been taking alcohol since 1970.” Igor encouraged him just to taste it [*prigubit*]. They went through a few exchanges of piquant male humor, one of which was Kozimirenko’s line: “My gun still shoots sometimes.” Krikunov replied, “It’s good. I’m speaking like a male [*ya kak samets govoriu*].” The four of us are standing, holding our glasses, Igor said a toast, “To the mind. Because all

of us are of the same nation [*Za um. Potomu chto vse my odnoi natsii*].” That was the best-tasting vodka I had in Ukraine. To continue toasting to the future and various good causes, Igor reached up the bookshelf and opened an enormous bottle of whiskey, which I had always assumed was just a souvenir on the shelf.

Soon the office becomes too confining for conversation, and Igor, Kozimirenko and I stepped outside in the hallway. Igor suggested that Mixa should read Garcia Lorca for inspiration, and I promised to check out a few volumes at the university library. Igor described a movie to us that he recently watched on TV about Salvador Dali and Garcia Lorca setting out in search of the Moses’ Spring of Wisdom, with all the phantasmagoric encounters and love on their way. “Such existentialism!” exclaimed Igor in fascination.

Suddenly Mixa remembered something, reached into his briefcase, and retrieved a letter he wanted me to translate and send to Dr. Ian Hancock at the Romani Archives. Then he hurried to the train station to catch a train home, and Igor invited me to spend a festive evening with his family. They lived in a two-story private house surrounded with an iron fence in a street of similar Romani homes. This was my first New Year’s Eve in a Romani home.

We took off our shoes and lined them in a neat row to the left of the door, stepping into the warmth of the living room. Igor invited me to sit at the dining table and he sat across from me. Zhanna, Igor and Mila’s 15-year old daughter, served us food, and Igor gently asked her to help him with this or that, addressing her tenderly as *docha*. On the table stood large plates with beautifully bright red borshch, surrounding us with a divine aroma. “It is Lenten,” specified Zhanna. It was about 10 days before the Orthodox Christmas, which follows the New Year. Next to the red borshch is a bowl of Korean carrot salad, very orange, spicy, and garlicky. And beside the carrot salad stood a plate of fresh cabbage salad. I always sat on that spot at the table, facing the dark faces of the icons in shiny, golden frames. The other wall was covered with photographs of various actors from Moscow theaters. I noticed a picture of Mila next to one of my favorite actors, Oleg Yankovskiy. I had not known that many of the leading actors and singers whom I knew as Soviet were in fact of Romani origin.

Mila’s mother, a well-known performer of Romani songs, Zhanna Karpenko, was taking care of her great grandson Igor Nikolayevich who was born in May. At home she

looked very fragile, petite, and thin—very different than on stage, where her powerful presence and energy mesmerized the audience. She was wearing a red silk robe and had red coral earrings in her ears.

One story Mila told me about her family touched me deeply. It was a story of how the beauty of her grandmother's voice saved both her grandmother and her great aunt from death in the Babiy Yar.

The Germans arrested [zabrali] all the Gypsies in Kiev, took them to Babiy Yar, and shot [them] dead. The only people to be released were my grandma and her sister. My grandma already had two children, including my mother, and was expecting a third child, a boy, my uncle. They appeared before the officer in a room of Gestapo in Vladimirskaya Street [known as the KGB headquarters]. "We are actors, opera singers," insisted both women. "Sing then," ordered the German. "I won't sing for the German!" protested grandma's sister in [a] whisper. "Have mercy for my unborn baby!" implored grandma. The power of the beautiful women's voice singing for life brought tears to the German's eyes. He let them go; moreover, each of them was given a loaf of white bread *this big* [Mila demonstrated]. The women walked out of the building in such shock that they could not say a word and kept walking around and around the block several times before they could come to [their] senses and decide which direction to go.

After that story, I came to feel a certain awe in the presence of Mila's mother for she reminded me of the tragedy my mother had lived through during the war. Perhaps it was the survivor's aura that instilled the awe in me.

"Let's go decorate the trees," offered Igor, "one is outside, another in a different room." The beautiful large Assyrian rug on the wall above the couch reminded me of the home where I grew up, as well as hundreds of other homes throughout the former Soviet Union. The pine tree touched the ceiling with shiny, thick, long needles on healthy branches. It filled the room with the tangy smell of needles without which a transition to a new year can hardly be imagined in Ukraine. Igor brought in cardboard boxes full of large, new Christmas tree balls with beautiful designs, and we hung them on the tree. The female family members—Mila's mother, Zhanna, Mila, her daughter-in-law, Raya, and a Ukrainian-speaking nanny from Chernivtsi—had surrounded little Igor on the couch and were interacting with him. They discussed the unique quality of this room with the Christmas tree—it had a special aura of calmness and peace.

When the party moved back to the living room, the heat was cranked up, and it smelt deliciously with strawberry compote. The compote was served warm on the table in

large, smooth, round glasses. The large whole berries were bright red. The aroma was indescribable. On the couch, Raya was holding her son's small feet. Zhanna was tickling her nephew's pink cheeks, "Oh, how would I have liked to eat these cheeks, these sweet cheeks! [*Oh, kak by ya poela shchas eti shchyoki, eti sladkie shchoki!*]" Little Igor laughed. He continued to be at the center of attention, sitting in his high chair in the middle of the room. Mila and the nanny were talking to and about him. The room was very warm, and his hair was wet in the back. Mila measured his temperature, and he had a bit of a fever. The women gave him strawberry compote, of which he was not crazy about, and he kept spitting it out, "talking" to them. "Scold us, sonny, scold us," encouraged his Ukrainian nanny.

A non-Romani maid, Tanya, came to do the dishes. I was getting ready to leave. I approached little Igor in his chair; he saw me up close for the first time and gave me a long, serious look, and at that moment, he looked just like his grandfather. "Happy New Year! This is your first one." Mila and I hugged and kissed, and we parted until the next year.

Day Three. January 13, Monday. Long Winter Holidays

I waited for half an hour at the train station, but Mixa Kozimirenko did not come. Was his train from Dnepropetrovsk late? At 10:30 a.m., I called the theater to find out if he was there. Sveta said, "It's a good thing that you called. We need to write an application to the Biannual Festival. Why would you wait there? Come here."

In the dark concert hall, Igor was playing the keyboard by the stage (he liked to think at the the dark stage). I nodded and said "hello," and he gave me a long and serious look until I smiled. Then he got up and said, "Happy New Year!" I completely forgot it was the New Year, old style, which Roma and the Slavs celebrate. Neither did I expect to get three traditional kisses instead of one, so I messed up the rhythm. Igor said, "Will these holidays come to an end soon?" [*Skoro uzhe eti prazdniki zakonchatsya?*] I responded, "Here the holidays never end." I meant the holidays never ended because the routine never kicks in—the life of an individual is very unpredictable in Ukraine. But my thinking was out of sync with Igor's. He was tired of the extended, over-two-weeks long holiday, during which his theater group gave many private concerts and performances.

“No, they must come to an end. It will be good when they end. How much longer can the country carouse? It is time to finally get to work! [*Pora zhe perekhodit' k rabote, v kontse kontsov!*]” We walked across the dark stage, painted black, to the office in the back. Mila and a woman ballet artist were smoking in a corridor by the window. “Hello, hello! Happy New Year!” we greeted each other. He opened the door to the office. Sveta was working on the computer. “Hello Tanechka! Kozimirenko has called. He is at the publishing house and is coming here.” She gave me a printed letter from the Open Society Institute in Budapest, and I simultaneously interpreted it into Russian for Igor and her. After we e-mailed Igor’s response back to Budapest, she called the manager of the *Vidrodzhennya* Roma program to check on the application we sent him a week before. “You haven’t looked at it yet? It is hard to come back after the holidays, isn’t it,” she scorned him.

Krikunov walked into the office followed by Mixa Kozimirenko in a long wool coat, carrying a large stack of books wrapped in brown paper and tied with white plastic rope. Mixa came over and gave me a kiss. He took scissors, cut the rope, gave me the top two books, then took about three of them and gave them to Igor for the Amalyata studio. Igor put them on the shelf next to the *Handbook of Vlach Grammar*, by Ian Hancock, I had given him earlier. “Very thorough work,” he commented on the handbook after reading it. Igor asked Mixa how he was doing. Mixa, who just got off the train, complained, “A bit tired.” “Tired?” asked Igor, “Happy New Year old style! Would you like a shot to the New Year?” Kozimirenko repeated his maxim about having quit drinking back in 1970. Krikunov tried to cheer him up with a new maxim he coined, “A poet should be always tipsy and with a sparkling eye [*Poet dolzhen byt' vseгда pod furshe i s goryashchim glazom*]. By the way,” he remembered, “on Saturday, January 19th, at 9:45 p.m. they will show *Amala* festival on the first national channel.” Kozimirenko asked him to repeat it several times and then asked me to write it down for him.

The dance instructor Pyotr Nikolayevich walked into the office and stood in the doorway shaking hands first with Igor, then with Kozimirenko, and then he said “hello” to me and to Sveta without shaking hands. He was much shorter than Igor and Mixa and much more slender. Krikunov was holding a copy of Mixa’s new children’s book. He showed it to the dance instructor and read the title with a comic smirk, following his

finger under the large black print, “*When you get big [Kala tu baro aves]*” he paused meaningfully and looked down at the dance instructor with a smile, giving him a hard time, “*What and where [so te kaj]*,” he paused again, “*Everything you will find out [Saro dzhinesa]*.” The three of them burst into laughter. The dance instructor teased Krikunov, “So you can speak Romanes, eh?” Krikunov responded, “As if you didn’t know. You’ve known me for 30 years and didn’t know.” Kozimirenko, anxious to share his poetry, reached for the book and read the first poem. He was holding the book in one hand and moving another open palm in the air with each line, looking at Igor and Pyotr Nikolayevich to see if he was making an impression. The dance teacher’s face expressed surprise, “Good for you. Looks like you can [*Molodets, umeesh* ’]” Kozimirenko finished reading, “So has it turned out fine? [*Nu kak, poluchilos* ’?]” Krikunov turned to the dance instructor, “And you should dance to it [*A ty pod eto dolzhen splyasat* ’]” “What do you mean, dance?” he could not tell where this might lead. “To this rhythm,” said Krikunov and he clapped, deliberately slowing down the rhythm of the poem. Kozimirenko continued to read more from the book, crumpling the pages in his big hands, with excitement. Krikunov noticed this and gave him a hard time, “Be gentle, do not crumple the book, it’s not yours.” Then he took the book from Kozimirenko and read a few pages to himself. He found and read aloud a line from a poem:

Aj ne-ne-ne kham ilo,
Te aves tu baxtalo!

He laughed, “What is this ne-ne-ne, did you run out of words?” Kozimirenko laughed, “It’s ne-ne-ne.” And he repeated a parodied version of the line. The dance instructor left.

With humor, Igor Krikunov was always trying to cheer up and support Mixa Kozimirenko. Soon he went over the list of the names of those to be invited to Kozimirenko’s literary soiree. Most of them were high-ranking officials from the Writers Union and the government. Krikunov asked, “Is there anyone from the Ministry of Education?” Kozimirenko did not know anyone there. Igor instructed him on how to invite the Ombudsman Nina Karpacheva through the official he knew in the Ministry of Culture. Kozimirenko recalled with awe, “I even talked to her once!” Igor said, “Yes, they would talk with you, but when it comes to actually doing something serious they are

gone. Where are they? How to get a hold of them?” Ultimately, none of these high officials came to Kozimirenko’s literary birthday party.

Mila walked into the office, sat down by the computer and asked Kozimirenko how his trip to Dnipropetrovsk went. “Good,” said Mixa, “they danced and sang for me. And they have already started to speak the language, words and phrases. Here’s the article about it,” he pointed to the newspaper on the desk he had given Igor.

“I think Lyuba will do a fine job,” said Kozimirenko. “Which Lyuba?” I asked. He explained, Lyuba Vlasova, the wife of a rocket engineer in Dnipropetrovsk. She founded the Romani children’s studio of the arts. The parents want their children to learn Romani very much. The parents are intellectuals of Romani origin. They speak Russian at home, and their children do not speak much Romani. The new children’s book of poetry could be used as a textbook for now. The school uses the premises of the School of Culture, but it is a private school and parents pay tuition. However much of the expenses are covered by Lyuba herself. “Lyuba and her husband respect me very much, they show great respect every time I come there.”

I promised Mila and Sveta to take Kozimirenko to the train station and return to the office by 3p.m. after retrieving my son Anton from school. In a spacious foyer, Krikunov was standing and talking with a group of young male actors, Romani and non-Romani. He stopped talking and looked at me. “I will accompany Mikhail Grigoryevich to the train station and will come back with Anton,” I said. “Whom will you accompany?” asked Igor as if he did not hear the name. “Mikhail Grigoryevich,” I repeated. “Aha, the poet!” he smiled, “The poet must be accompanied [*Provesti poeta nuzhno*].”

Kozimirenko, with his stack of books, stopped to say good-bye to Igor, and I sat down nearby to wait for him. The men were discussing something, and I heard Kozimirenko’s voice, full of hope, as he cheerfully promised, “No problem, it will resolve itself [The Russian verb he used graphically pointed to something being sucked out and away by itself—(*Nichego, rassosyotsya*)].” He paused to admire the expressive verb that popped out, “Rassosyotsya, eh? What a word! [*Slovo-to kakoye!*].” “It’s a good metaphor,” said Krikunov, and everyone laughed. I assumed they were discussing a recent break-up of a married couple of Romani actors, one of their spiffs. It was months later that I found out Mixa Kozimirenko was diagnosed with a cancerous tumor. The

theater family was helping him get through it, gently joking with him and cheering him up.

Kozimirenko and Krikunov walked towards me, and Igor gave Mixa a final piece of advice. Kozimirenko was working on a new collection, and Krikunov had been advising him to find inspiration in reading Garcia Lorca's works. "Tania, where can we get Walt Whitman? Would you help us get Whitman?" Igor asked. "Sure. Anything specific?" I asked. "Whatever you find. There have been only a few editions here." I looked at Kozimirenko, "They really are much alike. In pathos." "In significance. In dimensions [*Znachitel'nostyu. Razmerom*]." The word Igor used simultaneously meant the size, dimension, and poetic meter. "And get us Garcia Lorca as well," remembered Igor. "I can find Garcia Lorca," said Kozimirenko, "I have translated some already. But it was a translation of translation. I want someone to do a word-for-word translation for me." Krikunov said, "There is only one translator from Spanish in Ukraine who is the best for this, but I do not know if he'd agree." "I don't need anything special," said Kozimirenko. "I could do a word-for-word translation if it's just a few poems," I volunteered, "I would like to do it very much." The latter I said automatically translating from English into Russian, which came out as, "I want to do it very much." The men could not help but give it a sexy spin. Kozimirenko said, "It is very pleasant that you want it very much [latter said with emphasis, *cho ty ochen' khochesh*']. Both men laughed. Kozimirenko and I started walking towards the exit, Krikunov went back to the office. He and I turned our heads, his eyes smiled understandingly, as if saying, "Mixa needs it, you are doing a good job."

Outside my former school, a group of parents and grandparents were waiting in the deadly cold. The security guard did not let them wait in the foyer. A yellow and blue flag was on his uniform with a seal emblazoned with the Ukrainian words "State Security Guard Service [*Derzhavna Sluzhba Okhorony*]." One of the fathers commented sarcastically, "The guard looks [like] a real teetotaler. Just looking at his physiognomy, he should get a prison term [*Takoi ohkrannik yavno ne p'yushchii. Uzhe po ego odnoi fizionomii emu srok nado davat*']." Anton and I returned to the theater.

Back at the theater, Anton was walking in front of me in the narrow corridor. Igor noticed him and exclaimed, "What people! [*Kakie liudi!*]" Anton smiled; when he came

closer, Igor asked him in English, “How are you?” Anton simply showed him two thumbs up without saying a word. “How did your trip go? Was there much snow in Montana?” asked Igor. “Nope,” said Anton, and he and Igor exchanged jokes about it. “Even the look he gives is his mom’s! [*I vzglyad u nego mamkin!*]” said Igor. Mila agreed.

Having spent several months with me at the theater, 12-year-old Anton came to appreciate the theater family and its art. He liked the serious subversiveness of Mila’s humor, “At first sight it looks like she seldom laughs and she doesn’t laugh much. The actors have a heart for what they do. People just do it with love. Music is great, I like it a lot! They pick good music.” He attended the *Amalyata* studio for 2 months and saw the difference between it and his secondary school # 57, such as more individual attention and family-like care at the studio, as well as the Romani students’ serious attitude towards dance as a professional art; they were learning from the experts. Societal change undermined the teacher’s prestige in a secondary school:

The Romani kids at the studio were mostly rich—just the clothes and the watches, nice wrist watches and rings, and also cell-phones. They’d bring Coke to the dance class. Coca-Cola. They respected the teachers more in the dance class than at school #57. They didn’t *goof-off*, I mean, *barely at all*. They *obeyed the teacher*. They *didn’t talk* much. They were nice, but once they found out that I was American, they got mean. *Dancing* is kinda a *life thing* for them. Just for *them*. It just seemed like it *was really serious, it wasn’t just a hobby*. Seemed like a *daily thing* for them. So unlike school # 57, the dance school *was more serious*. The teachers in the school # 57 didn’t really [pause] I mean—they *won’t talk* to any of their students *individually*, like in America. It was like [pause] it was just—the distance was greater between the teachers and the students. The teachers *were closer there* [at the dance school] maybe because there were a lot less students there than in the school # 57. So you got a lot more *individual attention*. It *does* matter. I think that maybe the kids *pay less attention because of that*. The students paid less attention and were more obnoxious to the teachers [at school # 57] maybe because the teachers weren’t *as close to them*. Maybe not just because they were richer than the teacher, but because they didn’t get as much *attention*.

Like Anton, I have also witnessed the family-like attention the studio teachers gave their students. For example, each girl got a kiss from the teacher—even male teachers—when she came to class, and each boy received a manly handshake from the male teacher. The children felt they were learning the professional art, just like their older relatives in the artistic dynasties, and they worked hard. Every performance concert by the studio

students was taken with great seriousness, and there was a great sense of pride and competition among them. They were planning to be selected for the theater group.

Despite Igor's wish for the holidays to end, the holidays in Ukraine just did not seem to come to an end. Religious holidays preceded and followed a month-long national flu epidemic, during which the schools were closed. Every weekend, Kreshchatik Avenue was closed to traffic. With patriotic Ukrainian music, the avenue was open to walking, eating, and drinking under beer tents printed with brand names, until Easter, V-Day, and the Day of Kyiv in May. The next Sunday after Igor's complaint about the dragging holidays, January 19th, was the Orthodox holiday of *Vodokhreshchya*, or Epiphany, when any water was believed to be holy from midnight until the end of the day. The nation continued to carouse boundlessly. *Bespredel*, or boundlessness, is a metaphor for the time Ukrainians are living in.

In the large Hydropark, a huge crowd on the bridge was watching another crowd below walking naked into the icy Dneiper water. More crowds on both sides of the bridge were waiting for their turn to get up on the bridge and watch. Two oversized billboards in yellow and blue hues, with domes of Mykhailivs'ky Cathedral, were sending *Vodokhreshchya* greetings to all Kievvytes. The park got so crowded that a second subway platform had to be opened to let the crowds safely leave and get on the trains. We waited in line for one hour outside to get traditional pork kebab [*shashlyk*] at 14 grivnas for 100 grams (about \$15 a pound), with potato fries, onions, and sauce, Pepsi, and vodka. Vodka Nemiroff, beer, and wine were sold in a great assortment by the bottle. People gathered in small groups, companies of friends, around the small tables outside, in the snow, under the old trees. Many people, mostly over 40 years old, brought their own bags of food and alcoholic beverages. The entire park was one big celebration scene. The tree stumps served as tables for groups of people eating, drinking, and singing. Some were strolling; others were putting their clothes on after taking a dip or a swim. The open-air dance floor was crowded with older couples and singles dancing to a waltz from the loudspeakers.

The other side of the park was overtaken by the younger generation, many were drinking alcohol while standing; kebabs are sold everywhere. Kids were running around and playing near their drunken parents. Odesa sea songs blasted from the small, clear,

plastic-covered restaurant. Inside, crowds of drinking people were gathered around the tables; waiters were running back and forth with orders. A young woman pushed a baby cart with a toddler inside the restaurant and sat down at a table to order.

Outside it was already dark, but a few nude people were still getting in the water. Many headed back to the subway, having called it a day—a religious holiday.

By Way of Conclusion

Clearly, the Theater Romance helps to create a strong sense of cultural identity among Roma. The company:

- Encourages ethnic mobilization of Roma by rallying them (Amala Festival, anthem, emblem);
- Redefines and modernizes Romani identity and promotes the rejection of stigma;
- Gives Roma a sense of their larger identity (Music from Spain, Hungary, Poland);
- Raises a group of professional artists, ensuring the continuity of artistic tradition;
- Forges working alliances with national and international institutions and organizations; and
- Finds the state's language to be biased and denounces it as discriminatory (e.g., "outside the format").

Located in the capital and granted national status, theater Romance is playing a leading role in Ukraine generating the Roma of Ukraine identity and transmitting it nationally through plays, concerts, and tours throughout Ukraine; additionally, the theater hosts annual Romani festivals and participates abroad in international cultural events, which further promotes the Roma of Ukraine. With access to television, the theater broadcasts recorded *Amala* festivals several times a year. The actors appear on national television in skits, shows, and infomercials. Articles about the theater's new productions and interviews with the theater director and actors regularly appear in the national press. The theater plays an important role in preserving Roma identity for the future by attracting young audiences and by bringing its productions to colleges and universities. In 2002, I witnessed such an appearance at the National University of Culture during the Romani Language Day.

Despite the fact that almost none of the theater's audio and video recordings are in retail sale, many Romani families have VHS copies of the *Amala* festivals recorded off TV and are listening to the audio collection of the theater's songs in their cars. Several times I heard these songs broadcasted on overnight trains throughout Ukraine.

The theater plays an important role in collection and preservation of Romani folklore and works with a small group of young performers from the artistic dynasties, providing them with professional training and assisting them in job placement, thereby assuring continuity of Romani performance tradition.

The collective image "Roma of Ukraine" is being continuously co-constructed and reconstructed in negotiation with various other Romani cultural collectives of Ukraine and abroad during the annual festivals; simultaneously, the emerging national Ukrainian identity is itself in the process of becoming.

A number of theater productions based on the Russian classics had to be taken off the repertoire, for example the 2001 play *Tsygany*, based on Pushkin's work. After hours of rehearsals and directorial labor, some plays are not approved for production due to the current repertoire policy, such as the play on the history of the Russian romance in 2003. These instances prompt the theater to seek out new productions. Thus the consciousness raising play about the history of the Russian romance was replaced with a play based on the music of the European composers who used Romani themes in their compositions, such as Paganini, Liszt, Ravel, Sarasate, Brahms, Schubert, Bartok, and Dvorzak. "The chic performance! [*Shikarnyi spektakl*!]," Mila called it. First shown in 2005, "it was very well received and the media and critics spoke very highly about it," she said (2005).

I remember the warmth of the theater family and the love they shared with my son and me. When I telephoned Igor on June 25, 2003 to congratulate him on his 50th birthday, he remembered Anton, "And to your son—shake his hand for me, to your butch [*khloptsu*]. And let everything in his life come together fine. It can come together in many different ways, but let it be fine. Courage to him, strength of spirit [*Bodrosti, tverdosti dukha*]—this is the most important." I am grateful for the way Mila and Igor Krikunov have always heartened me with their love of children, family, and the arts.

Chapter Four

Our Journey to Ourselves: Moments With Mixa Kozimirenko

“The poet is the archetype of human being”

—Hans-Georg Gadamer—

This story brings out various facets of the creative self-consciousness of a very interesting person. “I am a poet, thereby I am interesting,” the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky once said. He was a Russian poet. Another great poet, the Ukrainian Taras Shevchenko, noted, “The Russians here are calling me ‘an enthusiast’ that is a fool. God forgive them, even if I am a ‘peasant’ poet—let it be—as long as it is ‘poet,’ there is nothing else I need. Let a dog bark, the wind will carry it around” (Shevchenko, 1964). “*Dzido dzides polel mishtes*—The living understand the living better,” said Ukrainian Romani poet Mykhailo Grigorovich Kozimirenko,¹⁸⁴ or Mixa Kozimirenko—his pen name. Each from a different turning point in history, all three poets were trailblazers creating the uplift momentum for the development of language and culture of their people. It is important that we understand our geniuses during their lifetimes.

My English translations¹⁸⁵ of Mikhail Kozimirenko’s original poems in Ukrainian, Romani, and Russian (please see Appendix), serve as a portrait of our time and a portrait of the artist. The story unfolds in four parts—as a few encounters selected by me and set against a broad historical and literary background. This journey should lead us to the understanding of the complex inner world of this person and his lyrical self. The poet’s personal way of confronting life, his novel approach to the creative process, his historical and genealogical lineage, and his original perspective on

¹⁸⁴ Mikhail (Russian) and Misha are other names by which he is addressed. I witnessed the name Mikhail Grigorievich as used most often. The Ukrainian last name Kozimirenko comes from a Polish name Kazimir.

¹⁸⁵ Albeit translations “are flatter,” in Gadamer’s words as they do not capture the rhythm-melodics and rhymes of the originals. “In the case of poetry, only bilingual editions are useful. Translations make the reading of the original possible” (1992, p. 69). To assist the reader in following the poet’s rhythm-melodic patterns, Romani originals are transliterated by me from Cyrillic to Roman script in the “free style” most often used in today’s written communication, e.g. on the Internet. Here I followed Kozimirenko’s belief that “letters play only secondary role in what is necessary to convey the thought. They are only a means of conveyance [a medium] and cannot be a dogma.” Transcript. 06.13.2002.

the world will make this journey ever more interesting.

Introduction: The Staunch Word, the Symbol, and the Uplift

Mikhail Grigorievich Kozimirenko and I met in Kiev at The First Romani Congress of Ukraine on June 6, 2002. Aladar Adam, the President of the Transcarpathian Romani Congress and the Editor of the newspaper *Romani Yag*, introduced me to him. “This is our first Romani poet. Write down every word this person says,” the President of the Odessa Romani Congress urged me later that evening. During the leadership elections, in front of the delegates and the media, Aladar Adam ended his speech walking a few steps towards the poet sitting among the delegates and saying, “And now, without flying into passion, I would like to say a few words of Mikhail Kozimirenko.” He took a few more steps, “Before this person I bow low. Because he is our—” and with reverence he bent his right knee. The storm of applause that followed made him shout out the last word, “Poet!”

A good way to introduce Mixa Kozimirenko would be to show you the black and white photo he gave me—from his Soviet passport, taken a decade ago when he began to publish his first work. He took up the entire frame, looking seriously, openly, and calmly straight at you—a face of a handsome, strong, and kind person: big lyrical eyes under resolute eyebrows, dark wavy hair combed back, and a long moustache. Broad shoulders. Suit and tie. This formal image of him in my memory is vivified by his voice reading a poem—a credo, a Biblical Manifesto of sorts, or in Gadamer’s words, a pledge, a proclamation with the binding power of a religious and legal text: “The poetic word is... a statement in that it bears witness to itself and does not admit anything that might verify it” (1986, p. 110). It is the word that stands by itself, straight and tall as Mixa Kozimirenko on stage, reading his poetry. Kozimirenko, a kind and calm private person, exudes prophetic public presence when he reads, displaying an actor’s great skill. His deep voice, with its range of tonalities and expression, renders the intensity of his poetry. Mandelshtam called this kind of intensity “a gigantic compression of reality.” It is a necessary feature of any real poetry:

Devles sir gres na paruvava

I won’t swap God like a horse

Sir peskro rat na parudjom	As their blood did not change ¹⁸⁶
Sareng dre jakha phenava:	I will say this to everyone's eyes:
“Romen nikaj na bikindyom!”	“Roma never sold out!”
Dadestir me na odphenavpe,	I never rejected my father
Koneskro sam—na xoxavav.	Whose I am—I did not hide
Man tasaven—upre gazdavpe	I fell—I got up
Te sajek peskro rakirav.	And no matter what, I said what I wanted
Na phut'kirdo me, manushale,	I am not a wannabe, guys,
Mri baxt dre zorale vasta.	My luck is in my strong hands
Dre mande rromano kokalo—	Inside me is Rromani bone
Man na phagirna, sir kashta!	I won't burn like the trees! ¹⁸⁷

Such depth and sincere straightforwardness of self-reflection imparts Kozimirenko's poetry a tremendous ethical charge. The self-knowledge “straightens up a person” (Dement'ev, 1989). By expressing himself, the lyrical poet also expresses the problems of our epoch; from such expression is born the poet's identity; his “self” grows into a character representing our time. It is the lyrical image of a poet, his lyrical “self,” to which the poet *rises* as a person and also elevates the reader (Ibid.). Kozimirenko crystallized his lyrical experiences and transformed them into a system of artistic tropes, creating his own poetic world, and these tropes elevated the created artistic image to the symbolic archetype of humanity and our epoch. The metaphoric symbolism of his word-images—blood, eyes, strong hands, and Romani bone—conveyed his psychological state succinctly, vividly, and life-like, at the same time representing the tension, richness,

¹⁸⁶ The poet referred to the blood of Roma, which after many generations still shows genetic affinity with the Indian origins, as confirmed by a number of genetic studies. Ian Hancock (2001) listed some of them (e.g., Bernasovsky & Bernasovska, 1999). The Human Genome Project team at the Center for Human Genetics in Perth, after comparing genetic material from large numbers of both Roma and Indian groups, concluded that, “The Roma are genetically closer to Asians than to surrounding Europeans” (Kalaydjieva *et al.*, 1999, p. 13). Mastana & Pahipa's serological research determined that “gypsy populations of eastern Europe still have greater genetic affinity with Indian nomadic groups” than with the white population (1992, p. 50), while Sivakova's research found that “the lowest genetic distance value” was between Roma and Indians, “suggesting a relatively low degree of genetic assimilation of Gypsies with their surrounding [European] populations” (1983, p. 98). Bhalla found that “[t]he Rajputs occupy the position nearest the gypsies . . . the gene pool of East European gypsies is markedly different from that of the surrounding non-gypsy population [while . . .] measures of divergence reveal least distance between East European gypsies and the stock of people in India represented by the Jat-Sikh-Punjabi Hindu-Rajput complex” (1992, pp. 331–332). Quoted from Hancock (2001).

¹⁸⁷ Biblical images permeate Kozimirenko's poetry.

ambiguity, and complexity of human existence. Thus his aesthetic activity through the poetic medium of word is no less ideologically poignant than that of a theater director or a reporter.

Explaining the uplifting aesthetic function of a symbol, scholars of semiotics such as M. M. Bakhtin, N. G. Chernyshevsky, Hegel, A. F. Losev, and Y. M. Lotman saw its most important role in the generalization and elevation of everyday life and of the idea carried by the image. In the process of symbolization, the creative imagination imparts a perceived phenomenon the meaning different from its primary one, but analogous to it (Hegel, 1973). In Kozimirenko's poem, blood could symbolize identity; eyes, openness; strong hands, hard labor; and Romani bone, the continuity of Roma; thus, an artistic detail could grow into a symbol with nebulous boundaries. Every interpretation of a symbol remains a symbol, somewhat nationally colored, according to Bakhtin (1974, p. 209). Importantly, at the center of a metaphor-symbol is juxtaposition¹⁸⁸ in an endless structural perspective,¹⁸⁹ such as real versus ideal, concrete versus abstract, and debased versus elevated. Underscoring the importance of images-symbols in literature, Bakhtin (1978) noted that the transition of an image into a symbol "imparts it a particular semantic *depth* and semantic perspective. The content of a genuine symbol, through mediated semantic links, corresponds to the idea of universal wholeness, to the comprehensiveness of cosmic and human universality" (p. 209). Kozimirenko employed the inherent uplifting possibilities of the symbol and elevated the lyrical character, the hero, and through him, the identity of Romani (and non-Romani) people. It should be noted that the lyrical character thereby is removed a certain distance from the audience, and from that distance, the audience can observe his monumental greatness. The middle-aged poet's life's trials and tribulations intensified the uplifting momentum from particular to universal. This uplifting momentum, from the lyrical particular "I" to the epic universal "we," renders greater expressiveness to the artistic image. Kozimirenko's poem, vivified with metaphoric images, inspires respect for a hard-working, strong Romani person and elevates the beauty of his spirit. Our participation in this uplifting

¹⁸⁸ The very semantics of the word "symbol" in Greek points to a clash. Lotman (1970) stressed that the content of a metaphor-symbol could only be understood in a structural analysis of oppositions and antitheses (pp. 50–57).

momentum, according to Chernyshevsky (1939), is an act of acknowledgment of the elevated (p. 20). This explains the important role the uplifting momentum inherent in poetry could play in propaganda of Romani culture.

In the Soviet Union, each encounter of poet and public was a spectacle, making the art of recitation an act of communion, with listeners capturing a poet's language flow, complete with assonances, rhythms, and modulations of pitch and intensity. Arthur Miller (1978) was much surprised when in the early 60s, a group of Soviet poets appeared reading their poems to tens of thousands of people in football stadiums and big theaters:¹⁹⁰

Their poems...cut close to the bone on sensitive public issues. In fact, the poet alone seems to have been allowed a license which is not shared by novelist, playwright, or any other public artist or interpreter. This is so completely at odds with our tradition that one does not know how to comprehend it. I have wondered whether way back in time, in Russia, there was not some religious exemption, some aspect of holiness which the poet was thought to possess, quite as though he were some sort of subconscious connection with the soul of the race. (p. xi)

Describing Andrei Voznesensky's performances of poetry, Miller wrote, "he has carved out a private speech for public occasions, an intimacy which is yet open-armed toward the world." The same could be said of Mixa Kozimirenko's poetry. Kozimirenko's celebration of personal values and the life of the heart in Romani and Ukrainian languages, which after decades of Soviet censorship is now possible in Ukraine, evokes the moral climate for the revival of literature from the miasma of Stalinism in the post-Stalin period when poetry readings seized the Soviet Union. It was then that the young poets began resurrecting poetry from the heap of "the glittering phrase," turning instead to the language of symbol and fantasy in their personal search for truths. According to Blake and Hayward (1967), Voznesensky, who was beckoned into the world of poetry by Pasternak in 1958, commented on the sense of the poet as a prophet:

The poet is two people. One is an insignificant person, leading the most insignificant of lives. But behind him, like an echo, is the other person who writes poetry. Sometimes the two coexist. Sometimes they collide; this is why certain

¹⁸⁹ A. F. Losev (1976) considered the endless structural perspective the nucleus of the symbol theory (p. 300).

¹⁹⁰ It should be noted that those were Russophone poets writing predominantly in the Socialist Realism tradition.

poets have had tragic ends. Often the real man has no idea what path or what action the other will take. That other man is the prophet who is in every poet. . . . When a man writes he feels his prophetic mission in the world. The task of the Russian poet today is to look deep inside man. When I read my poetry to a great number of people, their emotional, almost sensual expression of feeling seems to me to reveal the soul of man—now no longer hidden behind closed shutters, but wide open like a woman who has just been kissed. (p. xvi)

One of the first poems Mixa read to me (2002) was his translation into Romani of Mykola Lukiv's Ukrainian lyrical poem "I Won't Bring you Happiness" (Kozimirenko, 2000, p. 94).

I won't bring you happiness
I'm afraid to talk much of unhappiness
Through hardships I will carry my head high
Before woman's beauty I fall on my knees.
Kiss me, burn me with eyes
I don't have the strength to forget you
You are immersed in my stars
For you I yearn, as long as I live.

From our first encounters, I was fine-tuned to listen, take notice, and learn.

*Part One. Bringing the Past Into the Present: June in the Poet's Homeland. Pathways to
Poet's Home: Music of the Road*

In Kozimirenko's poetry (1998), the green-forested, historic land of Korosten' is portrayed as the homeland of Ukraine:

Legs are leaden and I can barely walk,¹⁹¹
I greet the godly day with pain in my heart.
I sit down to rest and drink poisonous water¹⁹².
Neither life, nor death: life is like a temptation. . . .
Drevlyanian land, my Polissya country,
For you, for all of us I am imploring God:

¹⁹¹ A toll of arthritis after spending seven months in prison in the 1990s.

“Do not let a path get lost in the field,
Give my Ukraine the strength to be reborn!¹⁹³” (p. 32)

On Wednesday, June 12, 2002, I waited for the electric train to Korosten’ on a crowded platform. Among the passengers, no one knew to which side of the platform the train would arrive, but people did not seem alarmed, they waited through this ambiguity, ready to take up the seats by storm when it was time. Once inside, I took a seat facing the door. As if from behind the closed shutters, a continuous succession of vendors and performers appeared through the door, loudly announcing their product. First, came in two young men carrying a bayan and a trumpet. They filled the car with a lugubrious Soviet Ukrainian song with the refrain, “*Son, one can choose whatever one wishes in the entire world. The only thing not to be chosen is Fatherland!* [Mozhna vse na sviti vybyraty, synu, vybraty ne mozhna ti’ky Bat’kivshynu!]” Next, a thin, young man walked through the car chanting in Russian, “*Chocolate-coated ice cream, and in the waffle cones* [Morozhenoye v shokolade, v stakanchikah].” Then a man in his mid-40s, holding a homemade garden device with a hose above his head, repeated an odd mantra walking through the isle, “*Insect spray against ants, caterpillars, potato beetles on tomatoes and apples!*” Other vendors offered sunflower seeds, simple scales, and pens. All of the merchandise was chanted out in Russian.

The passengers, predominantly middle-aged and older women, were returning home having sold produce at the markets of Kiev or going to their gardens located outside of the city. The Russian and Ukrainian conversations focused on the weather, weeding of potatoes, potato beetles, potatoes yielded that year, porcini mushrooms in the local forests, and strawberries to be harvested and sold at the market. An argument between a Russian-speaking merchant woman and an older, Ukrainian peasant woman over an isle space politicized the discussions. The merchant woman was looking for a place to put her merchandise pushcart, with little success, while the entire space in the isle was taken by empty wicker baskets. The merchant woman was frustrated because apparently she had paid a double ticket price for the pushcart. She confronted the peasant

¹⁹² As many people in the area did, the poet used the radiation-contaminated water from a regular draw well in his yard.

¹⁹³ Ukrainian word for “rebirth” [vidrodzhennya] is synonymous with Renaissance.

women in Russian, “I have bought two tickets, and you are riding free!” One peasant woman responded nonchalantly in Ukrainian, using the familiar *ty*, “When you reach my age, you, too, will ride free.” And she rounded it off with an unfriendly comment, switching to *vy*, a plural directed towards the entire invisible group, “Or better yet, you will stay home.” This exchange ignited the volatile topic of Verkhovna Rada. A bespectacled woman with a book—a rare sight in the transportation of today as compared to a decade ago—stopped eating a chocolate-covered *Gulliver* waffle¹⁹⁴ and noted in Ukrainian, “Verkhovna Rada cares only about itself, they do not use public transportation and do not pay for it either.” “Our Verkhovna Rada is not the worst, you know,” argued another woman, “Why, would you rather be under Moscow?” “Why not?” responded someone, “Was it bad or what?” At the opposite window, a woman sighed, “After the war, such an enormous country was rebuilt anew.¹⁹⁵ And now the plants and factories are closed and there are no jobs.” These conversations resounded with Mixa’s lines, metered to the boundless beat—half a century of rhymes, rhythms, thoughts, conversations, harmonies and dissonances to the accompaniment of train wheels:

Where, tell me, I should hide my eyes,
 When a beggar is walking towards me,
 And there are as many beggars in this fatherland
 As nowhere else.
 To cover them with hands, so as not to see,
 Not to hear the words that rip the soul apart?
 My closed eyes are crying,
 And the beggars keep walking by. [...]
 The eyes are shut, so as not to see,
 Not to hear the words that rip a soul apart.
 It is Ukraine-the-mother, who is crying,
 Can it be that this cry is not heard? (p. 33)

¹⁹⁴ Though candy propagandizing children’s literature is still around—*Little Red Riding Hood*, *Puss in the Boots*, *Doctor Ajbolit*, *Mal’chish-Kibal’chish*, *Zolotoi Klyuchik*, *Aleko*, *Belochka*—it can hardly compete with less educational, but more decadent confections such as chocolate-covered figs with walnuts, chocolate-covered apricots, cherries, and prunes.

¹⁹⁵ Rebirth, Renaissance.

A few other poems from the same collection, *Where to Bring Up My Pain?*, bemoan the corruption of the Verkhovna Rada's deputies-parliamentarians (Appendix).

On the platform, Kozimirenko was anxiously searching for me in the crowd. We walked through the busy farmers' market located in a small asphalt square next to the station—spontaneous markets and quick turnovers are the spirit of today's Ukraine. In a chaotic arrangement, on rows of rough wooden boxes, women sold vegetables as well as unattractive meat and raw fish that should not have been left in the dust under the mid-day sun. Fresh bread without wrapping was handed down from the big army truck, and beer was poured into clear plastic jugs from an old kvass tank. Mixa insisted on carrying everything we bought and piled it up in the back seat of his old *Lada*. Before starting the engine, he put his hand on my shoulder, "A good friend of mine and her son are waiting for us." His house was on the edge of town, by another train station.

On the way to his house, Mixa turned on the only audiotape he had in the car, the Theater Romans collection *The Favorite Songs of the Gypsies of Ukraine*. The collection presented the songs of the Russian Roma in Romani and Russian, in Hungarian—of Roma of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire—and in Romani of the Bessarabian Roma, now inhabiting Ukraine, Moldova, and Romania. Mixa's *Lada* reverberated with the guitar accords of *Mardzhanzha*, or *Kon Avela*, one of my favorite songs. It tells of a good-looking lad, dressed in a white shirt, coming to propose to the most beautiful girl with golden earrings.

Kon Avela was one of the favorite songs of some of the Russian nobility such as the lieutenant-general A. A. Ignatiev (1877–1954), a Russian military diplomat and writer. The counts Ignatievs descended from a Chernigiv boyar Biakont who in 1340 began his service to the Moscow tsars (Ignatiev, 1989, p. 6). The ancient Chernigiv, now in northern Ukraine, is the city where Mixa Kozimirenko was born. The autobiographic accounts of A. A. Ignatiev capture the similarities in the lives of Russian noble families and Roma: The former, as the military and civil administrators, were easily transferred from one part of the empire to the other, and groups of Roma were also moved across the empire in times of need.

The Ignatievs were the influential patrons of the Gypsy choirs. A. A. Ignatiev's father, having served as a general-governor of Western Siberia for 6 years, in 1888 was

appointed the governor of Kiev, Podolye, and Volhynia, that is, the part of Ukraine where Mixa Kozimirenko lived and where my family and I came from. The finale of the governor's service was the reception of the newly crowned tsar, Nickolas II, in Kiev in 1896, which ended in magnificent fireworks on the Dnieper. Ignatiev, then a young officer and a witness to these events, remembered a curious detail (1989):

Kreshchatik and other major streets were crowded with peasants in traditional festive wool coats, whom the police brought to Kiev from all three *gubernias* to create an illusion of the mass welcome of the tsar and to prevent any revolutionary outbreaks. Nickolas II commented, "What a delight not to see the police." (p. 19)

Thus the election events leading to the Orange Revolution of 2004 were not the first time the authorities transported loyal crowds from the provinces to the capital for a display of support. Kreshchatik saw the propagandistic display of loyalty during numerous communist parades, which as we now know went back to the tsarist imperial times.

Thus it was the prominent families of noblemen-connoisseurs of Gypsy song such as the Ignatievs, the Sheremetevs, and the Meshcherskys, who were the patrons of the Romani choirs in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The Meshcherskys were A. A. Ignatiev's uncles. "There was nothing Nikolai Vasilievich Meshchersky loved more than the Gypsy choir, and he wrote the music of the well-known romance *Utro tumannoe, utro sedoie*,¹⁹⁶" wrote Ignatiev (p. 157). Having received 100 roubles each from their father, Ignatiev and his brother would drive to the Chornaya River, where next to the café chantant *Arkadia* was the wooden dacha of Nikolai Ivanovich Shishkin, the owner of the best Gypsy choir in Petersburg. The nobility disliked the "banal" romances favored by tipsy merchants that "polluted" the repertoire. "We would not allow them to sing such filth, and the old Gypsy women sometimes right in front of us would teach the young to perform the already forgotten old Gypsy songs: *What could be more delightful than when, cherishing love, a Gypsy family is greeting friends with songs*," recalled Ignatiev, not mentioning that these old songs were obviously written for the Roma to be sung as greetings for noble patrons. The collection of music sheets from the early 1900s in one of Kiev's museums instances the "Gypsy romance" genre as very popular. "Five romances for one voice with the piano, dedicated to Anastasia Dmitrievna Vyal'tseva. Lyrics by K.

¹⁹⁶ *Foggy morning, silvery morning* (Russian).

Severyanin, music by A. Taskin,” announced the cover of a St. Petersburg edition styled in fashionable art nouveau with red and green poppies. “Gypsies in Kiev,” shouted the large bold title of another music sheet collection, “Love romances and songs performed with enormous success. Leon Idzikovskii. Kiev and Warsaw.” Listed are over three-dozen song titles. “Repertoire of the Kiev bard [bayan] of Gypsy song,” beckoned the third one, “*Aroma of Tuberoses*. Romance. Lyric by V. Frenkel’, music by G. Berezovsky. Favorite idyll of Vasyl’ii Dmitrievich Shumskii.” Two dozen song titles followed (Shlensky & Braslavets, 2002, p. 73). In these music lovers’ editions, the Gypsy image is already separated from the real Roma and is circulating for the benefit of non-Roma.

Thus, the tension around the discussion of the “high” and “low” genres of Gypsy music in the Russian empire dates back to the differences between the audience groups of Romani and non-Romani performers, as in the case of military nobility and the bourgeoisie as the patrons of Petersburg and Moscow Gypsy choirs. The noblemen preferred the “high” repertoire politics. Ignatiev drew a vignette of a private concert for such noble patrons:

And it truly was a family, in which one could find shelter from the boring high society with its dull salons, as well as from the restaurants with Romanian bands... The old Gypsy women, sitting in the center of a semi-circle, kept asking us about the health of Aleksey Pavlovich and Sofia Sergeevna and the rest of our relatives, and on our part we were not supposed to mix up the relative relations between the choir members. Having performed a few songs, the choir usually asked to go have a snack, which meant a request to give money to “chavals” supposedly for drinks and snacks; but in fact the Gypsies usually drank only tea, and all the money went to the joint cash bank, which was divided in allotments according to the seniority and the status in the choir. One had to win a special trust by one’s respect of the choir to be able to talk the choir queen such as Varya Panina into staying in the hall for a snack and a glass of champagne. Each of us had our own songs. My brother’s favorite was *Ah, da ne vechernyaya*, mine, *Kon Avela*.¹⁹⁷ The candles were almost burnt down ... It was dawning, and the Gypsy women hurried, according to the custom, to the early mass. (pp. 157–158)

Over 100 years ago, the Ignatievs enjoyed the privileged feeling of being “a friend” of the choir family, similarly to the way the Soviet leaders, such as Leonid Brezhnev, and more recently the new Ukrainian elites patronized Romani performing groups.

¹⁹⁷ Both songs are in the main concert repertoire of the Theater Romans.

Mixa stopped the car on Turgenev¹⁹⁸ Street, which looked like a village street, and through the gate we walked into the yard. On the right, was a draw well with a bucket on a chain. On the left, down from the tall fence, hung the long branches of a cherry tree. The tree grew in the neighbor's yard, but most of the branches, studded with juicy cherries, were on Mixa's side of the fence. A cherry tree orchard by a cottage is a Ukrainian ideal glorified by Shevchenko and other Ukrainian poets. Mixa picked heaping handfuls of cherries and handed them to me—my first cherries back in Ukraine.

Nastya, a woman of distinctive beauty, was chopping something on a cutting board in the kitchen. A blond, blue-eyed, suntanned boy named Kostya was peeling vegetables outside. Mixa sat down on a dark verandah and announced that he would play the accordion for us. With broad powerful strokes and tricky improvisation, he started with *Melancholy*, a popular melody of the 1920s. On the wall, between the two large 1930s-style radios, a yellowed poster announced, in Ukrainian, a literary performance by the Gypsy poet M. G. Kozimirenko to be held at the palace of culture of the Bolshevik factory.¹⁹⁹

After dinner, Mixa showed me the poems he was working on: a translation of Lina Kostenko's *Gypsy Muse* [*Tsygans'ka Muza*] into Romani and a collection of translations of Pushkin's and Shevchenko's poems on the images of women. Mixa did not have a computer. The poems were calligraphically handwritten in ink on the sheets of white paper. Next to the stack of paper on the table were about four Romani dictionaries. In the adjoining room, he turned on a record player. His collection of music records and books was very impressive. The bookcase in the third bedroom was also full of books, and all of them were about Roma. The furniture in the house was simple and old, with an air of artistic ease or philosophical abandon. The steel beds, chairs, and cabinets were from "the previous generation." In various corners of the four rooms lurked luring antiques. In this creative space Mixa's Ukrainian and Romani rhymes lined up on paper as poetry, as the word that "stands." Mixa's poetry came to him as a rhythmo-melodic pattern:

¹⁹⁸ I. Turgenev, a 19th-century Russian writer.

¹⁹⁹ The Bolshevik Palace of Culture housed the Theater of Poetry founded in 1979, whose mission was "propaganda through the stage artistic medium of the creativity of Ukrainian poets, authors from the fraternal republics, popularization of the best samples of foreign lyric" (Kudritsky, 1985, p. 500).

It happens like this: you'd think to write of something—For me the most important is to grasp the FIRST LINE. That is, to capture this RHYTHM, and then to ENTER this rhythm. And then you close your eyes [he closed his eyes] and see how—well, it is like a BROOK, which seeks where to go. And it often happens that you think of one thing, but the poem—That is, a poet is not always FREE to write what he wants. I don't know why! You write about one thing, but it turns to be about something else. And then you look: Yes, this, too, has the right to existence. That is, either the thought turned out to be MORE PROFOUND, or you approached the issue from an UNUSUAL ANGLE.

I wondered aloud whether in his memory there was a recurrent poetic text or texts that helped express his own identity, texts that he kept in his memory. He did not let me finish the question, immediately connecting with it. “Here's one,” and he read Shevchenko's:

O my thoughts, my heartfelt thoughts,
What trouble you bestow!
Why have you stood up on paper
In your sorrowful rows?

It seems to me that it is not poetry, but rather it seems to be a thought of a person who is alive and who is talking. And in general, all of Shevchenko's poetry is like a conversation. I do not follow his rhymes or figures of speech. I only follow his thought. That is all. And it flows freely in a human language. And it turns out that this human language is highly poetic, because it is given only to a great master to be able to keep the folk language and at the same time to speak in this elevated style! Pushkin's language is very aristocratic, while in Shevchenko—it is the language of a people. This is what I think.²⁰⁰

Shevchenko was the first in Ukrainian poetry to have introduced the frequent change of rhythms within one poem, and thus, expanded the range of rhythmomelodic patterns. Depending on the text's content and tone, the melody could resemble a conversation, a song, a lament, or a pathetic appeal. The rhythmic variations and interruptions within one poem emphasized the dramatic or lyrical tone of the verse with an outstanding musical expressiveness. As musician and composer, Mixa appreciated these rhythmomelodic variations and admired the skill of the great master to put deep thoughts to music.

²⁰⁰ Shevchenko's thoughts turned to his Ukraine, symbolized by the Dnieper, the steppes, the ancient grave mounds as the signs of past glory and freedom of the Cossaks, whose descendants are now Russian vassals. He often spoke against Polish overlordship and denounced the German and Jewish influence. In Ukraine, many ethnic groups lived in misery and oppression, which brooded ethnic tension and animosity.

Soulscape: Prince Igor, Princess Olga, Old Windmill, and Other Moments

The evening was dedicated to the car ride around Korosten'. The town boasted many new, big churches of white brick, a privatized and operating paint factory—the smell of chemicals hung in the air—and a prison, all located in one long street. Across from the factory was a pond, near which Mixa stopped the car for a photo opportunity. At first glance, it was a typical industrial cooling pond, with plastic bottles, empty cans, and other litter scattered around by motorized picnickers. But at that moment, Mixa lived in the make-believe and perceived it as an artist, transcending the visible. “Art is an intuition of the world,” said Gadamer (1986, p. 164). Mixa smiled at the impressions of the setting sun, coloring and shading the water, the faces, and women’s bare, suntanned shoulders. “How beautiful!” he said, resting his large hands on our shoulders, when a breeze whiffed through our hair, rustled through the leafy tree branches, and rippled the reflections in the pond. My favorite poem by Mixa, “such a water-color one” he called it, captures a similar moment of pausing in the evening (Appendix). The varied and meditative meter and rhyme scheme of this poem works to slow down and extend the moment, making it linger, preventing it from flying by, weighing it down with memories of the past:

Behind the tall mountains
And the blue forests
Rolled down the sun, tired.

With a cinematic technique, the line follows the dynamic of each image, weaving the words into the pictures of life. The synergy of the feeling and rhythm is masterfully achieved here in the free-flowing and flexible tonality. The heartfelt musicality of this free verse is further emphasized by the variations in rhythm, melodic and rhyming. The meaningful pauses impart speech-like ease and nuanced texture to the verse:

I am drinking a song [pause]
Somewhere far away the Gypsies are singing.

Along with the repetition and exclamation so characteristic of a folk song, a mid-line pause renders the intensity of nostalgia:

For long [pause]. Oh, for so long
Mother's song is not heard.

Kozymirenko's rhythm-melodics deepen the artistic imagery and its aesthetics. The last line, which in Ukrainian sounds like a deep sigh, leaves a profound trace of awakened associations. It was Mixa's gift to transcend the everyday and the ordinary and speak of them as precious moments of life, which touched the heart. The everlasting haunting presence of the past in his narrative, as well as his mother's presence—this split between attachment and separation—casts his writing into a pain-pleasure circularity. This circularity in Kozymirenko's poetry and conversations is similar to the idea of eternal comeback in the symbolist poetry of Andrey Bely.

On our way to the old village on the outskirts of Korosten', Mixa pointed to the groves of majestic white birch trees swaying their green, curly branches, "It is here, on powerful trees like these that the Drevlyane killed Kiev Prince Igor and his warriors." And adding extra detail, he recounted the old legends the scribe Nestor recorded in *The Chronicle*:

Prince Igor, the son of the Varangian Prince Rurik, ruled Kiev in the years [A. D.] 912–945. Even before him, the growing Kiev Rus state conducted many military campaigns in the Byzantine Empire and the Caspian steppes. The Drevlyane living around Iskorosten' (now Korosten') wanted their autonomy. In 914, Prince Igor came here with his troops and reaffirmed his rule over the Drevlyane, which meant paying him tribute. In those years, the Kiev state had many military conflicts with nomadic tribes of the Pechenigs in lower Danube and with Khazar Kaganate. In a dispute over the Byzantine Empire's control of the northern Black Sea, Igor conducted another military campaign against the Byzantine Empire. It ended with the signing of a peace treaty between Constantinople and Kiev. The same year, Igor's troops went on a military campaign to the Transcaucasus. These military operations were wearing out the state's economy. They enriched the top military command of the prince while putting the burden of higher tribute on most of the population. In 945 Igor and his armed men came here to Iskorosten' to collect tribute. Having collected it, they were on their way back to Kiev, when Igor ordered his troops, "Go home with this collected tribute, while I go back there and collect some more." With a small group of warriors, Igor came back here. The demands of more tribute enraged the Drevlyane, and they killed Igor and his men by lowering these majestic birches to

the ground, tying the left arm and leg to one tree and the right arm and leg to another and letting go of the branches, releasing them back into the sky. The bodies were pulled apart.

In revenge for her husband's death, Princess Olga ordered [her men] to bury the first group of envoys from Iskorosten' alive in a ravine, the second group of the Drevlyane's envoys was burnt alive; 5,000 more Drevlyanes were slain during the three-day wake honoring Prince Igor. Their capital of Iskorosten' was burned to the ground. Those who escaped the death had to pay an ever-greater tribute. An interesting detail concerns the destruction of Iskorosten'. Unable to take their capital by arms, Olga demanded from them only "a small tribute," promising to retreat from the town. The tribute consisted of three sparrows and pigeons from every house. Burning brimstone was tied to the birds and they were set free: They returned to their nests and set fire to every dwelling²⁰¹. Princess Olga visited Constantinople, was baptized there, and ruled until her death in 969.

I joked that in the contemporary jargon of primitive capitalist development in Ukraine, the self-appointed patronage Prince Igor imposed on the Drevlyane was *krysha*, literally the "roof," in exchange for tribute. Kozimirenko laughed at the parallel. Becoming greedy and raising extortions is not uncommon in today's racket, neither is cruel revenge. The role of the "prince's armed men" is today played by the former military, including the Afgan veterans left without better jobs, the former KGB, and the criminal element. Racketeering and assassinations are understood as a common side effect in the challenging process of democratic state-building in Ukraine. The school and college edition *Outstanding Figures in the History of Ukraine* normalized the patronage, stating that "despite Igor's selfishness, . . . the international positions of Rus were strengthening, the Kiev state was being built" (Gusev, 2002, p. 18). Similarly, although "the ancient chronicles called Olga cunning, the Eastern Orthodox Church considered her a saint," and "the contemporary scholars call her a wise ruler" (p. 21). She was praised for strengthening the centralized power and her vengeance on the Drevlyane for her husband's death, "to which she imparted a state-ritual quality," and her methods were

²⁰¹ Dmitrij Chizhevskij (1960) found traces of pre-literary Varangian influence in the tale of Olga's vengeance on the Drevlyane, such as verbal riddles. Olga suggested to the envoys sent to her by the Drevlyane that they demand to be carried by boat to Kiev: The Scandinavians used to bury their dead in boats. The Slav envoys did not understand this riddle, and they were thrown together with the boats into a ravine and buried alive. The third vengeance consisted of Olga offering the Drevlyane to "brew some mead" in order to keep the wake on her husband's grave near Iskorosten'. To brew mead and to feast was a symbol of war. The Drevlyane did not understand this riddle either, and during the wake Olga's warriors killed the Drevlyane who took part in it. Chizhevskij saw these and other passages as the instances of a somewhat scornful attitude to the Slavs and thought that such tales could have naturally originated among the Varangians (pp. 15–16).

considered “an important measure to this end” (p. 20). Whatever the folkloric transformations, these epic stories, according to Ukrainian historians, convey the “character of real Princess Olga: statesman’s mind [*rozum*], thoughtfulness of action, and consistency in the pursuit of goal” (Ibid.).

It came as little surprise that one of the earliest²⁰² folkloric literary forms in these lands was a lament for the dead. Interestingly, The Chronicle spoke about lamentation for a man’s death, whereas in other societies, such stories were usually focused on women. In content, laments are similar to the modern dirges of the Eastern Slavs: memories of the deceased person—who is frequently compared to the sun—gloomy representations of the unhappy state of living, and regret that the mourner did not die together with the deceased.

The times of the Kievan Rus long gone, a thousand years later, the countryside still greets visitors with sleepy forests and groves giving way to grassy green fields. Similarly, in the summer of 1920, traces of the distant past in this landscape—a past with ample similarity to the present—captured the imagination of Isaac Babel. But at that time, this land was once again a battlefield. The history that the Jewish writer saw repeating itself was that of ruination and people’s wish for a respite—to begin to rebuild anew. According to Carol J. Avins (1995), Babel observed the following:

More and more frequently we come across trenches from the last war, there’s barbed wire everywhere, enough for fences for the next ten years or so, ruined villages, people everywhere trying to rebuild, but not very successfully, they have nothing, no building materials... [...] That whole story—Poles, Cossacks, Jews—is repeating itself with stunning exactitude, the only new element is communism. (p. xxxiv)

Writing from the frontline of the Polish-Soviet war, where at issue were the ideological forces of communism and nationalism, Babel found remarkable the words of the philosophizing tradesman he met in the market in Zhitomir who wished for a benevolent state: “They all say they’re fighting for justice and they all loot. If only some government or other were a kind one” (1995, p. 3). This was the same wish the passengers on the trains would be refraining some 80 years later.

²⁰² Systematic literary activity in Kiev Rus’ began after the acceptance of Christianity in A. D. 988 (Chizhevskii, 1960, p. 10).

In today's peaceful landscape along the road, a tall poplar or two—of feminine gender in the Ukrainian language—clung to the field's edge, as in Shevchenko's poetry and in the song *Poplar Land*—music by Mixa Kozimirenko, lyrics by the famous Ukrainian poet Mykola Syngaiivs'ky. The girls choir of Korosten' music school, where Mixa taught for over 35 years, performed this song at his 65th birthday. Each voice represented a poplar growing in a field, the destiny of each girl, spring blossoms, and sun shining on the enchanted foliage, growing from generation to generation in a beloved land. "Here as if from a song I have grown, my generous-in-beauty fatherland!" The clear voices of the girls melodiously carried the refrain written by the two men:²⁰³

My native land, the singing land! I am your branch, your destiny.

Out of an ear of rye, out of the blue sky embroidered are the stars of my faithfulness!²⁰⁴

An ancient abandoned windmill towered above the peaceful green meadows. Never in my life had I seen solid beams of such enormous proportion as at the base of that windmill: enough room for each of us to stretch out. Leaning on the aged rough warm wood under this colossus felt invigorating as under the patronage of a kind giant. The setting sun was still reaching down here just enough to light up our smiling faces and color the grass in a silky, light green. As soon as the sun disappeared, the impression changed. The dark monster of a windmill, with many boards lost to the elements over the years, was toothlessly gaping at the sky, curling its gnarled fingers on its tremendous outstretched arms. To me, that metamorphosis at the feet of a giant windmill symbolized the Chernobyl disaster. We had been sitting at the feet of a man-made giant, drawing from its energy, until one beautiful April day the giant turned into an unruly monster, coughing out deadly clouds all over the planet and spitting up radioactive mucus, contaminating everything around and causing millions of deaths for decades to come. In Korosten', Chernobyl's shadow is lurking in every moment of joy: drinking crystal clear, chilly water from a draw well, picking a sweet strawberry in the garden, finding a porcini or chanterelle in the forest, or catching a fat bass in a pond. It made me shudder, when the

²⁰³ Many Soviet male poets of various nationalities wrote folk-style poetry "for a woman's voice." Folk-style poems "in a woman's voice" speaking of faithfulness, love, generosity, a woman's lot were written by such male authors as V. Sosyra, M. Isakovsky, Y. Kupala, Ashot Grashi, A. Yashin (Dement'ev, 1989, p. 30).

Korosten' girls, the ovals of their faces contoured by curled hair and large lacy butterfly collars, performed the song *Chernobyl*, music by Mixa Kozimirenko, lyrics by Volodymyr Matvienko, at Mixa's birthday celebration. After the powerful and solemn accords of the piano, the silvery voices sang the refrain:

Chernobyl, an alarm-bell-of a word,
It is our hell, our destiny!
There is no return back.
Only for the clouds—a scorching expanse.

Powerful and deep piano accords. The girls' soft and quiet voices. Contrasting piano accords, three powerful tolls of an alarm bell. Silence. The music, lyrics, and solemn alarm the song sends to the world liken *Chernobyl* to the Soviet Russian song *The Alarm Bell of Buchenwald*, commemorating another man-made disaster and the human lives it claimed. I realized that the girls were living this song every day; they have learned to sing beautifully because the government affords them free arts education as a compensation for living in hell. What I did not know at that time was that the author whose birthday was celebrated with this song was battling cancer.

“Beautiful!” sighed Mixa taking a deep breath and casting a long look at the old windmill, the meadow, and the dark forest in the distance. We returned to his home.

Forests and Cherry Earrings

The cherry tree greeted us on the first morning in Korosten' by the draw well. In Ukraine, running water is still a privilege of urban living. Several times a day, Mixa hauled buckets of cold water from the well to his house. There was no shower or restroom in his big three-bedroom house—just an outhouse across the yard.

And yet, country living rewards an artist with sounds, smells, sensations, and a pace of life that could turn a moment into a poetic experience. One is closer to the essence of being here. From the tree, Mixa pulled two cherries on a green stem and handed them to me. He picked another two cherries and held them above his left ear like an earring. He posed, displaying his proud profile in front of the cherry branches. That

²⁰⁴ Transcript. 02.06.2003.

moment of Mixa's smiling profile in front of the cherry tree, in the morning sunlight of his yard, became inseparably linked for me with his first Ukrainian poetry collection, an orange paperback, *Soul's Warmth* [*Teplo Dushi*], (1998). "Lyric that emits light," praised its critic Stepan Kelar who noticed "the heartfelt tone of the poems, their warm energy and the soul-felt melody." "Before us," wrote Kelar, "is the poetry which emits the light of sincerity and cordial kindness, the light of love of his kin, of the native word, of Ukraine, of everything that for a people was and will remain sacred" (1998, p. 3).

It was later that I came across Papusza's poem "Earrings of Leaves" in the Polish edition of Jerzy Ficowski's book, a copy of which I had noticed in Kozimirenko's bookcase. Ficowski, who was the primary translator and critic of Papusza's poetry, similar to Kelar's role for Kozimirenko, explained that Papusza's ballad about the earrings dealt with the way in which poor Gypsy women who could not afford jewelry made themselves ornaments from the golden autumn leaves of the oak tree adorned with oak apples, or round reddish growth on the leaf, like small apples of paradise (1989, p. 116). Mixa Kozimirenko knew this poem by Papusza. Moreover, a few of his poems were written in dialogue with his predecessor. Ficowski (1989) mentioned that Papusza's greatest period of poetry was around 1950, "at a turning point in the history of the Polish Gypsies and in a period of growing drama for the whole people" (p. 114). That turning point was marked by the post-WWII territorial divisions, modernization, and enforced sedentirization of itinerant Roma. Kozimirenko emerged as a Romani Ukrainian poet 40 years later, at a similarly dramatic turning point of another cycle of post-Soviet decentralization, modernization, and integration requirements. Like Papusza at her time, Kozimirenko was "a participant in and a mouth-piece for these movements" (Ficowski, 1989, p. 114), and his poetry, like hers, was the account of his era's drama.

The longing for what was lost was only one of the themes in Kozimirenko's work and one dialogic connection with Papusza. His poetry offered a few moments of crossing over with some of Papusza's images, visions, and metaphors. An attempt to resurrect in words the lost past life in the forest was one such parallel. Papusza dedicated several of her poems to the beautiful forests of Volhynia, or Polissya, where she, Mixa Kozimirenko, and my ancestors lived. In her last verses, Papusza addressed the forest as her lyrical co-hero that sang Romani songs and reared and taught Romani children. She

called the forest her black father, the father and teacher of Gypsies (pp. 115–116). Similarly, at his 65th birthday celebration, Mixa read the poem about the forest-teacher, which he announced as his confession to the audience. In a Freudian gender twist, however, the forest was his mother. Another difference from Papusza’s tragic lyrics of loss and abandonment was the mood of Kozimirenko’s poem—humanistically optimistic. Last, but not the least, unlike Papusza, Kozimirenko constantly improved his poetry, which was evident throughout his several printed editions and the performances I witnessed. Papusza’s songs, less than 30 verses in all, which were translated and published twice by Ficowski, “could not be improved...by constant circulation, by repeated performance, which introduces corrections and sometimes adds new elements, while inessentials...are rejected” (p. 114). At his literary soiree, Mixa read a new edition of the poem central in at least two of his collections, *Soul’s Warmth* [*Teplo Dushi*] (1998) and *I Am Rrom* [*Ya Rom*] (2003) (Appendix):

[...] I come to the forest as to Mom,
 To draw the warmth for all of you.
 I glorify the family of beloved Roma,
 Their sincere nature and beauty,
 I am coming to you as to my home,
 Bringing you my love!
 I search for Truth and Word
 As an ancient Kyiv scribe.
 My spring--the language of the Roma,
 Love—only for the people!
 Such is my Gypsy lot,
 Forests, roads, and a star,
 And also a Shevchenkian poplar.
 I am Rrom! And this makes me happy! (p. 25)

On a gas stove in his kitchen, we heated up a huge pan of water Mixa brought from the well, and Nastya and I washed the dishes. Mixa’s country adobe was the most modest out of the dozen Romani intellectuals’ homes I visited in Ukraine.

Korosten' Museum of History and Economy

Mixa Kozimirenko was a well-known figure in his town, which became obvious during our tour of the local museum of history and economy. The exhibits presented a millennium (the 11th–21st centuries) of political and economic development and the role of various ethnic groups in the region. Local history was already represented here as a geopolitical mill—a competition and succession of ethnic and religious groups, rather than the progression of socio-economic formations.

The tour began with the legend of Princess Olga and her vengeance on Drevlyane for the death of Prince Igor. In the 12th–14th centuries, the time of the Tatar raids, the town became a province of the Kievan Rus state. The Tatar influence has been reflected in the toponymics such as the village of Bekhi, from the Tatar word *bek*. That Tatar village had been founded by the Tatar warriors who settled there. The local population of Polissya was turned into the servants of the Horde [*slugi ordynskie*] and the servants of the castle, or the local landlords [*slugi zamkovye*]. In the 15th–16th centuries, the prominent Nemirichi family promoted the Uniate movement there. The Uniate church, which retained Orthodox rituals and Slavonic liturgical language while recognizing Papal authority, was created in 1596 and was backed by the Polish government. At that time, Polissya was the borderland of the Lithuanian and Polish region and was predominantly in control of the Polish gentry [*shlyakhta*]. During the Bogdan Khmelnytsky war of 1648, the national movement had a religious element manifested as a conflict between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. In that war, Korosten' was destroyed by the *sotnik*-military commander Taras'ka Moskalenko. In 1589, the Polish king Sigismund III granted his permission to build a fortress around the town. The villages in the area were Polish [*shlyakhetskie*] and Ukrainian [*muzhitskie*]. The old boyar families upheld greater independence from the Polish kings.

Yet perhaps the most significant event in Korosten's history, according to the guide, was the construction of the railroad in 1902. The town's population doubled very quickly, modernization began, and many new enterprises opened up. In 1912, the last Russian emperor, Nicholas II, made a stop in Korosten' when he came to attend the inauguration of a new cathedral in Ovruch. Photographs from the early 1900s display the industrial enterprises: Brzhebelsky porcelain factory, Osterman mechanical factory,

Aksel'rod cast foundry iron factory, as well as the factories producing brick, leather, and wicker furniture. Korosten's Jewish community constituted almost half of the town's population, the other half being predominantly Polish. All education was in Russian. In 1919, the railroad school opened up. In the 1920s, Jewish collective farms were set up, and newspapers began to be published in both German and Polish languages. In the 1920s–30s, the Ukrainian language was introduced in schools until 1937 when the language began to be gradually curtailed.

A separate wall space in the museum was dedicated to Mikhail Kozimirenko as an honorary citizen of Korosten', a Ukrainian Gypsy poet who was the first to translate Shevchenko's poetry into the Romani language, and together with Illie Mazore, co-wrote the Romani ABC reader. A few of Kozimirenko's books were on display. This was the only museum in Ukraine out of the dozens I visited in the eight cities that represented a local Romani intellectual, although the community life, its history, and culture were not displayed. Even in Uzhgorod, where Romani organizations are very strong and where the Romani musicians are famous internationally, the local museum of history and ethnography had only Ukrainian musical instruments on display. I asked the director of the Korosten' museum why this exhibit dedicated to Kozimirenko appeared as an addendum to the rest of the exhibition and why the presence of the Romani people in the area was not reflected in any other way. The director looked at Kozimirenko, who saved the situation, promising, "I know an old woman in shanty town [*shalman*]; I might get some playing cards from her, an old dress, and let me see what else." I swallowed a comment on the city commemorating the poet at the history museum, while at the same time ignoring his living conditions. Mixa told me later that he would have liked to live in Kiev, but could not afford it. And in Korosten', he would never exchange his old house for a modern apartment: The memories of too many good people are still alive in that house. The tour of the museum reminded me of the privilege of experiencing Mixa Kozimirenko's home because "only the quietest word still confirms the communality and therefore, the humanity, which you and I find in the word" (Gadamer, 1992, p. 81).

Museum's display once again unrolled in front of us the long history of Ukraine's repeated annexations at the whim of the geopolitical windmill and its nearly unbroken national servitude since Kiev fell to the sackings of the Tatars in the early 13th century:

For a century Ukraine was balancing between three fires: Poland, Turkey, and Moskovia. Crucial for Kyiv was the year 1686, when it altogether was left without Polish patronage. Polish King Jan Sobeski could no longer withstand the ever-growing pressure from the Ottoman Empire and agreed to an “Eternal peace” with Russia, where by then Peter the Great ascended to the throne... Moskovia managed to realize the ideological claims of Orthodoxy to the Eastern Roman Empire having won the accesses to Europe’s northern and southern seas Ultimately, the destruction of the Zaporozhian Sech at the Battle of Poltava turned Kyiv from potential European capital into a real imperial province. ... On October 21, 1721 Peter the Great proclaimed a new empire (p. 16).

From there onwards, Ukraine’s provincial status was symbolized in the tsar’s palace, built in Kyiv and seldom visited by the royalty, and the arsenal built inside the Pechersk monastery, already surrounded with a fort from Peter the Great, never to be used as intended. Russia, Poland, the Ottoman Empire, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire all exercised their influence over the multiethnic subjects living in their Ukrainian provinces or in between, planting the seeds of intolerance. “We encounter, up to the present,” noted Gadamer, “how intolerance and the forceful suppression of the other is determining the struggle for world dominance” (1992, p. 206).

The Road to Forest: Conversations About the Uplift

On the way to a nearby forest, Mixa turned on the audiotape *The Favorite Songs of the Gypsies of Ukraine* by the Theater Romance. After Count Ignatiev’s favorite, *Kon Avela*, the next song was *Hop-Hop*, or *Loli Phabaj, The Red Apple*—about a Rom and his beloved on their way to a Kishinev market. The song was popular in the summer Romani language camp held in 2002 in Braila, Romania—just across the Ukrainian border where I studied Romani language with young Romani teachers from all over Romania. The laconic refrain bursts with folk symbolism in the framework of a conversation piece: “*I will cut up a red apple, hop-hop; one for you, one for me, hop-hop-hop.*”

Kishinev is a big city,
Roma will live there very well,
They will press grapes, hop, hop,
And drink lots of wine, hop, hop, hop.

In their concert program, the theater styled this song after a marketplace scene, with motionless masked, white-gloved actors holding symbolic “goods”: a giant chess piece of a black horse, as in a grand chess game; a tray with books written about Gypsies by non-Roma; and a parrot in a large cage—all allusions to the changing world and the role of Roma in it.

Mixa fast-forwarded the tape to *Brotherhood*, a Romani song about the great diversity of Roma living in Russia. The theater staged this song as a self-parody. Igor Krikunov, who sang it, appeared on stage unshaven, wrapped in a piece of fur over a white shirt, with Gypsy linen bags for booty thrown over his shoulder. “There are as many kinds of divertissement as there are Roma in Russia,” he sang, shaking his head and choking with sardonic laughter. “One watches and one tells fortunes, this is how wonderfully we live, traveling the long road through life. Roma, I don’t want you to forget: Rom is with Rom, and Gadzho is with Gadzho [*Rrom Rromesa, a Gadzho Gadzhesa*].” The latter line ran as a refrain throughout the song. “You are a Servo, I am Lovar, and the third one is Russian, not from Roma, the fourth is from Kelderar, and the fifth is from somewhere else. Roma, I don’t want you to forget: Rom is with Rom, and Gadzho is with Gadzho!” Giving the Roma of Ukraine a sense of their larger identity, the song aimed to inspire them to unity, and in Krikunov’s words at the First Romani Congress of Ukraine, this unity was “like a fist.”

Mixa commented on the diversity of Roma in Ukraine and the fact that each dialect group was judged by others—a common argument among Roma, in which, as Hancock (2001) noted, they almost universally favor their own dialect over any other. Kozimirenko explained the existing hierarchy by the role or the actions of prominent members of these groups. His arguments were teeming with tensions around the standardization of Romani and the negotiation of intellectual leadership. As Hancock (2001) explained, interdialectal bias is one manifestation of the discrimination that exists among different Roma populations where individual groups generally regard their own members as ‘real’ Romanies and all others as ‘less real.’ This has an historical basis, and is reflected in the different self-ascriptions; thus, a Servo would never call himself a Kalderash, and vice versa. Greater commonality is evident among Roma groups saying what they are not—a Servo may not be a Kalderash. A Servo, Kozimirenko brought up

another “criterion” by which the “legitimacy” of Roma groups is negotiated in Ukraine, such as the time of arrival into the country. Since Barannikov’s (1931) monographs on Ukrainian Gypsies, Servi have been regarded as the true “Ukrainian” Roma as compared to the groups that arrived later. Because the communist ideology of the Soviet Union compelled Roma to prove their loyalty to the state by conforming to the de-nationalized Soviet *lichnost*’, or citizen, mold, the time of arrival was not an important issue. The regime needed loyal masses of “productive citizens” for the smooth operation of the giant societal machine in the constant state of mobilization of manpower, and everyone could fill the worker’s niche. The stage of national revival Ukraine is undergoing today has activated the language preference, Ukrainophone vs. Russophone, as well as the time lived in Ukraine as the criteria for determining which Romani group is truly “Ukrainian” or loyal. The competition among various Romani groups has increased with greater access to participation in various Roma-centered projects. Importantly, often it is the non-Roma who make the ultimate judgment of which Roma are truly Ukrainian.

The role the Romani cultural elite plays in constructing Romani culture loyal to the new Ukrainian state becomes evident in the discussion of Kozimirenko’s new work. He turned to me and said, “The following I would like cited literally, in my own words. Is the tape recorder on? Can I begin?” I nodded.

I would like to state in the introduction to my new book that due to the fact that little is published in the Gypsy language, the circulation is small and not always reaches the audience—and these are serious works, this is considered to be the classics, the world classics: Shevchenko, Pushkin—so I would like to dedicate one book to woman’s fate, woman’s happiness, woman’s road with the eyes of the classics in translation into Gypsy language. And in it, to show that in the fate of that Katerina, in the fate of that witch are the fates of Ukraine, and these are the fates of the Gypsies as well. This I would like to say: This book is like a tribute²⁰⁵ of respect from the Gypsies of Ukraine to Shevchenko and Pushkin, therefore the tribute of Ukraine itself to Shevchenko and Pushkin. And I would like to say that the Gypsy literature, which is now only beginning to stand on its own feet, with such works is striving towards high poetry and to high cultural heritage. And if many poets and writers continue to think in this vein, then with time it will become at par with any literature of a developed people. That I would like to say. Let these be the first steps but these are the steps aiming high, inspired by the high thoughts. If there is such literature and editions and if they reach [the readers], it

²⁰⁵ Perhaps coincidentally, he used the word “tribute” [dan’], exactly the same “tribute” Prince Igor and Princess Olga imposed on the smaller tribes, co-opting them into their enlarged state entity.

would testify to the national policy of Ukraine, the new one, and of the new thinking of the Gypsies themselves, who have grown enough to read such works.

“Mikhail Grigorievich,” I addressed him, “what about your own works, those written not under the influence of Pushkin or Shevchenko, but your own reflections in Romani language—is that not the high poetry?”

Well, you see, I am not the one to judge how high they are. I write about what stirs me and about what I know. I think that many works—I am talking about Gypsy poetry in songs and folklore—the melodies are wonderful yet the texts are very simplistic, not poetic. The everyday, the everyday mostly. There are no high or profound thoughts there. More profound texts are needed. It is the kind of artifacts we call *tsyganshchina*, that’s what it is, the forgery we call *tsyganshchina*. It is not a truly national art. The higher spiritual texts are needed. The poetry is needed in the poems.

I agreed that the folklore of all ethnic groups undergoes modification and “modernization,” yet could not but notice the tension and ambivalence in this discussion of the uplift and folklore modernization. To be sure, the importance of folklore for Roma is emphasized in many of Kozimirenko’s poems. One of them stated directly that it is in the songs that one should search for the soul of the Romani people. Another poem called upon Roma not to forget the songs that their fathers taught them to sing and to make sure that the grandchildren never forget them.

As early as in 1975, Ian Hancock explained such ambivalence of the speakers of Romani as “the prevailing non-Roma attitudes towards Roma and Romani, and the consequent effects upon the speakers themselves towards their language” and predicted it as a problem attending the standardization of Romani (1975, pp. 8–9). Contemporary prejudice at the popular level originated in long-standing stereotypes about Romani language and identity that gained additional support at the academic, and hence the administrative, level (Hancock, 2001). “Of the twenty-two different people who have published on Romani standardization over the past forty years, only five have been Roma, and this has kept the management of our language in mostly non-Romani hands,” stated Hancock (*Ibid.*).

In Ukraine, one such non-Romani professional and consultant whose main role was to provide authority on Romani cultural issues was the Director of the Ethnic Minorities Languages Laboratory, Ilie Mazore, who “[had] started Romani literature in

Ukraine and whose dream [was] the raising of Romani language to the level of literary standard, as now it still exists in several dialects.”²⁰⁶ Mazore’s colleague in this movement was his cousin, Stepan Kellar. Both of them collaborated with Kozimirenko in the Ukrainian Writers Union. In his introduction to Kozimirenko’s translation of Shevchenko’s *My Thoughts* (1996), Kellar described “the tremendous space of lexical vacuum” the translator had to overcome:

The active part of Ukrainian literary language has over 100,000 words [for example, the *Slovnyk Ukraïns’koi Movy* in 11 volumes (1970–1980) contains about 137,000 registered words]²⁰⁷ whereas any dialect of Gypsy language has in its active written use from 4,000 to 6,000 words, and in conversational language, even fewer. (p. 14)

As an example, Kellar noted, “in Gypsy language absent are the names of certain kinds of birds or trees, say—nightingale, lark or poplar, guelder rose. There are only general words: chiriklo—bird; kasht—tree” (p. 16). Therefore, he praised Kozimirenko for using the Ukrainian words in translations of Shevchenko’s poetry when there was no Romani equivalent. Kellar quoted a well-known Romani poet, translator, and educator from Hungary, Choli Daroczi, saying, “I am certain that our language would become truly a literary language only when the greatest, most famous and best works of world literature are translated into it. Without this it is impossible to publish the needed number of adequate Gypsy books and newspapers” (p. 13). While recognizing the important task of expanding the domains of language use, I would like to recall Gadamer’s ideas as he wrote on the “untranslatability” of lyric poetry (1986, p. 146). Noting the special difficulties involved in the translation of literary works, he commented on “the barrier of language” (1992, p. 68), but did not term it the “lexical vacuum.” According to him, direct translation is not possible, especially in the case of lyrics—“It is the originality of language which constitutes a barrier” (Ibid.). Each language has its own means of conveying a richness of experience and expression, and the translation of lyrics by “filling in the lexical vacuum” with Ukrainian words is not the best approach to lexical

²⁰⁶ Grigoriy Latnyk in his introduction to Mazore’s novel *Spells of the Gypsy Rose* (Mazore, 2001, p. 9).

²⁰⁷ The magnitude of the vocabulary of a written language is impossible for an oral language. “The grapholect bears the marks of the millions of minds which have used it to share their consciousness with one another” (Ong, 1982, p. 107). Webster’s Third New International Dictionary (1971) could have included at least three times more than the 450,000 words it does include—a lot more than any oral

augmentation of Romani. Resources for the latter already exist in the language, assured Hancock (2001), and the first task might be to find legitimate words in other dialects. Apart from this lexical pollution, the translation of poetry welcomes extensive syntactic and idiomatic calquing, which some Romani scholars, such as Gilliat-Smith, believe “to be the greatest obstacle, along with our present state of development as a people, for the success of a standardized dialect” (Hancock, 2001).

Kozimirenko himself (2002), commenting on the overwhelming translation process, expressed the mental anguish each choice of a non-Romani word involved:

As a musician, I easily capture the rhythm and melody of the original, but there was and there is a shortage of vocabulary. That is why I have three dictionaries, but even that is not enough. I would not want to fill them up with gadze words, that is, I would not want to take them from another language. Although I cannot tell with 100 percent certainty that a word is a purely Gypsy one: it could be from Spanish language or Hungarian language²⁰⁸.

Likewise, explaining the variability in the lexical corpus of Romani, Hancock (2001) noted that sometimes, in the absence of information on the pre-European character of Romani, external factors, or interference from various non-Romani languages, are not always easily identifiable. As an expert presenting Kozimirenko’s work, Kellar (1996) ought to have commented on the translator’s dilemmas in connection with the lexical variability of Romani as a result of internal and external factors instead of demonstrating Romani’s “shortcomings” in comparison to Ukrainian and thereby his own lack of expertise in Romani linguistics.²⁰⁹

Further, writing on the “lexical vacuum” of Romani, Kellar skirted important facts: first, that most Roma are multilingual in more than one non-Romani language,²¹⁰

language. The lexical richness of grapholects begins with writing, the resources of a modern written language are available largely through dictionaries (Ibid.).

²⁰⁸ Transcript 06.14.2002.

²⁰⁹ On other academics diminishing the worth of Romani, most often claiming that it cannot express various notions, see Hancock (2001). Kellar (1996) described Romani as “a totality of many dialects, sometimes very different from one another. Some of them could be fully considered integral languages” (p. 13). At the same time, he completely ignores the common origins of Romani—his introduction did not have a single reference to the Indian origin of Romani language, or any origin whatsoever. Ignored was the fact that “the basic vocabulary of Romani and Hindi-Rajastani is 60% the same” (Kochanowski, 1971, p. 76–77, quoted in Hancock, 2001). By concealing the common Indian origin and thereby denying the common corpus of Romani, and by exaggerating the dialectal differences Kellar revealed his own opposing stance towards the creation of a common written dialect in Romani standardization.

²¹⁰ Romani writers and poets usually write not only in Romani, but also in the language of their home-country. At the 2002 Congress of Romani writers in Kiln (Germany), where the decision to form an

and second, that many speakers of Romani are familiar with more than one dialect of Romani. Even more astonishing is the fact that the same expert who diminished the worth of Romani language in his own edition (Kelar, 1998) published translations of poetry by 14 Romani poets from various countries, including Rajko Djuric, Leksa Manush, Niko Satkevicho, and Aleksandro Germano—known for the beauty and power of their Romani verse.

Kelar's introduction defeated the purpose of the multicultural education it declared to promote by downplaying the common origins of Romani people. Roma, according to such stereotypical representation, have no linguistic or cultural roots. The Indian origin of Romani people is not even mentioned. Such discourse on the "native sons and daughters of Ukraine" continues the line of forced cultural homogenization that was part of the policy of building nation-states. In contrast, Kozimirenko's narratives and public speeches emphasized the common Indian origin, the common history, and the common roots of the Romani people. Only one sentence in Kelar's introduction gave Kozimirenko credit for conveying the melodies and the national character of the translated originals, attributing this to his poetic abilities and the fact that "he was born in the Ukrainian land, cradled with its melodies, nourished with its sources, warmed up with its sun" (p. 19). Kozimirenko's masterful rendering of Shevchenko's rhythm-melodies was an important aspect of his work as a translator and deserved more specialized attention than what Kelar was willing to give.

Besides the reserved presentation of the merits of Kozimirenko's work, Kelar (1996) downgraded the potential of the entire Romani intellectual elite to stand in charge of Romani culture and language development:

The process of renaissance of each specific culture takes place in a different way, depending on such factors as the demographic state, intellectual and spiritual potential, the overall cultural level to date, etc. The Gypsy culture in general and the language and literature of the Gypsies of Ukraine in particular today are in their beginning stage of renaissance. This can be easily explained. There are few literate people among the Gypsies, they practically have no cadre of their own intellectuals in science, technology, and the humanities. They have not studied their native language and literature at school, to say nothing of the secondary and higher educational establishments. There were no favorable conditions for that.

international Romani writers union was made, it was estimated that the Romani writers write in at least 29 languages (10.01.2002. Vorba le Romegni. <http://www.dw-world.de>)

And if sometimes we do come across a Gypsy physician or a Gypsy music teacher, in no way do they feel as Gypsy intellectuals per se. It is not the fault of the Gypsy folk themselves that the Gypsy culture is so neglected. (pp. 11–12)

Contrary to Kelar’s opinion, “Gypsiness” is a “big-concept” to Romani intellectuals (Hancock, 2001). Specifically, in my conversation about the Gypsy intelligentsia in Ukraine with Mixa Kozimirenko and the first Ukrainian Romologist of Romani origin, ethnographer Aleksei Danilkin, they described the Romani intellectual elite in Ukraine as coming fore and growing in numbers. As the dialogue below (2002) well demonstrates, both of these “ethnic” intellectuals not only see their specific roles in the collective task of Romani language development very clearly, but also understand them as complementary, as supporting one another in the great project of the uplift.

Danilkin: It seems to everyone that the Gypsy language is small and weak. But when I stay in people’s homes in Transcarpathia, working on my writings, processing data, while they are doing something in the kitchen or in the room, they could speak the Gypsy language *for hours*. This alone shows that the Gypsy language has a good vocabulary, a large vocabulary—

Kozimirenko prompts: Capacity.

Danilkin: That it is expressive, that it has a good synonym structure—that it is a normal language! It just has not been studied! It is not studied, as it should be. Here the dictionaries and conversation books come out, but there is not a single one good scholarly edition on Romani language, so that, say, I could take this work and rely on it, like on Ezhov’s dictionary. If we take Ukrainian language, we could speak of its richness. But if we take a certain dialect of this language in a certain region, it would look very poor! It is only the totality of all the dialects that creates this tremendous entity—the Gypsy language, which has a great number of dialects! Then the vocabulary capacity is the richest!

Kozimirenko: To fully demonstrate the richness of Gypsy language, not only the academics are needed but also the writers and poets, and needed is a tremendous work with WORD. Needed is a large amount of translated literature. When we translate most of the world classics into Gypsy language and do it as precisely and deeply as possible, just like it was written by the classics, to show that we are aspiring to the same heights, the same values, and through these values show our language, our capacities, as well as our capacities as translators and poets, then we would be better understood—what we aspire to, what we want to say. And the development of language base should be contributed to by

these people—not only by the academics, but also by the poets, writers, and everyone working with the living WORD. Therefore my goal is to work as much as possible on the original Gypsy works—poetry and translate as many well-known authors as possible. And only when there is a vast literature with many literary works would we be able to speak of the literary Gypsy language.

The immediacy of turntaking in this conversation and the ready support each speaker offered the other serve as an illustration of the intellectual solidarity I experienced working among Romani cultural elite.

Kelar’s ignoring of this intellectual solidarity, his diminishing of the “intellectual and spiritual potential” of Romani intellectual elites, as well as his belittling of the interdialectal corpus of Romani can be explained by the desire of the non-Romani Ukrainian “specialists” to keep Romani language and culture development under their control. In Kelar’s own words (1996):

The democratic changes taking place in our country today open up wide opportunities for the cultural renaissance of the national minorities. Ukraine’s law “On the national minorities in Ukraine” declares and guarantees the rights of each of them to the national-cultural autonomy: the use of and education in the native tongue or the studies of the native tongue in the state educational establishments, the development of national cultural traditions, meeting their needs in literature, the arts, mass media, the founding of the national cultural and educational establishments, etc.. (p. 11)

It is these Romani cultural and educational opportunities, and in particular the creation of a formalized variety of Romani, that the Ukrainian establishment represented by Kelar aims to control, managing them by the workings of Ukrainian nationalist rhetoric.

Translations of the works by Taras Shevchenko into Gypsy language, made by the poet from the lineage of Ukrainian Roma ... present interest to us ... as another convincing evidence of unextinguishable [*sic*] interest of the multinational public to the classical heritage and contemporary acquisitions of Ukrainian language arts. Translations by Mykhailo Kozimirenko are not only a good contribution to the native language arts, but they, undoubtedly, enrich the spiritual heritage of the Gypsy people. Ukraine, Shevchenko are the names sacred for everyone of us. (pp. 22–23)

The declarative nature of the following statement is obvious: “The bilingual edition *My*

thoughts... will become for the Gypsies not only a book to read, but a certain textbook, which in absence of the Gypsy language textbooks would help the reader acquire the language—the native one and the state one” (p. 24). This observation is in turn contradicted by the statement that the edition “will undoubtedly become a book collector’s rarity” (p. 25). The edition’s small circulation of 1,000 explains why it only reached the book collectors and not “the reader.”

“Who delivers your poetry to the audience?” I asked Mixa. He sighed, “This is not happening yet. No such thing yet. No such thing yet.” It was the Theater Romance that he saw as the best opportunity existing to date not only to popularize the folk songs in a concert program, but also to produce dramaturgy in Romani language and thereby raise the linguistic competence and cultural awareness of the audience.

And we must look for our own audience and develop that audience. Theater is higher than just a theater. The theater media allows us to convey our thoughts, our dreams, and how the future of a people is seen--the reflection on the past and the today. That is, through the characters we can openly express the thoughts that trouble us. Conversation is a great medium. To talk with the authorities and with the audience, that is to raise and to tune them to a high conversation—to a higher—to raise the bar higher.

I asked Mixa what he meant by a search for and development of his own audience—whether he wrote for a particular audience, whether he addressed a particular audience with his thoughts. He said that in trying to incorporate as many genres as possible he did not write for any particular audience.

I think that it is not the poet who needs to come down to an audience, but the audience that has to understand the poet, that is, it should make a step, stand on tiptoe, to reach that peak. If we keep coming down to earth all the time to the audience, to the reader, there will be no high poetry. It is labor. One has to be prepared to perceive this original world. Poetry is a certain convention. Not everyone can understand this convention, that is, just as in the fine arts, the music, symphony, or ballet. But one has to make an effort, learn to do it. It is a unique language.

Kozimirenko’s perspective on educating the audience to perceive poetry as a unique medium with its own conventions was similar to Gadamer’s view on poetry becoming quieter in an epoch of management and electronic media. Like Kozimirenko, Gadamer (1992), compared the quiet word of poetry to the slow passages in a symphony:

As discreet messages are spoken quietly so that an unintended person cannot overhear them, so has the poet's voice become. He shares something with the one who has an ear for it and who is sympathetic. He whispers something to him in his ear and the reader, who is all ears, nods finally. He has understood. (p. 81)

This view of training the audience to appreciate the medium is also similar to Igor Krikunov's effort to create Romani plays in half tone, or pastel, as opposed to acting "on the edge." The quieter presentation fosters a communality of experience.

However, not everyone welcomes such communality. Mixa acknowledged that, just as his predecessor Papusza, he, too, has been reproached by Roma for opening up too much when writing in Romani.

They think that if I am writing in Romani, someone will learn it and use it for certain purposes. Nonsense. If someone wants to learn it, they would learn it no matter what. Lina Kostenko writes about it too: Who asks you to tell about Gypsy soul? Just keep playing cards and shaking your earrings.

Ultimately, our conversation pinpointed the three fundamental problems facing the creation of a standardized Romani language: (a) the diversity, which exists among Romani dialects, (b) the general acceptance of such a formalized variety should it ever become established, and (c) the politics around the issue in various nation-states in which Roma live.

Mixa stopped his car at a clearing. We gave up on finding a grassy spot without litter scattered around and cleaned up a spot large enough to make a fire. We watched the fire, listening to the crackling of the pine branches, and enjoyed the smell of smoke on our hands. Mixa brought up the topic of the close relationship Roma had with the natural world as their messianic role:

This precisely: to mediate the natural world, to be a MEDIATOR between, say—between cosmos and people. That is, they find some kind of wisdom of their own. I don't know how or where—such *zhitejskaja mudrost'*, worldly wisdom. That is, on the one hand, they—have fallen behind the civilization—understand?—so to say, they are not dying to break ahead, but at the same time, they keep this connection with NATURE to a greater extent. They are closer to the natural world than any other people. They understand it. They feel it better.

I looked at him. The country was amidst a dramatic sociopolitical, technological, and ecological change, which affected everyone, including Roma. I asked Mixa what constituted the quintessence and strength of Romani culture.

You see, it looks like the Gypsies manage to remain themselves in everything. The civilization and the rulers have taught them not to expect anything good from the authorities, therefore they try to keep to themselves and *safeguard their vitality source inside themselves*. They have enough love of life and life philosophy to remain themselves throughout centuries. Therefore this isolation is a kind of protest in order to safeguard the life within. Hence the negative attitude to mixed marriage because the influence of the alien philosophy and world-view weakens the vitality strength. This is why the Gypsies are trying to *preserve*.

And look, this vitality strength *does not depend on the level of formal education*, it sits somewhere deeper. It is perhaps more profound, something humanly universal, some foundation, something deeper. They keep to their separate group, where they know what rights and obligations they have, what they can or cannot say or do. And in a greater world they are still novices, they have not integrated into that society yet. And in this both the society and they themselves should help, because otherwise they would either be completely gone or they would become different. But I don't think the humankind would gain anything if they are gone, the humankind would not gain a dime, because humankind would grow impoverished if there were no Gypsies.

If the last Rom dies
A star would die out above the tent,
Mountains and valleys would moan quietly,
Horses would startle in the open field,
Black clouds would shroud the moon... [Appendix]

"I love this poem by Kozimirenko!" a young Romani teacher told me who had grown up in a Transcarpathian orphanage and became a teacher there after college. "I love reading it to the kids in our orphanage." The rich romantic vision of cultural heritage creates a transcendental power for this poem and others. Romani heritage schoolteachers from Izmail, Kharkiv, and Dnipropetrovsk have told me their students learn Kozimirenko's poems by heart.

"On Equal Footing"

Mixa Kozimirenko wanted me to meet the family of Roma he knew in a shantytown [*mangan*]. He referred to them as *startsy*, the word he applied to poor Roma

and non-Roma. All together, 13 families lived in two long barracks divided into efficiency “apartments” with no running water, no restrooms, and no natural gas or other central heating. It looked similar to the housing projects in which I saw Roma live for three generations in Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, and Ukraine. In this shantytown, several generations have grown in these apartments—over a period of 50 years—with children, parents, and grandparents living together.

The door opened into a small room with a wood stove by the entrance, overlooking a small window across the room. Impeccably clean, the room had only one bed, covered with a bedspread of red silk, and two chairs. On the bed sat one of the brothers, with crutches, and his wife, the other brother was sitting on the chair; all three were in their mid-20s. The children were at school. At night, the family members slept next to one another on the floor. Ukrainians and Russians occupied several other apartments, but only temporarily; they were scheduled to be moved to bigger ones as they become available, and only the Romani families had been staying here since the late 1940s—living here permanently since what the family called the “1957 Khrushchev law.” A question about employment touched a sensitive nerve, and the family began talking simultaneously, “No way one can find a job here with all the job cuts! Nowhere to go! No jobs! Even with a shovel—no job. There is no job at all, none.”

Kozimirenko: Guys [*ryebyata*], I want to tell you this. I talked to Moskalenko, our mayor, and he said, “If anyone of the Gypsies wants, we could give them several spaces at the market to sell stuff. This is official. He won’t cancel his decision. Think what kind of goods to sell. That is, to stand there on an equal footing with everyone else. First, one has to buy out a section; I think it’s \$200; it has to be paid. This is just to start. It is too much money for one person to start—you need at least five people, so that gradually each one could buy it out from the first one.

Woman: Well, you say, “Buy it out,” right? Take my husband and I, for example: right now my husband is sick, so—

Kozimirenko interrupts: This is not what I’m talking about, what I’m saying—he is giving such an opportunity, although it’s a lame opportunity. And the other jobs they do not give, because, first of all, the Gypsies are of low qualification. What kind of jobs could they apply for—

Woman explodes before Kozimirenko finishes: Why low qualification? In other countries the Gypsies are not considered of low qualification! Only here [*zdes’ u nas*]!

Kozimirenko interrupts: Hold on, do not rush. I want to say that in their majority the Gypsies are to date the least educated nation in our country. It

is not their fault, it is the fault of the state. There are no special provisions—the city council should—

Husband interrupts: I beg your pardon. Children go to the first or second grade, and they spoil them so that it is impossible! And then when it's already the eighth or sixth grade—"Why don't the children show up at school, why do they study poorly?" But give them a chance to study in a normal way! Can one study in this ship-cabin [*kayutke*]? [emotionally] At the beginning this was the only housing available, O.K., I agree. But today! There are lots of empty apartments! So can't they give an apartment?

Kozimirenko interrupts: All is clear, clear. This is the everyday life [*byt*]. This is the everyday life, and I am talking about something higher. I am saying that to date the Gypsies are the least educated part of the population. And the state is not doing anything about it! Today nothing is being done to give them at least some kind of vocational training!²¹¹ I am sure that if an agricultural organization was formed in Korosten' and someone said, "You will be grooming horses!" Any Gypsy would immediately agree. It is pleasant to be near a horse. One morning you see—a foal. He could take it, and he would already have his own horse, he would feel better. That is, to do what he has been doing all his life, what his grandfathers and forefathers did. The Gypsies make wonderful blacksmiths, wonderful jewelers, wonderful psychics—they could tell fortunes better than anyone else! But why are they not given such opportunities? Everyone wants a Gypsy to take a shovel and dig up some garden! It is not a job for him! It's not a job for him! Let him walk next to a horse, even if he is considered some kind of a shepherd, let it be—but he leads a stallion! He is walking *ingresa* [he will lead the horse]! It is not shameful for him to groom a horse. He would groom it and clean after it. But to stand [he switched from Russian to Ukrainian to impersonate a peasant] in the garden and throw around dung in some kind of village—he won't do it! Understand?

The Roma kept expressing their approval as he talked. Kozimirenko's soliloquy was permeated with nostalgia and concern for the Roma falling through the cracks of another industrial and technological modernization. With the last cavalry battle in this land over in 1920 and with current agricultural modernization, horse grooming was just a dream Kozimirenko was sharing with a grateful audience. A painful dream. I asked one of the brothers what job he would like. "I had a dream to be a driver," he said. Mixa interrupted, "Wait, wait! Tatiana! A dream—a driver! A dream—a driver! What does it take to become a driver? Three grades of education!

²¹¹ Kozimirenko here is trying to emphasize the priorities and the ultimate aims of the Romani movement, instead of just focusing on the issues and disadvantages of everyday life. In this, his perspective is similar to Igor Krikunov's (e.g., his speech at the First Romani Congress of Ukraine) and Mirga & Gheorghe's (1997).

It's that easy! And the drivers' ed! Can't the state do it?" The man pointed to the shelf, "The drivers license is over there. I graduated from the drivers' school and could not find a job. Even after the army and everything I could not find a job."

Kozimirenko: The man has served in the army. Why are things this way? He is a ready member of society! He does not need to be tamed! He is not a wild one from a forest. He did not come from the forest! He has come back from the army! That is, he has fulfilled his duty towards the state! And the state has not fulfilled its duty towards him! This is what one needs to talk about!

Man: I am a house painter and plasterer. It's my military occupation—there, take a look, read. There, as well as a truck driver. But there are no jobs. I have a license, but cannot get a job anywhere!

The conversation about this responsibility turned to the recent changes in leadership within traditional Romani society, the emerging Romani movement, and the Ukrainian political wing, such as the mayor or a parliamentarian. In most Romani communities the elders hold power. Their leadership has typically been vested in informal, but powerful, extended family structures. With the emergence of formal organizations or associations, a new type of Romani leadership has come into existence. This, in turn, has raised questions of legitimacy: Should leadership devolve from the traditional power structure or from the constituency of a formal organization and the state authorities? The legitimate traditional leadership drawn from within the family power structure, especially if it is eroded, might not always be well prepared for participation in the modern bureaucratic structures that increasingly characterize government and public administration, as in the case of the family we visited. The state legitimization of some leaders rather than others fosters dissent and internal conflict. A modern and democratic leadership legitimized by the constituency of a formal organization is an ideal not yet well rooted in Romani communities (Mirga & Gheorghe, 1997), as became evident when the woman emotionally protested the notion of Romani intellectuals, national and international, being referred to as the "*baro shero*," or traditional leaders, literally "the big head."

Woman: So there we go! That one is called *baro shero* [the big head] and those are called *xurdy manushentsa* [small people]! [Several arguing voices]

Husband to his wife: Do not start now... Do not get into this [*Da ty ne razbegaisya. Da I ty lezesh' tuda..*]

Kozimirenko: I want to say this. Quiet. *Mek, mek* [let me, let me]. “Big” means big with his mind, with respect. Such a person is respected, and his word is followed. This is what *baro* means. If you are a Gypsy *baro*, then you bear *responsibility* for your people. But who is a *baro* for me? To whom could I come to speak my *thoughts*? And how could he influence me so that I could become better or worse or lived better of so that she lived better? Where is that *baro* to whom one could go? And that one says, “I am a baron!” So what—that you are a “baron”? But what have you done for the people? What have you done if you are a “baron”? Just like that one—Like the mayor! “I am a baron!” Whose baron are you? Who elected you a baron? Who are you? Where are you from? What are you? Oh, all this is fake [*lipa*].

Man: It was in the past when they were elected.

Kozimirenko: There is *Romano Sendo*—Gypsy Court. They are people with authority. If there is an issue, the Gypsy Court gets together to solve it. But this is the Gypsy Court—the most interesting, the most *humane*, because it does not say, “You are guilty! You will be shot to death!” It is the court that never tells you that “you will be shot to death, imprisoned.” No. It is moral, it would say, “You are not right, you have to apologize, you have to get money, you have to do this or that.” In the countries of the West it is called *kris*, but here it is called *sood* or *sendo*, from the Russian word “sood,” or court. But whether it’s *kris* or *sendo*, the essence is the same.

Gypsy Court is an ancient form. It includes the *elders* and *wise* [*umnui*] and *respected* people. The party who considers himself right and the other party who thinks that he could explain what motivated his actions turn to these people and know that they would be judged justly [*sic*]. That is, everyone had an opportunity to appeal to them, and there it did not matter whose brother or son-in-law you are [*chto ty brat--svat*].²¹² Because the word first and foremost must be *honest*! There was not just one person in the court, not one, but three, four, or five people judged, each of them discussed and argued. They elected incorruptible people, well not just incorruptible but *independent*, independent Gypsies. The court still exists, but—Today, in our society, even in *Vidrodzhennya* [Renaissance Foundation] there is their own Kris. Yermoshkin is at the head of it.

Our hosts told us about their court and its strictest punishment—for a year or two someone can be excommunicated from the people [*otstranyayut ot naroda*]. Four people

²¹² Nepotism has reached dramatic proportions during Ukraine’s transitional period. During the Soviet regime, there were social mechanisms that prevented open nepotism. In new conditions, nepotism has blossomed along with corruption and racketeering. The most obvious nepotism was in the highest echelons of Ukrainian power.

began talking simultaneously at this point with emotion.

Kozimirenko: It is the worst, the worst when—

Husband: He cannot eat or drink. It is the end.

Wife: We do not call it *kris*, but we have the old people who review, for example—

Brother: During the itinerant times, there was one person who decided where to go, and the elders were respected—

Wife: He is telling the men his side of the story, and I am telling mine. Then they assemble and decide who is right.

Husband: The old people, two or three people.

Kozimirenko shouts: Who is the oldest here?

Wife: Well, Grandma Tamara [*Babushka Tamara*] is the oldest.

Husband: Tamara.

Kozimirenko: Tamara? Then we need to come see Tamara. *Tamara khere*—Is Tamara home? Good. Tell her to make tea! [*Xaj chaj gotovit!*] [Everyone laughed]

Grandma Tamara, a frail woman of 70, lived in the room next door. She and I sat down on the bed with the same bed cover of red silk. She asked who taught me to speak Romani and then left a greeting for my Romani Professor in Texas.

Tell him this: Grandma tells fortunes well. Many come to see her. Also tell him she is old [*staren'kaya*]. Did you understand? So far they come to me—a little, little, little [*chut'-chut'-chut'*]. At least a little. At least I can earn enough to buy bread—three, five roubles. Sometimes two roubles.

Back in the car, I was thinking of Grandma Tamara. She was 20 years old when she began living in that ship-cabin of a room. She raised her children there, and now her grandchildren sleep there on the floor. I left Mixa a small package with photographs to give her. In a couple of months he said, “You know, I could not give her anything. They are not there anymore. They’ve been arrested [*Zameli ih*]. They say because of the drugs or something.”

This story, out of many in Ukraine, confirms that Romani political and cultural elites are aware that education is the key to modernization and that many Romani parents see education as the way of breaking the vicious cycle, yet the humiliating housing conditions, the absence of a traditional education, and a high percentage of illiteracy among parents can be overwhelming. “Hopelessness and despair destroy the will to strive for better things, ...they destroy one’s very sense of worth,” said Ian Hancock (2001). He further wrote (1992, 2001):

As long as families...must deal on a daily basis with problems of racism, unemployment, housing and health-care, then abstract issues such as language standardization and the details of our Asian origins rank absolutely nowhere on their list of priorities. Interest in language comes with improved schooling and social conditions, and both can only come with improved civil and social rights—but these must originate with the non-Romani governments in whose lands we live. (p. 8)

Importantly, during the present transitional time, Romani disadvantaged are now “on equal footing” with such vulnerable populations as the orphans, the disabled, single mothers, and the elderly—whose images Kozimirenko has drawn as an endless stream passing through Ukraine’s train. This circumstance engenders another stereotype of Roma—that of Roma as victims spelling out their grievances in terms of social and economic problems. Warning people of the tendency of simply following the state’s lead in addressing the Romani issue, Romani scholars and leaders underscore that Romani input into governmental programs is essential (Mirga & Gheorghe, 1997; Hancock, 2001). Yet Romani viewpoints remain under-represented because of a lack of sufficiently qualified Roma to participate and because of reluctance driven by prejudice to employ and promote those Roma who are qualified (Hancock, 2001). Clearly, until educational and social conditions improve drastically, the goal of achieving the standardization of Romani language will remain largely in the academic domain.

Avelas Fededir—It Would Have Been Better

Later that evening, on the verandah of Mixa’s home, in the warm yellow light of an electric lamp, next to the two old radios and a yellowed poster of Mixa’s poetry readings, the day’s meetings inspired a conversation about the dynamic of change. I asked whether the communication between Roma has changed in recent years. “It has changed,” said Mixa, “It has become better and it has become worse.” And he recounted the past.

“Pictures of communication in the past,” by Mixa Kozimirenko:

In the past, how did the Gypsies communicate? They rode horses, mostly, and as an excuse to meet with each other, most certainly, were various fares. Big fares. [He began to speak fast, with excitement] A big fair in Nezhin or in Chernigov. Today we have a Sorochintsy fair. That one is an all- Ukrainian, everyone knows about it and everyone goes there. But back then they knew that a

fair in Nezhin was on that date, in Chernigov was on that date, in Kiev—on that date, in Bobrovitse—on that date. And they tried to come to these fairs.

And it was a type of communication in itself: everyone knew how much everyone was worth [*kto chto stoit*]. You have brought five horses today, and that one—8 or 10; and that one over there has brought two—a progress already, the last time he brought one, now he has brought two. That is, it was obvious how they were doing—financially.

Also, at these fairs, the same as during festivities and weddings, matching took place. Because a people is small and lives within itself, they kept their eyes open who has a good girl and who has a good boy: A conversation is about horses, and they keep talking about horses and at the same time keep thinking, “What can I fix up for my child?”—or to take in a girl, or to marry off a son. So they would not allow themselves to be rude so as not to spoil future relations. That is, they tried to maintain positive relations so that they could always come to this or that person in the future.

On religious holidays, too, they got together, but in a much smaller circle, only the relatives. And we also have such tradition: It is considered chic—well not chic, but it is considered a great honor—for example, this is the way we always used to do in Korosten'. On the first day of Easter everyone came to our house to celebrate. Father was the oldest, and all the Gypsies who are here—such more or less respectable—come to my father to congratulate the father. And then later the other one invites everyone to his house. And it goes on, according to the age. And so it was that at least for 20 minutes, but you must come by to give this house honor. At least for 20 minutes one must come in. And I was always at a disadvantage, because even though I was my father's son, I was the youngest in age and I had to—I, too, wanted to host them and treat them, but my turn came always the very last. But when they did come here to my place, there was no other house to go to after mine, and we celebrated wholeheartedly here, and everyone felt great. In this house, in this very house. It was in the past: People partied here in the past. And everything was so pleasant. My father came here, too; father was proud that everyone got together at his son's. This is how it was. Such form of communication, as I told you. And one after another we kept inviting everyone to our house.

My father became excited about a month before Easter. He liked the custom of Easter egg fights—who wins. About a month before he started going to the market and picking strong-shelled eggs. At home, he put them in salt, so that they stayed in salt and hardened up. One time he brought me to the market in Chernigov. Painted Easter eggs are sold there. And here the enthusiasts of egg-fight are playing *na ubitki* [whoever breaks the other's egg wins]. I was amazed to see the baskets full of eggs: 10 to 30 baskets! “So? Shall we play?” “Let's play!” And so each of them takes—you take and I take—and one hits another; whoever won last gets the full basket [laughing]! The luck can turn any way! [laughing] The father was always the winner of that market. And God forbid to lose the first egg! The FIRST egg had to win! The first! If you lost the second egg, it was not such a problem. But the FIRST egg he had to win no matter what!

And one had to be [a] very HONEST player! Some made a hole in the egg with a needle, blew out the contents, and filled it in with wax, which made it very hard to break. This was against the rules, a forgery. And father used to say, “If this is an honest egg, good for you! And if it’s a false one—you will pay for all the eggs! And he kept winning. He knew them well, he could tell a good egg by the sound and by the shape on the sharper end. He was a pro in it. At home, when someone came in, he already had the stronger eggs hidden somewhere. And next to the Easter bread the weaker eggs were mounted. So he says to the guest, “Go ahead and pick out yours and I will pick out mine. Choose any one you want.” [Mixa laughed] Meanwhile he went out and... So to lose was impossible! Such was [he laughed] the custom.

And on Baptizing [*Xresbiny*]²¹³—it is another form. It is also an honor, you are elected. It is also a way to make a family connection [*porodnit’sya*]. Such are the communication connections. Just as usual. Just as other people.

So kam, kherestir na nashesa:	Try as you may, no way to escape from the house ²¹³ :
Chavo, bori, te chavore.	Son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren.
Sir kham sig patradi avela—	Come Easter, like the sun—
Lole marasa arnore!	We will be breaking red Easter eggs!
Ke me sare mursha kedenpe,	At my place gather all the men,
Me maj phuro, maj godedir.	The oldest I am, and the wisest.
Bersha pale mre te rysyonpe,	But if the gone by years came back,
Galyov, avelas fededir! ²¹⁴	It would have been better!

Like several other Romani intellectuals worldwide, Kozimirenko often mentioned to me that not infrequently he felt unappreciated by both Roma and non-Roma. In this epoch of management, poets are needed as tokenism²¹⁵ to open the meetings and rallies, but are kept quiet at business meetings. Kozimirenko’s attempted speech near the end of the First Romani Congress was cut short in favor of the subsequent elections. “I wanted to say more, they did not let me. *Politikanstvo*,” he commented. Likewise, a female professor cut short his speech at Romani Language Day at the National University of Culture before he could read his Romani poetry. She was anxious to give the floor to the parliamentarian rector who dropped in briefly to say a couple of words. Also, Romani dances and music—the show—are appreciated by non-Roma more than Romani poetry.

²¹³ In psychoanalysis a house symbolizes the person—oneself.

²¹⁴ Kozimirenko, 2000, p. 66.

²¹⁵ I borrow bell hooks’ (1990) term.

The theme of the poet's loneliness and isolation in a time of transitional capitalism ran throughout many of our conversations, as, for example, the conversation below (2003).

I feel myself *constantly* in *isolation* [sigh]. *Constantly*. I [pause]—*here* in Ukraine [pause], to say *honestly*—there are Gypsies who seem to *think in the right vein*. But as soon as any of the financial type of activity begins, then everything is trumped and everything is done to *g-g-g-r-r-rab* [*x-x-v-v-vatanut* '] it! And then nothing else—*everything* is done to grab a chunk of bread for oneself and that's it! And everything else—That is: just like in *Queen of Spades*—first the money is spent to reach the goal and then the money itself becomes the goal [he laughed]. Understand? This is what's the problem [*Vot v chyom beda*]!

I commented, "It is not only with the Gypsies. It is the spirit of time."

Kozimirenko nodded, "Yes, yes. The spirit of time." He then continued:

Who represents us? In Verkhovna Rada, in the government? Who represents our people [*nash narod*]? Is there any strategic program of the development of *our* people? None. And those people who do represent, say, at the president's—they represent only a particular *region*, region. I respect—*whadzizname*—[he named one of the leaders]. I respect him. Yes, there are many problems there. But take a look: How much money has been sucked out of *Vidrodzhennya* [Foundation] and channeled there.²¹⁶ There are a good two-dozen [cultural] associations there! But is there any *enlightenment*? Or not? Do they already have their own instructors of the Gypsy language? Are there any specialists? And where exactly are they working? That is, to say, "Here this is *how much we have spent* and here—take a look at what we already have." Has any writer, any thinker, any public figure come forth over there? None! And just as those *h-h-h-o-o-orses d-d-died* in the street there and *s-s-stunk!*—so it continues to this day [*l-l-loshadi d-o-oxli i v-v-vonyali!*] So on one hand, "There, we are *publishing magazines, publishing books, meal kitchen*." Yes, those [evaluating visitors] will remember "meal kitchen." But meal kitchen is only for 20–30–40 people, that is all! *Magazines*—they also take funding. But who reads them? They do not read them!... That is—the result! What is the result of this work? It is a perpetual [dung]hill! It is a perpetual hole!

In the complexities of representation and modernization, Kozimirenko saw the contradictory goals and aspirations of Romani intellectuals and Romani communities. By an intellectual he meant a cultural creative producer such as a poet or a theater director. A community he ultimately understood as an audience or would-be audience.

There is a contradiction of this kind. A community lives *closer to earth* [*zazemlenno*] and lives with the *thoughts of daily bread*. This is the major task of

²¹⁶ Another respected Romani leader noted that Aladar has "bombed Vidrodzhennya through" to get all the funding he wanted [*probombil Vidrodzhennya*].

every community and every family—to SURVIVE! And the intellectual lives somewhat higher, with other abstract ideas, he lives with a higher—take a typical example: Igor Krikunov. He says, “I live with my theater.” It would be great if all the Gypsies enjoyed the theater, but all the Gypsies do not enjoy it! Too bad—it would have *enriched* them. But because of these constant thoughts of *bread* they do not have the time to go. They cannot rise to the level of that theater! Thus--the task of an intellectual.

I cannot find my audience either. This is why I have to write in both Ukrainian language and Romani language. I would have liked to write ONLY in Romani, but then again, someone has to be able to reach up to it. Besides the contradictions of *dialectics* there are great contradictions connected with the *level of education*. What can understand a person with elementary schooling, and what can understand a person with secondary education, and a person who has a college degree are three different levels of *perception* of the same concepts. When they read the same poem, one sees in these words one thing, another—something different, and the third one—something else.

That is, we *need to educate our own audience*. And the more educated the society, the easier it should be for the intellectuals. But the intellectuals themselves should contribute to the raising of this education level.

That is, the intelligentsia should lead. It should not get down to the level of those who say that the art belongs to the people. “The art belongs to the people.” How? That is who? The people—who are they? In the past they would say, “The collective farmers should be able to understand.” But do all the collective farmers understand the high artistic images or the high ballet or the high poetry? Not everyone does. Therefore it is necessary that the people rise to the peaks of this art. Gradually the people rise.

That is: the *work of mind* is crucial [he put a special emphasis on the “work of mind”—*rabota uma*—for *everyone*, to be able to understand something complex. Complex matters should not be explained in simple words. Should not. If it is a complex thing, it is complex and cannot be subdivided into two times two. It does not work this way! There are simple things and there are complex things. And to the complex things one has to rise, to grow. It is a constant, constant—not to lower that *standard [merku]*, not to lower the standard.

With time, when the Gypsies stand on an equal footing with others in education, then perhaps we could look into the *future*. Why don’t we speak one language? Why doesn’t Europe speak *one language*? Yet the process has already started—there is Euro there already. That is, it is an attempt to standardize a monetary unit, isn’t it? And a language is also a unit, except of a different order. It is a unit of communication. That is, we are looking for some common economic moves, some common monetary unit. But ultimately, the language is secondary to thought. If our thoughts become identical, then, perhaps, we will find a common language—sometime, *maybe* [a sigh].

Therefore, *we must put forward our goal and move toward that goal*. Thus I see this issue: It is appropriate that we write in the script of our country and our region. Even though many say that Roman script is a symbol of progress and so forth—perhaps it won’t happen soon.

Pe saro dro sveto si kimin?	Is everything bought in the world?
Phenes, saro kinelpe te biknelpe,	You say everything is bought and sold,
So dasavo godo—terne bersha dzha kin!	Go buy the years of youth—if you're so smart!
Nat, na biknenpe, mange delpe.	No, those given to me cannot be bought back...

[Appendix]

I left Korosten' with Mixa's Romani-Ukrainian bilingual poetry edition *Romano Kxam—Romani Sun*,²¹⁷ signed [in Russian] “To Tatiana Nikolayevna Gabrielson for a kind memory with wishes of Happiness, Hope, Faith, Love, and Patience.” [Then in Ukrainian] “Ukraine has not died yet,²¹⁸ has not died yet the last Rom. Korosten'. Signature.”

Part Two. Ukrainian Romani Literature and its Gatekeepers

The important role of literature in the Soviet Union, inherited by the post-Soviet Ukraine, manifested itself through the government's use of the print word's propagandistic power and it was made symbolically visible in the geographic location of the key literary institutions in Lipki—the aristocratic, picturesque area of Pechersk, next to the highest organs of state power, in the hills southeast of Kreshchatik.

The presence of the tsar's palace made Lipki the aristocratic area, where the highest administrators of the province lived and the mansions of the wealthy sprang up. The mansion on Bankova 2, where the presidium of the Ukrainian Writers' Union is located today, at one time belonged to the General Governor Count Ignatiev, the patron of Romani choirs whom we met earlier (Nekrasov, 1971, p. 194). In Lipki, lived other prominent people who drew inspiration from the Romani theme, such as count M. D. Buturlin, who, in Kiev during the years 1835–36, wrote and published a famous romance *Do not tempt me without need* [*Ne iskushaj menya bez nuzhdy*] to the lyrics by E. A. Baratynsky. Here lived Princess K. Sain-Witgenshtein, whom, in 1847, F. Liszt met at a concert in the assembly hall of Kiev University, and she played a significant role in the life of the composer—famous for his use of Romani harmonies.

²¹⁷ “Romano” translated by Kelar as Gypsy—Tsygans'ke.

²¹⁸ “Sheche ne vmerla Ukrainina,” the national anthem of independent Ukraine. Kozimirenko was the first to translate it into a “minority language.”

Roma themselves kept closer to the opposite side of the hills, where the Dog's Path [*Sobachka*] lead amidst ravines from Petchersk to Bessarabsky Market. In the 1930s, Mechnikov Street was established at this spot; also, a permanent camping ground for Romani tabors was located along the path (Kelar, 1996, p. 21). Another Romani location in Kiev was between the Pochaina and the Dnieper Rivers,²¹⁹ on the historic Varangian route to the Byzantine Empire.

As the first consecrated Romani writer of Ukraine, Mikhail Kozimirenko was the only Romani member of the Ukrainian Writers' Union [*Spilka Pys'mennykiv Ukrainy*]. Formed in 1934, this creative organization unites prose writers, poets, dramaturges, critics, and translators. On average, over 75 years its membership fluctuated around 1,000 members (Kudritsky, 1985).

The story of Romani poetry in Ukraine would be incomplete without the figures of two non-Romani writers—Stepan Kelar and Ilie Mazore—who are credited as the founders of Romani literature in Ukraine and who assisted Mixa Kozimirenko in his first steps as a Ukrainian Romani writer. The two cousins were born in a Moldavian village on the Ukrainian southern border. Having graduated from Kiev State University, they became newspaper reporters in rural Moldavia. Both of them came into journalism from Komsomol activism in multiethnic Moldavian villages, where they often managed Romani and Gagauz (a non-Muslim Turkish group) issues. Romani leaders suggested I should interview them as the non-Romani experts representing Romani literature in Ukraine and cooperating with Mixa Kozimirenko. “These people are our long-time friends and allies, as long as they do not do any damage...” a prominent Romani leader from Odessa now residing in Great Britain assured me.

Each of these gatekeepers of Romani literature in Ukraine described its “beginnings” in a different way. The foreword to Ilie Mazore's (2001) book *The Spells of a Gypsy Rose* recounted how in 1972, during Brezhnev's rule, Mazore received Dmytro Pavlychko's blessing to start Romani literature in Ukraine. Pavlychko was the chief

²¹⁹The first *Amala* festival was held on that spot in 2000.

editor of the literary magazine *Vsesvit*, the organ of the Peace Committee,²²⁰ among other organizations. Mazore brought to him his Ukrainian translation of O. Germano's *Mirikle*:

—Tell me Ilie: Are there Romani poets in Ukraine?

—Maybe there are, but I have not seen their poetry yet!

—What about Romani prose writers?

—There is one already. Right in front of you, but, unfortunately, Romani prose is not being publicized...

—If it's true at the moment, it should change for the better in the future. And since you live in Ukraine, go ahead and start Romani literature (Latnyk, 2001, p. 12).

The ethnogenesis in Ukraine brought the two cousins, who spoke several minority languages, into the spotlight of Ukrainian literature. In 1989, Mazore became the senior scholar at the State Museum of History of Ukrainian literature, where on November 10th an evening of Romani poetry was held. Among the participants were a Romani poet from Moscow, Niko Satkevicho—Mazore's friend and teacher—as well as Romani poets from Lithuania and Moldova. M. Kozimirenko and O. Danilkin also arrived. After this evening, Kelar told Kozimirenko that they should start translating Shevchenko's poetry into Romani.

Stepan Kelar

Stepan Kelar foregrounded his role in the consecration of Romani literature in Ukraine in his introduction to Mixa Kozimirenko's (2000) bilingual Romani-Ukrainian poetry edition *Romano Kxam—Romani Sun*. Curiously, Kelar was credited not only for the introduction, but also for “the special editing of the text in Gypsy language” (I was told he did not speak Romani). By 2000, it must have become clearer where the geopolitical windmills were blowing because Kelar's introduction presented Kozimirenko's work much more comprehensively and without the degrading remarks about Romani culture that his 1996 introduction contained. At the same time, as in the previous edition it had no reference to the common Indian origin of Romani people and

²²⁰ The Peace Committee occupied part of the tsar palace. The meetings of our Ukrainian delegation were held there before and after the 1988 Soviet-American Peace Walk. The chairman of the Ukrainian Peace Committee was a prominent Ukrainian writer, Oles' Gonchar.

their common cultural roots. Again, Romani culture was presented as fragmentary and Kozimirenko's experience as unique and isolated:

No Gypsy state exists in the world, thereby there is no common standard Gypsy language, thus no common literature. Gypsy poets are very few; they live in various countries and write predominantly in the majority language of the country. So tell me, what experience, what traditions could the poet Kozimirenko lean on? All he has left is to be a trailblazer. (p. 5)

The hypocrisy of this statement was exposed by Kelar's own translations of a dozen Romani poets and the gratitude Mixa Kozimirenko expressed in conversations with me to the Romani poets who supported him, most of all Niko Satkevich and Rajko Djurich.

Yet Kelar's introduction, entitled "Gypsy Muse Inspires Him", (2000) presented an interesting story explaining the beginnings of Romani poetry in Ukraine:

No one knows which moment and how a poet is born. Hardly anyone would be able to open a little the curtain of this magic and eternal mystery. [...] Mixa Kozimirenko came out on the path into the world of literature when he was 50, that is at a mature age, when behind his shoulders was a rich life experience. [It was at the evening of Gypsy poetry and song at the museum of literature of Ukraine in October 1989] that I first met a good looking tan man, a music school teacher from the enchanting town of Korosten' in Polissya land. That encounter later has transformed into an intensive and sincere creative joint work. It was at that evening that Mixa Kozimirenko determined that the time came to turn the sacred dream of his youth into reality and to write poems in his native Gypsy language. Throughout the years that passed since our first meeting, we have kept close, met often and still meet, working together in the field of Gypsy culture and education. (p. 3)

Mixa's own narrative about this evening, which I heard and recorded several times, contained important details of pride for his Romani language and culture that were missing from the stories of those who guided his self-education in poetry writing:

I was *one of the fir-r-r-rst R-r-r-roma*, who—It was in 1989, when the Soviet system was already shaking, and in Kiev, at the museum of history of literature the *first eveing of Romani [sic] culture* and Romani romance was held. Invited were the writers from Moscow Leksa Manush and Mykola Satkevich. It was the same Mykola Satkevich who had been one of the first instructors at the Romani pedagogic technical school, which existed in 1930s. Those were the *giants of Romani thought*, Romani writers.

I was fortunate to *listen* to them—what they had to say. And I was happy to see so many Ukrainian intellectuals and *Romani* intellectuals who were listening the *Romani word*. [Many Gypsy intellectuals came—people old, wised

by experience, and of great conscience. The room was packed.] And for the first time I heard HIGH POETRY off the lips of the honorary poets. And when Leksa Manush read “*Reve ta stogne Dnibr shirokyi*”²²¹ in four dialects of Romani language, I realized that in Romani language one *could write poetry* and express one’s own *thoughts*. And after that Kelar said, “We need to do it in Romani language [*Nado delat’ na tsyganskom yazuke*].”²²²

In general, Kelar’s introduction (2000) offered positive and warm representations of Kozimirenko’s creative work. He wrote that Kozimirenko’s piece was a translated work from several languages that served as Mixa’s training in creative writing because “in works by various poets he was finding themes close to his, philosophical reflection, a variety of forms, the brightness and finesse of imagery—all characteristic of the high poetry” (p. 4). Kelar characterized Kozimirenko’s own poetry as “a calm, reflective, moving lyrical testament of the person who has a big and sensitive heart” (Ibid.). My favorite passage in the introduction because it is the most representative of Mixa’s style, is the following:

Poet’s voice is not loud, but penetrating and most importantly—sincere, not fake, it captivates with clear tembre and quiet intonation. The poet is not trying to surprise or astonish one with extravagant phrases or verbal frills. He creates in classical verse tradition, with its clear word and harmony, because being a musician he is fully aware that only harmony and clear word are able to create a spiritual uplift for a person, fill the person’s heart with the feeling of humanness and kindness, and the rays of noble light (Ibid).

Of special interest is Kelar’s construction of Kozimirenko’s identity as a “Gypsy poet”. Kozimirenko’s father was Romani, and his mother was Ukrainian. Yet his hybrid identity is downplayed in favor of the “Gypsy” one to emphasize the faithfulness of a Gypsy poet to his Ukrainian motherland.

Every poem by M. Kozimirenko is a separate fragment of created by him single picture of Gypsy life in its entire display. [*sic*] In some of them one perceives the notes of nostalgia for the mythical proto-fatherland [*sic*],²²³ for tabor romantics with nocturnal campfires and dances around them, though the author himself comes from the family of long-settled Gypsies and has never been itinerant. But thereby he claims his belonging to Gypsy lineage. At the same time he sees himself as being the son of Ukraine, which is his fatherland, expresses his sincere

²²¹ Poem by T. G. Shevchenko.

²²² A composite of Kozimirenko’s interview with the author (Transcript. 06. 13.2002) and his speech on Romani Language Day at the National University of Culture (Transcript. 12.09.2002).

²²³ This could be an appropriate place to mention India, although India is not mentioned in Kozimirenko’s poems either.

son's love, and is concerned about her [Ukraine's] fate. ... To be a devoted son to his parents, his people, to follow their testaments and traditions, to uphold his principles—such is the poet's credo. (pp. 4–5)

Kelar's introduction mentioned a few other "Gypsy representatives, who have chosen poetic creativity for their own soul" (p. 5). Avoiding calling them "poets," he named O. Danilkin and L. Danilkina (Bila Tserkva), M. Illijsh (Transcarpathia), O. Durova (Luganshchina), R. Nabaranchuk and R. Sobolev (Kiev), etc.:

Each one of them is interesting, each has promising streaks. But they write predominantly either in Ukrainian, or in Russian, or Hungarian, and still very few in their native language. Mixa Kozimirenko today is a professional Gypsy poet in Ukraine, member of the National Writer's Union. (p. 6)

Besides presenting Romani literature in monographs, Stepan Kelar spoke with an expert's authority in other media and institutions. In 2002–2003, I recorded his appearance on national television being interviewed during the International Romani festival Amala and his participation in the international round table "Roma and Mass Media" in Uzhgorod. Following the round table, his long article about the Romani poet Dzheki Zaporaozhano appeared in *Romani Yag*. Kelar's writings were quoted in press by other authors. For example, Igor Liberda extensively quoted Kelar on the "lexical vacuum" of the Gypsy language in his article "'Minstrel' is Close to the Gypsies as Well."²²⁴ Curiously, Kelar chose to downplay his expert's role in public. My friend, who was Kelar's neighbor at his dacha, knew him as a Ukrainian poet and a mere enthusiast of Romani, *lyubitel'*—a fan, as we say. Naturally, I was looking forward to our first meeting with him.

On June 27, 2002, I met with Stepan Kelar in Ignatiev's mansion on Bankova 2. Our conversation took place in the hallway on the second floor, next to the bookcase, showcasing books about T. G. Shevchenko behind the glass. From the outset, Kelar protested against the notion of "Romani intellectuals":

First of all, there is no such thing as Gypsy intellectuals [he ignored the words *Roma*, *Romani*, and continued to say *tsigane*]. Intellectuals are intellectuals in any society. They are not just "Gypsy intellectuals." All intellectuals in the world are dedicated to the general human ideas and humanism. They are intellectuals of those countries where they live.

²²⁴ *Zhitomirshchina*, 08.29.2002. p.8. Kozimirenko received the prestigious literary Ivan Franko Award in 2004.

“But they are of Romani origin,” I pressed. I felt that by persistently using the term “Gypsy intellectual” Kellar was trying to posit it as an oxymoron, foregrounding the social group connotation of the word “Gypsy” and denying the primary meaning of ethnicity of the word “Romani.” Kellar lapsed into a lecture I reproduce below.²²⁵

Yes, of Tsigane origin. But there is something I want to tell you since you will be working with them. Be careful. There are things that the Gypsies say about themselves, ways they want to present themselves, that are not always the truth. We Ukrainians do not agree with everything, we know that they are still begging and scavenging [*zhebrakuyut*]. And other people in the world know it as well. There are facts, scientific data. And the Gypsies spread myths, legends. There are very few Gypsy intellectuals in the world, next to none. For generations, they did not have parents who were educated. They have no tradition of scholarship or research or method. They had to learn from Western scholars. They had no data on their history, their roots. They learned about themselves first and foremost from the non-Gypsies [repeated a few times]. On this foundation, searching for their roots, they created their legends. So be very careful about what they tell you. They argue among themselves. They are a kind of people—they don’t like to hear anything critical about themselves. So be careful. They call us, the non-Gypsies, *gadjo*, that is a non-Gypsy.

Everywhere across the world, there are nations and national law. People cannot live in anarchy. There have to be laws regulating society and people must respect and follow these laws no matter whether they like them or not. And the Gypsies—it’s like—There is a large rock that creates an obstacle. A tree growing from underneath finds a way to bend around this rock [*obmynaye*] and continues to grow. They are the people that continue to grow like such trees around the obstacles that society has on their way.

Why Gypsies? There are other minorities in Ukraine, for example, Gagauzi. They managed to preserve their culture and their rich literature through generations by teaching it to their young. They have been developing their own literature since [the] mid-1950s (1957) on the basis of their own script, because before they did not have their script. Their literature has been developing well. As to the Gypsies, they did not have their writers, and only about five years ago they became very active in creating their literature. But many of the books that come out are of very poor quality.

Mixa is different because he is an educated, mature person. He is half Gypsy, half Ukrainian, his mother was Ukrainian. Mixa is the only one in Ukraine. *Samorodok*—Prodigy.”

From time to time Kellar looked at his reflection in the bookcase glass as he talked. I interrupted his speech, “Are there any women poets?”

²²⁵ Field notes. 06.27.2002.

There aren't any true poets, only the beginners. It was my idea to create that volume of Shevchenko. I am a generator of ideas. And I make people carry out those ideas. I told Mixa we should make such a book. I wrote the foreword because Mixa is not a philologist [*literaturoznavets*']. There was a leader of one Gypsy organization who questioned the purpose of the book when I presented the idea at a meeting. He said, "Only Roma should be writing about Romani poetry." I said, "Sorry, all over the world people write about other people. I am Ukrainian and can write about whoever lives in Ukraine. The Gypsies learned their history and about their culture from non-Gypsies." And I made sure we followed through with the book.

I asked, "So do you hold a monopoly on translations of Romani poetry and representations of Romani (and other minorities) writers in Ukraine?" He flinched at the word "monopoly."

I am considered a specialist in philology [*literaturoznavstvo*], folklore, Gypsy literature, and language. It is my field. Each of us must have a field of activity. When a Gypsy ethnographer came along, Oleksandr Danilkin, I said, "O.K., you can work on it," and stepped back, although I still reserve the right for myself to write on certain topics. I have collected rich ethnographic data.

Kelar's paternalistic manner and positivistic understanding of culture brought back the memories of talking to an old communist ideologist, except Kelar was a nationalist ideologist. No one has talked to me in such a totalitarian tone for over a decade. "You should cooperate, if you are going to live in Ukraine," he said.

He signed his *Philosophy of Being* for me and read a few of his poems and translations of Romani poetry from it. I asked why he began translating poetry in "minority" languages. "I can't even explain why. It started in [the] 1970s. I felt sorry for these people. No one loved them. No one wrote about them. I met a few Gagauz families and fell in love with their culture and language," he said.

Over and over, I found his statements astonishingly anti-Romani for a person who made a living writing on Romani culture and institutionally representing Romani literature in Ukraine. After the years of newspaper reporting on agricultural issues, Kelar's knowledge of Gagauz and experiences in interethnic relations propelled him to Kyiv from rural Moldova in 1983, following the interethnic conflicts along the Ukrainian-Moldavian border. I understood that in the field of area studies one is not required to love the language and culture of his "expertise," but hoped that the expert's integrity required at least some measure of acknowledgment of and respect for that

culture. I did not find that acknowledgment in Kelar and left the Writers' Union mansion overwhelmed.

Ilie Mazore

Unlike his ideologically vigilant cousin, the more gifted writer Ilie Mazore did not have a dacha or even his own apartment in Kyiv. He was staying at a friend's, but did have the title of the employee of the Minority Languages Methodology Lab at the Institute of Pedagogy. The lab amounted to no more than a desk in an office with other desks. Unlike his Ukrainian cousin, Ilie Mazore presented himself as a Romanian.²²⁶

Ilie Mazore and I met for an interview in the Writer's Union library²²⁷ with a beautiful Renaissance stucco ceiling and shiny white ceramic stove. Mazore differed from his cousin by his attention to style and a metaphysical manner, often wandering off in his thoughts and lowering his voice to a whisper. Our conversation revolved around his metaphysical romantic novel, *The Spells of a Gypsy Rose*, until finally he started drawing vignettes of his life in a multiethnic village on the Moldavian-Ukrainian border, one of which is worth sharing.

This story was described in the newspaper *Kommunist* and was titled "This is how one must work!" I was a secretary of the Komsomol organization, which was comprised of four villages.

Soroki is a city above the Dnistro, where there was a sewing factory that produced suits for men and women. There were three collectives there and the Gypsies. You know what is the attitude to Gypsies: "Ah! The Gypsies!" Such a collective: many communists and Gypsies. So there you have it: they are competing to be titled "A communist labor brigade." I say to them, "I see you've got discipline. Can't you challenge the communists to a competition? Can't you?" I say. Their bosses say, "Let's do it! [*Davaj!*]" Those ones spoke Moldavian. And here the Gypsies got together—a brigade—and in Rromanes how they started to talk! [*yak ushkvaryt'!*] If only one takes Roma and gives them the right direction—there! [He gave one thumb up]. There were about 50 people in each brigade. So they challenged. They talked and agreed: watch out, there should be no defects, no waste of material. And it began. So they are competing for the communist labor title. But in that other non-Gypsy brigade there are communists and non-communists. One came tipsy, another came "under the influence." And here it's a heat wave! The sweat is pouring! [He switches to Russian] There are no fans! Each gets a piece of fabric. Joint meeting! Communists!

²²⁶ E.g., Introduction to Mazore's (2001) book, p. 10.

²²⁷ Transcript 12.25.2002.

In communist brigade the equipment keeps breaking up, and the Gypsies [he laughs] they have devilish, devilish discipline! Hell of a discipline! At the end, they collect the results. The Gypsies overfulfilled! Without any defect or damage. The secretary of the city party committee comes over to investigate the case. He and the others reviewed everything, he assembled everyone and says, “This is how one must work, like the Gypsies. And you were making fun of the Gypsies. The red banner!”

There is a second part to this story. Remember, during Brezhnev and during Khrushchev times religious people were terribly persecuted? And it turned out that the young Gypsy women-workers attended the evangelical meetings. When the party secretary asked whether they had been baptized, he was told, “No, they just come because they are curious.” Had he been told that they were baptized—kaput! Their brigade would not have won.

Ilie Mazore’s vignettes of life in a borderland village showed the continuous oppression of Roma by authorities throughout the regime changes. In the 20th century, power changed hands there many times.

The communist industry and agriculture capitalized on the large workforce of low-qualified multiethnic workers in the region, yet at a price of rapid assimilation. The introduction to Mazore’s book (2001) reflected the memory of that citizen mill of the totalitarian regime:

It was not easy during the brezhnevism and malanchukism to write the truth about Roma as citizens of Ukraine. The pages of the ...official press were full of humiliating labels such as “non-workers,” “waste,” “lazy.” And how many Roma, as well as the Poles, Germans, and Jews had to find ways to change their nationality [in passports], so that from the stigmatized they could be “promoted” to the state of slaves-srews of the “indigenous” [i.e., Russian] nationality?! (p. 11)

In the 20 years since WWII, assimilative pressures produced a generation of young Roma who abandoned their language and culture. Romani factory leaders already spoke Moldavian, yet they were still the Gypsies in charge of the Gypsy brigade. Romani women farmers were Komsomol members and could not speak Romani, but they were Gypsy heroines of labor. If a minority population remains distinctive because of a combination of factors such as complexion, clothing, occupation and the area in which it lives, it continues to be visible and different, even though its language and culture have been taken from it (Hancock, 2001). While such deraciated populations are still discriminated against by the greater population despite forcible efforts to assimilate them, they now also lack the linguistic and cultural wherewithal to enable them fully to function

in their own original community. They are caught between two worlds, not fully a part of either (Ibid).

The story about the two Ukrainian writers Stepan Kelar and Ilie Mazore sheds light on the creative process of ethnogenesis, or fusion between cultures, in a few important ways. Poetic field being created by Kozimirenko, Kelar, and Mazore is a borderland. This borderland, following Doug Foley's ideas (1995), could be explained as a contradictory historical situation in which complex cultural identities are produced. It is also a political space in which ethnic groups actively fuse and blend their culture with the mainstream culture. It is a psychological space at the conjuncture of several cultures (p. 119).

In this borderland space, the two cousins—both from the same borderland village—have each chosen their ethnic identities, one as Ukrainian, the other as Romanian or Moldovan. In this borderland space, the two Soviet journalists have begun their intellectual transformation process, continuing or changing the patterns of perception, behavior, and style, during the current transition period. The Leninist principle of *partijnost'* of literature has been transformed in one journalist into the staunch Ukrainian nationalism, sustaining clarity as a criterion of “good literature” and vigilance against external and internal enemies. For him, the communist goal of consciousness-raising of “natsmeny” to the level of the Soviet person-citizen has been replaced by the task of upbringing Roma and Gagauz as devoted “sons” and “daughters”—children—of a Ukrainian nation. For the other journalist, the lifting of all socialist realism constraints, including the rabid dialectic and historical materialism, has released the metaphysical flow of consciousness and romantic visions, which Romani readers find too opaque and incomprehensible, especially for their children. “Our children do not understand a word of it,” complained one Romani educator. A prominent Romani leader praised Mazore for consistency in control of the dialect, but admitted it was too isolated of a dialect to be understood by the majority of Roma in Ukraine.

On the other hand, this story illustrates the constraints Kelar and Mazore presented for Mixa Kozimirenko's creative work. Selected and consecrated by them to fill in the literary institutional niche as the first Gypsy poet of Ukraine, Kozimirenko had to maintain positive working relations and solidarity with these and other Ukrainian

authors, despite differences in perspectives. Competition for the few opportunities to publish and to claim being “the first” in various domains created additional tensions.

“Envy,” Mixa succinctly and nonchalantly diagnosed the psychological condition of his “big brothers” in the creative field. They, as well as the others I met with, including Mixa’s long-time friend, director of the Korosten’ music school, used our meeting as an opportunity to step into the spotlight instead of highlighting the facets of their friend’s creativity. The music school director claimed his decisive role in spearheading Mixa’s literary career, “I said: ‘Better become a Gypsy poet. There are many poets, but you will be the one and only Gypsy poet,’” and he launched a 2-hour lecture about the history of the music school.

Importantly, none of my many meetings with Kozimirenko took place at the Writers’ Union. He would rather walk in the streets, even in winter, than meet there. To date, no one better than Mixa Kozimirenko himself underscored his mission in Romani culture. Remarkable in this regard was our phone conversation on August 26, 2003, the first in his 6 months of surgery and radiation treatment. I told him I had begun writing about the treasurers of heritage—of word—“Of spirit, traditions,” he echoed instantly. Words must have long matured in his mind and were coming out now as in Bakhtin’s last notes, as if the author was running out of precious time and did not want to waste it on secondary comments.

In word is the philosophy of a people. Words said in another language do not convey it. Thought, culture, language. TRADITION. I AM A CONTINUER OF TRADITIONS. The development continues. Unbroken connection. I am like a connecting link. Because I have met and known Satkevich and Manush, I am continuing their road. But behind me I see no one.

Responsibility. Cross which I have shouldered and carry. [Emotionally] I cannot throw it off! Of Traditions. Gypsy spirit. I look for simple words, write simply—but they are profound. So that they could reach. Many people recognize me already, come up, thank me—in Ukrainian. And the Gypsies have begun to understand as well. I wrote a poem in Russian. Would you like me to read it? But it will be the money thrown to the wind.

And he began, “I have not found in this life what I’ve been looking for...”

[Appendix] The poem struck me as at once sad and boisterous. “The gate keeper will unlock the gate there for me. My time must have come.” I pictured Kelar. In Ukrainian *kelar* or ‘gatekeeper’ was a key-keeper in a monastery, who used to lock and unlock the

monks' cells. "What a sad one," I said when Mixa finished. "Well. It's true. I do not see after me..." he sighed.

Part Three. Hall of Memories. Family Roots: Grandmother's and Mother's Songs

At his confessional birthday presentation at a Zhitomir library, Mixa Kozimirenko read his translation of Shevchenko's *В каземати* [*In the Citadel, to my fellow prisoners*], which he announced as, "Such a lyrical vignette *Alone Am I, Yes All Alone*."²²⁸

Xasjuval jekh dzeni	Alone am I, yes all alone,
Sir dro vesh charori	A blade of grass forlorn... [Appendix]

Explaining the significance of this endearing image of a lonely woman to him, Kozimirenko told me:

My grandmother used to sing: *То не ветер ветку клонит, не дубравушка шумит. То моє сердечко стонет, как осенний лист дрожит* [Not by the wind a branch is swayed, it's not an oak grove that heaves. My heart it is, it groans in pain, trembles like an autumn leaf]. It's an o-o-o-old song, *Лучинушка, A Light Splinter*. Not by the wind a branch is swayed. I love it. I remember it by heart to this day, and it is in connection with my grandmother, this particular song. And it seems to me that she is of Russian background, of those who came from there, because my mother was Ukrainian. So she must have come from some kind of Russian background. And her name, too: Melanya Anifitovna. What an interesting combination: Melanya [pause] Anifitovna. Nowadays no one speaks like this. And great grandfather had been Anifit. I see something pure Russian in us, even something, perhaps, of old-believers, some sort. Anifit in some ways is linked with some kind of *skit*, a small monastery. Something like this. And as to my mother, she used to sing church songs, mother used to sing. She sang in a church choir. And she sang a lot of Shevchenko's, like *Така її доля* [Such is Her Lot]. Also, she sang *Не питай, чого в мене заплакані очі* [Do not ask why my eyes are brimming with tears] by Ogiyenko. And of course, the Gypsy folk songs. She became accustomed to the Gypsy culture, spoke Gypsy language and knew Gypsy songs.

"Because she lived close-by?" I asked Mixa. He laughed: "Not close-by! She lived with my father!" And he laughed again. "Mother, mother," he said through laughter,

²²⁸ Translated from Ukrainian by C. H. Andrusyshen and Watson Kirconnell (1964: 295–296). The narrator is of feminine gender.

[Mother] got married around 1934, she was about 24, got married to the father. His first wife, Romni, had died, leaving three children, she died during famine, the famine of 1933, and he had to survive, and it was the Soviet time, and life was very hard: either go ahead and join a collective farm for a twopence, or forget the twopence, come with us and that's it! By the way, Roma are not quite accustomed to such sort of thing: they are more freedom loving, traditionally they were horse dealers. And here such misfortune has befallen. Therefore father—he had a horse—and he went from village to village and traded some kind of clothes, who knows what, some sort of suits or clothes for food products. They would give him potatoes, bread, macaroni, whatever—something to survive on, and then he met an interesting young woman in Chernigiv Region and proposed to her, and she in order to survive—because it was the time of hunger, and of cold, and of poverty—this is why to make it, to survive somehow she agreed. Mother, yes. So this is how they lived, then in 1938 my father was sent to prison, and mother was left all alone, and my older step brother was already married and they lived in one part of the house, in one half of it, so to say, and we lived in another part.

“Forgive me,” said the poet thumbing through the pages on the library stage, “but today I will read what I must read. Good that my mother was recalled and good that recalled was the song, which sounded—I remember it, and it resounds: Не питай, чого в мене заплакані очі [Do not ask why my eyes are brimming with tears].” [Appendix]

[...]

Ackirdjan tu man mre i bidasa	You have left me to misfortune
San pe mandar sare manusha	Everyone laughs at me
Na puchman, ni pash lav tuke me na phenava	Do not ask, I won't tell you a word
Tu dzines pale so me rovav	You know why I'm crying
Biilitka lava tre shunava	To hear you heartless words
Do xalja mang'ile de shukav	Will not dissipate my heavy thoughts

Father's love of word.

Kozimirenko explained the impact his father had on him:

My father—I am proud of my father. He was one of those—a respectable person, Rom, he is still remembered today and will be remembered for a long time. He has carried throughout his life the principles of justice, honesty, and decency. He kept his word. If he gave his word, then—He always helped people, always helped. It happened that he always had cash on his hands, that is, he could help poor people. What was his profession? Well, what profession could a Gypsy have? What? A Gypsy profession: *baryshnik*, profiteer, horse-dealer. It was not easy during the Soviet time: he would sell something, trade something somewhere, that sort of thing. But this was not the most important. The most

important was that he could find the right word to every person. And even back then he had enough reason to have us live a settled life, not as a *tabor*, but in our own house. To give me education. There. He hardly ever looked into my education. I do not remember him ever helping me with assignments, it was more like: “You are studying, keep studying.” That was it. “Either way”, he said, “you don’t understand anything.” What was his name? Yegor Fadeyevich. Yegor Fadeyevich. He was a great talker and always remained himself, although original, he remained himself. And this was why people always remembered him and the conversations with him.

When Roma came from afar to visit us, they stayed and talked throughout the night. And there was a great cult of Easter, Christmas, weddings--this was sacred. And at a wedding no matter what it was important to put up a good show and throw out more than someone else! If you were invited to come up front to the *karavaj*, a round wedding bread, and greet the newly weds it was an honor, a sacred duty, and the person had to uphold his status. And no matter how long the guests stayed into the night, until one, two, three in the morning, there was never any loud noise, that is, they treated each other with great respect. And no matter how long they stayed, no one ever got drunk. The conversation was always about life: how to go on living and what to do. Father said: here’s what has to be done—the children: this one has to get married, that one has to go there, this has to be done this way. That is, many people came to ask his advice.

He had a great influence. After the war, after the whole family was executed, he somehow managed to pull the rest of them all together. He found one in Kyiv, another one just outside of Kyiv, yet another in Chernigiv, and they all paid respect, as he was already the oldest among them.

In general, my father did not have a great appreciation of poetry. ... He liked the word. He liked to talk. He could find the right question to a person and could find the way into a person’s soul. ... And this love is probably what I got from my father. And my mother loved to sing So this poetry was a kind of folk poetry. I did not perceive Shevchenko as a poet, I perceived it as a conversation, but a very profound one. This is why I found it very high: it flows, all is clear, and the thoughts are clear. And when I read *Katerina*, I cried over that *Katerina*. And mother cried. And when we got to one place there, father could not hold—that is, it was at a high emotional pitch.

The Identity Maze: Ukrainian Rom.

“Mikhail Grigoryevich,” I asked him one day, “well, I don’t know, this is a tough question, but sometime in your life has it ever happened that a Rom reproached you in some way because—” “My mother was Uk—Yes!” he said.

Yes. Many times! Many. That is, it is some sort of a mathematical approach: Aha, your father is a Rom and your mother is Ukrainian, therefore you are not entirely Romani.” Though I might be more Rom IN SPIRIT, and might be doing for the Roma more than—and feel more PAIN because of the problems then someone

who might seem a pure Rom but does not care. It is a typical thing one would say in an argument: you are such and such.

“I would add,” said Romani ethnographer Aleksey Danilkin, who was present during this conversation. “As a matter of fact, as a result of their stay in Ukraine—of Roma in Ukraine—there is not a single Romani line that does not have Slavic admixture. This has been confirmed by all of our archives.”

“According to your passport, were you a Gypsy?” I asked Mixa. “По паспорту я був українець,” he responded in Ukrainian.

According to my passport I was Ukrainian. My mother was Ukrainian. And this is the way it was with very many Roma. Because Roma have learned a tragic lesson. During the war they were killed just for being Gypsies. And this is the way it has been throughout history. Therefore it is easier to write someone down as a non-Rom, and Roma themselves know who is Rom and who is not! How do they know? They KNOW! Even by the most fleeting nuance! If you are a Ukrainian or a Russian and have learned Romani language, we can tell by the accent somewhere in there. It is like borsch that is not salty enough. It might seem that everything is there and yet something is still missing, which gives away a non-Rom.

“So according to your passport you were Ukrainian,” I pressed Mixa “but did you have to hide your Romani origin a for example at work?” “No!” he responded emphatically.

I could not hide it because it was obvious. One can tell by looking at me that I am Rom. Even though I could never dance—I can’t dance for some reason, my father danced somehow and I did not pick it up from him, but the rest is all there: I love music, and guitar I love, and *bayan* I love, and the singing I love! But when I was trying to get into a college of music, it was then that my father showed his keenest quick wit, and persistence, and consciousness.

And he told me the story.

Rom in a College of Music: Special Case

So I passed the entrance exams and got As and a couple of Bs. This was in 1954, 54. In those days, there were many children of the generals, the military, the merited among the applicants to that college, that sort of thing, yes. And then—I knew by the exam records that I did not have Cs. As, As, and well a B—should have been admitted but was not! I called the father in Korosten’ right away. Father arrives the next day and straight to the headmaster he goes: “What’s the matter, why hasn’t my son been admitted?” “He has not withstood the

competition”. “What do you mean ‘he has not withstood the competition’? What was the passing GPA?” “Such and such.” “It is exactly what he has.” “Well, you know, he did not pass and that is all.” The father: “You have no right to do this. Explain to me how can it be—” “You know, your son will be a student here when hair starts growing on my palm! There, this is how much we miss a Gypsy here.” And there comes in a colonel or a general who also came to inquire about his son. “Well, yes, it was a mistake, accept my apologies, my apologies, yes indeed, sorry. We will enroll him.” And father goes to the Minister of Culture right away. The ministry was not in Kreshchatik, it was up—and he goes to the Ministry of Culture. There are many people waiting to see the Minister of Culture. How to get in? Everyone is sitting and waiting. He is walking back and forth, walking back and forth—he walked with a stick—back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. Suddenly the door to the secretary’s room opened and the people waiting: “Where are you going! All of us have been waiting here!” And he: “So what, if I am a Gypsy, I can’t be admitted? I’ve been standing here for two days! No way to get in! What, if I’m black I can’t get in? How can it be?” And they: “What?” “Give me a break! I’ve been standing here and you”— Just then a woman secretary: “What’s a problem? What is all this noise? What”— “Well, this is what”— And the minister could no longer stand the noise and asked: “What’s happening? What’s the matter?” “Here—this boss of yours, if I’m a Gypsy I can’t get in.” “Please by all means do come in”. [Mixa and I laughed. “Get it?” laughed Mixa, “Please by all means do come in.”]

“What’s the matter?” “Here’s what.” And the father shows—says, you see, my son has passed such and such exams. My whole family was shot, executed, all of the children. What am I to do now? What: Does he have to go in the street now to beg for a loaf of bread, when I want him to get education? And he has passed them wonderfully. So how is it: if he is a Gypsy, they do not let him be admitted? I don’t think we have such primitivism here.” That one: “I see. Where did it happen?” “At the college of music, the headmaster is such and such.” So the minister dials up the number: “The college headmaster to me right away! And have him bring the exam records. Step out in a hallway and please have a seat for a little while.” He is sitting and waiting. In no more than twenty minutes the headmaster shows up with the records. Then he notices *bat’ka*, father is sitting there too, he: “Aha, so you are here as well!” “Yep, I’m here as well!” [“I was there too,” added Mixa.] And that: “Well, have him come in.” Minister says to him: “There, apologize to this person right away for what you said about your hair. He will be a student, and have him enrolled right away,” he said. “Ukrainians who passed with such grades—there is 100 of them, a Gypsy is only one. Therefore enroll him right away. He is to be a student by tomorrow.” Father says: “This is all fine, thank you. But I’m warning you that he might find 150 reasons to expel him in a month. I am asking you, so that he gave him an opportunity to study.” We return back to the college, he says: “So since you don’t have a *bayan*, we will sign him up for *balalaika*.” “Not the *balalaika*, *bayan* will be here by tomorrow.” Father went and bought me a *bayan*. We did not have a *bayan*, so he went to the music repair shop and they gave him a used one, but *horrrrrOshyj!* Verrrrrry good *bayan*. And I started college with zero training.

Everyone there had graduated from music school, and I could only play the guitar a little. I was admitted because I had a gift for music. And so I began school, and by the second year I caught up with them. So everything was fine. This is how keen-witted the father was.

Chernigov is My Pain

I asked Mixa what his favorite place on earth was. “I love Kiev, honestly” he said. “It is the city of my youth, and my best years were spent there. And I love my Chernigov. Chernigov is my pain.” “Why pain?” I asked.

Well, it has to do with the TRAGEDY. That TRAGEDY—that the family was shot. This is why: The family was shot, this is the most—understand? And even so there is something in my soul—Whenever I get there, something always draws me to Kordovka, where my home was, there, to that house, and there I even find the people who still remember me when I was a tiny little boy. It is very—probably for you it is exactly the same way,”—a meeting there: [Impersonated in a gentle voice] “Is it you, Misha? Is it the same Misha? And I remember you as a TINY one!” They are already very old, because I myself am an elderly man. “I remember your mom, remember your dad!” There are such neighbors. Or it might be their children who remember it from what their parents used to tell. So this is what always DRAWS me. [Emotionally] This is how it is. My native home draws me and draws me.

I still feel the pain, when I walk by my mother’s house where I grew up. Now it sits there all DEVASTATED. Because I am here, and there is no one there! There the neighbors crawl inside through the windows, there—they steal everything, IT IS A PAIN TO WATCH! But what can I do? Life goes on.

[So] in 1938 my father was sent to prison, and mother was left all alone, and my older step brother was already married and they lived in one part of the house, in one half of it, so to say, and we lived in another part. And then that night when they drove up to take us away, my mother quickly tossed me somehow somewhere there, and those were all taken away. And the neighbors did not report us as the Gypsies, because supposedly I was from a Ukrainian mother. Understand? This is what the matter is! And all those were taken away! And shot to death. And then, when—and there was an order issued: My father was sentenced to 5 years in 1938. He was supposed to get out in 1943. And they issued an order that even if the term ended, NO prisoner was RELEASED, because he could have turned the weapon against the power that imprisoned him. Therefore, they were kept there until 1945. But there again—it was INHUMAN! So this is when he came back, and I do not know whether it was for the better or worse, because the family was shot, while he stayed alive. So this was how those who were in battles stayed alive, and those who were in prisons might have stayed alive. But those who remained on the occupied territory were all quietly taken away and shot. And it was not only they, the Jews as well. Well, this is a tragic story. Oh!

I want a monument built in Chernigiv, where 200 people were shot by the Nazis, among them Russians, Ukrainians, Jews, Roma—45 members of my family. The city archives there—nowhere one would find the archives that list with such precision the Roma killed as the Chernigiv archives. I remember the day I came there. I didn't think they would have all the names. I came there and asked a woman archivist to check whether there were any Kozimirenkos in the records. She came back with a changed look on her face, walked up slowly to me. She puts a glass of water on the desk, puts a vial of *Korvalol*, a cardiac: "Only please do not worry, please have a seat." God, I cannot talk, it's hard to talk about this [he interjected]. "37 names. They had transcripts of interrogations, confessions of those who worked in the prison. When the Soviet troops came, the bodies were removed from the ground and laid out on the ground for identification, and people would come up and say: "Oh, this must be Ivan—and this..."—And the relatives who found someone were given a sheet of paper to sign as witnesses. I recognized some of those signatures, for example the handwriting of my aunt. First, there were 37 names; later on they found another page, so there are 45 names, two pages of names. Not only Roma were among those executed, often it was hard to tell just by their names. I want this monument to be a memorial for all those killed. [...] That memorial would be my ultimate deed. If I get it built, then I would consider my life's mission accomplished. Not having accomplished it, I cannot leave this world. That would be the feat of my entire life [he finished slowly].

I think he has built this memorial with his poetry. Every September, on the Babiy Yar Rememberance Day, Mixa Kozimirenko came to Kyiv by train and read his poetry standing at the ravine. He was the first poet in Ukraine and in the world, a Ukrainian Rom, whose poetic lines lament for the Romani victims of Babiy Yar: "The world is in the flames of fire. I'm standing over the abyss. Remember! We, too, we too are in Babiy Yar!" I witnessed him read this poem on the Romani Language Day at the National University of Culture and at the celebration of his 65th birthday held by the Writer's Union in Zhitomir.²²⁹ Every public reading of this poem serves as a commemoration, an act of creating "spaces where one is able to redeem and reclaim the past, legacies of pain, suffering, and triumph in ways that transform present reality" (hooks, 1990, p. 147). This poem, a story of his life, is the memorial Mixa Kozimirenko has created for his Romani sisters and brothers and for all of us, as it concludes in hope and prayer:

My people are proud! Talanted! How much grief and misfortune they have known! Barefooted! Hungry! Bleeding to death! Beaten! They have never lost

²²⁹ The only periodical to publish Kozimirenko's poem in the article about the poetic soiree was *Evreiskii Obozrevatel'*, the print edition of the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine. The article, alas! titled "Gypsy with Ukrainian heart," was placed under the rubric *All of us are your children, Ukraine!* (7–8 April 2003, p. 7).

hope for the better. I too believe that the time will come, happiness will come greeting our homes too, happiness will smile to us too, Romale! So help us Holy Mother!²³⁰

Our path to ourselves, our own consciousness, lies through the acknowledgment of the hideous crimes our predecessors committed against the millions of us in the name of civilization. Without this recognition, we cannot consciously aspire to progress and democracy. Romani genocide is only one of many such global atrocities that needs to be acknowledged and commemorated. This is what the life history and poetry of Mixa Kozimirenko teaches us.

Kozimirenko's thoughtful cherishing of life's moments as the most precious units of time is the moral imperative, "the cross" the artist has chosen to carry. "Drinking" these moments like songs, like the wine only given once, privileged him to what his Romani sisters and brothers and the Ukrainian mother who had managed to save his life did not live to enjoy. The sin of forgetting burnt his heart. He lamented their loss and absence as the sorrow and "drastic guilt of those who were spared" (Adorno, 2003), and we hear this lament of loneliness in poetry's rhythm-melodics. Throughout his life he kept asking himself whether a person could go on living who had accidentally escaped and should by rights have been murdered as well, and he goes on carrying this burden of representation. The sorrowful memories of the past are what he envisioned for himself as his last moment in the future.²³¹ Kozimirenko's dream about the future is symbolized in the beautiful image of a woman—the holy mother, at once being the memory of the past. Feeling his personal responsibility, he envisioned the future while at the same time holding on to the desire "to remain himself." This is the meaning of circularity of eternal return in Mixa Kozimirenko's poetry.

Yet the uplifting power of his poetry is centered in its thrust into the future. The prophecy of the poet lies in his power to build a lasting image out of words—for generations to come. The word, which the poet captured and caused to endure, Gadamer called "one of the powerful central metaphors of modern times" because it represents the essence of possible human experience (1992, p. 77). "The thoughts of our common spirit

²³⁰ Holy Mother image-symbol echoes the symbol of laments in ancient chronicles—mother-damp earth.

²³¹ In this holding onto the memory, Kozimirenko's later poems parallel the similar insistence by Anna Akhmatova in her *Poema Bez Geroya*: Leave me only memory [*Tol'ko pamiat' vy mne ostav'te*].

are completed quietly in the soul of the poet” (p. 81), thus making the poet “the archetype of human being” (p. 77). Poetry allows “the reader to be the I of the poet because the poet is the I which we all are” (Ibid.). In this metamorphosis, the “I” of the poet is transformed into a word-image. The “I” of the poet acquires the all-human spiritual power. Thus the poet’s lyrical hero never disappears; he is like a star that never ceases to burn. In making us pause and look up at the stars lies the uplifting power of poetry.

I will conclude this story in Mixa Kozimirenko’s own words recorded at my request by the U.S. ethnomusicologist Jeff Buettner, who visited Kyiv while working on an article. On July 30, 2004, the poet came to Kyiv to the Theater Romance. He was already grieving the losses inflicted upon his body by surgeries and radiation treatment. After the performance of the theater’s new play, Kozimirenko gave answers to Jeff Buettner’s questions, and my friend Irina Shaparovska was the interpreter. The translation here is mine. The theater created the play based on Papuzsa’s and Kozimirenko’s work to be performed on Remembrance Day—on the 60th Anniversary of Liberation of Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. That Kozimirenko’s first performance abroad and his last one was the act of remembering, a quiet long-hearted inscription into Adorno’s “Education after Auschwitz” and other texts that had not mentioned Roma among the millions of innocent people systematically murdered.²³²

In the greeting Mixa left for me before the interview, he said: “I’m engaged in the performance they are taking to Poland. My health is not quite normal, but we are trying to stand firm. Success to you, son, and mom—greetings to everyone! And to America as well!”

The assonances audible in Kozimirenko’s narrative were testaments to the ambivalence, agony, and the scars dramatic change brings to a people and to a person. I am leaving Mixa’s words here as his signature, to stand on the page. And as “some sort of narrative margin which leaves the unsayable unsaid” (Friedlander, 1992, p. 17), let the music fill up the silence with the sounds of the accordion—*Melancholie*.

²³² E.g., “One should work to raise awareness about the possible displacement of what broke out in Auschwitz. Tomorrow a group other than the Jews may come along, say, the elderly, who indeed were still spared in the Third Reich, or the intellectuals, or simply deviant groups” (Adorno, 2003, p. 32).

What would you like the Americans to know about Romani culture?

Gypsy culture is a great class in the world culture. The Gypsies propagandize the music of the country where they live. [...] On the shoulders of the Gypsies came out Russian romance, and this one never dies, it represents us *at once*. One cannot speak of the homogeneous Gypsy culture. [No matter what the geographic location], the spirit of the Gypsies would sound in *any* music. I would like the Americans to know that there are Gypsies, that it is a very talented people, it is a very peace-loving people. It is known for its songs, its dances, and its communion with spiritual world—fortune telling and prophesies. It is a people which is closer to nature, which has not advanced far into civilization and which wants to stay at that level—that is, without getting in anyone's way, it wants to stay their own self. I would like to wish every [national and ethnic] group of people to be themselves and to learn about others to advance their own knowledge.

What is the Romani life-view and world-view today?

They do not have their own state. Some time ago they left India and since then have been searching for their happiness in all the countries. Where they received a more benevolent reception, they stayed in that land and tried to preserve their individuality. They never struck much friendship with authorities, knowing that the authorities would always oppress them. Throughout their entire history, the Gypsies were in the back yard of history. They never entered political schemes, they never started wars; they never were the oppressors. And although we know that a president of Brazil was a Gypsy and that a Queen of Britain was of Gypsy origin—those are more the exceptions than the rule.

The Gypsies occupy their niche in the world culture and the world community. They are wonderful jewelers, wonderful musicians, wonderful snake charmers, wonderful fortune-tellers—that is psychics. This is what they want to do.

It saddens me that all over the world the Gypsies are the least educated people—least educated in the sense that there are no schools, no mass media, no colleges that would teach a Gypsy to be a Gypsy. And there are no jobs. This is why they always remain in this—

But the Gypsies never marched with posters, with banners, and never started riots, never went against the authorities—that is never demanded to impeach the president, never demanded fair elections—they are outside of this. They dissolve in the people and it is their niche to be invisible. Although they are noticed and I know it all too well.

How did the life of Roma change in the last 50 years?

The changes were for the better and for the worse. The Gypsies are a very conservative people. Having once chosen their occupation, their niche, their place of living, their itinerary of travel, they remain at the same positions. That is, they

do not learn at the same pace with time, they lag behind time, because they preserve their heritage: they preserve traditional trades; they preserved romances and sing them just like they were performed in the past. They are very apprehensive of the contemporary culture, and the tempo of the new life has done the Gypsies a misfavor. It is only the young and the new that can pick up this tempo and enter it on the right footing with the time. The Gypsies are falling behind, falling behind, and the old people are not finding themselves in the new life, are not finding.

They cannot tell fortunes now because fortunetelling has been institutionalized [state sanctioned]. Fortunetelling is now performed by psychics, who gather large audiences in the theaters [and at the stadiums]. And the Gypsies tell fortunes face to face, in private. Even that niche has been taken away from them. Commerce—everyone sells now. Horsedealing—there are no horses anymore, this too has changed. That is, the ground is being swept away from under the Gypsies' feet. Like the buffalo in America, they are left with fewer and fewer niches for their real life. That is, the Gypsies are not the same today as before. And perhaps now the Pushkin of today would not have chased the Gypsies of today, because they are not as attractive today as in the past.

On being a Romani poet.

The poets are godsend. They are a bit obsessed²³³ [*zatsiklennye*]. If you are a poet, you either exist or you don't. If you have a chance to say something interesting, which would interest *everyone*, then you could happen, and such poets are supported. So far I am the one and only Gypsy poet in Ukraine, the member of the Writers' Union. I can't say that they don't know me—they know me. But at the same time they do not support me much. Because I do not write about today, I do not write about politicians. I have found my niche. I try to write about the Gypsies and what ails them. And today we have such an abundance of suffering! That God Bless—if only someone listened! So I will always have enough to write about. And I think I will always be interesting, and with time—even *more* interesting.²³⁴

²³³ Caught in one cycle or circle.

²³⁴ The audio recording is courtesy of Jeff Buettner. I substituted the exonym "The Gypsies" in his questions to Kozimirenko with "Roma."

Chapter Five

Building Networks of Perspectives: Brushing History Against the Grain

This chapter explores the innovative role of the Romani media formations, or those movements and tendencies, in intellectual and artistic life, that have significant influence on the active development of a culture and an often oblique relation to formal institutions (Williams, 1977). In Ukraine and other countries, teams of Romani intellectuals and their colleagues generate the strands of cultural history of the Romani people in response to its exclusion and misrepresentation by the mainstream media. These media formations could be seen as agents of developmental, or educational, power, and not simply as counterinformation institutions. In the following four parts, I will endeavor to examine the strands Romani intellectuals pattern together into the cultural history tapestry under four main headings: (a) Standing for a Mission in a Quest for Social Justice, (b) To the History of the “Gypsy Image,” (c) Scintillations and Gray Areas: Byzantine Web, and (d) Yearnings.

Part One. Standing for a Mission in a Quest for Social Justice

As the liaison between the networks of Romani intellectuals in Ukraine and the Romani Archives and Documentation Center at The University of Texas in Austin (RADO), created by Professor Ian Hancock, I witnessed an important communication event on February 27, 2003. On that day, the Romani poet Mixa Kozimirenko invited me to the home of a respected Romani leader Vladimir Zolotarenko. Zolotarenko was the first chairman of the Roma Association in the history of newly independent Ukraine and represented the Roma of Ukraine in Soros Roma Foundation when it was started in 1993. He and Ian Hancock had met at a number of important international meetings in Switzerland and Romania in the early 1990s.

As we were waiting to make an international phone call to RADO, our conversation in Zolotarenko’s kitchen, equipped to serve as a comfortable press-center, revolved around the tasks of Romani intellectuals. Valentina Zolotarenko, Vladimir’s wife, and their 15-year-old son, Arthur, participated along with Vladimir, Mixa, and myself. “Simply put, we are creating the uplift for the culture and the language. We are

changing the stereotype that has formed about the Gypsy people over the centuries,” said Vladimir.

The traditional crafts, which Roma practiced for centuries, such as metalworking, are gone, and with them gone is the language connected with the crafts. Gone are the pride of the dynastical craftsmanship and the very view of life stemming from the traditional occupations, as well as the cohesion in the community.²³⁵

When the conversation turned to the Ukrainian government policies, Vladimir stated that the new laws affecting ethnic minorities in Ukraine had largely a declarative nature and recalled the time in the late 1980s when Roma and other ethnic minorities were mobilized to work toward Ukraine’s independence:

I wish they kept the promises they had given us and cared about us as much as about the native Ukrainians. Among us are scholars and poets, yet no one hears about them. We get only negative media attention. The people begging at the train stations are the only coverage we get. The history of our people has to reach the general public. People just do not know anything about the Gypsies.

Excitement reigned in Zolotarenko’s press-center of a kitchen as Dr. Hancock spoke to Mixa Kozimirenko on the phone in Romani and to Vladimir Zolotarenko and me in English, and we simultaneously translated everything to Valentina and Arthur. For over a decade, the homes of Romani cultural activists in Uzhgorod, Izmail, Kilia, Odesa, Korosten’, and Kyiv, as now Zolotarenko’s centrally located apartment, had served as international press-centers for the meetings of intellectuals.

No matter what countries they came from, Romani intellectuals shared some of the similar experiences. Many of them were told to hide their “Gypsy” identity when growing up, and were admitted to higher educational institutions by “special provisions.” “Not many ethnic groups are told to pretend to be someone else. We have to stop this; we have to feel better about ourselves before other people can feel better about us,” said Dr. Hancock that day just before his trip to India. He has made it his mission to help ensure that future generations of Roma celebrate their ethnic heritage. His 2002 handbook titled *We are the Romani People* was designed to help instill a sense of pride in Roma, as well as to serve as a guide for teachers and social workers in the communities, helping them better understand the cultural history of Roma, “One purpose of this book is to

²³⁵ Field notes. 02.27.2003.

deconstruct the stereotype of fictional ‘gypsies’ and to replace it with a picture of the real population—the Romanies” (2002, p. xviii):

The facts of Romani history are sad: the slavery, the Holocaust, the transportations, the sterilizations, the mass killings, the pogroms... Yet we are still here, we still have our identity. We have our language and our culture. And to me, this is a triumph of survival. (personal communication)

These words were reiterated by other Romani intellectuals, speaking of Romani history and culture with the same pride in many different languages. Mixa Kozimirenko, for example, heralded this triumph of survival in his poetry, public appearances, and speeches. Linking dialogue solidarity networks into a Romani international “community” imparts what Downing (2001) called “lock-step homogeneity of opinion” to Romani groups (*the Romani community*).

Romani intellectuals in the West as well as in the East recall that it was not until 1989 that they began interacting face-to-face. As Ian Hancock put it, “Communism fell and the borders came down. The barriers came down and people could travel. We could go that way, and they could come this way.” But ultimately it was the Internet that made the networking and global communication much easier to maintain. “I’m everywhere,” said Hancock, “Now I can be everywhere without getting out of the chair. Before 1989,” he continued, “it wasn’t so easy to interact face-to-face with people in Eastern Europe. We would only meet sometimes, when they were able to attend meetings. It’s become MUCH easier since Europe has opened up, and it’s become much easier with the Internet and e-mail.” By “we” he meant “Roma” and by “people in Europe” he meant “traditionally: people in the socio-political structures, people in the International Romani Union, or the Roma National Congress, or the Nordic Roma Council, or the Gypsy Education Council.” “Because it was only through structures like that that we could meet or had reason to meet,” he added (personal communication, June 22, 2004).

A broader picture of this change became visible when we complemented the perspective of the Romani scholar in the West with the accounts of Romani intellectuals in the East, as evidenced from my conversation with Mixa Kozimirenko and the first Romani ethnographer of Ukraine, Aleksey Danilkin. It was in 1986 that Aleksey Danilkin changed his vocation and became an ethnographer with a mission to study the cultural history of Romani people:

When I chose my ethnographer's path 15 years ago, everyone [in Romani community] took it with hostility and very aggressively: How could I choose the unknown, alien to them profession—and on top of that such a *gadje* one that oh boy! Later on, everyone got used to it. I began with self-education. And the self-education was VERY interesting: I was Nadya Demeter's intern—an entire year at the Institute of Ethnography [in Moscow]! Just like that! See, the way it used to be: I had a higher education—in agriculture, in zoological engineering—and always had to endure everyone's suspicion: that, say, he is a Gypsy, what does he think he is? And it bothered me: First of all, I am a citizen of this country—and it bothered me. And I decided to defend my rights. And then I realized that to defend my rights one must know the history of one's people—for well-argued defense. This is how the idea itself transformed during that year—I no longer defended my rights, but I simply began studying the history of my people, since 1986.

“Since then,” continued Danilkin, “my work has been directed at the creation of the Gypsy MUSEUM.” He went on to say:

I cannot do it, cannot solve this issue either at the *highest level of authority*, or at the local level. That is, everything has remained as it was: human rights as such, even to *self-expression in profession are infringed*. But: I have become a highly qualified specialist, one of the best in Europe in that profession of mine. And I am not giving up. I realize perfectly well that if I am already someone, it is my duty—now at this *crisis stage*—to *pass on* all my *knowledge* as a baton. That is, to *work for the future*. I have realized that it is necessary to *work for the future*. [Just as Kozimirenko, Danilkin adopted Igor Krikunov's appeal to the First Romani Congress as his mission]. I must work so that all my research could be used to improve the state the Gypsy ethnos, as well as Ukraine, are currently in. That is, there is disappointment, but at the same time I am convinced that everything is temporary. It's temporary. Mishaps—temporary, crises—temporary.

I asked him to specify what “working for the future” meant—a new generation? And, if so, of whom—scholars? Danilkin replied:

First and foremost, the future is children. The future is children. Scholars—well there are about 100 ethnographers in Ukraine, there is no need to be working for them, they are working for themselves. I am writing a dissertation. My dissertation explores the social structure of the Gypsy community in Ukraine. The goal is to find its nodal points. That is, to find the regularity: Why is everything happening this way in the Gypsy community. Thereby discovered would be all those mechanisms; then it would be easier to correct something. When there are no unknowns—then maybe. That is, to work to produce the results that really help. Not like this: I went to a conference in Budapest, read my paper, our circle listened—12 people—everyone went back home, and everything stopped at that. Today I should be working only for the future, for the country. Therefore, my research is aimed at finding the mechanisms through which, by social or political

means, everything could be removed, little by little. [I asked who would be “removing it.”] The thing is that only after all this is explored then it would be *clear*. Right now it is only at the exploratory stage. Someone is backing up these groupings, someone is profiting from them. I prefer writing scholarly works [to poetry—he writes poetry as well] because I understand perfectly well that if God gave [opportunity, talent], it has to be used [he laughed]. I present my research in scholarly publications, but mostly in newspapers and lectures. I have not even suspected that people read my work and know it. It turns out that some Gypsy organizations relied on my research to draw their policies, for instance in Transcarpathia. When the issue of education came up, they studied the entire section written by me.

As evidenced by these interviews, Romani intellectuals in the West and in the East are working in the field of a mediated production of culture and knowledge. To shatter the ubiquitous “Gypsy image” and instill a sense of pride in Roma, as well as to educate the non-Roma, they reconceptualized their office space as media or information centers, such as the Romani Archives and Documentation Center at the University of Texas at Austin, created by Ian Hancock, or the media information center at the Theater Romance, created by Igor Krikunov. Zolotarevko’s apartment in central Kyiv, equipped with telephones, a computer, and a Xerox machine, as well as extensive archives, was another example of such centers. Therefore, they used any space available to them and created a team of enthusiastic colleagues, who collected, studied, represented, and propagated the facts of the history of the Romani people through the media of publications, museums, documentaries, and public performances. However, in this production process the very term “the Romani people” becomes problematic. As Hancock explained:

There is a fundamental *DRIVE for identity*. And you can make a case certainly that there are *commonalities* in our history as *a people*. I mean, we talk about *the Romani people*. I do it myself *all the time*, but if we are *pushing for unity* simply because it’s nice to know who you *are*, it’s nice to belong to *something*—and you *can* argue that whatever the Romani group is there are *THREADS* leading *back* to something we all have in common: genetic threads, linguistic, cultural. They are there, you can’t deny that, they are there. But almost immediately [upon leaving Byzantium or earlier] the threads became undone—just like *pulling a rope apart* or *undoing a braid of hair* into *lots of hair*. That process began *almost immediately*, so it’s *almost true* that our *differences* now outweigh our similarities.²³⁶

²³⁶ Transcript 06.22.04. Interview with the author.

Thus from the outset, the yearning for a seamless meshing of the unified culture of the Romani people is challenged by the vast internal diversity of the group. The broad diversity of the nations in which Roma live all over the world only adds to this challenge. What unites Romani intellectuals is the fact that irrespective of the nation-state they are living in, they produce their theories in the context of non-Roma supremacy. At the same time, however, with few exceptions, they are fitting their theories, including the cultural history of Roma, into the master narrative of a monolithic culture of their nation-state, which further broadens the diversity to be accounted for. In the post-communist countries like Ukraine, the latter task is complicated by the process of the creation of the monolithic master narrative of the Ukrainian titular nation—itsself under way.

Such a condition requires a radical reconceptualization of culture from the unified expression of a community into a contested and conflictual set of practices of representation. Underlying the culture and knowledge production by Romani intellectuals through various media is the principle that education is central to democracy and must be responsive to the life experiences of all members of a multicultural society. In Raymond Williams's words, "all education depends on the acknowledgement of an ultimate human equality" (Williams, 1993, p. 124). In today's complex societies, cultures should not be seen as monolithic or unchanging, "but as a site of multiple and heterogeneous borders where different histories, languages, experiences, and voices intermingle amidst diverse relations of power and privilege" (Giroux, 1992, p. 205).

Therefore, my story here will not focus on the notion of Romani cultural history as a collaged unity. Such story would be a tremendous undertaking of multiple yet coordinated information centers throughout the world. Instead, I will focus on the actions of Romani intellectuals of Ukraine in making meanings and the multiple and complex pictures of Romani history and culture to which they gave rise. Such an approach rests on the theoretical writings of the Swedish anthropologist and media theorist Ulf Hannerz, who viewed culture as a set of meaningful forms and human interpretations of them, or "the meanings which people create, and which create people, as members of societies" (1992, p. 3). In this view, culture is not a completed object or text, but an open-ended process because the mediated or externalized for public consumption meanings and human interpretations of them do not necessarily cohere, for example, as a result of the

unevenness of distribution across space or the complexity of the individual's experience (Ibid.). Instead of trying to describe a coherent history of Roma of Ukraine, I will examine the many forms of cultural experiences shared with me by Romani intellectuals of Ukraine in their quest for Romani history.

Part Two. To the History of "The Gypsy Image"

The very first article Aleksey Danilkin shared with me opened up the fascinating world of art collecting of which he is fond. At the same time, the authors' search through the web of enigmatic art history demonstrated how peripheral art collecting and the Gypsy image produced by the non-Romani imagination has been to real Romani communities. This once again reminded me that Romani intellectuals such as Aleksey Danilkin are striding both worlds: the world of academia and the world of the everyday reality of Romani communities.

Authored by N. V. Potapova, a tour guide at the St. Petersburg tourist bureau, and V. A. Savinkova, the senior researcher at the State National Library's engravings and prints department, the article was titled "New Material to the History of Attribution of the Steel-Engraving *Gypsy Tabor* From the Russian National Library of St. Petersburg Collection." The article aimed to reestablish, after some 60 years, E. Gollerbach's opinion about the existence of a drawing by T. G. Shevchenko—the illustration to A. S. Pushkin's poem "Tsygany"—and to confirm this unique finding in the collection of engravings of the Russian National Library. The library's collection of engravings included the masterful steel engraving well known to the specialists under the title "Gypsy Tabor." In the late 1930s, a prominent art critic, E. F. Gollerbach, mentioned this work in two special editions: one dedicated to A. S. Pushkin and another to T. G. Shevchenko. However, neither the engraving nor the drawing were polygraphically reproduced, but instead there was some sort of intermediary edition. In the confusion over authorship of the engraving and the drawing, the name of T. G. Shevchenko was obliterated from the authorship list, and in the 20th century special editions dedicated to A. S. Pushkin as well as the artistic editions of T. G. Shevchenko's works, "Gypsy Tabor" was listed as "spuriously attributed" to Shevchenko. Having conducted extensive research, Potapova and Savinkova built the following schema of events.

First, they listed the author's illustration "Gypsy Tabor" made by A. S. Pushkin himself as a likely creative source for the famous artist L. F. Maidel. Pushkin left his own sketch under the draft manuscript of his poem "Tsygany," which he began writing in Odesa. Aleksey Danilkin and I visited the Pushkin Museum in Odesa where the sketch was exhibited: A bear wearing a collar, two tents (*shatra*), the wheels of a carriage, the head of a Gypsy man with sideburns; in one tent a woman with a graceful, regal posture breastfeeds a baby.²³⁷

Second, Potapova and Savinkova cited the readiness of E. F. Fischer's privileged publishing house to publish the poem "Tsygany" by 1840–1841, and L. F. Maidel's Indian ink contour drawing for it titled "A Scene in Front of the Tent." Estland artist and engraver baron Ludwig fon Maidel (1795–1846) worked in the book illustration genre and was considered the founder of Romanticism xylographic illustration, or wood engraving, which proliferated in the 1840s. The contour drawing preserved Pushkin's composition of the tents and a woman breastfeeding the baby, yet developed the romantic scene: Surrounded with women and children, an old woman mixed brew in a large cauldron on a tripod²³⁸ over the fire while giving directions to a younger mother and daughter. A man with a pipe is stretched on the grass by the fire, watching the cook. A naked child is petting the bear. Behind the tent, young people are dancing in front of Ukrainian peasants, and in the distance, horses are grazing in the field.

The third stage was the preparation to do the engraving, namely the finishing of the contour drawing to its present state, known as "Gypsy Tabor," yet it was the original drawing. It was at this stage that Taras Shevchenko was believed to have participated. The authors listed his biographical data, namely the mutual acquaintances with Maidel. Baron fon Maidel had his own studio in Yur'evo, where he gave lessons to his students. He stayed with his brother-in-law, Professor M. D. Engelgardt in Derpt, where he met the

²³⁷ Field notes. 08.07.2002.

²³⁸ In the Crimean Khannate, which included Bessarabia, population was counted by the number of *kazanlar* (plural from *kazan*, Turkish word for "cauldron"), i.e., cauldrons, hearths, or as in ancient Rus, smoke (stacks), thereby families (Tunmann, 1991, pp. 21, 76). Two cauldrons on a tripod, as opposed to a pot hanging over a fire common among Roma in Western Europe, could be seen as used by the Vlax Roma in Romania at the beginning of the 20th century (see Demeter, 2000, p. 193); a pan on a tripod—by the Turkish Gypsies in the 1930s (p. 268). The 18th century nomadic Tatars in the steppes adjoining the northern Black Sea region had similar cookware: one big and one smaller iron cauldron, tripod, and two to three wooden bowls (Tunmann, 1991, p. 48).

famous poet V. A. Zhukovsky. The artist received several orders of illustrations from the poet and was invited to St. Petersburg. At that time V. A. Zhukovsky and Karl Bryullov began their attempts to buy Taras Shevchenko out of serfdom from his landlord, Count P. V. Engelgardt. The great painter Bryullov painted Zhukovsky's portrait, which was sold as a lottery. With the money made, the serf-artist Shevchenko was bought from Count Engelgardt in 1838. In 1840, Shevchenko worked on illustrations of Pushkin's works, for example, his poem "Poltava." At the same time, he dedicated one of his paintings to the Gypsy theme. In 1841, his watercolor "A Gypsy Woman Telling Fortunes to a Little Russian Woman" was awarded the silver medal of the second degree in the class of historical and portrait oil painting. In 1841, Shevchenko worked with V. Timm and K. Klodt who also participated in Fischer's edition "The Arts Memorial" as promising young artists working with von Maidel. Under these circumstances it was likely that the young artist Shevchenko, whose talent had already been highly praised, could have worked on the finishing of the contour painting.

The fourth stage was the mirror image of the original drawing "Gypsy Tabor," most likely a daguerotype.²³⁹ The drawing was the only one and a rarity. It was in such cases that a photocopy, most likely a singular one, was made. In his exile in Kazakhstan in 1847–1858, Shevchenko was forbidden to write or draw, and upon his return in 1858, he tried to locate his drawings and photocopy them to be reproduced in engravings. This step allowed making many copies. The following multiple editions were published with the engravings of the daguerotypes.

The fifth and final stage opened up the possibilities of many copies of the original drawing and of the mirror image in, for example, engravings. The authors established four engravings of "Gypsy Tabor" by 1910 that without doubt had Shevchenko's genealogy, the first of which was in the museum collection, others came from very prominent 19th century collectors. It turned out that when Shevchenko applied to the Academy of Fine Arts in 1859 to receive the title of academician along with nine other applicants that year, he was assigned the exam topic "Gypsy Tabor" in the class of oil painting of folk scenes. In 1860, Shevchenko was pronounced an academician for the

engraving of his work “The Small Little Russian Landscape” to Pushkin’s “Tsygany.” In conclusion to their article the authors stated, “The existence of multiple reproductions of the drawing ‘Gypsy Tabor’ in etching, steel engraving, and lithography is easily explained by the popularity of the topic in which the creativity of the two great artists [Pushkin and Shevchenko] crossed.” The analysis of this article by Aleksey Danilkin and myself showed the complementarity of perspectives, evidenced in our interpretation of the latter statement.

In my interpretation, stemming from the writings by Ian Hancock on the perpetuation of the Gypsy Image (e.g., 2002, pp. 64–69), I focused on the first part of the statement and noted the proliferation of the Gypsy image as a popular theme and its disconnectedness from the real Romani communities. This image originated in the idealizing of the European Romani populations during the period of the industrial revolution when they came to symbolize an earlier idyllic, rural way of life (Hancock, 2002):

The contemporary, created “gypsy” persona is the result of a dynamic which got out of hand in the 19th century and which then took on a life of its own. It was stimulated by a combination of the responses to industrialization, colonialism and emerging 19th century ideas of racial hierarchy. (p. 65)

As this article well demonstrated, the proliferation of the Gypsy Image and its separation from real people were further aided by the development of copying technology in the mid-1800s and the growing book industry. Along with the Gypsies, the “Little Russians” with their archaic, pristine, bucolic living, inspired by Romanticism, also became a popular 19th-century theme. The artists—such as Pushkin and Shevchenko in our case—contributed “to the topic” in locations often remote from the real communities whose culture they portrayed or described. Thus, Gogol created his colorful stories about “the Little Russians” in St. Petersburg, and it was there that Shevchenko drew his “Gypsies” and “Little Russians,” while Pushkin began his “Tsygany” in Odesa and finished in the Russian village of Mikhailovskoye near Pskov. Apparently, the allure of the more exotic south seemed even more romantic as seen from the north. Whereas the

²³⁹ In the 1840s, the world was obsessed with photography, or daguerotyping: In an obscuring camera the image of an object was mirrored on a horizontally placed paper, covered with light-sensitive solution. The mirror image resulted in left-handed people, the opposites of letters, etc.

misrepresentation of ethnic and social groups eventually came to be challenged by members of those groups, this did not begin to happen in the case of Romanies until very recently (Hancock, 2002).

Contrary to my interpretation, inspired by western critical thought, Aleksey Danilkin put emphasis on the second part of the statement and wrote “geniuses” under the words “great artists” in his copy of the article. In the great authors’ connection with the “popularity of the topic” he saw the positive association and, thus, the impetus for the uplift of Romani history and culture. It was this approach that prevailed in Ukraine. Examples are numerous.

In the article titled “Why Roma Love Shevchenko?,” the newspaper *Romani Yag* (No. 5 from March 12, 2003) presented the analysis of the two paintings by the Ukrainian poet and artist: The above-mentioned watercolor *Gypsy-woman Fortuneteller* (1841) and *Gypsy Man* (1851).

The artist has portrayed a young woman who decided to turn to the Romani woman’s fortune-telling to find out her fate. The master gives expressive characteristic to the trusting ingenuous girl and a talkative fortuneteller. With mixed feelings of fear and hope and the apprehension to look at her “prophet” the beautiful girl is awaiting her verdict. This narrative and full of everyday detail situation Shevchenko draws in a Romantic ideal... While the young woman is wearing Ukrainian national dress with a bright ribbon and a flowery wreath on her head, the Romani woman’s clothing is somewhat unusual. It is a turban on her head and a wide dress of simple cut. The shadowing effect on the fortuneteller’s face, which accentuates the darkness of her skin, sharpens the facial features. By this artistic medium the master emphasizes the women’s contrasting way of life. The lighted face of the Ukrainian woman, kind-hearted and sincere, is juxtaposed with the dark, obscure face of the fortuneteller. In the modeling of both figures dominant are the round shapes with softly contoured silhouettes and gentle supple folds of clothing. Two women..., two fortunes..., two cultures. (p. 10)

The analysis of the *Gypsy Man* focused on the main protagonist:

At the center of the painting pictured is a young Rom, forcibly made to be a soldier, who cannot put up with the misfortune. He most likely has already escaped a few times, for which now he is handcuffed and chained to his fellow in misfortune. And if the latter has already put up with his soldier’s fate, Rom demonstrates with his entire look the philosophical perspective on life. The noose above his head does not scare the young Rom, who cannot put up with captivity, which contradicts his very being. The strong fist of the left hand betrays the seriousness of intention of the Rom, while his sly face expression, cunning eyes disguised under the strange looking brim of the hat, stress the love of freedom,

recalcitrance, and Rom's unwillingness to live by the rules which he does not want to and will not follow. (Ibid.)

These descriptions confirm that Romani cultural history in Ukraine today is inscribed into the master narrative of the titular Ukrainian culture. The critical approach, or any deconstruction, gives way to a positive culture celebratory discourse, which marks any positive connection with famous national poets, artists, and noblemen, as evidenced in the following interview:

Kozimirenko: The Gypsy culture gave the world culture not less than any other culture, as a whole—

Danilkin: Take Garcia Lorca—a Gypsy—flashed, in his 27 years flashed so—that the entire Europe got terrified! [He laughed. I mentioned that Lorca himself denied his Gypsy origin and only used “the Gypsy theme.”]

Kozimirenko: Even if you take only the Gypsy theme—what it gave the world culture. Even if *others* speak of the Gypsies, they speak of this people, of the Gypsies. That is, it is *their* contribution, people speak about *them*, and the humanity only gained something, having learned about this people (personal communication, June 30, 2002).

Positively affirming the presence of Roma as an ethnic group in the works of national classical literature, art, and music, Romani intellectuals thereby are claiming collective co-ownership, if not the co-authorship, to this heritage, and argue with the art and literary critics, and sometimes the authors themselves, over the tokenism—the use of “the Gypsy theme” by the classics either as part of the national landscape or as an archetype of the suffering and the poor. Garcia Lorca's work is a remarkable example, because many of our discussions at the Theater Romans revolved around Lorca's literary heritage. After Igor Krikunov commissioned a few of Lorca's translated romances from Mixa Kozimirenko for the new play, Kozimirenko and I read and discussed a number of the critical reviews, for example G. V. Stepanov's introduction to Lorca's collection (1979) published in Spanish.

Stepanov (1979) argued that the Gypsies in Lorca's works were only a theme, an archetype, “bearing an inner property of becoming essentially common” and part of Lorca's movement to universalization (p. 10). He quoted Lorca's letter, in which the poet described how he “transformed” the “mythological Gypsy” into “new beauty” in his romance *Preciosa y el aire*:

Es un romance gitano, que es un *mito* inventado por mi. En esta parte del

romancero procuro armonizar lo *mitologico gitano* con lo puramente vulgar de los dias presentes, y el resultante es extrano, pero creo que de belleza nueva. (p. 706)

Also, Stepanov quoted Lorca's letter to Jorge Gillien, in which the poet protested against "the myth of his Gypsiness" created by what Stepanov called "unsophisticated critics and poorly cultured readers":

I am somewhat concerned about the *myth about my Gypsiness*. They confuse my own life with the life of my protagonist. I do not want any of it. Gypsies—it's only a theme. And nothing more... Besides, the Gypsiness imparts to me a tone of non-sophistication, non-education, of a *village poet*, and this, you know, is not true. I do not want to be classified. I get a feeling of being shackled. (pp. 10–11)

Stepanov concluded:

The least of Gypsiness . . . one finds in the Gypsy as portrayed by Lorca. . . His Gypsy is not the ethnographic type, which has become a necessary property of an Andalusian landscape, but a social image representing all the persecuted and disadvantaged, irrespectively of their skin color and the geography of living. An impulse to such generalization was the poet's social stance. (p. 11)

Romani intellectuals subvert this claim of "generalization" by appropriating the Gypsy image in the classical heritage as in fact immortalizing Romani culture and representing their ethnic cultural contribution to the world. By recycling the works of classics in their own theater productions, they give the image a new spin as an archetype for the Romani cultural uplift. Similarly, they highlight the musical contributions of Romani virtuosos who won the respect of many members of the nobility, aristocrats, and monarchs, especially in Hungary, Russia and Spain, thus giving rise to Romani elite. Romani musical talent was a powerful factor in winning a measure of respect among the nobility. According to Danilkin (2002):

The Gypsy intelligentsia has the deepest roots! In the Russian empire it originated from the development of the Gypsy choirs—in that close communication of musical Gypsy elite with the high-class Russian and Ukrainian intelligentsia. [Kozimirenko agreed, "Nobility, aristocrats."] That is, the intelligentsia by itself cannot be narrowly national, narrowly ethnic! Gypsy intelligentsia! Take Hungary with its famous Gypsy bands: Janos Bihari,²⁴⁰ Gypsy elite of the 19th century—entire sections of museums and archives in Hungary are dedicated to them!

²⁴⁰ Violinist Janos Bihari (1764–1827) and his orchestra played for the assembled monarchs and statesmen at the Congress of Vienna in 1814. Liszt was one of Bihari's greatest admirers. The Gypsy virtuosos not

In Russia, the first record of Romani choruses, with their improvised singing in several parts at noblemen's soirees, dates from the latter half of the 18th century, when these singers were brought from Moldavia to Moscow by Count Aleksey Orlov. Orlov's chorus was much in vogue and could often be heard at soirees offered by Catherine the Great's favorites. During the Napoleonic invasion of 1812, every man among them of militia age joined the hussars, and the others donated money to the government (Fraser, 1998). Romani intellectuals of Ukraine traced and took careful note of every connection between the Russian and Ukrainian nobility, the classical authors, and Roma.

Not surprisingly, Danilkin recalled the "Gypsy Tabor" article he had shared with me, especially what he called "the closed circle"—Shevchenko, Russian creative elite and nobility, famous Romani musicians that gave rise to a group of Romani intelligentsia—in our conversation with Anatoliy and Yulia Kondur on August 12, 2002, in their home in Izmail:

Danilkin: Let us not forget that Shevchenko was a friend of Fedor-*Amerikanets*, that is Leo Tolstoy's great uncle who was married to a Gypsy woman.

AK: Yes, I know.

Danilkin: The Rector of the Fine Arts Academy of Russia. At the same time, when Shevchenko returned to St. Petersburg from the exile [in Kazakhstan] that same Gypsy family *took care of him!* [*pri-yu-ti-la!*] for the time being!

AK: That is, that connection *again!*

Danilkin continued: And Pushkin's friends—the Decembrists—they were Shevchenko's friends as well! And at the same time they were the friends of Illya Sokolov!

[YK laughed with pleasure]

Danilkin: Gypsy choir. It's a closed circle here.

AK (simultaneously): Sokolovskaya Guitar!

Danilkin: You see? There—Tania, it is that very same circle, that interesting material [the article] that I gave you! I will tell you that Shevchenko for me—I do not look at him as a Romologist, but simply as—

AK (simultaneously): As a contact, as some kind of connection.

Danilkin: No, not the contact. Thank God! Thank God that he WAS! As Krikunov has said, "Thank God that he was in *Ukraine*. Not anywhere else but in *Ukraine!* [laughing]²⁴¹

unseldomly were marrying the daughters of well-to-do citizens and sometimes aristocrats: princesses, countesses, and baronesses (Fraser, 1998).

²⁴¹ The ironic effect rests on the fact that most of Shevchenko's creative life was spent outside of Ukraine, in St. Petersburg and Kazakhstan, while he is considered a Ukrainian national icon figure. Nowadays, the Romani intellectuals like Igor Krikunov, who moved to Ukraine from Moscow, or those who were born in

These conversations illustrate that Romani intellectuals carefully trace the Romani lineage with prominent people and draw pride from it. To date, however, they are much more knowledgeable about these facts than the wider public and they are finding ways to educate their audience. In his book, Danilkin mentioned that Leo Tolstoy's "brother Sergey and son Sergey were married to Gypsy women" (2001, p. 66). Unfortunately, this fact as well as the strong Romani influence on Leo Tolstoy's creativity is hardly ever mentioned even in Russian language media. In the meantime, Tolstoy's daughter Alexandra described it very powerfully in her Russian language book about her father, published in New York in the 1950s, but this fact was never mentioned in Russian language arts school curricula. Alexandra wrote that music always influenced Tolstoy very profoundly, especially during the formative period of his writing career—the mid-1800s, which was a very turbulent time for him. At that time there was an excellent choir of Roma in Tula, and Leo, then a young man, and his brother Sergey were its patrons. Tolstaya (1953) stated that, "the majority of Russian aristocratic young people were fond of the Gypsies at that time" and mentioned "a certain patriarchy in their way of living, the strictness and purity of morals . . . it hardly ever happened that a girl or a woman agreed to live with a man outside of marriage" (p. 69). It was at these choir performances that Alexandra's uncle Sergey Tolstoy met his future wife, the beautiful singer Masha. Masha had many fans, but loved passionately "for the first time and for the rest of her life" the handsome Sergey Tolstoy. And this "worldly brilliant young man gave up all his promising future for Masha, he became attached to her . . . and eventually married her" (p. 70). This was the time when young Leo Tolstoy tried squeezing himself into the "forms accepted by all the people," which he despised and "contradicted his broad, artistic, creative nature" (p. 71). He tried becoming a statesman, like most of the young people of his social standing, but just could not become a dutiful bureaucrat. In his letters to brother Sergey, he implored him not to give up on him as "the most hopeless guy," He continued, "God give and I get on the right track and some day will become a

Ukraine, but associated with the imperial Russian culture, are challenged with the task of re-conceptualizing themselves as the Roma of Ukraine and generating the Roma of Ukraine cultural heritage, congruent with the Ukrainian national narrative.

decent person” (p. 68). Tolstaya documented (1953) that soon after this last correspondence to his brother, he wrote:

It is ridiculous for me to recall how I used to think...that one could set up a happy and honest little world for himself, in which to live quietly, without mistakes, without repentance, without confusion and to do, with no hurry, only the good. Ridiculous!... To live honestly, one has to slash himself, get tangled, fight, make mistakes, begin and quit, and begin anew and quit anew, and to always struggle and be deprived. And calmness is the spiritual meanness. (p. 156)

Tolstaya said that her father was entirely in this pattern of “slashing himself and getting tangled,” adding that, “Fuming, the dung burnt down in him, gradually turning into valuable, rich humus, giving strength and power to the mighty young growth nurtured on it” (Ibid.). Roma were a large part of the rich world that nurtured Tolstoy’s genius:

His powerful healthy nature required constant movement: he went to fairs, bought horses and derived utter pleasure in mixing with the crowd and walking along the rows of horses tied to the horse racks or carts... The Gypsies vied with each other in bragging about their horse and, having cocked their shabby fur hats, were galloping across the square on their jades, whom they had sprinkled pepper under the tails to liven them up. Tolstoy wanted to show the horse-dealers that he was an expert on horses, while those most likely duped him, while Tolstoy was convinced he had made a great deal. (p. 156)

“Only a Gypsy would think of such a thing!” laughed Mixa Kozimirenko in fascination at each example of such ingenuity, noting that they spiced up the stories of Russian writers such as Nikolai Gogol. This was the world that provided rich texture to Russian classical literature:

The buyers and sellers shouted, slapped each other’s hand, and finally having made a bargain and paid for the horse, the seller handed the horse to the buyer “from flap to flap,” that is holding the rein with the flap of his coat he handed the end of it to the buyer.²⁴² The cows tied to the carts mooded, with their enormous udders, which had not been milked for three days and from which milk was dropping on the dusty ground; young guys nibbled sunflower seeds and smartly spit out the shells, which gradually made the ground on the square gray. (pp. 156–157)

This was the world that nourished Leo Tolstoy’s imagination as he worked on his first big writings, *Kazaki* and *Albert*, the latter being about a drunk, dissolute genius-

²⁴² This explains the etymology of the popular Soviet Russian expression *iz pod poly*—“under the flap” denoting a covert, “black market,” illegal in the Soviet economy transaction.

musician. To understand why such images haunted Tolstoy one has to know his relation to music, said Tolstaya.

Music occupied a tremendous place in Tolstoy's life. To him it was not a mere delight in the beautiful combinations of sounds... Music—be it a simple folk song, a beautiful old Gypsy romance, a classical work by Mozart, Haiden, Schubert or Chopin, whom he especially loved—was to him a divine expression of human soul. When he listened to music, in him the ideas boiled with an extraordinary force, new images were born, the entire force of his own creativity woke up, rocking to the foundation his entire powerful being. (p. 157)

It is such powerful associations and historical connections between the Romani prominent figures, if not merely the Gypsy theme, and the founding fathers of the national cultures, such as Shevchenko, Pushkin, and Tolstoy, that Roma of Ukraine draw pride and confirmation of the important Romani contributions to world culture. To date, however, most of the Ukrainian public is not familiar with much of this information. The archives collected by Romani intellectuals greatly surpass the expositions of various museums, which do not reflect any Romani presence even in the regions with high Romani population, such as the Odesa Oblast.

The Roma population in Bessarabia²⁴³ was the highest in the entire Russian Empire, according to the census of 1847. Out of 48, 247 Roma, 18, 738 of them lived there (Demeter et al., 2000, p. 56). None of the museums Aleksei Danilkin and I visited in Odesa and Izmail represented any aspects of Romani history. The exposition of the National A. S. Pushkin Museum in Odesa was very traditional. Its last hall represented the Bessarabia exile period, when Pushkin, then 21, began working on his poem *Tsygany*. Pointing to Pushkin's Odesa 1824 manuscript of the poem with sketches of a bear, tents, and an old Gypsy with sideburns, the guide commented:

²⁴³ Bessarabia (Budzhak) was located between the Dnester and the Danube, the Black Sea and Moldavia. The greater part of it, comprising Budzhak, belonged to the Crimean Khan after the 1774 peace treaty, while the area of Akkerman by the Black Sea, the Danubian cities of Kilia and Izmail, and Bendery belonged to the Ottomans. The name Bessarabia originated from the name of the Polovets (Koman) prince, who ruled the area, and the residents were first mentioned as *besarabeni* by a chronicler in 1259. The Komans (Utsi, Polovtsi), a Turkic nomadic people, drove out the Pechenegs farther west from the Danube in 1087 and conquered Bessarabia in 1123, until in turn they were conquered by the Mongols (Tatars) in 1237–1241, and those who did not flee to the Greek Asia Minor and Hungary, became the Tatar subjects. But nowhere they remained as numerous as in Bessarabia, where they were still ruled by their own princes. It is from the name of one of them that the area's name, Bessarabia, originates (Tunmann, 1991, pp. 52–54).

When he lived in Kishinev, he traveled with a Gypsy wagon for about a month. Here is described his own experience.²⁴⁴ ...She ran away with a young Gypsy man, and the poet was looking for her but could not find. When he was in Odessa, he found out that her life tragically ended. Shaken, he wrote his poem. It is wonderful that the Gypsy customs, and language, and love—all this was captured, and the Gypsies should be grateful to him.²⁴⁵

I looked at Aleksei Danilkin. He was very interested in the information about Gypsy music in Odesa in the 19th century and asked the guide whether there were any professional groups. She glanced at her watch and headed for the door, talking on the way. We followed her, catching her brief comments, “There was a military band at the theater. There were no professional choirs. The theater presented Polish plays, German plays, and French vaudevilles, therefore there were no musicians on staff.” And she finished it off, “Our museum is closing now.”

The detailed analysis of “the Gypsy woman myth” launched by Pushkin’s poem was presented on a rich historical and ethnographic backdrop in Demeter et al. (2002). The authors concluded, “The psychology of Pushkin’s Zempira is absolutely improbable in the context of a traditional family and tabor as a whole” (p. 64).

It is known that Prosper Merime, impressed by “the wild energy” of Zempira’s song about her old husband, created the image of Carmen—“the woman who can be killed but cannot be forced to love” (p. 65). Thus the entire plot of the famous story was inspired by the five lines of Pushkin’s poem: “*Terrible husband/Menacing husband/Cut me, burn me/ I am strong and do not fear/Neither you nor the fire*” (Ibid.). The authors commented:

Certainly, the Gypsies are flattered that it was a Gypsy woman who became the heroine and forever entered the heritage of world literature along with Juliet, Dulcinea of Tobos, or Anna Karenina. At the same time, they do not perceive Carmen’s image as real and denounce this literary heroine’s infidelity to her husband, as well as her being a kept woman with a number of wealthy gentlemen. The Gypsies justifiably dislike the fact that looking at that image many would expect loose behavior from the women of their group. (p. 65)

The National History Museum of Odesa spanned the history of the northern Black Sea region from the 13th century. The Gypsies were mentioned only in one document,

²⁴⁴ Demeter et al. (2000) confirmed the reality of Pushkin’s “Gypsy episode” quoting literary critic B. A. Trubetskoi, who stated that the poet did stay with tabor between July 28th and August 20th, 1821 (p. 54).

“The List of Resident Aliens of the European Part of Russia and the Gubernias Where They Are Located, by the 1834 Census.” Most of Roma lived in the southern region of the Russian Empire. A few documents representing Romani organizations of Odesa and Izmail were exhibited in the recently added hall of ethnic minorities, including the drawing by a young Romani artist from Izmail Alina Pitula. However, the Romani exhibition was the smallest compared to the other “minorities” of the region: Bulgarians, Jews, Czechs, Poles, Belorussians, Russians, Germans, Old Believers, Moldavians, Gagauz, Armenians, Greeks, Georgians, Koreans, and Albanians. “Why is Romani representation so episodic in the region where their population has historically been the greatest?” I asked the Senior Researcher of the museum Victoria Aleksandrovna Vonsovich. “The Gypsies are indeed more indigenous and more numerous in the region than some other groups, but because of their specifics, communication with them is difficult,” she said. She also explained the uneven distribution of representation by the post-Soviet changes in the museum business, “The researcher’s salary is 170 grivnas a month, while a janitor gets 165 grivnas. The culture workers, museum employees, and librarians are the lowest paid in the nation. Ukraine is last in Europe in salaries of culture workers.” In such conditions the museum simply cannot afford expeditions and new acquisitions and depends on donations. The minority organizations that donated most of their exhibits are represented the best. Danilkin promised to contact Romani organizations in the region and Mrs. Vonsovich said she would gladly expand Romani representation.

In a cozy basement café around the corner from the museum, Aleksei Danilkin and I were discussing the efforts of Romani intellectuals to deliver the information about Romani cultural heritage to the wider audience. “I can answer your question [about the underrepresentation of Romani history and culture],” said Aleksei:

I was the first in Ukraine to create a national, non-private Gypsy collection at the Bila Tserkva museum. In the past there were no specialists [Romologists] and the material was not being collected. This is why very many “gray areas” exist. What we saw today was one of such “gray areas”: the old document showed large numbers of Gypsies living in various *gubernias*, yet in fact nothing is known

²⁴⁵ Field notes. 08.07.2002.

about them, even about their music. Nothing has been preserved.²⁴⁶

Some of the gray areas reach far back into a distant past, shrouding the history of Romani early migrations, and the comparative research efforts of international teams of Romani scholars are aimed at filling them in.

Part Three. Scintillations and Gray Areas: Byzantine Web.

Aleksey Danilkin and I began our collaboration with the tour of the Cathedral of St. Sophia of Kyiv, built at the beginning of the 11th century in the heyday of the Kyivan State and the Byzantine Empire. Notwithstanding the lack of concrete evidence and reliable historical data, Romani intellectuals of Ukraine have reason to believe that the first contacts and penetrations of Roma in the steppes of the northern Black Sea region, the Crimea, and perhaps other parts of what is Ukraine today occurred much earlier than the traditionally alleged 16th century.²⁴⁷ Their belief is justified by the varied pieces of evidence on the presence of Roma in the Byzantine Empire during the 13th and 14th centuries and on their migration toward the Danubian lands of Wallachia and Moldavia²⁴⁸ adjoining today's Ukraine (see e.g., Marushiakova & Popov, 1997). The historical findings made in Kyiv in the late 1980s shed light on the cultural life in the northeastern outposts of the Byzantine, later Ottoman, Empire²⁴⁹ and the cultural and historical

²⁴⁶ Field notes. 08.08.2002.

²⁴⁷ E.g., see Fraser (1998): "It seems to have been from Poland that Gypsies first reached the Ukraine, where they can be observed in Volhynia around 1501" (p. 111).

²⁴⁸ In Wallachia and Moldavia Roma were given to the monasteries. Around 1360 the voivoda Vladislav donated Romani families to the monastery in Woditza; in 1385 voivoda Dan I donated 40 Roma families to St. Mary monastery in Tismana in the Carpathian mountains; in 1388 their heir Ian Mircea I donated 300 Romani families to the newly-found monastery in Cozia. Gradually a legislative system was instituted in the Danubian principalities which imposed on Roma the status of slaves (Marushiakova & Popov, 1997, p. 18).

²⁴⁹ In the fourth century, when the Roman Empire split into western and eastern halves, Constantinople became the eastern capital. The city was originally known as Byzantium and was 1,000 years old when Constantine the Great made it the capital of the Roman Empire in the year AD 330, whereupon it was called Constantinople (Freely, 1998). A century later, the western empire was overrun by Visigoths, and the Byzantine Greeks of Constantinople became the sole heirs to imperial Rome. Byzantine emperors succeeded one another for 1,000 years, until the Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople in 1453 and renamed it Istanbul. The Ottoman victory completed an ongoing process of migration and cultural infiltration as Turkish nomads from Central Asia moved into Asia Minor and merged Byzantine culture with their own. The Ottoman sultans were in effect latter-day Byzantine emperors, whose mosques imitated the architectural style of early Byzantine churches. These sultans ruled for over 450 years, until the collapse of their empire in World War I. As in the Byzantine Empire, in the Ottoman Empire, the state and the

contacts between Kyiv and Constantinople. These findings, of which it would suffice to mention a few, are studied by Romani intellectuals worldwide in an important project of “cultural recovery,” or by Giroux, recovering histories you have not heard before (Giroux, 1996, p. 89). This necessarily involves demystifying the processes of representation by revealing how “the Gypsy image” was generated by non-Romani social scientists since the 18th century and the underlying politics of representation. As evidence of the immensity and challenges of this project, the tour of St. Sophia of Kyiv will transport us to Constantinople of the time approximating Roma’s earliest presence in the Byzantine Empire and will illuminate some aspects of the culture that was formative to Romani.

Unlike most of the non-Romani historians, Romani intellectuals are recovering the early history of Romani people while simultaneously generating the uplifting momentum for the Romani cultural movement. Some of them (e.g., Hancock and Marsh) turn to the military history for evidence of the military past of Romani ancestors and their migration to Europe. The medieval armies necessarily included servants in the auxiliary detachments, craftsmen servicing the army, and the camp followers (Marushiakova & Popov, 1997, p. 19). Other Romani scholars caution of the dangers of covering up any criminality in Romani society on the one hand, while on the other deconstruct the existing stereotypes and the ubiquitous “inborn traits of the Gypsies” by explaining them as engendered by historical circumstance. Demeter et al. (2000), representing the latter group, focused on the Byzantine period of Romani history as the one holding many invaluable clues. According to these authors, the very etymology of the word “Rom” points to the Byzantine empire as the place where Romani groups formed as a people. They recall that in early 20th century, A. T. Sinclair noted that the self-ascription “Roma” existed only among the Gypsies of Europe whose ancestors had lived in Byzantium for a long time. The Byzantines called their country Roman Empire (*basileia ton Rhomaion*) and called themselves *Romaivi* (Romans), reflecting their beginnings as the Eastern Roman Empire (Demeter et al., 2000, p. 78; Hancock, 2002, p. 8). “Therefore, the Gypsies lived in the *Romaios* state for three centuries before spreading throughout

military had been inseparable. Kemal Ataturk’s Turkish Republic, which succeeded the Ottoman sultanate in 1923, was a creation of the military (Kaplan, 2000, pp. 95–96).

Europe,” concluded the authors, “even having left Byzantium, they continued to remember that they were Roma. The name...exists to date, although the Gypsies have long forgotten its original meaning” (Demeter, 2000, p. 78). Having “recovered” this historical and etymological connection with Byzantium, Romani intellectuals foreground it when possible. To give one example, Igor Krikunov, the artistic director of Romani theater in Kiev, which propagandized Romani culture, preferred to transliterate the theater’s name into Roman script as “Romans” and not “Romance,” thereby claiming the authorship by Roma of the popular genre of music.

A few examples below would illustrate how the scholars of Romani origin and their non-Romani colleagues recover the early medieval history of Roma.

The Questions of Romani Origins and Migration

The problems surrounding the origin and historical migrations of Romani ancestors after they left ancient India have long been an object of scholarly discussion. Trying to account in part for the lack of cohesiveness among the various groups self-identifying as Romani and for the major dialect splits within the language, Hancock (2004) underscored the three salient aspects of the contemporary Romani condition that rest upon the facts of Romani history:

First, that the population has been a composite one from its very beginning, and at that time was occupationally rather than ethnically-defined; second, that while their earliest components are traceable to India, Romanies essentially constitute a population that acquired its identity and language in the West (accepting the Christian, Greek-speaking Byzantine Empire as being linguistically and culturally ‘western’); and third, that the entry into Europe from Anatolia was not as a single people, but as a number of smaller migrations over perhaps as much as a two-century span of time. ... We might see each major post-Byzantine group as evolving in its own way, continuing independently a process of assimilation and adaptation begun in northwestern India. (p. 11)

Searching for the earliest documentation of a Romani presence in Byzantium, Hancock (2004) reported two likely possibilities:

The first, dated AD 1068, from Byzantium reported the presence of “Lors’ ... but that may have been a reference to Luri, i.e. Dom, rather than Romanies, but the second, dated some time in the latter part of the 1100s clearly refers to *Atsinganoi* and *Aeguptoi*, then as now the most usual names for Romanies. Fraser’s important

lexico-statistical analysis of Romani puts the beginning of its split into different dialect groups in the Byzantine Empire at around 1040. (p. 12)

At the same time, Hancock noted that the explanation of how the pre-Romani population reached the Byzantine Empire and that whole period of its history was barely ever addressed in the scholarship.²⁵⁰ The ancestors of Romanies, according to Hancock, were likely to be the Hindu soldiers in the Indian military detachments, who came from many different backgrounds and spoke many different languages and who fought with the Muslim troops led by General Mahmud from his headquarters at Ghazna (today called Ghazni and located in Afganistan). Then the Seljuks, a Sunni Muslim people of Turkic origin, defeated the Ghaznavids in A.D. 1038 and A.D. 1041, taking prisoners of war to use as their own fighting force. The Seljuks also attacked and defeated Armenia in A.D. 1071, preparing the establishment of a new sultanate called Rum²⁵¹ with its capital at Iconium (Konya), occupying former Armenian and some Byzantine territory in Anatolia—the area that is today Turkey. Hancock quoted Fraser who saw the appearance of the Gypsies in Byzantine lands “undoubtedly connected” with the Seljuk raids in Armenia and Marsh (2003) who suggested that the Seljuks established *beyliks*, or granted fiefdoms within Rum to bands of their warriors, including Sindhi. Among these combatants, the fighting force made up about one third of the total number, the rest being the armorers, grooms, smiths and metalworkers, carpenters, servants, tent-makers, cooks, bakers, washer-women, slaves, camp-followers and children (Hancock, 2004).

Hancock noted that the Armenian words in Romani, for “godparent,” “incense,” and “Easter” (*kirvo*, *xung*, *Patradji*) point to Armenia as the place where Christianity was first encountered (Ibid.). While the move from India to the Byzantine Empire was “very rapid,” taking only two to three decades, “the stay in Anatolia itself lasted for over two centuries, and was crucial to the emergence of the Romani people”:

We may well suppose that the Romani language, and the Romani people, came

²⁵⁰ Among a few scholars he quoted Marushiakova & Popov (2000, p. 5) who wrote of the Roma’s trekking for several centuries throughout the lands of what are today Pakistan, Afganistan and Iran, and to the south of the Caspian Sea; as well as Demeter et al.’s (2000) statement that the Romani people’s three century sojourn in Byzantium is always very cursorily dealt with in scholarly works.

²⁵¹ The toponym “Rum” originally referred to the eastern Roman dominions that later came to be called the Byzantine Empire. “Anatolia” is the Greek word for “east,” more literally the “land of sunrise” (Freely, 1998). Today Anatolia is the Asian part of Turkey, where 93% of the country’s land mass is located, a subcontinent also known as Asia Minor (ibid.).

into existence in the Byzantine Empire during this time... The influence of Byzantine Greek in the makeup of the Romani language cannot be underestimated; not only does it constitute the second largest percentage of the pre-European vocabulary after the Indian words, being found in every semantic area (even in numerals), but it has also contributed to fundamental areas of the grammar. (Ibid.)

The subsequent move of Roma up into Europe is considered the result of Islamic expansion by the Ottoman Turks, who eventually sacked Byzantium in 1453. However, there were other factors as well. Hancock (2004) named the bubonic plague, or the “black death,” which had reached western Anatolia by 1347, and “this forced a general migration across into Europe that surely included some Romanies, since they were blamed for having introduced it.” The plague of 1347 is said to been brought to Constantinople from the Crimea in Genoese ships, killing a third of the city’s population in a year (Freely, 1998, p. 161). A similarly devastating outbreak of plague reached Kyiv also from the Crimea a year before, in 1346, and was associated with the Tatars. In the history of Kyiv written by Maksim Berlinsky in 1798–1799, every outbreak of bubonic plague was blamed on the Tatars. For the year 1346 [*sic*], when Kyiv was ruled by the Lithuanian Prince, he reported (1991):

Although Kyiv was free of the danger of Tatar invasion, the Tatars who had since the old times had settled in Podol [Kyiv artisan district], being in every contact with their fellow-countrymen who lived in the contaminated Crimea, brought a different sort of misfortune to Kyiv—the bubonic plague, because of which almost the entire city became empty. (p. 84)

The devastating epidemics blamed on the “continuing contact of the Russians with the Tatar hordes” raged in 1352, so that entire towns lost all of their residents (Ibid). The unusual heat waves in the summer of 1366 contributed to such outbreaks that the Lithuanian Prince and most of Kyiv’s residents left the city for 2 years (pp. 84–85). Between 1366–1375, whenever the chroniclers mentioned Lithuanian military campaigns against the Tatar horde, the plague devastation was mentioned as well (p. 85). Finally, alongside the 1652 outbreak of the bubonic plague “brought by the Tatars” to various cities of Ukraine, chroniclers reported that although it stopped with severe frosts, “more

so grew the hostility between the nations of different faiths” [Ukrainian, Polish, Tatar²⁵²] (p. 114). Recovering the history, we have encountered an example of how the early ethnic prejudice was born. “Tatars” was a collective term for a great number of Turkic people and in some places for Roma, e.g., in northern Germany and Scandinavia (Fraser, 1998, pp. 65, 67–68, 121). In the old days, many groups responded to questions about themselves by mentioning their family, their clan, and their religion—but rarely their national group. For example, the Azeris did this until the early 20th century and were considered “Tatars” by their neighbors (Kaplan, 2000, p. 260). The fear of the mysterious deadly disease was associated with any new-coming stranger who “looked Tatar,” and was captured in a Russian proverb, *Nezvanyi gost’ khuzhe Tatarina*, or “the uninvited guest is worse than a Tatar.”

The word for “plague” in many languages (Kalderash Romani: *mamyorry*—grandma; witch; plague; cholera; Ukrainian, Russian: *chuma*) was used metaphorically and carried a range of connotations of menace and malediction. It was not until the beginning of the 20th century that a Ukrainian microbiologist and epidemiologist D. K. Zabolotnyi (1866–1929) formulated the theory of the natural nidi²⁵³ [contagion centers] of bubonic plague, carried by the rodents of which the steppes abounded.²⁵⁴ However, the ritual celebrations reaching us from the past show that our ancestors were aware of the connection between the disease and communal living, food preparation, and hygiene. Today in Romani communities in the Balkans, celebrations mark communities’ consorted effort in driving out the disease by ritual cleaning of the houses, dishes, utensils, ceremonial processions, and ritual meals of sweet food. Marushiakova & Popov (1997) described such annual celebrations held by the Roma from Vidin (Bulgaria), called by them *Chasing out of the Plague* or *Bibiaki* (the holiday of the aunt):

The “Master” of the festival...prepares the celebration: hires musicians, provides masks, selects the participants, etc. The organized procession is headed by the *Bibia* (the Plague), a man dressed like an old woman, put in chains and wearing a mask with horns. Then come the other masked men: a *rashai* (priest), *zhamutro*

²⁵² Although at that time the Cossak troops of Khmelnytsky often fought together with the Crimean hordes against the Polish king, as in 1653 at Zbarazh by Moldavia, where Khmelnytsky’s army of many thousands, [including Roma Cossaks] joined forces with the Crimean Tatars against the Polish king (p. 114).

²⁵³ The Russian term—*ochagovost’*, semantically points to the fire on which the food was cooked in a nomadic family *kazan*, a Tatar cauldron (Romani: *kezano*).

²⁵⁴ I am grateful to Vera Gnatyuk for this information. Zabolotny supervised the anti-epidemic expeditions to India, Arabia, and Mongolia (Kudritsky, 1985).

and *bori* (groom and bride), a few monsters. They go about the neighborhood, accompanied by music, with jesting and ridicule, enter houses and receive presents from the owners (most often money), at the same time, picking the *surovachki* (dogwood branches), preserved from St. Basil's Day (they "take out the disease"). Meanwhile all the houses are cleaned, all the utensils and dishes are washed, and the ritual meals are prepared—"sweet stewed hen with prunes", pastry, a special bread "for the *Bibia*" and sweet rice pudding. When the ceremonial procession has toured the neighborhood, everyone goes to the place where holiday dances are held, then all together head out of the neighborhood, the bread for the *Bibia* being carried by the youngest child: "to drive diseases out of the house." (p. 134)

The historical memory about the fear of the disease that devastated entire European cities for centuries and the communal efforts to prevent it would have been irretrievably lost if not for the tradition kept in one Romani community.

However, apart from the plague, religious and military factors are emphasized as the key ones that brought Roma into Europe (Hancock, 2004):

Not only was Islam a key factor in the move into Europe, as it was in the move out of India, but both events also shared a military aspect, since the Ottoman Turks used the Romanies as direct participants in their militia, mainly as servants in the auxiliary detachments or as craftsmen servicing the army. By the 1330s, there were specifically military garrisons of Romanies at both Modon and Nauplia, in Venetia Peloponnesia, today southern Greece. (p. 18)

Numerous and varied official documents attested the presence of Roma in the Ottoman-dominated lands. The first tax register in the *vilayet* (the largest administrative unit) Rumelia, dated 1475, required all Gypsies regardless of their faith (Christian or Muslim) to pay a *haradz* (head tax imposed only on the non-Muslims); Muslim Gypsies were forbidden to mingle with Christian Gypsies; the black-smiths who catered to the army and the Gypsies who lived in the fortresses were exempt from this tax (Marushiakova & Popov, 1997, p. 19). The first census of Ottoman Istanbul of 1477, which counted only the civilian households and did not include the military class or those residing in the imperial palace, recorded 31 Gypsy families in Istanbul. These all lived in the mahalle known as Sulukule, just inside the Theodosian Walls on the Sixth Hill, where their encampment was noted as early as the 14th century, and where their descendants still live to the present day (Freely, 1998, p. 188).

“We do not know how the various groups of Romanies first entered Europe,” admitted Hancock. They presumably crossed the isthmus at Constantinople, or left Anatolia by boat across the Aegean or the Black Sea, reaching the Balkans and being reported in almost every country in Europe by 1500.

Other Romani intellectuals constructed the history of Romani people through their peaceful occupations and, like their colleagues who put emphasis on the military past, show how valuable the skills of Roma were in medieval societies. A Moscow anthropologist from a prominent Romani family, N. Demeter, and her co-authors Bessonov and Kutenkov (2000) focused on the Roma-specific ways of making a living, or traditional crafts, not only as the development factor that brought them to the Byzantine Empire and later Europe, but also as the unifying, consolidating factor of Roma’s ethnic self-consciousness. “The same unifying function which religion plays for the Jews, for the Gypsies is performed by the clear set of traditional crafts” (p. 122). This view follows the richly illustrated argument by the intellectuals of former Yugoslavia such as Tihomir Dordevich (1984, 2002) and Rajko Duric (1980, 1983) that “it is the occupation itself that makes the Romani people stand out as a separate nation” and that in the places where the name Gypsy was pejorative, they tended to “declare themselves as blacksmiths” (Dordevich, 1984, p. 11). Following this line of argument, having described the Byzantine period as unifying for the Romani people, Demeter and colleagues (2000) shattered the myth of the so-called inborn criminality of the Gypsies by tracing the different reception of Roma in Western and in Eastern Europe and focusing on the flourishing traditional crafts among the Roma. “The division of the Gypsies into East-European and West-European after the fall of Byzantium demonstrates how strongly the development of a people differs under different historical conditions,” stated the authors (p. 42). “By a sad tradition,” they wrote, “the press and public opinion reduce all the occupations of the Gypsies to fortune-telling and theft.” The authors showed that throughout centuries the criminal activity among the Gypsies has not had a violent character: “The reality is such that the criminal activity blossoms among the Gypsies only in conditions of persecution. Therefore the only way to combat crime among the Gypsies, as history has shown, is the equal-rights approach on part of the justice” (p. 314). It is the tolerant reception of Roma and their crafts in Byzantium and later Russia, which the

authors connected with Eastern Orthodox religion in contrast with Protestantism, that deserves special attention.

Demeter et al. (2000) outlined some of the following traits of the “Gypsy world outlook”:

1. What they call “the main law cast in laconic formula”: *Rom—Gadzho* (Gypsy—non-Gypsy). The clear-cut demarcation between these two notions is the cornerstone of Gypsy psychology. As long as a Gypsy remembers of the invisible boundary between himself and the rest of the world, he remains a Gypsy (p. 115).
2. The superceding role of family values (Ibid.).
3. A circle of traditional crafts as a mechanism of cultural continuity and reproduction of tradition, sustained through “the typically Gypsy education of the young generation. A child was told, “You should not do this, it is what the Gaze do. Now this here—is a Gypsy occupation” (p. 123).
4. Everyday practicality of the Gypsies, yet the focus on the immediate income (p. 116).
5. The Gypsies often view the non-Gypsies as a potential source of income. Due to this, this nomadic people became so receptive of the cultural traditions of other people (Ibid.).

The authors emphasized that throughout their millennial history, the Gypsies continued to practice virtually the same occupations. Depending on the favorable or unfavorable external conditions, some of the professions could be temporarily dropped, but it was from the following list that the tabor members chose the ways to make a living: crafts; commerce; singing, dancing, and instrumental music; performances with trained animals; fortune-telling; and asking alms. All of these occupations were traced back to the Byzantine written sources (pp. 122, 313). It is in the caste system of India where we should search for clues of Gypsy history, stated the authors, for the organization of an ethnic group or tabor is practically that of the caste (p. 123). Even the “notorious resistance of Gypsies to formal education” was explained by the authors as stemming from the same caste professional specialization:

Attending school, even more so college, leads a Gypsy away from traditional occupations. To engage in crafts, singing, and fortune-telling one does not need higher education, on the contrary, it fills the head with temptations that lead to the

alienation from traditional socium. (p. 124)

Such an attitude was quite legitimate up until the mid-20th century, noted the authors; indeed, traditional crafts or horse dealing afforded Roma a living.

It was the ultimate victory of industrial civilization—as the agriculture became mechanized and the factory-produced consumer products dropped in price—that left the Gypsies without daily bread. Thus only in the recent decades this people came to a crossroads and for the first time began to reconsider their values. There is no place for a people of tradesmen in the industrialized society, and even the small business, onto which the Gypsies caught as a salvation, increasingly requires good education to stay in competition. (p. 125)

In their review of Gypsy occupations, the authors underscored crafts as the major way of making a living in a majority of Gypsy groups up to the 1970s, when the decisive victory of industrial civilization forced the tradesmen off the market. Discussing asking alms as one of the Gypsy ways to make a living, they pointed out that it exists in the majority of peoples around the world and trace it back to India, where it is part of the religious and philosophical system's views on karma and where entire castes engage in asking alms. They stressed that unlike the intolerance of begging by Protestantism, the Eastern Orthodoxy treated this practice with traditional "softness." The Gypsies were merely a small part of professional begging that existed in the Russian empire (p. 314). Moreover, according to the authors the sedenterization and productive labor of the groups of Gypsies who migrated to the Russian empire from Western Europe was achieved not by punitive measures, but by tolerance of the Russian people and the local authorities: "Traditional corruption of office holders multiplied by mass theft would have made the selective persecution of Gypsies too outrageous a hypocrisy." The generosity of the Russian people is noted as having worked with the above-mentioned (p. 146). In times of socialist construction, however, the communist ideology-inspired legislature issued stricter measures, and vagabonding, begging, and private entrepreneurship were regarded as crimes for the entire population of the Soviet Union. Although not directed specifically against Roma, it was to them that the laws inflicted the greatest damage because they contradicted their traditional way of life, apart from the human freedoms of movement and entrepreneurship: "the so-called 'speculation' became the most massive 'Gypsy' indictment, and a great number of Gypsies were sent to prisons or camps practically

without being guilty, for ‘private sales in an unauthorized place.’” Another Soviet law of 1956, mandating sedenterization, had a punitive provision of 5 years of exile to a labor camp (p. 146). The history has shown that crime among the Gypsies grew only when they were persecuted and otherwise was not higher than that of other people, concluded the authors.

In sum, these are a few examples of how two teams led by Romani scholars, out of several working internationally, generated the uplifting histories of Romani people while at the same time healing the damage from the social theories and Romanticism in the arts that have been in circulation for 200 years. Without this important work of cultural recovery by ethnic intellectuals no ethnic group would look into the future with hope and optimism.

Now let us move on to explore what Romani intellectuals are collecting as the media well-capturing Romani cultural heritage in Ukraine and how they are presenting it to the world in novel and radical ways, or by Downing’s method (2001), politically oppositional, personally expressive, experimental, embedded in cultural present, heralding Roma’s future, and reclaiming the forgotten merits of the past.

Part Four. Yearnings

For years, Romani intellectuals have been collecting cultural and historical data in their archives: print material, photographs, video recordings, manuscripts, and artifacts. Each of them has shared some of their material with me. Throughout my communication with them, I was struck by the depth of longing for the detailed knowledge of Romani history in many of them. As I looked for common passions in their search, following the title of bell hooks’s book (1990) from which Ian Hancock not unseldomly quoted, I gathered their ideas here under the heading “Yearnings.” As bell hooks observed, “all too often the political desire for change is seen separate from longings and passions that consume lots of time and energy in daily life. Particularly the realm of fantasy is often seen as completely separate from politics” (1990, p. 12). The data from their collections that Romani intellectuals of Ukraine chose to share with me represent the various facets

of Romani historical origins and cultural heritage. This is a story of how they use this data in creating the narratives of the uplift.

Aleksei Danilkin, Ukraine's first Romani ethnographer stated the mission of collecting state Romani archives the most succinctly as "working for the future" and "being an objective patriot," because "the truth is always one":

We need to do really useful things. I must collect and create the state archives on the Gypsies as an ethnos at the Academy of Sciences, locked. The state will take these archives under its protection (against the black market in anthropology). Everyone would be able to come and take a look. One comes—looks—finds an answer. This will not be an immediate financial assistance to people, but it is work for the future. Krikunov was right—we need to work for the future. Museum: the lists on Holocaust, orphanages, migrations at the state level. To represent Roma at the state level. If I am gone, young people would be arising as a replacement. I am working for the future.²⁵⁵

The uplifting prefiguration of the future as a mission of ascendancy and heritage reproduction in the name of the betterment of the younger generation's life has been reiterated in similar ways by a number of Romani education and culture workers—Igor Krikunov, Anatoliy and Yulia Kondur, Mixa Kozimirenko, Boris Muntianu.

Romani Literary Heritage

Most Romani intellectuals view journalism and creative writing to be important cultural heritage fields. In Ukraine, I met a good dozen of Romani writers and poets. By 2003, only two of them had published their work as separate monographs, albeit with circulations not exceeding 2,000 copies and unavailable at retail stores. Mixa Kozimirenko of Korosten' was the most successful, having published a small number of collections of his Ukrainian and Romani poetry, yet not his Russian poetry. Volodymyr Bambula of Zolotonosha published his Ukrainian language collection of family history (2002), based on the stories told to him by his mother. The other poets and writers, who write predominantly in Russian and one of them in her native Hungarian, occasionally have seen their poetry published in local newspapers. The ethno-national state institutions and the western philanthropy foundations give writings in Ukrainian language first priority as best representing "the Roma of Ukraine." All of these Romani writers and poets regularly contribute to the Romani newspaper *Romani Yag*, published in Uzhgorod

and available for subscription as a national bi-weekly periodical and sold in the press kiosks in Uzhgorod. The newspaper's professional staff writers translate all the Russian contributions into Ukrainian, and the headlines and other short entries are published in Romani, along with Ukrainian. The English-language brief version appears on the newspaper website. I met most of the Romani writers and poets at the First Romani Congress of Ukraine in Kiev and at the international round table *Roma and Mass Media* in Uzhgorod, February 15–16, 2003. On February, 16, the night before we all departed in separate directions, we crowded a small hotel room, where the poetry reading and singing to two guitars lasted well into the next morning. It was there that the chairman of the Odessa Romani Congress, philologist and linguist Sergei Yermoshkin gave me a copy of a small “samizdat” edition of Russian-language poetry by a Romani author, Nikolai Minesko, accompanied by a hand-written story about the poet and Yermoshkin's collaboration with him. Sergei wanted me to include this story as an important part of Romani cultural heritage. “Tatiana, this is a ‘collection’ of poetry by an absolutely amateur Romani poet, Nikolai Illich Minesko, known among the people as Tarzan,” opened the letter (personal communication, 2003).

Nikolai Minesko, wrote Yermoshkin, was born in 1937 in Shanghais (China), in a Greek-by-origin tabor of Minesko-Stanesko. The tabor reached China by moving farther and farther away from the battlegrounds of the Civil War and the warring gangs. The tabor had come to the Russian Empire from Transylvania some time around 1374. When Romania occupied Bessarabia and Moldova in 1918, they moved from there to Ukraine, then to Russia, until finally they reached China. When the Chinese Military Railroad was shut down in 1927, they were unable to get back to the USSR and stayed in China, finally reaching Shanghais. After World War II, around 1945–46, they received permission to return to the Soviet Union, and by the end of 1940s, the tabor reached Odessa, where it settled for good. Since then, the tabor became known among the Roma as the “Chinese.”

Tarzan was born in a chief's (“baron's”) family. After uncle Illia's²⁵⁶ death, his oldest son Georgy became the chief, and when he passed away Nikolay became the chief. Nikolay was about 13 years old when the family arrived in Odessa, and he never attended

²⁵⁵ Field notes. 08.09.2002.

school. He taught himself literacy skills, and that only “by ear,” wrote Yermoshkin.

He was a very gifted person—a wonderful musician, singer, and dancer. He made up various stories and tales and was an excellent storyteller. Due to lack of formal schooling and for the official record for many years he worked as an odd-job man, mostly at the Odessa furniture factory, the same factory where also worked all her life his wife—Nadezhda Pavlovna, from a historically prominent Russian aristocratic family of the Shakhovskys. From her stories (Nadya died in December 2002), she at once fell in love with a handsome Gypsy and never regretted marrying him. Coming from the family of Russian noblemen, Nadya quickly acculturated into a Gypsy environment, but in turn influenced her husband. Nikolai was a rather pious person and was fond of reading, especially fairytales and poetry.

In detail, Sergei Yermoshkin described how he assisted Nikolai in his literary endeavors. In 1972–74, that is when Sergei was about 20 and Nikolai was about 36 years old, Sergei was teaching him to read and write correctly. “The greatest challenge for me then,” remembered Yermoshkin, “was satisfying his voraciousness in reading”:

As soon as he hears about or reads a new name of a poet, he would ask, “Get it!” And this is despite his being a slow reader: at times he had to break up the new and complex words in syllables to read them. His major sorrow in life was the lack of formal schooling—he nearly cursed the old people and life itself for not letting him study.

With his health declining, Tarzan had to leave the other jobs and become a stoker. It was perhaps during the night shifts on the job that he decided to write a long poem about the tabor’s life. “We had a few big arguments about the language in which the poem was to be written,” recalled Yermoshkin, “Kolya was absolutely sure that it had to be in Russian. But the poem ‘did not go.’” Together, Sergei and Nikolai were trying to master the rhythms, stanzas, composition, and stylistics:

Nikolai’s reasoning was simple and justifiable: Pushkin did not study all these fine arts of writing, neither did Shakespeare (a bunch of other names followed), therefore they created their own stuff. He refused to emulate anyone and considered the profound studying of rhymes etc. to be “talent’s murder.” “If God gave me—I will write without any of these fine arts of yours,” Kolya used to say.

Despite his favoring of the freestyle, Nikolai approached his creations with great criticism. When he realized that one epic poem was not within reach, he began writing

²⁵⁶ Yermoshkin calls Tarzan’s father Illia “uncle.”

separate poems. His manuscript comprises about 100 pages of poems. In 2001, a decade after his father's death, Nikolai's son Georgy gave the entire archive to Yermoshkin.

Every poem in this "collection" has over three to four versions, with some up to seven-eight versions: he was trying to search. He was very frustrated with himself if something did not turn out right, which happened very often.

Yermoshkin admitted "spending a long time trying to bring his works to a certain literary standard":

You may see for yourself that Tarzan's poetry is intuitive and is full of the so-called "primitivism." But please note that the harmonies, rhythms, and at times imagery are clearly non-European. One should not look for rhyme here... The value of his literary heritage also consists in the fact that this "collection" gave a strong impetus to patriotism in the tabor and in our community, because it is THE FIRST ONE.

The copy of the samizdat edition of the collection that Yermoshkin gave me was the only one at the time, hastily printed for the international forum *The Lower Danube Euroregion*, held in Izmail in 2001. Yermoshkin promised to "publish" another samizdat edition for the 2003 forum to be held in Kagul (Moldova).²⁵⁷

Seven Poems by a Tabor Leader

The following seven poems from the collection Sergei Yermoshkin gave me (please see Appendix for translated texts) unveil various pictures created by the rich imagination of Nikolai Minesko. Together, they present a collective portrait of tabor life and the cultural heritage as seen by one of its talented members. Each one speaks of yearning to embrace this heritage and preserve it for future generations. Each one is permeated with prophetic wisdom: the leader sees the immanence of change. This vision emanates gentle sadness. Each poem traces the important aspects of Romani cultural history:

1. The loyal horse as a metaphor of movement of the Romani people through time and space, across a multitude of borders separating various groups of people, a symbol of border crossing and overcoming. The centrality of metalworking in Romani crafts. The

navigational skills needed for travel. The peaceful co-existence with non-Roma, who build wells and other infrastructures. Roma's "clairvoyance" as a privileged view of complex pictures available only to those who travel and navigate, who connect various contexts and events. These pictures might be inaccessible or seemingly disconnected for the majority of sedentary people, who are usually entitled to a more restricted view, honed by media and formal education.

2. The respect of an old age in a traditionally oral culture in the past, where knowledge, wisdom, and cultural sophistication are accumulated as experience. "For the Gypsies age is more important than gender--the elderly are respected as the carriers of experience, dignity, and strict morals" (Demeter et al., 2000, p. 64). Realization that this, too, is affected in a "progress race" with the non-Roma.

3. The importance of group solidarity in conditions of non-Roma supremacy. This is a male view of solidarity, imbued with military symbolics.

4. The importance of the campfire as a cultural symbol of peaceful togetherness, intergenerational communication, and prerequisite for journey's continuity. Despite the tiredness, these were the moments of communication, sharing, and learning. The artistic flare stemming from the appreciation for nature's beauty, and the feeling of communion with nature.

5. The Roma's daily existence in the natural and especially the social environment was not as carefree as depicted by the Romanticists.

6. "Poor Yorick!"—a Hamletian view of a wise Rom on a human society, where wreaths and slaps shower sages and fools alike. But as Walter Benjamin reminds us, "Death digs most deeply the jagged line of demarcation between physical nature and significance" (1977, p. 164). The realm of nature operates with the criteria of distinction different from those constructed by humans in cultural and historical realms.

7. Many Roma have told me that their culture and history rests on the shoulders of women—mothers and grandmothers.

²⁵⁷ The letter, the last quarter of it in Ukrainian, ended with Yermoshkin's signature in Ukrainian: Sergiy Yermoshkin, in Uzhgorod, 02.16.2003.

As an artistic medium, poetry by Romani authors conveys rich cultural information, beautifully complementing the academic texts by Romani scholars. With its artistic aura, liveliness, and zest, poetry leaves impressive, long-lasting images in our memory. In Sergei Yermoshkin's view, the harmonies, rhythms, and imagery of Minesko's poetry represent the "clearly non-European" origins of Roma. Yermoshkin saw the importance of Minesko's literary heritage in being the first collection of poetry and giving a strong impetus to patriotism in the tabor and in the community.

Aesthetic and Spiritual Heritage in Romani Collections of Objects of Everyday Life, History, and Culture

Describing the objects of everyday life, history, and culture in the first and only Romani collection published in the Ukrainian state, *The Culture of Gypsies of Ukraine: Past and Present*, Romani ethnographer Aleksei Danilkin (2001) showed how their everyday, aesthetic, and ritual functions often interact. Danilkin (2002) explained the scarcity of information on Romani decorative art and everyday objects in Ukrainian art studies and ethnology by the absence of Romologists-researchers in Ukraine in the past and by virtual non-existence of any material for such research: "in the state art and ethnographic collections the objects of Gypsy everyday life, history and culture have not been represented" (p. 1). Being the first to introduce the topic of Romani decorative applied art of Roma of Ukraine, he connected the national specifics of this applied art with the major phenomena of Romani culture: (a) itinerant living among the sedentary people; (b) itinerant, transitional from itinerant to sedentary stages of their history; and (c) the caste system (ibid.).

Traditional Romani crafts.

The itinerant way of living found reflection in traditional Romani crafts, of which Danilkin (2001) named blacksmithing and leather dressing as the most common and best known (notably, both were very important for medieval armies and cities). He explained that throughout the centuries, the itinerant metal working, with its specific technology has formed into a separate branch of production:

The specific feature of itinerant Gypsy blacksmithing technology was that the melting of metal took place in the pit in the ground, as opposed to the stationary shop, where the forging furnace was open. The temperature in the pit, unlike that in the open furnace, was kept without fluctuation, which ensured homogeneous structure of metal. Besides, the fire was sustained by a set of two bellows, due to which the air came to the melting pit without interruption [the same double bellow technology as in a tenth century Byzantine portable organ depicted in St. Sophia].²⁵⁸ In a stationary shop, on the contrary, the air was forced with pauses. This technological difference constituted the secret of popularity of the original Gypsy products. (p. 31)

The popularity of the metal products made by Roma among the locals went hand in hand with the adoration of the blacksmithing by Romani craftsmen. The blacksmith craft, highly respected and revered by Roma, has been described by Dordevic (1984) and Bogdanovic (2003), among others. Bogdanovic (2003) cited a few excerpts from the lore on the blacksmith shop as a cult place among the Jedupci group of South Macedonia. The blacksmith shop as the basic setting for living and working must be *clean*, namely... “so clean as to be the pathway of happiness to the top of the world.” This is taken care of by the oldest master, the blacksmith, who sprinkles the shop and the yard in front of it with water from the *full* vessel, “this he does every single morning for good health and good fortune.” The customers are given a *heartily* welcome to the blacksmith shop regardless of their property status, age or gender. In the evening, after the day’s work, each piece of tools is put back in its place. On Thursday evening, the master *lights up a candle on the anvil* to honor the blacksmiths’ God, David. The anvil is the tool that bread is earned with, therefore, no one, even accidentally, is allowed to sit on it. If a customer still does it, he is warned, “Don’t sit on my table!” (p. 111). Dordevic (1984) wrote, “How sacred the forge and the anvil are can best be seen in the fact that the oath made on them is the most solemn” (p. 18). The great pride taken in the blacksmith craft was evident in my conversation with every Romani intellectual in Ukraine, whose forefathers were blacksmiths.

Danilkin (2001) stated that Roma marked their products with their own marks that with time became their family insignia (p. 31). His research on the coat of arms of

²⁵⁸ A good illustration of Romani blacksmithing technology with a melting pit in the ground and a pair of bellows is provided in Marushiakova & Popov (2001, p. 85). A pair of bellows fastened with a long

Romani families that originated in the blacksmith dynasties fascinates some Romani leaders, as evidenced from our conversation with one of them, whose father had been a blacksmith:

AK: I want to make a coat of arms of my lineage—

AD: I have found some ornaments which were characteristic of the blacksmith dynasties: geometric designs, passed on from generation to generation, as a coat of arms. Now I would like to produce research on these castes as professional hierarchies.

AK (exclamation of fascination)

AD: I want to dig up the coats of arms of Muntyanu's divisions of Bogdan Khmelnitsky's time. Those were the Gypsy divisions on his side, *ratitsa*.

AK (with fascination): So it's true that the kossaks *sas* [were] Roma, isn't it?

AD: Yes, it's true. I've got this material from the Academy of Science. I could also include the coat of arms of the Russian nobility, whose blood was mixed with Roma, as Count Fedor Tolsoy's lineage. Even if it's just a Russian coat of arms without any added features, Romani blood was there. As well as the last owners of the Uzhgorod Castle—fifty years, barons, Gypsies—to dig it up.

AK: This is wonderful! What Gypsy coat of arms do you know, Lyosha? I am curious! It is archival work. Do you have any kossak material? Kossaks Roma *sas*, weren't they?

AD: They are the coat of arms of noble *shlakhta*. On the territory of Ukraine there were three forms of coat of arms: Polish, shaped as a shield or a wreath, and Prussian shaped as squares, sometimes rounded, without the shields. They represent two systems: Roman Catholic and Ukrainian. The small material I have collected so far, ten pictures, is not enough evidence that they are the coat of arms. But the blacksmith marks are definitely the special marks (personal communication, August 12, 2002).

Among his collection exhibits representing leather dressing craft, Danilkin named the bridle, which he described as a work of decorative art, "The bridle is made out of a wonderfully dressed leather sometime in 1943–1945. The place of making—Zhitomir forests, where the Gypsies were hiding, trying to escape the atrocities of the Nazi aggressors" (p. 33).

These and other items in Danilkin's collection represent the hope expressed by many Romani collectors worldwide, namely that people in many communities are still cherishing beliefs, faiths, and rituals connected with former occupations that should be

wooden handle to a wooden pole is of the same type as in the 10th–11th-century Byzantine portable organ depicted on a St. Sophia fresco of court entertainment.

“recovered” and analyzed to fill in the gray areas of history. Preserved whether in the form of lore or ethnographic material, the aesthetic and spiritual heritage is of primary importance to the Romani intellectuals as a source of knowledge about the relationship between the belief system, myths, and work. The respect of a place of work and adoration of craft represents the spiritual experience and a very view of life of a community united by a common occupation. The former occupations are of key value because they illuminate the spiritual and material culture of Roma. Romani intellectuals believe that the “recovery” of Romani past project would require urgent collecting, well thought-out studies, and more profound archeology and exploration of Romani spiritual heritage (Bogdanovic, 2003, p. 113).

Romani Belts and Military History

Metalworking and leather tanning as the most common Romani crafts and those very important to the medieval armies intersect in the exploration of Romani belts as insignia of distinction. As evidenced by the interviews during our ethnographic expedition to Bessarabia, of special interest to Danilkin was the history and function of *kimir'*—traditional, wide, leather belts of Romani tabor leaders, decorated with Arabic metal ornament. In the Kishinevtsy group, *kimir'* was red and decorated with silver coins (personal communication, August 9, 2002). Anatoliy Kondur wore a red *kimir'* with silver ornaments on stage, hosting the International Roma Day celebration in Odesa in 2003. He and his wife Yulia explained the difference between *kimir'* as an insignia of a Romani leader and a *kushtik*—a woven wool belt:

AK: *Kushtik*—*i kushtik te ne kerel kipik*—supports the back. Ursa Roma always made them out of wool. Why? Wool retains the warmth well, while supporting the back, that is, it is medicinal. Here in this area [of humid lower Danube] Bulgarians, Moldavians, and Gagauz wore them too, for health reasons, because of the climate in this area. Roma wear them year around. Unlike *kushtik*, a leather belt *kimir'* is the belt that a *baro* wears. It has buckles and special compartments for a knife and a purse.

AD: Was it an insignia of hierarchy?

AK: Yes, it was obvious that whoever had it was a leader [*kon kas te sikla baro, bare le Rom irenas*]. That is, at once he [*adva numa le*]—

YK: He stood out.

AK: Yes, he was either the elder, or if he was not a *baro*, then a distinguished

person (personal communication, August 12, 2002).

The earliest evidence of Roma in the Balkans is connected with belt making: in 1362; the sources mentioned Gypsies who made leather belts with silver ornaments in Raguza (Dubrovnik) (Marushiakova & Popov, 1997, p. 17). Belts and horse harnesses were important military insignia in early medieval armies. Every nomadic warrior invariably wore a belt decorated with silver plates. The number of plates depended on the social status of the warrior: The more distinguished he was, the more plates there were. In the early medieval times, the warrior received a combat belt, as well as a weapon and a horse, from the ruler, as a sign of military valor or high distinction. The Byzantine sources state, “one was not allowed to wear either a golden ring, or a belt, or a buckle or the like, unless it was bestowed on him by the tsar” (Gupalo, 1982, pp. 79–80). The same is confirmed by the Asian runic epitaphs, mentioning a half-moon buckle on a belt as a mark of distinction or forty two decorative buckles on a belt for a serviceman’s valor (p. 80). In Ancient Rus too the warriors received rich clothing and ammunition for their valorous service, as the symbols of power, strength, and wealth. The Vikings demanded gold, silver, and fine clothing, including combat belts and horse harnesses, from Yaroslav and other Rus princes, as the Russian chronicles and Scandinavian sagas confirm (Ibid.). In the toponymics of Podol, the ancient craftsmen center of Kyiv on the Viking route to Byzantium, there was an assembly place of ancient bodyguard, called *Pasyncha beseda*, from the verb *pasati*—to gird someone with a combat belt and a sword, which was a medieval ritual of bodyguard initiation, mentioned, for example, in 1149 in Ipatiev Chronicle. Such combat belts used in Rus were richly decorated with metal plates, as testified by many findings of them dated back to the 9th–10th centuries. It was most likely due to the fast growth of military elite—Prince Vladimir’s bodyguard—in the 10th century, that the richly decorated combat belts and harnesses became popular in Rus where they were first imported from the east (Khazar kaganate) (Gupalo, 1982, pp. 80–81). Interestingly, however, neither the silver plates for the belts, nor the casting molds for their production have not been found in the east. At the same time, buckles, silver plates, belt ornaments and casting molds dating back to the 10th century have been found in Kyiv. The findings of combat belt and harness sets confirm that in the 10th–11th centuries, the steppe territory, including southern Rus, northern Black Sea regions, and

the Crimea were served by highly sophisticated jewelry shops. While most of the casting molds found in Kyiv date back to the 12th–13th centuries, the unique finding in 1975 of a complete set of 10th-century molds is the only known to date across entire Eurasia. The molds were used to cast combat belts décor for Kyiv bodyguard and were covered with intricate ornamentation. For example, the belt end-piece was decorated with trefoils with sophisticated curlicues growing one out of another, thereby forming a tree of life topped with three solar signs. A pointed oblong ornamental piece was designed to cover the straps by which the sword, knife, purse, etc. was fastened to the belt by rounded plates with palmettos (Gupalo, 1982, p. 78). Round plates with eight-ray sun, shaped like a large star, decorated the rest of the belt. The Arabic Kufic inscription on the mold is variously read as the proper name *Yazid* or as *Turk* (p. 82), which is not surprising because many Turkic people lived in Kyiv at the time. Numerous findings made in Podol since the 1970s have shown it to be the center of blacksmithing, jewelry, leather-tanning, pottery, bone-carving, and wood-working. While blacksmithing and jewelry goods served primarily the military needs of boyars-bodyguard and were made by free craftsmen, there were also large boyar and princely estates in Podol, with the “house” craftsmen that belonged to them (p. 89), the proportion of the estate slave labor growing considerably in the 12th–13th centuries due to the policy of large estate-owners (Ibid.). Numerous findings included estates in Voloshskaya Street with thousands of Byzantine and local goods, some marked with the trident—the family sign of Prince Vladimir and the Rurik dynasty. The estate’s location near the city harbor on Pochaina River made it an important point on the Viking Route to Byzantium. It is hardly a coincidence that until the 1950s the itinerant Romani craftsmen camped near that area. Importantly, even after Batu’s invasion, Kyiv remained an important nodal trade center. Through Kyiv led the trade routes from Russia to Western Europe and the Balkans. Kyiv was the major point where the East European merchants assembled their caravans to be sent to the Crimea, Turkey, and the Middle East, because the route through Kyiv to the Oriental countries was considered the safest (Ivakin, 1982, p. 55). The ancient trade route went from the Black Sea port of Kafa, through Perekop, to the Tavan’ crossing on the Dnieper, and from there through the steppe to Kyiv. Along that ancient trade route the caravans guarded by as many as 1,000 people delivered various oriental goods from Asia, Persia, India, Arabia,

and Syria north to Moscow, Pskov, Novgorod, Sweden, and Denmark (p.56). Among the goods exported from Kyiv to the Crimea and Constantinople were “belts, swords, knives, sickles, arrows, and jewelry” (Ibid.). Kyiv had large colonies of foreign merchants, some with their own churches, such as the Armenian, Genoas, Russian, Polish, Byzantine, Turkish, and Italian (Ibid.). Importantly, even after the Batu invasion, in the 13th–15th centuries Kyiv was an important economic center and actively participated in foreign trade (p. 57). This leads Romani intellectuals of Ukraine to believe that the role of the ancient trade routes, such as the Viking route and the routes through the Black Sea steppes as well as Kyiv and the trade centers of the Crimea, have not been sufficiently studied in connection with the history of Romani people. The comparative research of military insignia, ornamentation, seals, and the dynastical craftsmen marks might lead Romani scholars in a thought-provoking direction.

Thus it is this conjunction of crafts and military history that draws the attention of many Romani intellectuals in Ukraine and beyond its borders. To give one example, in January of 1994, in a letter to me from the former chairman of the Odesa Romani Congress, a military MD, Boris Muntyanu, he wrote about his meeting with Val’demar Kalinin, a Rom from Belarus, now teaching at a Romani school in London. “Among various things,” wrote Muntyanu, we spoke “about the unique to our civilization social and political phenomenon of the contributions by Romani Cossaks. I showed him [Kalinin] a number of documents on this subject.” He continued:

The other day Val’demar Kalinin flew to Moscow to meet with the former general of the Soviet Army, who is Rom by ethnicity. Val’demar is convinced that the information and the documents that he has would be of interest to many in the academy, as well as to those who truly love their people and are interested in the rebirth of Romani National-Cultural Cossak Movement, the central ideas of which are captured by the slogan: *For Faith, Fatherland, and Law and Order*. Today like air we need sponsors to finance the rebirth of the Romani Cossak uniform as an integral part of Romani Cossak National-Cultural heritage.

As a manifestation of the efforts in Ukraine to popularize what Romani intellectuals call “Romani Cossak National-Cultural Heritage” as specifically the “Ukrainian Roma” contribution, the newspaper *Romani Yag* published a page-long article titled “Roma-Warriors and Cossaks. Relations Between Ukrainian Roma and the Cossaks

in Sixteenth-Nineteenth Centuries.”²⁵⁹ The author, O. V. Belikov, a non-Romani historian of the Donetsk State Institute of Artificial Intelligence, quoting A. Skal’kovsky, stated that from the oldest times Roma lived in the southern Ukrainian areas and in the Zaporiz’ka Sich, where they “became cossaks and engaged in blacksmithing and horse-doctoring.” In the 16th–17th centuries, Roma already traveled across the entire central and eastern Ukraine. Just as in the armies of Turkey, Moldavia, Sweden, and Austrian Empire, in Ukraine Roma played an important role in the Cossak Army, for example as scouts, for they could freely move across the Porta and the Crimean Khanate territories. The major Romani occupation vitally important for Zaporiz’ka Sich was blacksmithing. Besides, on its territory also lived other Romani craftsmen: cauldron-makers, armament-makers, metalworkers, etc. Roma were skilled equestrians and horse trainers, breeders, dealers, and doctors. The “Archive of Veterinary Science” noted that Romani horse dealers often had the veterinary knowledge unknown to specialists. Romani musicians were very popular among the cossaks, especially the players of fiddle, lute, kobza, and cimbalom. The famous scholar of Ukrainian music K. Kvitka connected the spread of these musical instruments as well as the origins of instrumental-and-vocal genres (Ukrainian *duma*, Moldovan *doina*) specifically with Roma.

In the 18th century, Roma of the left-bank Ukraine, like other residents of Little Russia, were divided into regiments, each with its leader, or Romani *otaman*. Little Russian and Vlakh Roma paid an annual quitrent to the Military Little Russian Treasury. During the 1812 Napoleonic War, the Russian troops included many Roma, whose valor and skills were praised in a Russian newspaper at the time. The often-cited example is of the Romani members of Sokolov choir who volunteered to become hussars.

In the first half of the 19th century, the Russian government took measures to use Romani groups to improve the state of cossak military formations in the southern regions, as well as to force the itinerant Roma to settle. The rules of sedenterization in the state-owned lands in Bessarabia were first published in 1800: The settled Gypsy farmers were freed of the military service duty and the taxes for the first 4 years after settling down (Zinevich, 2001, p. 414). The enlistment of settled and itinerant Roma into cossak

²⁵⁹ *Romani Yag*. March 12, 2003, No. 5, p. 4.

military formations across the entire expanse adjoining the Black Sea began in the second quarter of the 19th century. Since 1828, in southern Bessarabia the Danube Cossak Army began to be formed. In 1839, the groups of itinerant Roma of Novorossia and Bessarabia—lingurari, ursari, lasgii, the Gypsies of the crown and others—were enlisted in the cossak troops (Bondar', 1990, pp. 163–164). Also, in 1839 it was decided to enlist as cossaks the indigenous Roma living in the villages of Akkerman region, as well as those living in other regions of the oblast (Belikov, 2003). As part of the Danube (since 1856 Novorossiisk) Cossak Army two villages were enlisted including the Roma who lived there (306 families), as well as 746 families of itinerant (formerly non-itinerant) Roma. To resettle them, land and money were allocated, but due to the lack of land only 150 families were resettled, the rest left in the areas of their settlement (Ibid.). Likewise, by the imperial decrees in 1838 the itinerant Roma of Tavria (Crimea) were formed into two penitentiary companies for various jobs. The decrees stated that upon “rehabilitation” these companies were supposed to become military construction companies, but in 1843 they were disbanded. During the Crimean War among enlisted cossaks were 420 Roma who, in 1868, were reenlisted into state settlements as well as transferred as city residents if they wished (Ibid.). These examples demonstrate the efforts of the Russian government to relocate and use Roma in the state settlements of the Danube, Azov, and the Black Sea cossak armies. Belikov called these attempts of the Russian government “to use the Little Russian experience in solving “the Romani question” a “failure.” In contrast, he juxtaposed it to “the Little Russian experience” of “gradual assimilation” of “Ukrainian Roma” by describing it in normalizing positive terms:

Therefore it could be concluded that starting from the sixteenth century, Ukrainian Roma have become an integral part of Ukrainian society, they took an active part in the cossak movement, played an important role in the social-economic life. As a consequence, the sedenterization of Ukrainian Roma was taking place and their gradual assimilation. The state of itinerant and sedentary Roma was clearly determined, as known, in eighteenth century they paid taxes and had the organization that regulated the relations between Roma and the state.

Such discourse, which denounces the Russian imperial experience and idealizes the experience of a more independent Ukraine, corresponds to the present stage of nation-building in Ukraine. The construction, circulation, and normalization of the “Ukrainian Roma” collectivity and its representation in Ukrainian language as an ethnic minority

group and thereby an integral part of independent Ukraine is one of the roles played by the newspaper *Romani Yag*. At the same time, the search of each Romani intellectual takes on a more personalized form of yearning for self-identity. The thrust of this persistent search through the threads of evidence for Roma's military history and its implications for today's Romani communities is aptly captured by what Aleksei Danilkin called his yearning:

I have a dream, call it a mania if you will: 200 Gypsy generals in Ukrainian army.²⁶⁰ I support the idea that the Gypsies as a people should direct all their efforts towards helping their children become army generals, at least 200 of them.²⁶¹

This yearning helped Danilkin and other Romani intellectuals envision a way for Roma out of the present state of ethnic marginalization towards inclusion into the institutional structure of Ukrainian society and the state.

Family Circle Heritage Communicated Through Everyday Objects and Rituals

Along with literary heritage, the essential role of blacksmithing and other traditional crafts in the continuity of Romani culture, and the keen interest in Romani military past, Romani intellectuals emphasize the centrality of family heritage in Romani cultural history. Ukraine's first Romani ethnographer committed to the critique of mass media representations by counterinformation; Aleksei Danilkin paid particular attention to the importance of what he called "the quality" of his collection. He placed tremendous weight on the role of the aesthetically beautiful and spiritually meaningful everyday objects in transmitting to the public the information that has been systematically censored or dismissed in mainstream media. Thereby he drew on the fine art's "greater degree of independence, individuality, personal expression, and handwork" (Downing, 2001, p. 56) and imparted to these objects communicative, educative thrust by explaining the profound spiritual beliefs they mediate. To illustrate this important educational, cultural, and media work, I will provide four examples from Danilkin's book (2001) and article (2002) and one example from our joint fieldwork in Bessarabia (2002). Together, these

²⁶⁰ Transcript. Danilkin and the author—interview with Anatoliy and Yulia Kondur. Izmail. 08.12.2002.

²⁶¹ Transcript. Danilkin and the author—interview with Rustam Stoyan. Tatarbunary. 08.09.2002.

five diverse kinds of media—embroidered wall-hanging and towel, ritual smoking pipe, women’s clothing, and family dance—highlight the centrality of family in Romani culture and communicate important information about the spiritual beliefs of Roma.

Embroidery.

Embroidery is a type of applied art common among the sedentary people. In traditional Gypsy costume, embroidery as a décor does not exist (Danilkin, 2002). Among the sedentary Roma, however, embroidery art objects are used as the décor of homes. Among such objects in his collection Danilkin (2001, 2002) described the *kilim* (wall-hanging) he acquired in the town of Oster, Chernigiv oblast, made by Motrina Hovs’ka in the late 1960s:

On black satin cloth embroidered...in large satin stitch...are flowers and leaves. At the center of composition is a white cottage under a red roof, to which from two sides two paths lead, covered with bright flowers; there are children on the paths. In the lower middle part there are two swans and three bushes of reed. The symbolism of the kilim composition is conveyed in the lush blossoming of plants, happiness of children and the symbol of family happiness—on the two trees behind the cottage two colorful birds sit, facing each other. (p. 2)

In this *kilim*, Danilkin (2001, 2002) saw the culture of Roma who had been sedentary for a number of generations—influenced by the embroidery style popular during that time in Ukraine.

Another embroidery object in his collection, a traditional *rushnik* (towel) had a festive ritual function. A girl from a Romani family in a Moldavian city embroidered this towel as a house-warming gift for the Moldavian neighbors, who had built a new house. On that embroidered towel the girl’s father brought apples on a plate into the new house. For the Gypsies, apples are a symbol of happiness and prosperity, therefore, to give them as a gift means to wish happiness. Along the edges of the white factory-made linen the girl embroidered the contours of apples in featherstitch. The embroidery was childishly naïve, but this nice story about the *rushnik* made it not unlike a ritual object (2001, p. 34).

Smoking pipes.

The smoking pipes in Danilkin’s collection of Romani applied art objects

included one ritual pipe made out of linden inlaid with mother of pearl and small glass beads. With this pipe is connected an interesting family ritual, called “communion.” It takes place in a family circle on Easter (Danilkin, 2001, 2002):

After an Easter greeting at the table the Gypsies are talking, dancing, and singing. Women, men, and young people sit separately at the table. That tradition is inherited from the itinerant time, when after a hard working day men-craftsmen got together around a campfire to have dinner and discuss future events. Women did not partake in such conversations and sat separately. This tradition is still observed [by the posterity of Gypsy craftsmen]. After the women, girls, and teenagers leave the room, the men smoke the pipe—first the baron-elder, then the rest, passing it around the circle from the older to the younger. When the pipe reaches the youngest, he inhales the smoke and passes it to the baron. The baron (the eldest of the family) finishes the ritual, saying, that they are all united in belonging to their family and caste, therefore they should support one another in life and be worthy people. (2001, pp. 34–35; 2002, p. 2)

“In this ritual,” wrote Danilkin (2002), “through the ceremony and the decorative applied art objects the caste tradition among the Servi Gypsies clearly manifests itself” (p. 3). After the ritual, observed by Danilkin, Mykola Markovs’ky, the elder of the prominent Romani family from the city of Mirgorod, Poltava oblast, donated the ritual pipe to the national collection, in front of his family (2001, p. 35).

Romani costume.

Describing Romani costume in his collection, Danilkin (2001) showed that as a medium, it communicates information like an ethnographic text: It carries in itself the indices of its owner’s ethnicity and information about traditional semi-itinerant culture—the territory, age, family and social status, belonging to a certain ethnic group and caste (p. 37). The Indian origin of Roma finds its reflection in the entire Romani culture, but especially in women’s clothing (p. 38), which still preserves the features of the 7th–12th-century ancient Indian costume (p. 39). According to Danilkin, all the types of Gypsy women’s skirt have one common feature—three flounces and three tiers that play a sacred function:

The three tiers of the skirt and its three-flounce décor symbolize the Universe in various manifestations: 1) the time past, present, and future; 2) three periods of life on earth—youth, maturity, and old age; 3) three elements—water, air, and

earth. The lowest flounce is the line which protects the owner from disease that may rise from the ground and from the 'evil spirit.' Interestingly, the spread out flounce itself has the shape of a circle (the ancient Gypsy symbol), which surrounds a person and also protects her from evil forces. Some of the flounces have a toothed shape, with the sharp ends pointed upwards... This upward direction is another manifestation of the Gypsy cosmogony—the sharp end towards the sky. (p. 43)

From the way a woman is dressed we may find out where she is from and whether she is married and has children:

If her hair is covered with a scarf it means she is married. If she is wearing an apron, she is a mother. This is not only the information about her family status but also one of the warning signals about the forms of social etiquette towards the woman (in particular a respectful and tactful attitude to a woman-mother is notable). Besides, a decorated apron has another meaning—it informs that the girl is engaged, if she is wearing an apron but no scarf. To some extent it removes the possibility of the elopement ritual (the stealing of the bride). If an elderly woman has grandchildren, the scarf must completely cover her hair. (p. 44)

These are only a few examples from a number Danilkin provided of the information “delivered” by the elements of Romani dress to those who could read the messages they carry.

Festive family dance.

In a final example, Danilkin searched and found explanations of the symbolic significance underlying the ritual of festive family dance in a circle. The family of Kishinevtsy, Roma of Tatarbunary, Odessa region, told us that at large celebrations, the dancing contest among families is organized. One after another, every family is invited to dance in a circle of those present. “What is the significance of one family standing in a circle?” asked Danilkin our informant, aware of the ancient symbolism of a circle for Roma. “This is how the best dancing family is chosen,” responded one woman. “If 5, 6, or 10 families danced simultaneously, *who* would have watched *whom*? And this way they announce who is dancing, and each family can show off.” A man added, “And here’s what’s interesting. One might have only a wife and one child—so a husband, wife, and a child come out. [An]other one has a family of 15, all his alone! He is joyous when he comes out with his entire family!” The other informants agreed and laughed with

pleasure.²⁶² Danilkin not only collected information about the traditional family dance, but also searched and found an explanation of the symbolic significance of a paternally led family standing in a circle: the value of a large family in Romani culture and its paternal lineage. A paternally led family standing in a circle of relatives and friends thus powerfully symbolizes the centrality of family in Romani culture.

Concluding Points

Embroidery, ritual smoking pipe, traditional women dress, and festive family dance in a circle are only some of the media in Danilkin's collection whose communicative thrust depends on their aesthetically and spiritually conceived and concentrated force. The impact of these objects of art and culture on us is in their "aura," liveliness, zest, and moments of interactivity with us. Danilkin's explanations of the objects stimulate critical reflection and dialogue over Romani culture and its representation in mass media. His entire collection energizes Romani intellectuals' critical engagement with and against hegemony and holds ample possibilities for the cultural empowerment of Romani people and everyone's cultural education.

In conclusion, the various media circles created by Romani intellectuals serve as educational agents in a number of senses. First, not unlike any radical alternative media, they expand the range of information, reflection, and exchange from the narrow hegemonic limits of mainstream media and academic discourse (Downing, 2001). Secondly, they express views and opinions extruded from mainstream media and academic discourse. At last, these media circles fulfill the innovative role that Raymond Williams termed "formations," or the effective movements in intellectual and artistic life, which have significant influence on the active development of a culture, and which have an often oblique relation to formal institutions (Downing, 2001, pp. 44–45). Therefore, it makes every sense to see these Romani media circles as educational agents, or the generators of art and learning, and not simply as counterinformation agents and institutions. Romani histories and cultures generated by them do not cohere in any simple sense. Cultural coherence in complex societies is not so much a matter of shared

²⁶² Transcript 08.09.2002. Interview with Grigory Stoyan family. Danilkin and the author.

perspectives, but of *a network of perspectives* (Hannerz, 1992, p. 62)—of more people’s perspectives making sense out of other people’s perspectives (Ibid., p. 168). Thus Romani cultural and historical strands could be understood as a possibility that groups of Romani intellectuals and their colleagues share in common many meanings, but also structures of difference. The shared space and feeling of yearning opens up the possibility of common ground where all these differences might meet and engage one another (hooks, 1990). By speaking of these yearnings, building networks of perspectives, and making sense of the emerging evidence, the teams and media circles of Romani intellectuals in the “east” and in the “west” are gradually brushing the mainstream history against the grain and recovering empowering and uplifting images and narratives in what previously seemed to be the gray areas.

Concluding Observations: Romani Intellectuals as Agents of Educational and Cultural Change

The following reflexive observations bring my story to an open-ended conclusion. My project's outcome was an impressionistic mosaic spanning half a dozen human lives and depicting diverse aspects of intellectual experience. Reconnecting with their roots, these people told me, was the meaning of their cultural renaissance movement: As Roma of Ukraine, they use history as a discourse for identity in a subnational process parallel to the unifying phase of nation-building in that new state. Our joint effort was to demonstrate the diversity and complexity of experience that work beneath the totalizing discourses of Romani and Ukrainian nationalism. This multilingual research of Romani cultural heritage in Ukraine contributed to our understanding of the contemporary world's dynamics and the central place of the arts and media in human learning and cultivation—when they are skillfully put to constructive purposes.

Rather than “importing” Vygotskian and Bakhtinian perspectives, I went directly to where these perspectives originated and where the complex identity negotiation processes were under way. I believed that this encounter with the post-Soviet people constituted a long-term commitment to the East-West intellectual dialogue for new understandings and for the development of new alliances over the representation of the post-Cold War world in educational theories, classroom practices, and school texts.

Culture, Caught up in the Process of Becoming

The Romani Renaissance in post-Soviet Ukraine could be likened to the creative ascendancy Bakhtin described as the culture “caught up in the process of ‘becoming’” (1996, pp. 5–6). More specifically, this renaissance referred to the cultural educational movement spearheaded in the 1990s by a number of Romani cultural organizations and media production centers throughout the country, such as a newspaper, a national theater, an ethnographic museum, supported by the Roma of Ukraine Program of the International *Vidrodzhennya* (Renaissance) Foundation affiliated with the Open Society Institute. This cultural educational movement and its media centers are only beginning to play their important role in the formulation of a new consciousness.

Multilingualism and Experience

At the heart of my work was the concept of language inspired by Potebnya, Bakhtin, Vygotsky, and a number of philologists exploring the asymmetry of the linguistic sign, or how individual consciousness reflects reality through the prism of the language structures. Bakhtin proposed that at any given moment of its historical existence “language is heteroglot from top to bottom,” representing the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past and between groups in the present. Therefore languages do not exclude each other, but intersect; they are juxtaposed with each other in many different ways (1996, p. 291), as it is with Russian, Ukrainian, and Romani—just to give one example. Every socially significant verbal performance has the ability “to infect with its own intention certain aspects of language,” imposing on them specific semantic nuances and ideological overtones (p. 290). For any individual consciousness living in it, language is a concrete conception of the world; all words have a “taste.” (p. 293). With each literary-verbal performance, consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of having to choose a language, as we have seen instanced in numerous cases of situational and stylistic codeswitching in the narratives of Romani intellectuals (Igor Krikunov’s reflections were a good example). “Only by remaining in a closed environment, one without writing or thought, completely off the maps of socio-ideological becoming, could a man fail to sense this activity of selecting a language and rest assured in the inviolability of his own language (p. 295). According to Bakhtin, even then a person deals not with a single language, but with languages, except that the place occupied by each of these languages is fixed, as if these languages were in different chambers. “They do not collide with each other in his consciousness, there is no attempt to coordinate them, to look at one of these languages through the eyes of another language” (p. 295).

Thus Bakhtin inspired the acute sensitivity to the immense plurality of experience, specified by Vygotsky as historical (the experience of previous generations), social (the experience of other people), and the “doubled” experience of the individual.²⁶³

²⁶³ Commenting on Marx’s illustration between the instinct and consciousness as a difference between a honeybee building combs and the activity of an architect in whose head the result of labor is present before he begins building, Vygotsky stated, “What we have here is nothing more than a kind of doubling of our

This sensitivity to experience guided me in the presentation of my conversations with Romani intellectuals. My favorite philologists have taught me that the external explanation of text (by historical context, aesthetic influences, etc.) to a certain extent “dismember” it; commentary and explanation split the narrative and leave it out of vision as a whole (Likhachev, 1989, pp. 146–147). With this in mind, I have tried to approach the narratives as a show of aesthetic and ideological consciousness as holistically as possible.

Further, Bakhtinian’s and Vygotskian’s understandings of communication suggested that my dialogues should be marked by a certain measure of shared consciousness due to the relative uniformity of our socialization as individuals in the post-WWII generation and our work in the intellectual milieu of Kiev, thus by a certain shared repertoire of the discourses and their elements. Although the transcription system is often inadequate for the multiplicity of some conveyed meanings, I strived to perform what Bakhtin called “the profound artistic and ideological penetration” (1996, p. 416), assisted by my understanding of *heteroglossia*, or an understanding of the dialogue of languages as it exists in today’s Ukraine and of “each language’s socio-ideological meaning and an exact knowledge of the social distribution and ordering of all the other ideological voices of the era” (p. 417).

Romani Leadership and the Uplift in Ukraine: Continuities Between the Universal and the Local

Romani intellectuals created the ethnic uplift narrative, or a cultural archetype of Roma that challenged racist stereotypes.

- They encouraged ethnic mobilization, or Romani ethnonationalism, by rallying Roma (e.g., The Amala festival with its anthem and emblem).
- They re-evaluated Romani cultural heritage, validated the dignity, renewed the cultural identity, and rejected the stigma.
- They gave Roma a sense of their larger identity by foregrounding the transnational past and present of Romani people.

experience. Man builds twice; first, in his head and then in fact” (1926, p. 173; quoted in Veresov, 1999, p.

- They forged working alliances with national and international institutions and organizations.
- They did not always follow the state's lead. At times they denounced the state's language as biased and discriminatory.

The tensions surrounding issues of art and politics in Romani cultural and educational movement in Ukraine paralleled continuing fault lines in the presentation of the minority movement in the “white America's grand benevolent project of uplift and civilization” (Maddox, 2005, p. 3). The Romani activism in Ukraine showed multidimensional commonalities with the earlier stages of African American and Native uplift in the United States, which I will review here under the four headings: (a) inserting Romani uplift issues into Ukrainian national format; (b) ambivalence of Romani elites toward integration; (c) performance, media, and education; (d) art, propaganda, and artistic integrity.

Inserting Romani Uplift Issues Into Ukrainian National Format

In the United States, through racial uplift ideology, elite Native and African Americans sought the cooperation of white political and business elites in the pursuit of race progress (Gaines, 1996). The work of uplift, pursued through schools, temperance societies, settlement houses, Christian missions, and manual training programs, fostered a discourse that named progress, social evolution, Christianity, civilization, and citizenship as the uncontested goals of liberal democracy (Maddox, 2005). Today these goals of institutional reconstruction are on Ukraine's agenda of Euro-Atlantic integration. Instituted and directed from New York, the Roma of Ukraine Program of Vidrodzhennya (Renaissance) Foundation spearheaded the Romani uplift in Ukraine, enlightened by progressivism era confidence in the ability of social and cultural institutions, rightly constituted, to shape all individuals into productive citizens. Thus in its due time Ukraine entered the aerial of American progressivism with its faith in the process of individual and social improvement as the “most influential of American traditions. The better

American has continually been seeking to ‘uplift’ himself, his neighbors, and his compatriots” (Herbert Croly, quoted in Maddox 2005, p.11).

The 2002 Congress of Roma of Ukraine, remotely analogous to the American Negro Academy founded in 1897 and the Society of American Indians (SAI) formed in 1911, constituted its own reform organization with its Romani membership and joined the large number of Ukrainian reform groups focused on specific social tasks, including the “Roma issue.” In Ukraine, as in the United States a century ago, there were many “outside forces” at work on minority affairs and many non-Romani voices contributing to the discussions of Romani uplift.

In naming the rehabilitation of Romani people’s image as one of their goals, largely in a received language²⁶⁴—not unlike the Native American and African American intellectuals a century earlier—the members of Romani Congress of Ukraine organized their own “uplift” organizations and joined a discursive enterprise that was already working in Central Europe at full steam by 2002. The Romani Congress differed from the other agencies dedicated to Romani reform, such as the Roma of Ukraine Program, in their insistence that Romani people themselves were the ones best able to address the “Roma question.” Their work, like that of early American Indian and African American activists, was a direct response to the paternalistic rhetoric of predominantly non-Romani reformers. These parallel beginnings illustrate how essential the leaders of minority groups found it to establish intellectual and administrative control over the reform efforts, largely in the hands of the majority elites, and how constrained all reformers were by a discourse that had become normative, be it in the early twentieth century America or in the twenty first century Ukraine.

The strategies of Romani activists of Ukraine paralleled those of the Native American and African American uplift movements, aiming, in part, at bringing the particulars of their thought and experience into the nation-building and integration projects, a space itself under construction and governed by assumptions taken to be universal. The roles of Romani intellectuals of Ukraine paralleled those envisioned for themselves by the early African American and Native American intellectuals, namely in

²⁶⁴ As strange as it may sound to a Ukrainian or Russian ear, one of the projects run in Izmail in 2002-2003 was called the Center of Rehabilitation of Roma.

creating a public sphere in which to be heard and communicating the needs of Romani people to non-Romani elites while maintaining the cosmopolitan perspective as an instrument of cultural democracy, that is, maintaining a dialectic between universal and Romani particular and articulating the continuities between them in a compelling way (Maddox, 2005). In their theater performances, festivals, poetry, ethnographic exhibits, public speeches, and interviews to the mass media Romani intellectuals of Ukraine universalized the crisis, gave greater human scope to what Romani people suffered, and associated that experience with the sufferings of others, Roma and non-Roma. The challenge for them was similar to “a dauntingly difficult challenge” for Native and African American intellectuals (Maddox, 2005), namely to define and represent particularities of Romani experience congenial to the broader civic culture; to articulate a specifically Romani perspective on a set of “universal” principles, themselves in flux, to which Romani people could subscribe.

The most vocal Romani spokespersons urged Roma to make cautious adjustments to the changing conditions without assimilation, to remain Romani and foster pride in *Romanipe*, Romani culture, while working to improve their physical and material well-being. Most succinctly this argument was captured in the poetry and narratives by Mixa Kozimirenko: Romani people needed to cultivate both their *Romanipe* and their cosmopolitan identities, not just for the purpose of making Romani people acceptable to non-Romani elites as “Ukrainian citizens” but also for the sake of survival, because civilization was predatory. Thus Romani intellectuals acknowledged that the survival of Roma and their broader identity depended on their ability to perform their public roles on a universal stage according to the terms and conditions that had already been set, yet in constant modification and negotiation of them by Romani spokespersons. In many ways, the effort of Romani intellectuals to insert Romani history and specific local Romani issues into Ukrainian national *format*, or framework, paralleled American Indian histories and cultures, both of Progressive Era, as in the writings of Arthur C. Parker on the need to cultivate Indianness and humanity of Indian people for the sake of survival (Maddox, 2005, p. 14) and the present-day. Maddox (2005) illustrated the present American public’s resistance to taking American Indian intellectualism seriously by quoting Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, who stated, “It is as though the American Indian has no

intellectual voice with which to enter into America's important dialogues. The American Indian is not asked what he thinks we should do about Bosnia or Iraq. He is not asked to participate in Charlie Rose's interview program about books or politics or history" (p. 14). In a similar way, Romani cultural elite decried not being taken seriously as intellectuals in Ukraine because, to quote Igor Krikunov, they were seen by Ukrainian elites as "not fitting the national format."

Despite the continuing frustration and exhaustion of some of them from the national and international politics, most Romani intellectuals I worked with were energized by the current intellectual and entrepreneurial ferment in Ukraine and by the national and international publicity it accorded to them and their concerns. The national and international agendas of Euro-Atlantic integration provided an important intellectual framework for Romani writers, theater directors, and journalists. Their work chronicled the issues with which they wrestled as well as the political and cultural constraints that they had to negotiate. Those negotiations were at the center of our discussions. As I have demonstrated, Romani intellectuals of Ukraine, in attempting to create a political space for themselves, deliberately adopted and transformed the media available to them for addressing predominantly non-Romani audiences. Their texts and performances, examined in a variety of contexts, revealed multiple post-Soviet continuities, as well as the underlying or recently resurrected liberal orthodoxies that conditioned their work with reformers.

My work resulted in the collection of documented efforts of Romani educators and cultural producers in Ukraine to wrest control of Romani representation out of the hands of managerial and paternalistic non-Roma through their own publications, theater performances, festivals, and ethnographic collections. In particular, one document—the entrance ticket to the 2002 Amala festival—served as an eloquent illustration of those efforts, alongside the multidimensional continuities. The ticket consisted of two pieces of paper stapled together. The glossy card pictured the arresting emblem of the festival: the right-hand palm, open and covered in cosmic and cultural symbols that only the authors could best read. The palm was as black as the cosmos it was part of, and as white as the constellations and symbols surrounding the center—a hexagon star. Under it was a good-luck wish in Romani, in Roman script: "TE AVEN BACHTALE." The sponsors were

listed in Ukrainian: Kyiv Municipal State Administration, Central Department of Culture and the Arts, International *Vidrodzhennya* (Renaissance) Foundation, National Gypsy Theater Romance, *Amala* Organization, and Kyiv Charitable Foundation. The yellowish slip stapled to the card dated back to the Soviet past and was entirely in Russian. It listed the Bolshevik Palace of Culture, the Gypsy Theater Romance, and the old, Soviet price. The festival date and the new price were stamped over it, the new price being fifty times that of the old. Thus focusing on the supposed innate capacity such as “*passionarity*,” and performance, the uplift ideology in Ukraine paid scant attention to non-Romani supremacy over Roma and was ultimately subject to the logic of market values, post-Soviet continuities, and “minstrel” representations prescribing and controlling the social place of Roma. As within American society (Gaines, 1996), the social vision of Romani elites in Ukraine was largely determined “by those powerful whites who reasserted control over black and white labor” (p. xiv). In other words, through this uplift ideology, Romani elites sought the cooperation of non-Romani political and business elites in the pursuit of Romani people’s progress. Therefore this uplift ideology cannot be regarded as an independent Romani perspective. This middle-class ideology cannot be isolated from dominant modes of knowledge and the broader global power relations structured by race and racism.

Ambivalence of Romani Elites Toward Integration

In the primordial market economy of Ukraine, the tokenized few struggling Romani artists and writers and a handful of the first Romani organizations became increasingly dependent on non-Romani patronage and philanthropy, or grant-winning, and thus remained largely insulated from the segregated, stripped of wage-labor, and striving to survive Romani communities. Similar to the New Negro cultural renaissance, they lacked the economic independence of the rising class of entrepreneurs and functioned “in the third dimension of culture” (Gaines, 1996, p. 247). However, the critics even within this small group of cultural intelligentsia questioned the integrationist strategy, which they regarded as detrimental to the cultural independence and advancement of Romani people. The apprehension toward integration was reported as the fear of outside forces at work on Romani affairs, with Roma becoming a pawn in a grand

game. As we have seen, in Ukraine, where integration was primarily understood as ‘Euro-Atlantic,’ Roma had been pronounced ‘a bridge’ in that process. Another source of anxiety was the perceived erosion of cultural identity in the rapidly changing primordial market society with its materialistic values of conspicuous consumption, anti-intellectualism, and political apathy. It was feared that the change led some Roma to sacrifice their folk traditions and social heritage. Some of the new problems, such as the drug use by the young Roma, were attributable to the erosion of Romani cultural identity. Mixa Kozimirenko, for example, was among those who bemoaned the outside aggressive pressures he called “intervention” and, while being the poet of change, from time to time decried its fast pace and pleaded to spare the most vulnerable Roma and their traditions.

The most vocal of Romani intellectuals condemned the mass-media technologies and industries for trafficking in “the many-headed beast of U.S. racism” (Gaines, 1996, p. xvi) into Ukraine and commented on the deeply problematic relationship of some young Roma with the tangled meanings attributed to the category of blackness. They questioned the validity of knowledge about race produced by U.S. intellectuals and denounced the simplistic straightforward importation of the ideologies and categories of “race” and “emancipation” from the sociohistorical contexts of the United States, in which they were embedded, into the discussions of the ways ethnic identities and hierarchies were racialized in the Soviet and post-Soviet space. While some Romani elites attempted to distinguish themselves from racist constructions of Gypsy depravity, even they could not escape prejudice and anti-Romani policies. As Denis Varodi emphasized, the realities of life and the material consequences for Roma, especially in Transcarpathia, required them to treat race as more than mere illusion, and despite the color-blind ideals of Ukrainian society challenge the declarations of formal equality and integration. The contemporary Ukrainian nationalist and liberal social science discourse in Ukraine tends to theorize Ukrainian society as nondiscriminatory and names individual choice as determining the degree to which any individual participates “on equal footing” in the construction of “humanitarian aura of the nation” and other nation-building and integration processes. This Ukrainian nationalist mainstream view of integration, similar to the color blind developmental uplift ideology of the open society in the United States during the desegregation era, disregards the history of anti-Roma prejudice, the continuing social

effects of residential segregation, and the social inequities and grievances of impoverished Roma and non-Roma and shifts from them to a notion of cultural and innate deficiency in, for example, lack of “passionarity” of the ethnic leadership. Such discourse holds that Roma remain culturally different, deviant, unwilling to learn the state language and work in state institutions, and thus are hindered from integrating into the Ukrainian political culture.

Some Romani intellectuals in Ukraine criticized this normative view of integration, or the so-called emancipation, with its emulative character and exemplary, canonical figures, with its implicit hostility to cultural difference and objected it as a de-facto assimilation. They challenged the Romani movement’s accommodation to the economic and political status quo in the west and were critical of established professional Romani uplifters, whom they called *nomenclatura* or men with portfolios traveling to international conferences with little effect for Romani communities. They questioned the assumption that a single spokesman might effectively speak for the diverse groups of Romani people. They saw the push for the reformist consensus between Romani leaders and non-Romani patrons as an attempt to bribe Roma. On the other hand, some Romani reformists used their connections within local post-Soviet institutional networks to propel numerous integration projects. They adopted the language of Romani uplift’s master narratives, including the uplift as self-help, the embrace of the home and family as sites of Romani progress and respectability, hope to refine Romani folk culture into universalistic expression of high culture, and the accumulation of wealth, thus a certain measure of stigmatization of poverty. For them, like for the black intelligentsia in the United States, the bourgeois cultural values that marked class differences—“social purity, thrift, chastity, and the patriarchal family—affirmed their sense of status and entitlement to citizenship” (Gaines, 1996, p. 4).

The interviews, writings, and activities of Romani intellectuals of Ukraine, representative, yet relegated to a non-mainstream position, are unified in the desire for dignity, security, and social mobility. At the same time, they illustrate the complexity of their subjectivities, intensive soul-searching, ambivalence, and dissent on the objectives of leadership and progress. Like many educated blacks in the United States, Romani intellectuals were engaged in squabbling over philanthropy grants and command

of Romani institutions and politics (p. 247). The ambivalence and preoccupation with respectability revealed the defensive, precarious position of aspiring Romani elites. As in the case of African American and Native elites, Romani elites' defensive appropriation of dominant social theories for the purpose of "rehabilitation" of Romani image and construction of a supposedly positive Romani identity resulted from their desperate situation. I agree with Gaines in that ultimately this says more about power, Romani vulnerability, institutional racism, cultural continuities, and cultural imperialism than it does about the loyalties of Romani elites. Gaines (1996) showed the U.S. history to be very instructive for aspiring and middle-class members of racialized populations—the expansion of the black, Latino, and Native middle class in the United States has failed to undermine racist logic and practice: "Articulations of racism, sexism, and contempt for the poor still serve to scapegoat and exclude large segments of the population from the rights, protections, and entitlements of citizenship....The legacy of race as a driving force in our political culture thus endures alongside professions of color-blind ideals" (p. 259). Gaines stated that the health of the U.S. political institutions would benefit from assimilating the best and most democratic of African Americans' uplift ideals—"compassion, service, education, and a commitment to social and economic justice for all citizens" (p. 260). Ukraine, a new nation on its way to Euro-Atlantic integration, stands only to benefit from assimilating these democratic ideals.

Performance, Media and Education

As we have seen, Ukraine is living through a complex moment of collision between cultures, which includes the search by some Romani writers, artistic directors, artists, and ethnographers for distinctive Romani expression against the popular stereotypes non-Romani audiences have come to expect. Romani authors use literary production and mass culture as the space in which the complex representative Romani subject is generated. The work of Igor Krikunov, the artistic director of the Theater Romance, among others, illuminated the struggle waged around the complicated and contested appropriation of competing dominant discourses surrounding Romani uplift. On the one hand, the theater productions employed an assimilationist cultural aesthetic, refining Romani folk materials, as well as the romances originally written for the non-

Romani audiences, into a universalistic expression of high culture and simultaneously integrating them into the Ukrainian national, European, and the broader global culture. On the other hand, Igor Krikunov, critical of the iconoclastic and predictable “positive” images of Roma, played with non-Romani stereotypes of “authentic” Gypsiness. In interviews to the media, performances, and shows, especially for the young audiences, he manipulated fortune telling, Romani folklore, Orientalism, youth slang, and humor in search of novel and effective forms of cultural expression. Romani poet Mixa Kozimirenko, while officially representing Romani poetry of Ukraine in Ukrainian and Romani languages and emulating the Ukrainian national poet Taras Shevchenko under the auspices of senior Ukrainian literati, also wrote rebellious poetry in Russian subverting the power of his literary gatekeepers. Such ambivalent accommodation-resistance performances answered the anti-Gypsy images and social science and journalistic reductionism, without entirely dispelling them, in a way similar to the early elite African Americans’ interaction with minstrel stereotypes of urban black idleness and immorality (Gaines, 1996) and the pattern of embodied performance by Native Americans (Maddox, 2005). The writings and performances by these early representative figures demonstrated the quest of the minority elites for the authentic or “positive,” in our case Romani, subject and the struggle to reconcile the uplift’s ideals with changing social realities. The previous experience of the early minority elites has shown “the end result all too often being their personal and political disillusionment” (Gaines, 1996, p. xvii) in the struggle between accommodation and resistance to the racial and economic status quo.

The early minority intellectuals evoked and emulated white constructions of Blackness, Indianness, and Gypsiness. Maddox (2005) argued that these proliferating performances allowed them to embody roles that before had been constructed for them, and in embodying them to alter them, to reach the white audiences, and to reconstruct the white constructions for their own purposes. The pedagogical impulse behind these performances notwithstanding, such miming was shown to be problematic and troubling, especially if native people playing Indian or Roma playing Gypsy might also reaffirm them for a stubborn white audience, “reinforcing catch-22 of meaning that would prove difficult to circumvent” (Philip Deloria quoted by Maddox 2005, p. 4). The problematic

character of embodied performances is best illustrated by the early comparison between the American Indians in Buffalo Bill's show and the Russian Gypsies in Vladimir Gilyarovsky's memoirs. Maddox (2005) described the early performances by the Indian people at the Chicago fair of 1893 as "a political necessity," "important to understanding the nature and form of American intellectual activity" in 1890s (p. 5). Gilyarovsky's description of the Wild West show in Moscow in 1890s pointed to the troubling nature of embodied performances when they reaffirm the white stereotypes. He ridiculed the "lame tricks" of the Indians and their "wild tabor" as failing to impress Moscow, which had seen everything, including its own Gypsy tabors, "About two dozen Indians arrived, tattooed and painted, with feathers on their heads, as well as several cowboys in straw hats and with deadly spurs.... The spurs were made for taming "the wild mustangs," but no Gypsy would give any more than ten roubles for one of those" (1968, p. 179). In a similar derogatory tone Gilyarovsky described "the wild tabor" of the Indians:

The nags were grazing outside; in the wigwams, the half-naked copper-red Indians were sitting around the fire and with their fingers, perhaps never washed, were tearing the meat roasted right there on coals; and instead of bread they were eating hot roasted chestnuts out of the pot.... The food was cooked by women, while all around were running the half-naked, as in a Gypsy tabor, future chiefs of the Sioux tribe, to which these wild Indians belonged according to the billboard. They showed me their tomahawks and lassos (p. 179).

Maddox (2005) argues that for the Indian people performing their histories and individual and collective identities to a largely white American public was a strategic move, "Indian people had to position themselves on the literal as well as the figurative stages of American public life, through strategic moves, as a way of both inserting their embodied selves into the national consciousness and establishing their claim to a place on those stages" (p. 5). Earlier Indian intellectuals were of necessity "concerned to redefine public and institutional spaces by first establishing their ability, and their right, to inhabit those spaces alongside other Americans" (Ibid.). Gilyarovsky's account showed how vulnerable and precarious that position might be. The Wild West show was brought to Moscow by A. Feigin, an entrepreneur, whose son was a successful publisher in Moscow, well connected in the world of commerce. A century ago, as today, there were many outside forces at work in the uplift movement. The productions of minority intellectuals were shaped by trends in both elite and popular culture, "Rather than always refusing

those roles, Indian intellectuals often adopted and sometimes co-opted them, working to take the control of performance away from the white managers, and in the process tacitly acknowledging that the best way to gain the attention of the people who had power over Indian lives was through carefully orchestrated performances” (Maddox, 2005, p. 7). Though minority uplift movements have always regarded education as the key to liberation (Gaines, 1996), since the days of the fairs, the ethnographic exhibits and shows and performances were much more interesting to the whites than the minority school exhibits (Maddox, 2005). In Ukraine in 2002-2003 the Romani uplift was gathering momentum through a few media centers and a handful of embryonic heritage schools, but has not yet reached the public school system. Primary focus on performing arts was also a reaction to the cultural dimension of non-Romani supremacy in the institutional structures, including educational. The task of Romani intellectual is similar to today’s task of Native Americans, namely “developing a sense of belonging within mainstream institutions” as a prerequisite to redefining that space—actual and intellectual—as Native American (Maddox, 2005, p. 5), or as Romani Ukrainians, inhabiting those institutional spaces alongside other Ukrainians. The narratives and performances of Romani intellectuals extensively presented in the chapters of my dissertation documented the ideological and social diversity of these representative figures of Romani cultural elite, at once representative, yet marginal, and the conflicts inherent in their visions and visions of them as a result of inhabiting both positions: as both Romani intellectuals and Ukrainian intellectuals. Such chronicling of their precarious position both within the international context and a national context, rather than the analysis of their messianic visions of the future and dichotomous constructions of Romani culture at the intersections with Ukrainian nationalism and the uplift ideology, such as accommodation vs. resistance to integration, was the main contribution of my work.

Art, Propaganda, and Artistic Integrity

The creative ascendancy Romani intellectuals of Ukraine called “propaganda of Romani culture” could be likened to the remarkable organic surge in African American artistic creativity of the 1920s, variously known as black propaganda, or the Harlem Renaissance. I will point to the connections shared by these two movements, seemingly

separated geographically and historically. They paralleled in their hope to generate social change, their search for an overarching Romani or African American aesthetic, in their contested nature, and their continual unfolding.

Both movements began as transcendence of worldly oppression in a group struggle for freedom and social advancement (Gaines, 1996). Art was regarded as the key to liberation. The representatives of these movements believed that recognition of the cultural contribution of Roma or African Americans to civilization would be liberatory. In their respective beginnings, the movements were reiterating the older generation's middle-class agenda of racial vindication and interracial cooperation and stressed the need for Roma or black Americans to prove their humanity. Art was seen as a method of gaining sympathy and human interest, and because the desire of African Americans and Roma to be regarded as human was met with resistance by the outside "white" world, the artists resorted to propaganda, as W.E.B. Du Bois put it, to "make ourselves free of mind, proud of body and just of soul to all men." In his programmatic essay "Criteria of Negro Art" he forcefully stated:

...All art is propaganda and ever must be, ...whatever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy. I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda. But I do care when propaganda is confined to one side while the other is stripped and silent. ...It is the denial of a... right of propaganda to those who believe black blood human, lovable, and inspired with new ideals for the world (2001, p. 49).

Critics pointed to the uplift artists that to claim their humanity, intelligence, and artistic creativity, they tended to turn to middle-class values and traditional poetic forms even when celebrating their African, or Romani, roots (Patton & Honey 2001, p. xxiv). Also, the system of patronage operating during both artistic movements privileged men. As a result, it was harder for most women artists to get the financial and professional support they needed to produce their work (Ibid.).

Despite the contested nature of the movements, certain themes reappeared despite the gender and generational differences. For black propaganda, critics have identified the following themes: Africa is a source of race pride, black American heroes or heroines are apotheosized, racial political propaganda is considered essential, the black folk tradition is affirmed, and candid self-revelation is on display (Patton & Honey, 2001, p. xxiii).

Among the recurring themes identified within the Harlem Renaissance some parallel the Romani artistic movement, such as children as the anticipated better future of the people, motherhood and maternal figures, nature, love and sensuality, and the affirmation of Romani folk tradition. However, within the Romani artistic movement in Ukraine loyalties to the Ukrainian, Russian, and post-Soviet culture, as well as larger global, or European, identity of Roma and their migration, so far have received a much stronger expression than the reiterated connection to India as a place of origin; and racial political propaganda, in any, has been very benign.

Both movements are remarkable in their continual unfolding. Their texts and artistic productions enrich our understanding of Romani and African American history and culture and serve as pathbreaking trails—“away from silence, against all odds, toward futures their creators only dimly perceived” (Patton & Honey, 2001, p. xxxix).

The Star of Conclusion: Implications for Ethnic Media and Culture Development

Following Downing’s (2001) Hexagon model, a pentagonal matrix of implications could be drawn from the Romani media experience.

Artistic Flair and Punch

At the heart of the sparks was Bakhtinian, Freireian, and Brechtian dialogic interactivity, Benjamin’s aura of an artwork, and Downing’s audience as co-architect of the text. Within this arc the aesthetic charge built up.

Memory Levels and Time Frame

Ephemeral, short-lived iterations and long-term memory periods were bound together, not separate. Romani international festivals are like mind bombs—easily memorable and accumulating gradually. At the same time, the long-term memory of the media-educational movement, engaging theater, film, newspaper and other print, museums, memorials, etc. can be very influential. The energy poured into and drawn from Romani media projects continued on in many other projects. A vision offered by Romani media lit a flame, which persists even if media activism fails (p. 392). Media

centers and “pilot projects” created autonomous zones of freedom—intense in nature even if they are temporary.

Pragmatic Realities

Gayatri Spivak’s (1990) crucial question, “Who will listen?” (p. 59), was a question of distribution. To be effective, media productions have to reach the audience.

Social Movements

Media are longer lasting than a social movement’s trajectory, but the two are interactive: Social movements are “the life and blood” of these media and media are the movements’ “oxygen” (Downing, 2001, p. 390).

The Power Structure

A matrix-force of history (established power of the state, official religion, political parties, patriarchy, and global capitalism) could be transformed into a mobile infinity of tactics (p. 393). Resilience of Romani media authors and their search for temporary autonomous zones and prefigurative politics are the rebellious communications of the officially unheard (pp. 394–5).

In conclusion, the *praxis of Romani media centers* toward generating hybrid and porous cultural identities of “Roma of Ukraine” forms a triad:

- Revitalization of dialectics of tradition and modernity;
- Invigoration of ethnic and national loyalties;
- Restoration of civility in a fragmented political culture of Ukraine.

Applications of Research in Training of Prospective Teachers

The training programs for prospective teachers should include what Kellner (1995) called a “critical media literacy” component in any course addressing American cultural diversity. The students must realize that they live in a media-dominated society that produces a multitude of objectified others. We want them to understand specific historical articulations and discern whether they live in an era of ideological “backlash”

or “romanticization” of certain cultural groups or nations. Most importantly, we want them to appreciate the cultural struggles of stigmatized others to produce their own uplifting discourses and cultural images (Foley & Moss, 2001, p. 357).

A key pedagogical practice for creating such a course is a multitextual approach: Academic texts must be supplemented with autobiographical, fictional, cinematic, and popular mass materials. Another key pedagogical practice is to get students to represent their own dissenting voices or those of other groups in small, collaborative, field projects, thus bringing the stigmatizing discourses that are considered “out there” closer to the everyday experience of students and personalizing these issues, making changes in their ideological consciousness more likely (p. 358).

Also, it is not enough to simply present the counter-histories of a group’s virtues and triumphs. It is important to present the cultural histories of various groups in a less dichotomized or essentializing context, and one way to open up the context is through discussion and dialogue (Ibid.). Henry Giroux’s (1992) practice of border pedagogy is very useful here:

The concept of border pedagogy suggests not simply opening diverse cultural histories and spaces to students, but also understanding how fragile identity is as it moves into borderlands crisscrossed with a variety of languages, experiences, and voices. There are no unified subjects here, only subjects whose voices and experiences intermingle with the weight of particular histories that will not fit into the master narrative of a monolithic culture (p. 174).

Thus this research suggested a more effective approach than the traditional lecture: This multi-media and multi-case mode of presenting knowledge incorporates multiple contexts of learning (personal narratives, student projects, videos, discussion) and a more open dialogue that allows for cultural vulnerability, reflection, collaboration, media production, performance, and possibility.

Implications for Future Research

Future research might address (a) the policy implications of the cultural educational movement, (b) the role of religious institutions in promoting cultural educational change in Romani communities, (c) the philanthropic role of Romani and non-Romani organizations and their influence on the state or private educational institutions that

Romani children attend, and (d) the mentoring role of Romani leaders and organizations towards Romani students and youth leaders. Given the territorial diversity of Ukraine, research might be focused on one of several regions historically influenced by different empires, which affected the culture of Romani groups in each region: Northwest, Central, Western, Southern, Eastern, and the Crimea.

Appendix

Poems

Mixa Kozimirenko

1.

Karik na dzav, so na kerav—	Wherever I go, whatever I do—
Odoj mre dumi chavorentsa,	I think and worry of the children,
Nashti te rakirav laventsa,	I cannot say the words,
Kirke jasventsas me rovav.	Sometimes I cry.
Sa zhakirav; so kham ushtela	Everything is awaiting; that the sun comes up
Tej tat'kirela ²⁶⁵ mro ilo,	And warms up my heart,
Jov na saresa zoralo	It is not strong yet
Var-kala pes vo sxachkirela.	To burn down in loneliness.
Nikon pal mande na rovela,	No one would lament for me,
So te roves, te tangines:	Why cry over the grave:
Dzido dzides polel mishtes,	The living understand the living better,
Mulo dzides na vishunela. ²⁶⁶	Mulo ²⁶⁷ won't hear the living.

2.

Where, tell me, I should hide my eyes,
When a beggar is walking towards me,
And there are as many beggars in this fatherland
As nowhere else.
To cover them with hands, so as not to see,
Not to hear the words that rip the soul apart?
My closed eyes are crying,
And the beggars keep walking by.
This one I know, we've met before,
I recognize his song to the bayan,
He is a sincere and tireless singer,

²⁶⁵ TatO—"warm" in Romani; tAte—"father" a vocative in Romani; tAto, tAtko—"father" in Ukrainian.

²⁶⁶ Kozimirenko, 2000, p. 76.

A fire of music from beneath his fingers...
He is still young and good-looking,
An Afgan hero, a cripple,
Has kids and is happy
That has not fallen eternally asleep in the mountains.
Here's another one coming to the car,
A youth crippled by life,
And offers meekly and sleepily
A simple song "for free."
And a woman in black, who cannot
Feed her children,
Is shedding tears in the train cars,
While passengers are quietly asleep.
The eyes are shut, so as not to see,
Not to hear the words that rip a soul apart.
It is Ukraine-the-mother, who is crying,
Can it be that this cry is not heard? (p. 33)

3.

I have lost faith in the deputies-"servicemen"
Who shroud the essence in turbidity,
In the proud leaders
Who are already harvesting our dreams. ...
I do not believe the notorious deputies
Who pore water in the mikes,
Lots of this water has been pored through,
Yet the essence has not changed a bit.

4.

Behind the tall mountains
And the blue forests
Rolled down the sun, tired.
The day hid in the shadow

²⁶⁷ The dead, the spirit of the dead.

And the drops of dew
Are about to tear up,
Perched on the foliage.
Flew by and disappeared quietly
As a shadow a night bird.²⁶⁸
The moon with his silvery horn
Touches the mountains.
People, tired of labor,
Are already swirling in their dreams.
I am drinking a song—
Somewhere far away the Gypsies are singing.
The dark night, the bright stars,
And a sheep herder-of-the-moon
Deep in my soul
Have awakened something.
I'm trying to recall
And break out of the spells.
A song of my childhood resounds,
Which mom used to teach me.
Life has been dropping us
Like dust by the roadside.
For long. Oh, for so long
Mother's song is not heard.
The years have flown by
As river's waters—
The past can
No longer be returned.

5.

Again, like years before, the soul is calling
Me to the forest as to Mom.
Into the universe brewed from songs,
Where Mavkas²⁶⁹ are still in abundance.

The Forest taught us, gave us knowledge,
The starflower blossoms there without stint!
There I have discovered the throes of creation
And went up in forest fires of flames!
With them, I wander throughout the worlds now,
Joyous to the sun and to the winds,
I come to the forest as to Mom,
To draw the warmth for all of you.
I glorify the family of beloved Roma,
Their sincere nature and beauty,
I am coming to you as to my home,
Bringing you my love!
I search for Truth and Word
As an ancient Kiev scribe.
My spring--the language of the Roma,
Love—only for the people!
Such is my Gypsy lot,
Forests, roads, and a star,
And also a Shevchenkian poplar.
I am Rrom! And this makes me happy!

6.

If the last Rom dies
A star would die out above the tent,
Mountains and valleys would moan quietly,
Horses would startle in the open field,
Black clouds would shroud the moon,
Fiddles and guitars would cry,
Giant and Dwarf would mourn,
If the last Rom dies... [...]
What trace have Roma left?

²⁶⁸ The image from Bulgakov's novel *The White Guard*.

²⁶⁹ Ukrainian legendary, beautiful spirits of the forest that look like young women, as in Lesya Ukrainka's play *The Forest Song* [Lisova Pisnya].

Ask everyone around!
 Romani soul is in the songs—look there!
 In the lands nearest and remote, everywhere,
 Romani songs bring joy to human hearts.
 Their road to happiness is hard,
 They respect Freedom as well as God,
 Looking for their heaven on earth,
 But whether they've found it—ask them!

7.

Pe saro dro sveto si kimin?

(Podshundo rakiribe)

Pe saro dro sveto si kimin?

Phenes, saro kinelpa te biknelpe,

So dasavo godo—terne bersha dzha kin!

Nat, na biknenpe, mange delpe.

Terne bersha nikon na bikinel,

Ni pal love, ni pal sovnak.

Terne bersha jekh molo del Devel,

Tu len dile chibendir rakh!

Pativ jekh molo nashavesa,

Sir dre jakha dikhesa manushenge?

Pativ gavestir na andesa,

La na choresa barvalende!

Ripiribe achelpa manushentsa,

Nasti les te bistres, te nashaves!

So kuch kerdo sis—pesa lesa,

So sis bibaxt—kaj te keres?

Is everything bought in the world?

(Overheard conversation)

Is everything bought in the world?

You say everything is bought and sold,

Go buy the years of youth—if you're so smart!

No, those given to me cannot be bought back.

No one sells the years of youth,

Not for money, not for anything.

Young years are the wine given by God,

Guard them from crazy rumors!

If honor runs away like wine,

How would you look in people's eyes?

You won't go to a village to get respect,

You won't steal it from the rich!

Memories burn in people,

You can't forget, can't run away from them!

What was well done—is yours,

What was a mishap—what can you do?

8.

I have not found in this life,—

What I've been looking for.

Devoted horse my is complaisant,

But even he is tired.

I will let the horse go free,
And walk by myself
Through the unmowed field
Toward be it joy or trouble.

How much longer have I got to walk:

A turn is coming up.

I will cover this little stretch—

And sit down at the gate.

I will recall with sorrow the events of the past
(memory has saved)
And draw a sad conclusion—
That's it.

The gatekeeper will unlock the gate there for me;

My time must have come,

They can't even serve the table

As not so long ago.

Kharon will come and quietly
Will lead me to the bark.
Stiks-River is no joke to you
But it will smooth out the wave.

And once on the other side,

I will go to Hell.

Not that I wanted to, but still

It gives me a little joy.

My friends-Gypsies I'll meet there,
To burn—then what the hell!
And I will stay with them forever
Singing the songs of Freedom!

9.

Xasjuval jekh dzeni

Sir dro vesh charori

Na dija mro Devel

Alone am I, yes all alone,

A blade of grass forlorn,

For neither happiness nor luck

Na but ka baxtori	God gave when I was born;
Dija mange Devel	He gave me only sparkling eyes
Mre jakha, gozhipen	In beauty fair and good,
Tasaven man jasva	But even these I've wept away
Bidi jekh dzenipen	In lonely maidenhood.
Pshalaves na dikhjom	No brother and no sister dear
Phenorja na dzhanav	Have been my strength and stay;
Na kamel man Nikon	Up among strangers was I reared,
Dro shil bokh pomlivav	Among them waste away...
Kaj kamli mrijori?	Where may I find a helpmate true?
Te phenel ta palav	Where gentle friends uprouse?
Baxt ke me na avel	They can't be found... I am alone...
Dro shil di xasjuvav	I'll never find a spouse! ...

10.

Na puch man so yakha mre	Do not ask why my eyes
Pherdejas pur jasventsas	Are brimming with tears
So kamam vesh ratjako trebja	What I wanted in the woods last night
Mashkirav rat'kirav doj chargentsas	Spending the night under the stars
Na puch man, na puch man, na puch man	Do not ask me [3 times]
Na puch man soske me shukjuvav momeljasa	Do not ask why I dry up like a candle
Kamlipe geravan dre vesha	Hiding my desire in the forest
Ackirdjan tu man mre i bidasa	You have left me to misfortune
San pe mandar sare manusha	Everyone laughs at me
Na puchman, ni pash lav tuke me na phenava	Do not ask, I won't tell you a word
Tu dzines pale so me rovvav	You know why I'm crying
Biilitka lava tre shunava	To hear you heartless words
Do xalja mang'ile de shukav	Will not dissipate my heavy thoughts

Nikolai Minesko

1.

Along the dusty road
from centuries' depth
the horse, rapid legs,
is flying to a Gypsy call...

Lose the horseshoe in the dust—
as my lucky talisman:
prompt me on the right road,
tell me my fortune on the way.

The talisman I will find and will make a wish
to find my star:
the black horse's mystery I will discover
And will find my fortune.

Then I will water the horse
from a draw well across a river...
and will re-shoe him anew
in a smith shop under a pine tree.

2.

Before time we are all equal—
And just are nature's laws.
Our years are a priceless diamond.

A minute is silver, gold is an hour,
But even a million of wonders
Would not stop the progress...and us.

3.

To my brother-in-blood
Without hesitation I will come,
Will give him a helping hand in trouble
Or will risk my life to help.

Shoulder to shoulder, the two of us—
With my power he will join his.
We would turn upwards any mountains!
Brother—is power and shield.

If someone threatens with trouble—
Give me your hand, brother!
We will stand as a granite mountain,
All together we will overcome everything, brother.
Since times immemorial:
Cherish the brother forever,
Press a unit to a unit,
When trouble threatens.

4.

The starry night covered up the steppe
And, reflected in the fire,
To the guitar accords, the moon
Was roaming between the campfires.

Shadows were falling in the campfire,
The night and the darkness backed off,
But the tired Gypsies
Stayed wide-awake.

5.

Embrace me, nature,
I am your free son.
Disclose to me, the steppe road,
The origin of all misfortunes.

6.

There is a beginning and there is an end,
There is a sage and there is a fool.
A curse will not get to you
Flattery will not add a few more years to life

Everyone will leave his trace
Upon departure from this world.
A wreath to a sage for his wisdom,
A slap in a fool's face for foolishness!
But there is one response to everyone in this world:
The skulls lie empty in a grave.

7.

The squeak of wheels and carts....
The tired horses keep going.
Tabor is in a hurry to get to a camp to stay overnight—
The drivers do not spare a whip.

Hungry children in rags,
Shaggy bear on a chain...
And barefoot women with infants
Are walking on the dust.

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Evreiskii Obozrevatel'

Govorut' I pokazue Ukraina

Khreshchatyk

Kievskii Telegraf

Korrespondent

Polityka I Kul'tura (PIK)

Pravda Ukrainy

Romani Yag

Segodnya

Stolichka

Stolytsya

Zhitomirshchyna

Vita

Tatiana Nikolayevna Gabrielson was born in Kyiv, Ukraine on November 29, 1963, the daughter of the late Vira Mykolaivna Gnatyuk and the late Mykola Myronovich Gnatyuk. In 1981, after completing her work with a gold medal at secondary school No. 57, Kyiv, Ukraine, she entered Kyiv State University. She received the degree of Master of Arts with highest honors from Kyiv State University in June 1986. During the following years she was employed as a faculty English language instructor at Kyiv State University, until her emigration to the United States in June 1989. In the summer of 1988 she participated in the first American-Soviet Peace Walk across the United States. In July of 1989, she was a visiting Russian instructor at the Governor's Scholars Program at Centre College, Kentucky. In September of 1991, immediately following the Moscow coup, as a consultant and interpreter Tatiana Gabrielson accompanied Montana Governor's business exchange delegation to Moscow and Kazakhstan. From 1990 to January 1999, she was employed as a bilingual educator at Missoula County Public Schools. During the years of 1991–1995, she attended the University of Montana in Missoula. She received the degree of Master of Arts in English from the University of Montana in December 1995. In January of 1999 she entered the Graduate School of The University of Texas at Austin. During the summer of 2001, she attended the Central European University summer program in Budapest, Hungary. During the summer of 2002, she completed a course of Romani language and culture offered by the Ministry of Education of Romania. In 2002–2003 she attended National Kyiv University in Ukraine. During her graduate studies at the University of Texas at Austin in 2000-2006, she worked as a graduate research assistant to the editor of *Educational Researcher* and taught Second Language Acquisition courses to prospective teachers. Tatiana Gabrielson has lived and traveled in over 20 countries, most of them with her son Anton, now a 15-year old multilingual, highest honors high school sophomore.

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