

University of Alberta

**Canada's Roma and the "Gypsy Musicians":
Identity as Dialogue and Musical Practice**

by

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Music

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Canada

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family: To my mother, Jean Rasmussen, who was my first music teacher, and who now has a matched set of doctorate children; to my own children, Rowan and Liam, who traipsed all over Montreal attending concerts and interviews (one on the inside, and one on the outside) and spent a lot of evenings without their mom while she worked on her “book”. But most especially the work is dedicated to my husband Paul, whose commitment to this project, and to me, has been unwavering, and who by now knows enough about the Roma to receive his own doctorate. Paul made sure that we got to Montreal as a family and has shown his support in a hundred different ways over the years, as Tech Support, Child Wrangler, Dog Walker, Chief Bottle-Washer, Chauffeur, Head of Food Procurement, Personal Therapist, Light Comic Relief, and so on. The immortal Dora the Explorer, who accompanied much of this project, sums it up perfectly when she says: “I couldn’t have done it without you!”

Abstract

This research highlights the differences and similarities in identity construction between the two most visible groups of Roma in Canada: the Romani advocates and refugees, who are based in Toronto, and Canada's Roma and non-Roma "Gypsy musicians", who are largely based in Montreal. While the Roma advocates are inextricably tied to emergent Romani nationalism, the "Gypsy musicians" are generally apolitical by choice. Since many of them are non-Roma, affiliation with "Gypsy" or "Roma" identity is voluntary, and tends to be for professional and economic advantage when it occurs. Although it seems unlikely that the two groups could be connected on any meaningful level, let alone engaged in complicated and interdependent maneuvers, they are inextricably conflated on a practical level in both personal and professional constructions of identity, which form the basis of this inquiry.

I argue that in Canada, the Roma and non-Roma producers of "Gypsy music" products are informed by three main paradigms: Canadian national identity as manifested by social inclusivity and social welfare; Romani national (or transnational) identity, which, being historically based on an identity of "other", is still tentative and emergent, but which at the moment is largely predicated on the need for advocacy; and a free market identity which privileges branding of the "ethnic product" in a global marketplace. In Canada and in Montreal specifically, the Romani "Gypsy musicians" display a best-case scenario of Romani integration—social mobility and integration combined with a high degree of control over personal and professional cultural identity—that remains elusive for the general Roma population of Canada, and which is virtually unheard of in European countries.

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List of Abbreviations

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

CBC: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

CEE: Central and Eastern Europe

ESL: English as a Second Language

EU: European Union

IRB: Immigration and Refugee Board

IRU: International Romani Union

JGLS: Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society

NAFTA: North American Free Trade Agreement

NFB: National Film Board

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

RCC: Roma Community Centre

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Program

Introduction

Research Question and Parameters

This project contrasts the cultural productions of identity in Canada between the Romani people and the “Gypsy musicians” (both Roma and non-Roma), in which the producers of music become products paired with the music itself, engaged in flexible and situational strategies of identity and representation at local and global levels. In Canada, the musical products are informed by three main paradigms: Canadian national identity as manifested by social inclusivity and social welfare; Romani national (or transnational) identity, which, being historically based on an existence of “other”, is still tentative and emergent, but which at the moment is largely predicated on the need for advocacy; and a free market identity which privileges branding of the “ethnic product” in a global marketplace.

This research represents the first academic inquiry into the area of “Gypsy” or Romani music in Canada. Although multiple publications on similar topics are available from other countries such as Spain, Romania, and France, Canada’s unique geographical and national circumstances necessitates its own research. First of all, Canada’s great distance from Europe has worked to keep it relatively free from the negative stereotypes that have followed the Roma for centuries. Because there are so few Roma in Canada and they are of such diverse origin, transnational affiliation (as “Roma” or “Gypsy”) is by far the norm rather than local group affiliation (such as “Romungre” or “Kalderash”) as is more common in European countries. Also, Canada’s policies of social welfare have resulted in rapid integration of the Roma within mainstream Canadian society, although this movement has been challenged in recent years by larger than average influxes of Roma refugees and a populist backlash spearheaded by the Conservative government.

In the music industry, Canada’s multicultural atmosphere works to privilege Roma musicians, who, in Montreal at least, are greatly in demand as teachers and providers of Gypsy music, which is a recognized genre within the city limits of Montreal, usually (although not always) referring to traditional music of Eastern European origin, played in a highly improvisatory and often virtuosic manner. However, there are in most cases not enough Roma to be exclusive providers of Gypsy music, which means that there is great deal of collaboration with non-Roma musicians, even during performances specifically geared towards Roma advocacy. Thus the music of the Roma is interpreted and given back to the community in large part by non-Roma musicians. These collaborations also result in a great many non-Roma “Gypsy musicians” acting as ad hoc ambassadors for the culture. The “Gypsy” or Roma culture is often portrayed in very positive terms by these musicians as a generalized marketing strategy, which serves in turn to create a

greater demand for the music. In Canada and in Montreal specifically, the Romani “Gypsy musicians” display a best-case scenario of Romani integration—social mobility and integration combined with a high degree of control over personal and professional cultural identity—that remains elusive for the general Roma population of Canada, and which is virtually unheard of in European countries. As Romani advocates worldwide and within Canada struggle to create and disseminate a strong sense of collective cultural identity, the “Gypsy musicians” of Montreal, while ostensibly unengaged with advocacy or Romani nationalist efforts, show themselves to be not only creating and disseminating, but also successfully marketing, a strong cultural identity in a manner that is largely congruent with the theoretical goals of advocates.

The theoretical framework for the discussion is based primarily on identity studies within ethnomusicology but also draws from the fields of national, transnational, and diaspora studies; Romani studies; applied anthropology and applied ethnomusicology; and ethnic and cultural studies. Theory, in turn, is informed by a multi-sited ethnography based on a seven-month fieldwork component in Montreal, which hosts the greatest number of Canada’s Gypsy music groups. Here I attended concerts, conducted interviews, took Gypsy music lessons on the accordion, and studied Kalderash, Canada’s most common dialect of the Romani language. I was able to spend only a week at Canada’s only Romani Cultural Centre (the RCC) based in Toronto, but a great deal of information about the Toronto Romani community is accessible via social media such as mailing lists and Facebook pages, which I followed in detail for more than a year, and with which I had corresponded for several years previously.

The terms “Gypsy” and “Roma” are highly ambiguous. Currently, the term “Roma” is the norm in academic literature rather than “Gypsy”, which is now considered by many activists and academics to be a pejorative and outdated term. In academic literature, “Roma” is usually used in a transnational sense that conflates the smaller groups in numerous countries, such as the German Sinti, the Russian Kalderash, the Hungarian Romungre, and so on. During fieldwork in Montreal, however, I found that only a small proportion of my contacts used the word “Roma” consistently in any sense; the rest used the more colloquial “Gypsy”. Many of my fieldwork contacts oscillated between the two terms to refer to themselves and to others, and in some cases these oscillations occurred in the same conversations and even the same sentences. Because many of these conversations began with the word “Roma” and ended with the word “Gypsy”, it seemed that my Montreal contacts were more comfortable with “Gypsy” and were using “Roma” primarily because of my presence, perhaps to indicate awareness of my academic involvement. My Toronto contacts, by contrast, used the word “Roma” almost exclusively.

In the interests of clarity, and to be congruent with other literature on the topic, but mostly because it felt disrespectful for me, as an outsider, to use the word “Gypsy”, I have chosen to use the word “Roma” rather than “Gypsy” to refer to the ethnic group.

The adjectival form of this word is “Romani”, as in “the Romani flag”, while “Rom” and “Romni” were used occasionally by my contacts to refer to male or female individuals, as in “She is Romni”.

My assignment of the word “Roma” or “non-Roma” to various individuals must be clarified within the parameters of this study. Within Canada, the only requirement for inclusion in the Roma community is to have at least one Roma parent or grandparent. However, since there are often no real means to verify origin (such as passports, language, or religion) most people who claim to be “Roma” are taken at their word by other members of the Roma community. Although I know that instances of membership restrictions can and do arise in Canada, in which some members of the community attempt to deny inclusion of what they perceive to be “only half Roma” or “not Roma at all” individuals, my understanding based on the fieldwork interviews is that these situations are very rare in Canada. I myself, with ethnically ambiguous features, was every now and then pressured by other Roma to “be” Roma; in these situations, the relevant issue was not *exclusion*, but rather *inclusion*, with questions like, “Well, maybe you have a Gypsy grandparent that you don’t know about?” At any rate, I am quite certain that I could have passed unchallenged among most or all Roma in Canada (and after all, I spoke the language too) had I chosen to be fraudulent in this manner, which I admit was strongly tempting at times as I struggled, and often failed, to establish ties among more reclusive Roma contacts.¹

In short, by far the majority of people who identify as “Roma” or “Gypsy” in Canada are not challenged by others on points of ancestry, and I used that as my guide: If my contact self-identified as “Gypsy” or “Roma” at any point (in the sense of an ethnic heritage rather than in the more literary sense of “having a Gypsy soul”), then he or she was correspondingly represented in this research.

Fieldwork conversations showed overwhelmingly that in Canada, music that was based on and marketed according to its affiliation with Roma culture was widely referred to as “Gypsy music”, irrespective of the ethnic identities of the musicians themselves or of the specific nature of the pieces. Although it is tempting to engage with the question “What is Gypsy music?”—in other words, to try to demarcate the genre based on a shared repertoire, common performance practice, instrumentation, and so on—the emic reality argues very much against this idea as the Roma that I met did not seem to have any particular interest in defining the genre nor of restricting its capacities to certain allowable traits. It is no more possible, nor, I would argue, even desirable, to create a single definition of “Gypsy music” any more than it is possible or desirable to create a single definition of what is a “Gypsy” or “Roma”. The closest concept, which is

¹ I also found out that my first name is very common in Bulgaria (surprising my mother, who thought that she made it up herself), so some of my interviewees, before meeting me, assumed I was Bulgarian or Bulgarian Roma.

central to this research, is to examine the ways in which the individuals are imagining and creating their public and private identities vis-à-vis music and other cultural offerings within specific geographic locations. For example, the Gypsy music of Montreal, although not ostensibly bounded by knowable parameters, nevertheless has some degree of homogeneity as musicians mingle between groups and exert bi-directional influences on each other. Moreover, this sound, or category of sounds, is specific to Montreal in the context of Canadian multiculturalism as it is enacted in Canada's largest Francophone city.

Given the polysemous nature of Gypsy music, early fieldwork showed the futility of trying to delineate the research based on repertoire, which would have required some meta-authority or group consensus about which songs were "Gypsy", which to my understanding is simply futile at best and an outdated methodology at worst. Nevertheless, I did try, but my tentative and early efforts to ask about a "Gypsy repertoire" met with looks of condescension, and I soon abandoned the idea. However, there simply had to be some rationale for inclusion or exclusion of certain groups—if not repertoire—within the scope of this project. Eventually, and though it perhaps seems facile for an in-depth project, I came to the conclusion that the only method that it was possible to use was that of self-ascription. Here, "self-ascription" refers to the groups rather than to the individuals, because the identities of the individuals were ambiguous in many cases (and will remain ambiguous until the question of "What is a Roma" has attained a common understanding) whereas the *musical* ethnic identities of the groups themselves, regardless of the repertoire or the ethnic heritage of the performers, were often clearly labelled or referenced.

Unlike "Gypsy music", however, which is a term in widespread use in Montreal among the musicians and audiences alike, and which I use without quotation marks for the rest of this discussion, the term "Gypsy musician" is decidedly etic, one of my own making that I have chosen for the purposes of clarity in an academic discussion. When my contacts were discussing musicians who played Gypsy music, they sometimes labelled them "musicians who play Gypsy music", and sometimes "Gypsy musicians", and the usage was highly ambiguous in that it was not clear which musicians were ethnically Roma and which were not. Further, I found no consensus on the issue—different people used the terms in different ways—which caused a lot of questions during fieldwork as I had to constantly clarify what was meant by each speaker. To avoid similar confusion in this discussion I have made the decision to standardize the term "Gypsy musician" within the very limited scope of this publication, using it in the same sense as "jazz musician" or "classical pianist", referring to a musician who specializes in the genre and has a certain degree of proficiency. The great advantage of a single term is that I can additionally clarify whether the "Gypsy musicians" are Roma or non-Roma.

Lastly, I use quotation marks around the words to indicate that "Gypsy musician" is a term of my own making rather than one in common use among Canadian Roma. In

Montreal, the Roma and non-Roma “Gypsy musicians” have regular and interdependent contact on which they have built professional networks and informal alliances, and thus it is possible to speak with some certainty about the “Gypsy music community”, which includes both Roma and non-Roma musicians.

Although I list “Gypsy musicians” and “Roma people” as separate entities, in practice they are inextricably linked as much of the repertoire and performance practice of Gypsy music originates from, or is at least inspired by, the Roma people. In turn, the music is frequently repatriated to the Roma community by the “Gypsy musicians”, with or without any participation by ethnic Romani musicians. There is a great deal of crossover between the two groups in terms of production of identity, representation, and economic survival on local and national levels, and early attempts to delineate the two paradigms for research purposes proved not only futile but bordered on purposeful misrepresentation, as this was clearly not the lived experience. Moreover, the actors themselves were largely indifferent to boundary maintenance between the two groups, distinguishing between “Roma” and “non-Roma” almost as an afterthought in many cases. While I have taken the liberty of delineating the terms for discussion, I find I cannot in good conscience treat them as separate research areas. So although the area of “Gypsy music and the Roma people” is cumbersome, it must stand as the best expression of the lives of the Roma and their music in Canada. It is possible, as Canada grows and Roma become a larger proportion of the culture, that the two will be less interdependent and capable of discrete research, but that is a project for a different situation.

Seeing is believing: Meeting the people

In Europe we have the *mahala*, or Romani quarter, where Romani families live together in one place like one big family. They exchange food, drink, luck and sorrow. They live with one soul. *Mahala* life is incredible, as incredible as its songs. But Canada is a huge country and our Roma are scattered from one end to the other. (Sijercic 1999: 2)

The Roma in Canada are difficult to find, and it is not widely known that there are, in fact, Roma in Canada. For the most part, they have integrated smoothly into Canadian society, disappearing without a ripple. Large influxes of refugees occasionally draw media attention and corresponding interest from right-wing groups, but the majority of Canada’s Roma live unremarkably and quietly, with little public reference to their cultural heritage.

This quiet existence is perhaps one reason that there are currently very few academic publications concerning any aspect of the Canadian Roma, including Romani (or “Gypsy”, the more dated and colloquial name) music and the performing arts. Excluding

myself and Ronald Lee, a Romani academic and activist who has largely retired from academic pursuits, I know of only two other academics who currently study the Roma in Canada: Cynthia Levine-Rasky, a Sociology professor at Queen's University in Kingston, and Alana Conway, a Master's graduate in Anthropology at Carleton University in Ottawa. Both are primarily interested in Canadian responses to the recent flood of Roma refugees.

According to the Statistics Canada 2006 census, only 320 Canadians identified themselves with a single origin of "Roma", while 2580 identified themselves with a multiple origin (two or more) that included "Roma", for a total of 2,900. However, Gina Csanyi-Robah, the executive director of Toronto's Roma Cultural Centre, estimates that there are about 20,000-30,000 Roma in Toronto alone as of February 2012, with about 10,000 newcomers in the last year alone (Interview with Gina Csanyi-Robah, February 2012). In media releases (such as *Opre Roma* 1999), 80,000 is the widely-distributed figure for the number of Roma in Canada, although its derivation is unclear.

Even accounting for the influx of Roma between 2006 and 2012, the discrepancy of the "official" number of Canadian Roma with the anecdotal one is enormous—2,900 (or 320, if we wish to discount individuals of mixed heritage) versus 80,000. It is likely that a great deal of the difference is due to the fact that in Canada, "Romani" identity is largely voluntary and thus very flexible. Although a large number of Roma arrive in Canada as refugees seeking asylum from Romani hate crimes, there is no requirement to identify as "Roma" to anyone but the immigration board, and even then only for the duration of the process. If individuals wanted to distance themselves from their Romani heritage, Canada would be an ideal place to do it: the low numbers of Roma in Canada, and its great distance from Europe, result in a general lack of knowledge about the Roma and the negative stereotypes that accompany them in most European countries. It is of course possible that some people carry prejudices that were learned in European countries, and it is also possible that they pass these prejudices on to their children and children's children, but after living in many cities and rural areas of Canada for more than 40 years and fielding innumerable questions like "The Roma? Who are they?" for the last ten, it is my strong belief that the great majority of Canadians are simply unaware of most narrative concerning the Roma, and the preconceptions they have of the "Gypsies" tend to be largely media-derived.

In the early 2000s, while writing my Master's thesis on Romani traditional music in Canada, I visited Vancouver to meet local Romani musicians. The city at that time was host to a large number of Czech Roma refugees, who were unfortunately in the process of being repatriated to the Czech Republic due to rejected refugee claims. For a few years in the late 1990s, Vancouver had an active Romani cultural centre called the Western Canadian Romani Alliance; it was spearheaded by Mario Ines-Torres and Julia Lovell, both featured in "Opre Roma", the 1999 National Film Board documentary. Mario's flamenco group, Los Canasteros ("The Basket-weavers") was active in the

community, and the Kino Café, a flamenco venue, functioned as an informal community centre for the local Roma (Grierson 2006). However, in the years since, Mario has fled Canada to avoid deportation, and the Western Canadian Romani Alliance is now defunct. With the absence of the community centre and a central organizing figure, the community has lost visibility and at this point it would be very difficult to even speculate how many Roma might currently live there, let alone make contact with enough people for doctoral research. Since none of my contacts knew of more than one or two families scattered about the prairies or Maritime provinces (I sometimes heard rumours of Roma families in various places, but no one ever seemed to know how to contact them), I decided to split my research for this project between Montreal and Toronto.

The original scope of the research was to split the field research more or less evenly between the two cities, with a two or three month segment in each. However, this plan was complicated by the happy but tricky fact that I became pregnant between the planning stage and the actual fieldwork. Thus it was that I headed off to Montreal with a five-month old baby. My husband and I had rented an apartment in Montreal and I had hoped to be able to access Toronto very easily from there (it being so much closer than Edmonton) but in classic “new mother” fashion I had drastically underestimated the impact that a new baby would have on my life. Although I had many contacts in Toronto and at other points would have been happy to couch-surf or stay in hostels, I discovered that these options are not viable with a newborn; my contacts did not want to accommodate a baby, and I refused to hostel-hop with her.

To complicate matters, I discovered three days after we arrived in Montreal that I was pregnant again, so I spent a good deal of the planned fieldwork time trying not to throw up. A trip to Toronto was as distant as a trip to the moon. I did eventually make it back to Toronto in a different trip, but money was very tight at that point with two young babies, and I simply could not afford to stay longer than a week. In one sense the Toronto trip was a bit of a formality, a chance to put faces to names, as I had been corresponding with some of them and following the RCC email communications for years already. I also got to reconnect with a couple of contacts I had known for years. Following my trip to Toronto, I made an effort to connect with the RCC via email and Facebook; to read everything that was posted to the Facebook page, to follow all the links, to really understand the dialogue as it was being instigated by Gina at the RCC.

I realize that my Toronto fieldwork component is unusually short for an ethnography of this nature, but it was simply unavoidable given my life situation, and I made every effort to supplement the fieldwork with long-distance communications and media releases. Most importantly however, I feel that, given limited access to the Toronto Roma community, access to the RCC (even remotely) was the most useful thing I could have done given the focus of this research on purposeful identity creation. My Toronto field research does not necessarily indicate, then, the identity of the “average” Roma in Toronto (if such a person exists) but rather the more formal and very public

representations that my Toronto Roma contacts shared with me in their official or unofficial roles as Roma representatives of the Roma Community Centre: Gina Csanyi-Robah, Lynn Hutchinson Lee, Gyongyi Hamori, Tamas Banya, Micheal Butch, and Peter Ferencs. In addition to interviews with these people, I went to a rally, visited the RCC and its partner CultureLink, went to Romani dance classes, visited a provincial resource centre to speak to a social worker who worked with the new Roma, hung out in Tim Horton's with refugees, and saw a Romani food bank distribution. In the sense that both Gypsy music and Romani culture are being purposefully created, disseminated, and strategically marketed, the RCC in Toronto was the best place in Toronto that I could be.

Montreal, "City of Festivals"², supports a variety of "Gypsy" music of different geographic origins: Balkan Gypsy music from Bulgaria, flamenco Gypsy music from Spain, Gypsy jazz from France, Gypsy rock from North America, and so on. It does not have a formal Roma community centre, but finding the "Gypsy musicians"—who, after all, have a financial interest in being found—was a simple process, although it did orient me towards the financially successful groups, since the more technologically capable or business-minded musicians were much more quick to respond than the musicians who were not invested in promotion or social networking. (I waited five months, for example, to connect with Soleil Tzigane, who didn't return my emails and seemed to operate largely by word of mouth.) Many of the musicians performing Gypsy music were not, in fact, Roma, so it was interesting to see the ways in which the music and culture were learned and disseminated, and it led to some fascinating discussions regarding identity, appropriation, authenticity, hybridity, and lived realities.

Toronto has many more Roma than Montreal, but far fewer professional music groups. It seems to be in a perpetual boom-and-bust cycle with the Roma refugees, who arrive in waves—dependent on factors such as visa restrictions and word-of-mouth networking—and are often sent back in waves. Currently, the majority of new arrivals are from Hungary. There are a few Roma in the city who work in the music industry, but with the possible exception of Robi Botos, an established jazz musician, most of them operate at a fairly low profile, gigging infrequently and lacking the extensive professional networks utilized by most of the Montreal musicians. The reasons for this are not clear: possibilities include Toronto's less arts-oriented culture, or it could be reflective of the fact that many of the Toronto Roma are new arrivals, unfamiliar with both the English language and the networking techniques necessary to promote their music successfully in Canada. It may be simply that Toronto is not a poor venue for Gypsy music, but rather that Montreal is an excellent venue, over and above other Canadian cities for the marketing of live professional music.

²"Montreal is known worldwide for the quality of its festivals.....This phenomenon has generated a bevy of cultural, economic, and tourist benefits unseen anywhere else in North America..."
http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?_pageid=4517,7008714&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL
L)

The Toronto Roma from all countries of arrival are united by the Roma Cultural Centre, or RCC, which has an office on Bloor Street West. The RCC was begun in 1997 with a great amount of input from Ronald Lee, a prominent Canadian Romani activist. It expanded in 2011 into a dedicated office space and is staffed by Roma and non-Roma volunteers four days a week. The RCC's primary mandate is to provide support for the newly arrived Roma, in many cases by liaising between them and Canada's bureaucracy, but it also functions as a resource for educators, media, and researchers. It is now run by a Board of Directors with Gina Csanyi-Robah as Executive Director, and Ronald Lee as Vice Chairperson.

In the multi-ethnic towns and cities of North America, Roma simply vanished into the mass of a multi-ethnic population, something they cannot do in Europe where they exist in huge numbers. In Canada, non-Romani Canadians began to believe we had become extinct! Today, only public figures, like a handful of activists in civil rights, artists, etc. are known to be Roma." (Lee 2006)

As Lee states, there are only a few Roma in Canada— advocates and educators— who have both an online presence coupled with any interest in fielding questions from outsiders and researchers. It is these advocates who are primarily responsible for pulling the Canadian Roma out of anonymity, seeking recognition of the issues they face nationally and globally.

In Montreal, the "Gypsy musicians" are very successfully popularizing the "Gypsies" (however that is imagined by the Canadian populace), but there is a pronounced disassociation between the goals and strategies of the Montreal and Toronto groups. At the same time, however, there is a great deal of symbiosis as each group relies on the other for survival, whether they have articulated this need or not.

Establishing the tenets of "Canadian Roma" and "Gypsy musicians"

Ten years ago, I was studying for a Master's degree in music education focused on Kodály methodology, and it was in this framework that I began to study Romani traditional song in its oppositional role to the highly structured and theory-based approach of Western classical music. As a product of a classical music education, I was shocked that musicians could achieve such a high level of proficiency without musical literacy or a formal learning system; as a music educator, I was open to non-mainstream teaching techniques that could be adapted to Canadian schools to produce better and more engaged musicians.

On a historical level, I was fascinated by Romani history, or rather the lack thereof, in the way that such a large and well-travelled people had survived for a thousand years with almost no documentation, either chronicled by themselves or by other people, such as might be found in church records (marriages, births, and burials), historical

narratives, literature written by members of their own culture, and so on. The combination of widespread illiteracy, nomadism, and marginalization resulted in near-invisibility from an historical perspective, and much of the information about Roma for the last 500 years has been pieced together from sporadic documents such as slave auction notices and legal transgressions. I was also intrigued by the degree of fragmentation that had occurred in diaspora and the great many narratives or dialogues in which the participants struggled to delineate, define, and disseminate their vastly diverse experiences of “Gypsy” or Gypsy music.

After having read not nearly enough books about modern “Roma” or “Gypsy” traditional music and culture, all based on European Roma (there were at that time no Canadian publications) I set off with a tape recorder to find “traditional Gypsy music” in Canada.

About a year later, I concluded that the project had failed according to its original parameters. Not only did I not find Gypsy or Romani music that was “traditionally transmitted”—I had visions of the local Roma sitting in their kitchens swapping songs, like Irish house parties (Glassie 1995)—but I also found precious few traditions. (Apparently the Canadian Roma and I had not read the same books regarding their traditions.) Where were the enclaves, the communal cooking pots, the aversion to cats (which, because they lick themselves, are supposedly considered “unclean”, *marhime*), or the cultural barriers towards outsiders? Where, for that matter, was the Romani language? My contacts were (to me) disappointingly Canadian in seemingly every sense. A number of them owned cats, which were hard to ignore as they either adored or mauled me during interviews according to inscrutable feline nature. Almost none of my contacts spoke the Romani language in any dialect, and almost all of them were married to non-Roma (*gadze*), which, according to the European publications, happens only rarely due to the great cultural and socioeconomic distance between Roma and non-Roma.

It undoubtedly sounds very naïve to say that I was shocked by the disconnect between European scholarship and the lived reality in Canada, but that is the uncomfortable truth. The scenarios described in the literature from Hungary, Albania, Romania, Spain, and so on, were so far removed from the Canadian experience as to be ludicrous. Either the publications were largely fictional—this seemed unlikely—or the Canadian Roma were radically different from their European counterparts. Once I accepted “the Canadian Roma” as a valid category—albeit with newer and less traditional structures than seen in older societies across Europe—then it became clear that much of the existing literature in the field of Romani studies, predominantly European in origin, simply did not apply to the Canadian experience.

In my doctorate degree, I began a larger investigation into the Romani musical community, going further abroad to Montreal and Toronto, as the Vancouver

community was largely defunct, or at least too widely scattered to be viable for research, by that time. What I found in arts-oriented Montreal surprised me again, in that most of the Gypsy music there is supplied by musicians who are not Roma in any sense. Further, the purposefully created public identities of the musicians are so ambiguous and situationally dependent that, from an audience perspective, it is largely impossible to differentiate the Roma from the non-Roma. Certainly non-Roma Brigette Daczer, with her dark colouring and long skirts, has a much more “Gypsy” onstage presence than Carmen Piculeata, a Romanian Roma with blue eyes and fair hair, who performs in t-shirts and cargo shorts.

It must be made clear at the beginning of this publication that it is not possible to speak in terms of a “transnational Romani musical identity”. It is only barely possible to speak of a Romani national or transnational identity, and this emergent, very contentious identity is largely predicated on the need for advocacy and human rights reforms among the host countries rather than on shared linguistic, religious, cultural, or musical traditions. The only way that it is possible to speak with some authority about Gypsy music is within a fixed geographical boundary, such as “Bulgarian Romani music”, or “Greek Gypsy music”, and so on, and these traditions are fairly well documented in academic literature (Keil and Kiel 2002; Beissinger 2001; Pettan 1996; Lange 2003; and so on). However, the sense of Canadian “Gypsy” music is still largely derivative of its European ancestry—particularly the Eastern Europe countries such as Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, and so on—and is not at all well established in the public imagination.

“Gypsy” versus “Roma”: What’s in a name?

Just like the Blacks, Inuit or the Native Americans, the Roma also wish to be called by a name of their own, rather than one given to them by their oppressors. They prefer that everyone call them “Roma” which means “people” in their own Romani language.³ “The word “Gypsy” is considered by the Roma to be very derogatory, since it denotes a nomadic, unsettled or even criminal lifestyle... In addition the term denotes a lifestyle rather than an ethnic group.” “For the last thirty years the Europeans have abandoned the term “gypsy”. They now prefer to use the word ROMA [sic] in all media and written

³ Strictly speaking, the word “Rom” refers to a *male* person, while the word for a *female* person is “Romni”. “Roma”, the plural, conflates male and female persons into a single male-dominant group in the same way that English speakers use the masculine word “mankind” to refer to all people. In Canada, nationality is identified by the gender-neutral word “Canadian” (“I am Canadian”), but in fieldwork, my contacts who were women generally identified as specifically “Romni” rather than “Roma”. This can be seen in Esma Redzepova’s preface to “Dzelem dzelem”, with “Si ma Romni” (“I am a Romani woman”) (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UilcfHO_Z3g&feature=related).

communications. (Western Canada Romani Alliance independent publication, no date)

The discourses surrounding the labels of “Gypsy” and “Roma” are complicated and could easily fill a dissertation of their own. Generally, these are the two words used in English-language discussions of the group as a transnational entity, conflating the subgroups of different countries such as the Sinti (Germany), Kale (Spain), Kalderash (Eastern Europe), Romanichels (England) and so on. The movement towards a pan-Romani identity began in London in the 1970s with the first International Romani Congress, attended by Roma representatives from around the world (Gheorghe and Mirga 2001). One of the steps in this process was the purposeful rejection of the name “Gypsy” (a derivative of the word “Egipcani”, meaning “Egyptian”, from which country it was thought, for centuries, that the Roma originated) on the basis that it was both factually incorrect and fraught with pejorative connotations.

There are two main stereotypes surrounding the word “Gypsy”, dependent on geographical location. Gheorghe and Mirga argue that since the Roma have never constituted a significant part of the population in Western Europe (with the exception of Spain) as they have in Central and Eastern Europe, the capitalism of Western Europe allowed room for nomadic Roma as “marginal groups”. By contrast, Central and Eastern Europe maintained their feudal types of economies, requiring “a large, coerced labour force” for which the Roma were drafted in large numbers.

These differences across Europe gave birth to contrasting stereotypes of the Roma: in the Western context “Gypsies” means nomadic, traveling, or migrant, whereas in the Central and Eastern context, the corresponding terms, “Tsigani” or “Cigany,” imply socially subordinate, impoverished, and marginal groups (Gheorghe and Mirga 2001). North America is not mentioned in this schema, but the “Gypsy” stereotype conforms much more closely to the Western European model than the Eastern European one, which is not surprising considering that Canada and the United States were largely settled by Western Europeans, notably the English and the French.

Used by a Romani person, identification as “Gypsy” is equally as purposeful a statement as “Roma”, implying a rejection or disassociation from “Roma” identity or of some part of the transnational platform (such as perceived pretentiousness, political involvement, or a unified culture).⁴ “Gypsy” used by non-Roma often indicates, simply, lack of

⁴ The idea of nationality that is linked to individual choice or behaviour rather than external authority is also mentioned by Hobsbawm in his discussion of the United States, in which it is possible to be “un-American” through personal actions. This idea of choice contrasts with other societies such as France, in which one could be a traitorous Frenchman, but still French. Hobsbawm suggests that the new type of nationalism is a result of the personal decision required to immigrate to the new country from Europe; in other words, from the purposeful choice to “be” American (Hobsbawm 1992: 280). This is strikingly similar to the situation of the present-day Roma in Canada, in which identification stems not from geographical location but rather

knowledge of the Romani nationalist movement. When used adjectivally by non-Roma in North America (such as “I have a Gypsy soul”), it generally has positive and Romantic-era connotations such as “sensitive, artistic, nomadic, passionate”. (When used adjectivally by non-Roma in Europe, the connotations are very different— “thieving, lying, cheating, dirty”—which was the impetus for the name change to “Roma” in the first place). And of course it is important to remember that “Gypsy” and “Roma” are sometimes used interchangeably: Whether the speakers intend the words to be synonyms or antonyms, or both, at different times, is sometimes but not always clear from context.

Musically, the word “Gypsy” is well known, and signifies a market “brand” which is unlikely to disappear in the near future, particularly since it has not been specifically targeted for name change like that of the people themselves. Like “Roma”, however, the word “Gypsy” is vastly heterogeneous and resistant to simplification. In English-language discourse in Canada, both academic and colloquial, the two are commonly conflated, and their separation for discussion purposes would be an artificial and pointless academic exercise. Even within the parameters laid out in this publication regarding the use of “Roma/Gypsy” and “Gypsy musician”, it is not only possible, but likely, to encounter the following scenarios in Canada: a Roma musician who plays non-Romani music; a Roma musician who plays Gypsy music; a non-Roma musician who plays Gypsy music; or a Gypsy (Roma or non-Roma, in the literary sense of a “free spirit”) who plays Gypsy music. It is also possible—given the nature of flexible identity and especially considering that a large number of Roma in Canada have only one Romani parent or grandparent—that all of these scenarios could be enacted by a single person over a period of time. These words are tremendously ambiguous and not likely to become fixed at any point in the near future regardless of the efforts of activists, academics, politicians, and nationalists.

Forty years after the first International Romani Congress, use of the word “Gypsy” has waned and “Roma” has been disseminated with moderate success; it has entered the vocabulary of the intellectual and political elite around the world, but its usage in common parlance is ambiguous. As Fonseca states, “...many Gypsies like the term Gypsy (rather in the way that “queer” is back in fashion among homosexuals), because they are defiant, not ashamed, and also because they don’t believe a new name will change the way people see them.” (Fonseca 1995: 228) Marian-Balasa found active opposition to the word “Roma” (Marian-Balasa 2002: 250), and Beissinger states that Romanian *lautari* (professional Roma musicians), although largely indifferent to the

from purposeful affiliation or re-affiliation, in cases in which the Roma culture has been lost and is being reclaimed.

“Roma”/“Gypsy” debate, preferred “Gypsy” (“tiganesti” in Romanian) as they felt that “Roma” was primarily an academic term used by intellectuals (Beissinger 2001:46).

During my Montreal fieldwork, I was warned by my primary contact that using the word “Roma” would mark me as pretentious (Interview with Carmen Piculeata, July 2008) so I tried to be both sensitive and quick regarding the purposeful self-identity of the individual speakers. Generally I favoured “Roma” as it felt disrespectful to use “Gypsy” in light of all the advocacy publications I had read, unless it became clear that my contact favoured “Gypsy”. The individuals who used “Gypsy” exclusively were, for the most part, largely disassociated from Romani transnational concerns. Among my Canadian Romani contacts, some people preferred the word “Gypsy”, some preferred “Roma”, and some used the words interchangeably, even within the same sentence.

Because the umbrella term of “Roma” is largely subjective and situationally dependent with no regulatory body, yet deeply significant at a political and economic level—particularly internationally, with the increase of specialized funding and initiatives for the Roma as European Union hopefuls attempt to clean up their human rights records (the United Nations Development Program report of 2002 was commissioned by five such countries wishing to ameliorate their “Gypsy problem”)—it is common for conflicts to arise regarding group membership and representation. Hemetek documents the non-acknowledgment of some Roma groups by other Roma groups (Hemetek 2006: 49) In some cases, disagreements may arise about which group should represent the transnational body as a whole (Gheorghe and Mirga 2001), or, as the Romani language inches towards standardization, which dialect should be chosen to represent the whole, knowing that the native speakers of that dialect would have an advantage over other Roma. Debbie Folaron, a Translation Studies professor who deals extensively with Romani dialects, has pointed out that even choosing which dialect to learn is a political act in itself (Interview with Debbie Folaron, November 2009).

All of this discourse surrounding Roma inclusivity is new in the last forty years. The Roma themselves control much of the narrative now, with in-group membership at least partially controlled by Roma subgroups and individuals rather than by mainstream society. Also, voluntary and purposeful affiliation has the new potential to bring benefits both to the individuals and the subgroups as Romani activists increasingly bring Romani issues to the attention of international politics and transnational NGOs.⁵

⁵ The UNDP, however, believes that Europe’s Roma population is still significantly underreported, citing examples of affluent Roma who are less likely to identify as “Roma” (UNDP 2002: 23). For the UNDP statisticians, self-identification is nearly always accepted as proof of ethnicity, which is not the case for other groups. “This suggests that interviewers perceive Roma to be such a stigmatized group that no one would claim to be Roma if s/he were not” (UNDP 2002: 24) Another source states that Yugoslavia “officially” has 150,000 Roma, but unofficial estimates are closer to 500,000. (Ristic 2001: No page)

Within the international Romani community, Gheorghe and Mirga note two main oppositional uses of the word "Roma".

The first is that of the Romani elites themselves; it is a "political" tendency that stresses unity of the Romani culture, society, and interests. The second, mostly present in academic studies, underlines a "mosaic" type of Romani culture and society in all its dimensions and thus stresses the differences. The reality of the Roma, then, is a complex one, multilayered and containing both differences and commonalities. (Gheorghe and Mirga 2001)

In the political sense, then, "Romani" can be read as a state of mind as well as a noun, implying an acknowledgement of national aspirations and progress towards a common goal. To identify as "Roma", rather than by the more historically traditional manner of subgroup or family (such as "Kalderash", "Romungre", and so on), is to knowingly enter the forum of Romani politics with its mandate of human rights and political recognition.⁶ For a movement with meagre resources, a voluntary and widespread unification of "Romani culture, society and interests" (Gheorghe and Mirga 2001) would be a strong political asset on the international stage.

However, as Gheorghe and Mirga point out, the academia is more interested in the diversity of the Roma than their homogeneity. Certainly the concept of group inclusivity poses serious problems in ethnomusicology, where the very existence of the term "Roma" implies the existence of a body of "Romani" music, for example one that had been created by an alliance of different Romani cultures and societies in the same manner as the "Roma" people themselves. This is currently a non-viable concept for two main reasons. First, it is important to remember that the "Roma" political movement was based largely on a shared *lack* of commonalities associated with mainstream society, and the oppositional status (marginalization and human rights abuses) that took place as a result.⁷ When this opposition and persecution stops, as in Australia, it is tempting to wonder what might emerge as the new commonalities, or even whether the lack of opposition will destroy the impetus for nationhood (Lee 1997).

⁶ In fact Tamas Banya pointed out to me that he and most of the Hungarian Roma in Toronto were not considered "real" Roma at all in Hungary; they were from a group called "Romungre", which has been heavily mixed with local non-Roma Hungarians. This group has lost their language and, according to Tamas, are neither "Roma" enough to associate with the Hungarian Roma group, nor Hungarian enough to be accepted by the non-Roma. However, all dialogue in Canada uses the word "Roma" rather than "Romungre". (Interview with Tamas Banya, February 2012)

⁷ The UNDP states that, although they realize that the Roma have been persecuted since their arrival in Western Europe in the 15th C, their goal is to understand the persecution from the more recent historical perspective of the rise of nation-states, in which "rejection of *otherness* is a major element..." (UNDP 2002: 13)

Secondly, the word “Roma” itself is still fairly new and not universally recognized despite great efforts; changing the “Gypsy” label in music, which to the best of my knowledge has been the focus of no efforts at all, will surely take much longer. Although it is possible that, over time and assuming the continued influence of transnational organizations, an established body of transnational “Romani” music might arise somewhat organically; the implication would likely be that of a purposefully represented nationalism. In Canada one sees isolated examples of “Romani music”, in the spirit of pan-Romani inclusion and a self-aware sense of nationalism, but the repertoire is neither large nor well-disseminated. In the meantime, “Gypsy” remains the working label for the musical products.

Literature review

This research is informed by several different areas of literature of relevance to Romani music, arts, and identity in Canada. Expanding the project past the strict parameters of ethnomusicology, this research draws on nationalism and transnationalism as they relate to the task of situating the transnational Romani nation inside of the relative new Canadian nation; Canadian and Romani studies, as they contribute to the discourse of culture, multiculturalism, cultural transmission, and cultural tradition; and applied ethnomusicology, for its contributions to advocacy and human rights concerns, which are a foundational tenet of the Romani nation. Other contributions are made from political science (Vermeersch 2005; Benhabib 2002); sociology (Gheorghe 1997; Bannerji 2000); Canadian studies (Mackey 1999); Romani studies (Hancock 2006); applied ethnomusicology (Hemetek 2006); applied anthropology (Scheffel 2005; Tax 1958); and philosophy (Potter 2010).

This project was originally conceived within the framework of Diaspora Studies as that might inform inquiry into areas such as migration, boundary maintenance, authenticity, assimilation, and transformation, particularly within arts communities, yet I found this model on closer examination to be unsatisfactory. The Romani music entry for the *New Grove Dictionary of Music*, written by Carol Silverman, a reputable ethnomusicologist and scholar in Romani studies, classifies them as a diaspora group (2001), yet I argue that this is an incomplete model for the Roma because the term “Diaspora” generally presupposes elements of an original homeland and common memory, both of which are almost entirely absent in Romani communities around the world. For this research, I favour the emergent and less exclusive framework of Transnational Studies to situate the Roma in a global context. The transition from “Diaspora” to “Transnational” is easy; both Cohen (1997) and Clifford (1997) conflate the two areas to some degree, while O’Byrne and Hensby (2011) engage in dialogue between the classic ideologies of diaspora and transnationalism, as well as providing theoretical frameworks for further discussion of transnationalism.

As we explore the broad idea of musical identity within a diaspora or transnational group, concepts such as boundary maintenance, cultural essentialization, authenticity, tradition, and assimilation enter the discourse. Chong (2006) posits authenticity as an end goal rather than a process or inherent quality, while Hoefnagels (2007) discusses “tradition” as a process with an end goal of perpetuating a male-dominated hegemony, and Wrazen (2005) examines the ways in which musical change occurs within diaspora.

Within Canada, as within other nations, the forces of globalization act to commodify ethnic products, to which music is no exception. This process is discussed by Mason (2001), who examines the musical aspect of tourism as a commodified experience, and Abu-Laban and Gabriel (2002), who examine the ways in which Canadian neo-liberalism has been instrumental in redefining “ethnic” as “product” under the auspices of official multiculturalism. Mackey (1999) and Bannerji (2000) argue that multiculturalism is a nation-building strategy that works to reinforce the dominant hegemony, while Stein (2007) treat it differently, as a means of defusing ethnic tensions and promoting true equality in a diverse society. Benhabib (2002) posits multiculturalism as morally wrong, stating that cultural essentialization should not have to take place in order to assure basic human rights. Canadian Studies literature helps to situate the Roma within the context of Canadian nationalism, particularly regarding immigration, multiculturalism and social mobility, and the ways in which these factors inform the discourse of Canadian Romani musical identity. This literature also serves further to situate Canadian Romani music, as it arrives and changes in diaspora, between its European ancestry and the influential media industry of the United States.

The Romani literature supporting this research is drawn from several areas. Ethnomusicologists have examined various aspects of Romani music, usually specific to one country or community: the Hungarian Pentecostal Roma (Lange 2003); professional Greek Romani musicians (Keil and Keil 2002); professional Romanian Romani musicians (Beissinger 2001); Austrian Roma (Hemetek 2004). Overviews of “Romani music” (spanning multiple countries) are rare, probably due to the extreme diversity caused by assimilation with local sounds in each specific area. There are more publications dealing with Roma in European countries than in North America, and there are no academic publications at all concerning the Roma in Canada, in the field of ethnomusicology or any other.

Borrow, one of the earliest folklorists to study the Roma and highly influential in the field, documented the Romani language and some of the folklore in England (1907). He was part of a wave of interest in the Roma, or Gypsies as they were called at that time, which led to publications such as the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* (1888-1892; 1907-1916; 1922-1973; 1974-1982), now renamed *Romani Studies* (2000-present). Both the *JGLS* and *Romani Studies* are interdisciplinary journals that address a wide range of topics about Roma around the world. For more comprehensive historical and cultural overviews of the Roma, one turns to Fraser (1995), Kenrick (1993), or Hancock (2002). It

is also possible to find smaller publications among journals of various disciplines, such as anthropology and linguistics, which deal with the Roma; as with ethnomusicology, these studies tend to focus on one particular group and aspect.

Publications about the Roma often incline towards the social advocacy/ activism angle, which is perhaps not surprising since poverty and human rights abuses comprise a well-established, if not positive, facet of Romani group identity (Gheorghe 1997; Vermeersch 2005; UNDP 2002; Toth 2010). Hemetek (2006) found that it was very difficult to study Roma communities without engaging in social advocacy, and Scheffel, a Canadian anthropologist, documents the difficulties of applied research under the auspices of a CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) grant to improve conditions among the Slovak Roma (2005). Fonseca's ethnology, while not ostensibly aimed at advocacy, nevertheless arrives there as a final destination (1995). Literature on the politics of representation among minority or refugee groups can be found from Malkki, who argues that humanitarian practices can work to silence refugees by excluding their right to speak for themselves (1996), while Razack (2007) believes that objectification and consumption of the oppressed can lead to obliteration. Tax (1958) found that representatives for the Fox Indians needed to be mindful of the individuals' rights to establish their own cultural identity, even if the identity they wanted was that of a non-Indian.

Literature on nationalism is divided here into two categories: the theoretical and the action-based. Anderson (1983), Gellner (1983/2006) and Guibernau (2002), who examine the nation-state and its feasibility, comprise an important part of the former. While Gellner believes implicitly in the inevitability of its success, Benhabib (2002) and Guibernau argue that we require new paradigms to replace the nation-state, which is rapidly becoming archaic in an era of globalization. For a musical perspective, both Daughtry (2003) and Anderson examine the importance of the anthem in the nation-building process.

The literature on nationalism that deals specifically with the Roma focuses mainly on action-based nationalism, and the correlated field of action studies, focusing on the needs and voices of the group. Ervin (2000) and Benhabib (2002) both argue for a "bottom-up" approach to policy making, reducing the risks of patriarchal dominance through the processes of reflexivity and direct engagement in problem-solving. Malkki (1996) examines the ways in which outside representations of refugee populations serve to take away their histories and individuality. Chambers and Chambers (2002) believe that repatriation of materials should be an intrinsic part of fieldwork, and urge caution in the process as it is easy to change the culture that is studied.

In Romani activism (which in some cases is synonymous to Romani nationalism), both Hemetek (2006) and Scheffel (2005) find that work among the Roma is much more successful if one is willing to act as an advocate. Vermeersch (2005) and Gheorghe

(1997) promote Romani interests by arguing strongly for the eradication of cultural essentialization, urging Romani groups to change their public identities from a “victim” image to one with more positive attributes.

Ethnomusicological publications tend to focus on specific Romani groups. Lange (2003) examines the ways in which the lower-class Hungarian Roma are currently being subsumed into the egalitarian Pentecostal Church; Beissinger (2001) argues for the existence of a third class of Roma, that of musicians, who consider themselves neither Roma nor Gadze (non-Roma); Keil and Keil (2002) examine the socioeconomic status of Romani musicians in Greece; and Marian-Balasa (2002) looks at the songs of incarcerated Romanian Roma

Discourses of authenticity are represented here by Borrow (1907), one of the earliest “Gypsy” scholars, who searched for the “authentic” Gypsy language while simultaneously prophesying its disappearance. Kertesz-Wilkinson (1992), like Borrow, searches for “authentic” Gypsy music, with herself as the arbiter of authenticity. Gropper and Miller (2001), in their study of Macvaia Roma in the United States, question the rights of outside scholars to define who is a “real” Gypsy, and to define the centre and periphery of any given culture. Silverman (1988) and Pettan (1996) both find that one of the main survival strategies of the Roma is that of a flexible identity.

Literature about Canada is provided by Burnett and Palmer (1988), who provide a historical overview about the history of multiculturalism in Canada. Li (1999) problematizes the concept of multiculturalism, arguing that one of its main uses is symbolic, and Stein (2007) coins the term “multiculturalism light”, the sharing of non-problematic cultural goods such as food and dance while avoiding potential areas of conflict. Issues of essentialization and cultural “othering” are addressed by Mackey (1999), who situates “other” against a larger framework of a (primarily white suburban) “Canadian-Canadian” population, and also situates Canadian identity against that of the United States, which is a theme echoed by Corse (1997) in her review of creative literature in the two countries. Benhabib (2002) posits multiculturalism as morally wrong, stating that cultural essentialization should not have to take place in order to assure basic human rights, and Chapman in Stokes (1994) discusses the creation of a mythical “Celtic” place, afforded by the temporal distance between the original Celtic culture and its revival.

There is very little literature available concerning the Roma in Canada, past or present. With the exception of Lee’s autobiographical novel (1971) and Conway’s thesis on the Czech Roma refugees (Conway 2011), it is limited to a handful of pamphlet-style publications produced by the Romani Cultural Centre of Toronto, aimed at advocacy among a general audience (Chirikli Collective 2011; Sijercic 1999; Western Canadian Romani Alliance pamphlet “Call us Roma, Not Gypsies!”, no date). A handful of Romani authors have made their mark in academia: Ronald Lee in Canada (1971; 2005; 2006;

2009) and Ian Hancock in the United States (2002; 2006; 2007) are well-known in North America, and in the European Union, Romani-born academics such as Gheorghe (1997; 2001) have achieved an international reputation. There is no literature at all concerning either “Gypsy” or “Romani” music in Canada, although there are a great number of “Gypsy” music recordings of Canadian origin. This publication will be the first in this area.

For coverage of current events and issues facing Canada’s Roma, a great deal of national and local news media (such as *The Globe and Mail*, *The Toronto Star*, *Maclean’s Magazine*, *CBC*) have been included in this research. Although news media are not a common component of academic publications, I believe that it is relevant in this situation as the articles are used by the Canadian Romani community itself to inform a great deal of their actions, reactions, and publically disseminated identities.⁸ Entertainment media have been added to this project on the basis that they play an essential role in creating and disseminating the role of “Gypsies” throughout North America.

Fieldwork: Methodology

Although the publications inform the theory for this project, ultimately it relied on fieldwork to attain a deeper level of understanding about “Gypsy musicians” in Canada. Since my initial contacts with the Romani communities were primarily Romani advocates and educators, specifically Ronald Lee in Toronto and Mario Ines-Torres in Vancouver during my Master’s degree, I anticipated a large focus on the applied functions of music (such as awareness, advocacy, and education) within the Romani communities. Also, my first experience with fieldwork in my doctorate was at Romani Yag 2007, with its emphasis on advocacy.

⁸ The same conclusion was found by Alana Conway, who also used a number of media sources in her 2011 thesis *Examining the “Illegitimate” Refugee Label: A Case Study of Roma Refugee Claimants in Canada, 2008-2009*.



Figure 1: (L-R) Melaena Allen-Trottier, Ronald Lee, Hedina Sijercic, Philippe Caignon, Ljuba Radman. Romani Yag Symposium, Montreal, October 2007. Photo credit: Debbie Folaron.

However, in practice this did not occur: Ronald, although still active to some degree with the RCC, has largely retired from activist efforts; Mario had fled to Mexico ahead of deportation orders (and the Vancouver group, as far as I could tell, was largely defunct); and there seemed to be no single points of contact in Montreal at all, let alone anyone who was interested in Romani nationalist concerns. My Montreal contacts were musicians first and foremost, largely uninterested in Romani activism, preferring to focus instead on their professional music careers, and the Roma who I met who were not professional musicians (such as Adrian Wersch and Lelissa Savic, university students, and Philippe Caignon, a professor) were equally uninterested in political activism. The core group at the RCC in Toronto, of course, was much more globally and politically engaged, quick to see the applied uses of Romani music such as the anthem, but there were far fewer musicians, and far less “Roma” or “Gypsy” music than in Montreal.

In general, the two cities seemed to exist almost independently of each other; my contacts in one had little knowledge of individuals in the other. In my search for a “Canadian Roma” musical and cultural identity I was almost desperate to establish ties or find a meta-narrative linking the two cities so that I could extrapolate something--or anything--into a “Canadian” perspective, but my questions and probing got me almost

nowhere. The individuals in the two groups, it seemed, had so little contact with each other that I couldn't get any information even when I asked slightly loaded questions like "How many Roma, or Gypsy musicians, do you know in Toronto?" (which assumes the knowledge of at least some). The answers were almost uniformly: "None." Even Ronald Lee, my first and best hope, who had been active in Romani communities across Canada for decades, knew almost no one in Montreal except Carmen Piculeata. It is faintly possible, and I considered the possibility at first, that individuals were concealing contact information from me as a way of keeping the communities more secretive, but since these were the same individuals who were freely introducing me to local members of the community, this idea seemed far-fetched and dramatic. The Canadian Roma whom I met were not, by and large, interested in overt boundary maintenance; rather they were interested in networking, and were very open to multicultural collaborations, which I believe is largely how my own project was viewed.

Ethnomusicologists studying Romani music in European countries such as Greece (Keil 2002), Romania (Beissinger 2001), or Kosovo (Pettan 1996), where the Roma have been settled for centuries, have the opportunity to observe reasonably stratified societies with clearly established traditions and social mores. By contrast, Canada allows a great deal of mobility within social strata, and, importantly, is a popular refugee destination for Roma of many countries. In the entirety of my fieldwork, I met only one individual whose family had been in Canada for several generations and conformed to the idea of Romani "purity" (i.e., isolation from mainstream society) with associated musical traditions (Interview with Micheal Butch, February 2012). Most of my other interviewees were fairly new to Canada.

The fieldwork consisted of four trips over several years: Three to Montreal, between 2007-2010, for a total of seven months, and a one-week trip to Toronto in 2012 to meet people at the Roma Community Centre. During my fieldwork I attended concerts, took accordion lessons, interviewed Romani and Gypsy musicians and non-musicians, and went to as many Romani gatherings as I could find. In 2007 I was able to attend a four-day "Gypsy Festival" called *Romani Yag* and in 2012 I participated in a candlelight vigil to protest Bill C-31, a proposed amendment to the immigration laws which would severely limit Canada's acceptance of Hungarian Roma refugees.

Languages were a perplexing aspect of the fieldwork. There is no institute in North America that teaches the Romani language, so I studied it from a textbook (Kalderash/Vlax dialect, Lee 2005) for a year, and then spent the summer of 2009 studying in Montreal with Carmen Piculeata, a Romanian Romani speaker of the same dialect. I had also studied French as a requirement of the degree program, but my Romani and French were not terribly useful among my contacts, as I found very few Romani speakers in Montreal, and those who spoke French generally also spoke English. In retrospect, I would have done better to study Romanian, Bulgarian, or Hungarian, although there was no way to know that at the time. Romani is now (at the time of

writing, 2012) spoken among the Toronto Roma—although not as widely as Hungarian—but at the time of my fieldwork in 2009, the Toronto Roma were not nearly so populous and my Romani would probably not have been very useful there either. Also, it was clear during fieldwork that Romani individuals were sometimes switching into the Romani language to avoid eavesdropping by outsiders (me), so volunteering the information that I could speak the language seemed like a poor idea. This might have changed if I had been able to stay in Toronto longer and build a certain amount of trust and rapport with the group at large, but throughout the fieldwork I did not feel like my hard-won knowledge of the Romani language gave me any added advantage during fieldwork. At Café Sarajevo in Montreal, the de facto Roma community centre, the *lingua franca* was French, and at the RCC in Toronto, Hungarian and English shared the rights to public communications

From about 2010 and up until the date of this publication in 2013, the bulk of the Toronto refugees originate from Hungary, although of course there are individuals from other countries also, like the Czech Republic. Many of the Hungarians, like Tamas Banya, are Romungre, a Roma group which has lost its language in Hungary and is locally considered by both Hungarian Roma and non-Roma to be “other” (Interview with Tamas Banya, February 2012).⁹ Although in Hungary the Romungre and Roma distinguish between the groups and tend not to associate greatly, individuals from both groups end up at the RCC in Toronto after immigration to Canada because they are uniformly made to feel unwelcome at Toronto’s Hungarian House, the non-profit organization which assists ethnic Hungarians (Interview with Tamas Banya, February 2012, Interview with Gyongyi Hamori, February 2012). Regardless of the divisions that separate them from the linguistically-enabled Roma in Hungary, the Romungre become part of the “Canadian Roma” in Toronto, if not necessarily in the community but certainly as far as social services, outreach, and advocacy efforts that are run through the RCC.

As a result of vast migrations from this group in recent years, the two main languages in use at the RCC right now are Hungarian and English. Romani is also spoken, and Czech, and at the candlelight vigil to protest Bill C-31, the grievances of the Roma were being sent through the megaphone in many different languages. Although the overall result was that the rally was consciously inclusive and understandable to a greater number of people, there were 200 people standing in the dark on a wet and chilly February evening waiting for each sentence to be translated over and over again. The necessary details of inclusion detracted, I felt, from the emotive and powerful nature of the project, and this could be considered a metaphor of sorts for the practical difficulties of nation-building among linguistic or cultural diversities.

⁹ Lange (2003) has written an excellent publication about the impact of Pentecostalism on this group in Hungary.

Initially the scope of the project included both qualitative and quantitative information: the approximate number of Roma in each city (allowing for an emic definition of who was “Roma”), and the most common countries of origin. Initially, of course, my only goal was to find out if there were indeed any Roma in Canada outside of Toronto, and what kind of dissertation would result from the Roma and “Gypsy musicians” of Toronto and Montreal. The RCC was well documented online, but, from Edmonton, I couldn’t find any online presence of Gypsy music coming out of Toronto. Conversely, there was a great deal of self-advertised Gypsy music groups in Montreal, but, from my remote location, I had very little means to determine if any of the “Gypsy musicians” were Roma. From Edmonton, and in a bit of an academic void regarding publications in Canada, I was a little anxious that there were any Roma at all in Montreal disseminating the much-publicized Gypsy music. I could perhaps have written a doctoral dissertation about the entirely non-Roma “Gypsy musicians” (if that was indeed the case), but it would be very different in scope than I imagined.

Ultimately I did find two very important communities, and although I heard about smaller sub-groups (such as the Romani “mafia”) I ultimately was not able to access them. This research, then, focuses on the two largest communities that I found: One which I am labeling the “Gypsy music community” in Montreal, composed of a network of Roma and non-Roma professional musicians committed to the high quality dissemination of Gypsy music, and the second, the activist/ refugee community of Toronto, which is committed to social justice, international redress, and local distribution of provincial resources. I would never say that these are the only two Roma communities in Canada, nor would I say that they are exclusive to each other or to any other communities, but they are the two most visible by far.

From an immigration perspective, I was interested to know the country of origin of my interviewees, as well as who had two Roma parents, or one, or none. Since I personally hate being asked where I’m from (the question itself implies an act of “othering” that to me, as a fourth-generation Canadian, is offensive), I didn’t ask for it outright. However, almost everyone volunteered it anyway, along with information about how many Romani parents they had. Most of my Montreal interviewees had only one Romani parent, and I suspect that this fact skewed the research in different directions than if most of them had two Romani parents; the half-heritage might have explained, in part, their successful immigration strategies as well as their desires to integrate into mainstream society. In Montreal and Toronto collectively, I spoke with Roma who had come directly from Serbia, Bulgaria, France, Ireland, England, Argentina, Romania, Moldova, Turkey, Hungary, Greece, and the Czech Republic. There were also a few Roma, like Micheal Butch, who had been born and raised in Canada, but they were very much in the minority. Whether this is because the general population of Roma was so small even one generation ago, or whether the subsequent-generation Roma are less

likely to create public identities as “Roma” (or “Gypsies”) is not clear, although I suspect a combination of the two.

There were far more “Gypsy musicians” in Montreal than Romani musicians. Of the twelve Gypsy music groups in 2009-2010, with approximately a hundred musicians in total (with much give and take according to circumstances), there were only nine musicians of Roma heritage. In Toronto, I found only four groups that marketed Gypsy music as their main brand or affiliated themselves with Roma in any way. Generally the pattern was the same for both cities: the groups who performed Gypsy music on a regular basis were run by one Roma musician, with a supporting group of non-Roma, or by a person who had deep knowledge of Romani musical influences. In the case of the group called “Gaji, Gajo” (“non-Roma girl, non-Roma boy”) their blatant non-Roma ethnicity took on the nature of an inside joke, as the words themselves (commonly spelled “gadji” and “gadjo”) come from the Romani language.¹⁰

The number of Roma in Montreal, as far as I could tell, was much smaller than perceived. Although three or four very well-connected Montreal Roma told me that the community was fairly large, at the same time nobody had many contacts for me. So it is possible that the size of the community was an urban myth, or I was very unclear about the fact that I wanted to meet any members of the Montreal Roma community rather than just the musicians, or there was an extremely well-hidden body of Roma somewhere, because all networking attempts led me back to my starting points fairly quickly. I estimate the Montreal Romani community to be about two hundred people. It is likely, of course, that there are many Roma, such as refugees, who aren’t connected to the musicians or even each other, and that is why they didn’t turn up in my networking, but without knowing this for certain, everything is speculation.

One of my Montreal contacts hinted that the city hosts a hidden socio-economic stratum of Roma in Montreal, who deal in illegal (“not-so-nice”, as he put it) activities, and sometimes disappear for long periods in prison. He knew this crowd and tried to arrange for me to attend a house party hosted by one of these families, but I was refused entry on grounds of being an outsider, and no further meetings were suggested by my contact. I believe that concern for the safety for my person and reluctance to taint the Roma image with these lawbreakers played equal parts in that decision. Attaining entry to that community would have taken years, or direct affiliation with one of its members (such as through marriage), if possible at all.

The Toronto numbers are significantly larger and also better documented, in part due to their usage of Ontario social services such as Legal Aid, welfare, translation services, ESL,

¹⁰ “Gadji” and “gadjo” can also take on contextual implications within the Romani language, most commonly meaning “outsider”. In the movie “Gadjo Dilo” (1997), which chronicles a young non-Roma’s immersion into a Roma community and his complete bewilderment in the process, it is used to demarcate and emphasize cultural difference.

and so on, but ultimately mostly due to the RCC (Romani Community Centre), a resource which Montreal lacks. The number of Roma in Toronto changes rapidly as new immigrants arrive and depart almost daily. Because most of the new arrivals are Romungre, Hungarian rather than Romani is the secondary language of the RCC after English.

Due to the high number of Hungarian Romungre in Toronto, there are probably a great number of Roma who attend Pentecostal churches. Gyongyi Hamori, who was running dance classes for Roma youth at the Masaryk-Cowan Community Centre in Toronto, was deeply religious (Christian) and spoke openly to me about the power of prayer, but I felt uncomfortable asking her directly about religion as it was not the focus of my research. A few years ago, I attended a presentation at a Canadian Society for Traditional Music conference in which Heather Peters, an ethnomusicology graduate student from Toronto, was doing fieldwork among Toronto's Pentecostal Roma, and of course the widespread Romungre conversion to Pentecostalism in Hungary has been well documented by Lange 2003.

Montreal didn't seem to have a large population of Romani speakers. I heard Romani spoken at Café Sarajevo, the de facto community centre, but other than that it was limited to my tutorials with Carmen Piculeata. The Romani language is much more used in Toronto; I heard it several times in my short visit (although not addressed to me), and the Roma Community Centre communications are sometimes translated into the Romani language. I didn't get to use my Romani much: Since almost everyone spoke English (or in Montreal, French), the few instances where I heard the Romani language in Montreal seemed to convey a sense of purposeful exclusion, in which a non-Roma would likely be resented.¹¹ I was not clear on whether there was a strong religious community among the Roma; Suleyman, from Turkey, was almost certainly Muslim, and I know that Carmen was a (largely non-practicing) Eastern Orthodox, but by and large, religious affiliations were not mentioned.

The interviews were a mix of qualitative and quantitative questions. Commonly, I would ask a few uncomplicated opening questions like "How long have you been playing music?" and "How do you find your band members?" and then let the interviewee direct the conversation. Some people wanted to talk a great deal about why they had left their home countries; others focused on how they were forging a new life in Canada; some had a great deal to say about how they created their music, and so on. When possible, I asked questions that involved a certain degree of self-assessment on the respondent's part, such as "Do you consider yourself to be a Roma?" or "How important is it for Canadian Roma to push for (Romani) nationhood?" Some

¹¹ Indeed I found out later that many Canadian Roma were against the publication of Ronald Lee's *Learn Romani* textbook (2005) on the grounds that it would make the language accessible to outsiders (Interview with Micheal Butch, February 2012).

respondents were comfortable with the reflexivity, and some were not: If I got an evasive answer, I changed the subject. I asked the same types of questions at most interviews, but because they were open-ended, the self-directed personal narratives were vastly different. Of course all the interviewees knew generally what I was researching, and I had a definite sense that one or two went out of their way to exaggerate or spectacularize their Romani identity, but given the huge lack of direction from myself (to the point that one or two interviewees told me outright that I needed more structure) and based on the wildly divergent answers, I do not feel that interviewer expectations “led” the conversations to a significant degree.¹²

Contacts began mostly as cold calls or emails; for example, my friendship with Carmen Piculeata began as an email via his web page. In 2007 I met a number of people at the Romani Yag festival, and they were able to introduce me to other musicians in the Gypsy music community and other Roma scholars of Romani and non-Romani heritage. Ronald Lee has been the single biggest help in this project, as a networking contact, informational resource, and language teacher; this would be a much smaller, and less thoughtful, project without his very generous input over many, many years.

Much of my networking took place via Facebook. Interviewees used Facebook to connect me with other potential interviewees, either sending messages on my behalf or directing me to other individuals. I also received a great deal of event information about CD releases and upcoming concerts through Facebook’s “notifications” page. Toronto’s RCC has a Facebook page, and Gina Csanyi, the moderator, posts almost daily about relevant news items and events, both nationally and internationally. As a medium for collective action, Facebook works effectively, such as organizing 200 Roma and non-Roma participants for the Parkdale Candlelight Vigil (InsideToronto.com, 29 February 2012, “Parkdale’s Roma community gather for candlelight vigil”) with only a few hours’ notice.

As part of fieldwork studies, I took accordion lessons with Sergiu Popa, who, along with his wife Jessica, was definitely my most helpful contact in Montreal. Sergiu and Jessica are well connected, well respected, and highly articulate, as well as simply kind; they played with my baby, fed me tea, and made repeated efforts to connect me to the types of people they understood I wanted to meet.

I went to all the Gypsy music concerts I could find, and conducted interviews with anyone who was willing (Roma and non-Roma) and who had anything at all to say about the Roma in Canada. Some of the interviews were with Roma musicians playing “Gypsy” music and were fairly straightforward in their scope. Examples include: Carmen Piculeata, violinist; Sergiu Popa, accordionist; Kristin Molnar, singer and violinist; Jorge Martinez, guitarist; and Suleyman Ozatilan, singer. Other interviews were not so

¹² A sample list of the questions can be found in Appendix B

straightforward such as Charles Frandelion, an itinerant non-Roma Quebecois nomad who studies Gypsy accordion with Sergiu's family in Moldova; Lidia Varbanova, an economics professor who works for the Soros Foundation and is currently studying the feasibility of a Roma cultural centre in Bulgaria; and Adrian Wersch, a Roma undergraduate studying languages at the University of Montreal.

During fieldwork, the colour of my skin, and my features, were a source of constant questioning. Like many Canadians I am an ethnic mongrel, with two English grandfathers, a Russian grandmother, and a Romanian grandmother. I take after my Romanian grandmother to a large degree, which has obviously not been passed down to my own daughter, as Rowan and I look nothing alike (the teenage girls at Suleyman's dance class assumed I was her babysitter). As I mentioned before, it would have been very easy for me to pass as Roma, and although I don't know for sure, it is my belief that my Eastern European face, similar to that of many of my contacts—helped to ease the awkwardness and make the interviews flow more easily. Certainly my ethnic ambiguities helped me to feel more comfortable, if nothing else, particularly in group situations of Roma where not everyone knew everyone else. My presence passed, if perhaps not without notice, then at least without comment.

Fieldwork: Focus and Parameters

The fieldwork shifted in focus over time. Initially I had planned to ask a number of questions focusing on the transnational experience of the Romani nation, focusing on the applied aspects of music in the nationalist agenda. The nationalist and advocacy themes that were so prominent in the European experience, however, (such as Hemetek 2006; Scheffel 2005; Gheorghe and Mirga 2001; Vermeersch 2005) seemed to be largely irrelevant in Montreal. Face to face with the interviewees, it became clear that my Montreal contacts were largely uninterested in the concept of the "Romani nation" and its potential cultural unity; my prepared questions were so redundant as to be ridiculous. I could not even be certain that the largely disconnected Roma of Montreal—sometimes I knew more Roma than my contacts—qualified as a "community", let alone comprised any part of a nation. By contrast, the Toronto Roma, who do identify very much as a group and are greatly concerned with nationalist issues, were also largely preoccupied with pressing and time-critical matters such as immigration hearings and welfare cheques, and perhaps had a great deal less time and energy to spend on music. It was, of course, the rampant success of Montreal's Gypsy music groups that led me to fieldwork in Montreal in the first place, so it is not surprising to find a stronger commitment to musical rather than advocacy goals.

After one or two interviews I realized that my theme of "nationalism" was not a viable concept among the Roma of Montreal, and I changed my prepared questions completely to accommodate a wider perspective, leaving them open-ended to allow

respondents to pursue specific areas of interest to them. Another advantage of the broad, open-ended questions is that their very ambiguity helps the interviewer to avoid “leading” the conversation by introducing topics that may not be of interest or relevance to the interviewee. Ultimately, my goal was to discover the discourse, not lead it, and I remained very cognizant of that fact during interviews.

Another contributor to the shift in focus was the fact that the “snowballing” approach to social networking failed utterly for me. All of my interviews ended with the question: “Do you know any other Roma or Roma musicians I could interview?” but most of the time the answer was “Sorry, no”. This was surprising and perplexing news as I had understood from Ronald Lee, initially, and then many others, including Carmen and Sergiu, that Montreal had a large Roma community.

Regardless of the actual numbers of the community (possibly larger than I could access), many of the Roma whom I spoke to in Montreal didn’t know any other Roma, and some stated outright that they didn’t want to. I spent a long time trying to find more Roma interviewees and finally realized that the research as I had imagined it was non-viable, but it could continue with a shift in focus if I allowed for contributions from non-Roma who produced and marketed “Gypsy” music, which, as stated earlier, seemed to be inextricably linked to “Roma” music anyway. Further, non-Romani “Gypsy musicians” such as Lucas Moore, founder of Djoumboush, and Lubo Alexandrov, founder of Kaba Horo, function as ad hoc public representatives of Romani music and culture in a city where the boundaries between “Roma” and “non-Roma” are often porous and situational. In terms of identity, it is important to note that the three most prominent Romani musicians in Montreal, Sergiu Popa, Carmen Piculeata, and Suleyman Ozatilan, who grew up in Moldova, Romania and Turkey respectively, all had one Roma parent and one non-Roma parent. Although this might not be particularly noteworthy from a Canadian point of view, it meant that as children growing up in their countries of origin, they had a certain flexibility of identity that would likely not be available to children of two Roma parents.

After a few months in Montreal, I realized that the musicians are so interconnected, each playing in the others’ groups, constantly shifting and reforming, learning from and influencing each other, that it was ridiculous to make a distinction based on what was, in many cases, technically only half a heritage anyway. In many cases, the Roma who performed in groups did so only occasionally, which meant that relying on their involvement with a group to delineate the group’s inclusivity in the “Gypsy music” label seemed arbitrary and pointless: sometimes the groups played with Roma members, and sometimes not, and to demarcate them by specific instance would serve no clear purpose that I could tell since the overall spirit of each group remained the same throughout. It became clear that any group labeling itself “Gypsy” had to be included in the category whether or not it included Roma.

Among the group interactions I found were: Lubo Alexandrov (Bulgarian non-Roma guitar player), who played with Carmen Piculeata (Romanian Roma violinist) in the past, but now has his own group, in which Sergiu Popa (Moldovan Roma accordion player) and Suleyman (Turkish Roma singer/dancer) occasionally perform. Sergiu has his own group, but has played with Carmen in the past, and Suleyman was a member of a group run by Lucas Moore (Canadian non-Roma clarinetist) before he joined Lubo's group, and Suleyman also occasionally gigs with Soleil Tzigane. Brigitte Daczer (Canadian non-Roma violinist) has played with Carmen and Jorge Martinez (Argentinian Roma flamenco guitarist). Jessica Gal (Canadian non-Roma violinist) and Brigitte both took violin lessons from Carmen, who was the matchmaker in Jessica and Sergiu's marriage. Lou Boustani (non-Roma Canadian guitarist) is the founder of, and had at one point employed both Carmen and Sergiu to teach at his school, as well as gigging with Carmen. When Carmen got tired of teaching at École Jazz Manouche, he gave his students to Brigitte, and so on.

The group interactions are complex and fluid, and it was clear that the musicians knew each other well and were complicit in a community spirit in that they were protective of other members' reputations, hesitant to speak ill of others in the Gypsy music community even in cases where they clearly wanted to (these "un-comments" were marked by a lot of pauses and quick topic changes). The Gypsy music community in Montreal has very porous borders between "Roma" and "non-Roma" except perhaps as a technical point of interest, or in some cases a marketing strategy. The community that I had set out to find was not the one that I did find, but allowing for a change in focus, the Gypsy music community was alive and thriving in Montreal.

Another strong argument for collating Roma and non-Roma "Gypsy musicians" in this study is that, with one or two exceptions (such as Romani refugee claimants) the issues facing the Roma and the non-Roma "Gypsy musicians" of Montreal are almost identical. Both groups have based their professional identities on the "Gypsy" culture and are subject to the same market and cultural forces, such as transnationalism, advocacy, cultural representation, and essentialization, all within the same Canadian multicultural context. Additionally, the public division between Roma and non-Roma, at least in Montreal, is often invisible, as mainstream audiences simply cannot tell the difference. Although the groups themselves were clearly labelled as "Gypsy" in the marketing process (on billboards, web pages, CD covers, ticket stubs, etc.), the individual group members for the most part seemed willing to let the audiences believe whatever they liked about the ethnic makeup of the musicians themselves. Although the non-Roma musicians didn't ostensibly label themselves as "Gypsy", their inclusion in "Gypsy" music groups undoubtedly gave that impression to many people, and indeed that would have been a useful marketing strategy from the point of view of "authenticity" (which will be discussed further in chapter three). So in a sense, and from an audience perspective, the musicians "were" Gypsy for the duration of the performances.

Chapter One: Immigration and Inclusivity: Romani Identity in Canada

Situating Romani research in Canada is an unusual choice given the low numbers of Roma and the fact that Romani identity outside of the European enclaves is usually voluntary and flexible. Several people, including researchers and musicians (all non-Roma), told me that the people in Canada were not “real Gypsies”, with the corollary that one had to travel to Europe to study the “real” Gypsy music. The general sense of these comments is that the Roma, dislocated in space and time from their Indian origins, are somehow more authentic (however that was imagined) in the European diaspora than the Canadian one. It was not clear to me whether the speakers felt a privileged sense of “knowing” the Roma, or whether they were part of the general national habit of hyphenating non-Canadian origins (such as Polish-Canadian, Chinese-Canadian), which foregrounds the quality of hybridity.

The comments, however, far from discouraging me, only piqued my interest further. The Roma as a stateless people are in theory not any more displaced in Canada than they would be elsewhere, so dismissing their identity and their music due to locale seems like a spurious argument, a remnant of an old-fashioned folkloric impulse to demarcate a type of “authenticity” that denies the validity of social change. I knew many Canadian Roma who did consider themselves to be “real” (Roma or Gypsy) and who would have been deeply offended to have their existence denied. It is also safe to say that many Roma in Canada, particularly the refugees who have been targets of ethnic hate crimes, do consider themselves to be “real” Roma, and many of the people who have not arrived as refugees align themselves closely with, and feel a strong sense of kinship to transnational Romani communities, particularly ones who are experiencing great difficulties.

Of course there are a number of arrivals who for various reasons do not particularly wish to “be” Roma anymore. For them, one of Canada’s great advantages is its great distance from Europe, which means that virtually no one can identify a Roma by sight, allowing a flexibility of identity that is not available in most European countries. These “hidden Roma” contribute to the sense of cultural invisibility, which is occasionally problematic for the activists as they seek to establish NGOs and cultural organizations.

Canada’s commitment to social equality, although theoretically similar to that of many other countries (including Hungary) is backed up more effectively by an efficient judiciary system that, if not completely eradicates, at least greatly minimizes the incidences of ethnic and racial discrimination. This, along with national myths that emphasize social inclusivity (as enacted through federally mandated multiculturalism) makes Canada a particularly desirable location for Roma fleeing ethnic hate crimes. Montreal in particular practices a degree of multiculturalism that borders on conspicuous consumption: differences are not only celebrated but actively sought, and

this city provides the best marketplace in Canada for the sale of “ethnic goods”, of which music is an important product.

Further, Canada’s commitment to social inclusivity is practiced in its social welfare programs, which have waned through the Chrétien and Harper administrations, but are still generous compared to many countries. Roma who arrive destitute can access a number of free services immediately (such as translation, legal aid, retraining, child care, and so on, especially in the Parkdale area of Toronto which is a known immigration centre) in addition to receiving transfer payments such as welfare and disability if needed. This is especially important in light of Canada’s immigration system which favours language skills, financial stability, and formal education, qualities which are generally lacking among the Roma worldwide. What this means in concrete terms is that the great majority of Roma who arrive in Canada are refugees, whereas the Roma who arrive as skilled or moneyed immigrants are more likely to have only one Roma parent than two, with a corresponding level of distance from the impoverished Romani settlements.

From India to Canada: A thousand years of migration

If the sky has eyes,
If the wind has hands,
If the sun warms man,
Why is the Rom freezing?

If non-Roma make wars,
If they pass laws,
If non-Rom respect all people,
Why are Roma dying like dogs?

If the sky has eyes,
If the wind has hands,
If God loves mankind,
Why are the Roma crying?

The sky is opening.
The sun is fleeing.
The wind is moaning.
And a flower is crying.
Along with the Roma. (Sijercic 2007: 44)

History of the Roma is sparse, contradictory and above all highly speculative. In all discussions, it is important to remember first and foremost that “Roma”, in its current specific meaning of a “collection of distinct ethnic groups of Indian origin”, became a viable term only within the last 40 years. Prior to that, “Gypsy” or “gypsy” was the common term, which often conflated what we now imagine as the Roma with other groups or individuals who live outside of society for various reasons, or conversely acted in an exclusionary manner to delineate certain groups from other groups, such as “the Kale, the Sinti, *and* the Gypsies”: currently we would recognize the first two groups as Roma from Spain and Germany, rather than groups that exist in opposition to the Roma or “Gypsies”. Thus it is necessary when reading historical sources to be aware of which groups have been recently encompassed into the “Roma” transnational identity.

Although the term “diaspora” is an intuitive and common framework for the Roma due to their widespread migrations (used in this sense by Silverman 2000 and Cohen 1997), I believe that Roma history, or specifically the lack of history, in the sense of cultural memory and common traditions, contradicts this premise. Fraser writes: “The Gypsies’ diaspora has sometimes been compared with that of the Jews: however, theirs was a diaspora of a people with no priestly caste, no recognized standard for their language, no texts enshrining a corpus of beliefs and code of morality, no appointed custodians of ethnic traditions.” (Fraser 1995: 44) Their lack of cultural memory, centralized religion and language, and self-representation in the form of written tradition—all of which, in my opinion, refutes the usefulness of the term “diaspora” in Romani studies—as well as their common tendency to live outside of society, has resulted in near-invisibility in the classic historical sense.

The difficult task of Romani historians is to piece together ancient accounts (about people who may or may not be considered to be the “Roma” as we now understand the group today) to inform the theories, but these theories are tentative at best.¹³ Even researchers such as Kenrick, a highly respected author in Romani studies, use a great many phrases such as “would have” or “could have” to support his historical timelines and route of the Romani migration from India (Kenrick 1993).¹⁴ Since the details of these

¹³ For example, Fraser states that the Roma appeared in Constantinople in 1050, citing an original document that refers to “a Samaritan people, descendants of Simon the Magician, who were called Adsincani, and notorious for soothsaying and sorcery” (Fraser 1995: 46). Other historical terms for the Roma, always ascribed to them by the local populations, include *Bohemes, Ciganos, Czingari, Egyptians, flamencos, Gitanos, Greeks, Saracens, Castilians, Tsiganes, Zigueners, and Zingari* (Fraser 1995: 354).

¹⁴ The main English-language authors who inform the discussions of Romani history are: Hancock (2002), Fraser (1995), Kenrick (1993), Lee (2009), and Fonseca (1995). My personal preference, and the one most cited in this research, is Fraser, as it relies heavily on original documents and eyewitness accounts from the years in question.

academic controversies are not directly relevant to this research, we can sum them up succinctly by stating that although the date of the departure, or departures, as well as the exact origin(s) and the route(s) are highly contested, there is at least widespread academic consensus that it began a thousand or more years ago, and that it originated in India. All other attempts to pinpoint the exact point of departure by province or even by caste remain open for debate. Likewise, the reason for departure remains unknown, although war is a common guess.

The core words of the Romani language are based on Hindi and Sanskrit. *Manush* (man) is *manusa* in Sanskrit and *manus* in Hindi; *nekh* (nose) is *nakka* and *nak* respectively; *kham* (sun) is *gharma* and *gham*; *pani* (water), is *paniya* and *pani* (Fraser 1995: 16), and it is generally believed that the degree, nature, and importance of Hindi and Sanskrit words in the Romani language are a direct result of shared origin.¹⁵ After emigration from India, the languages of the subgroups diverged to a greater or lesser degree depending on contact with host countries and proximity with other groups, resulting in a great many dialects. Socioeconomic pressures, such as forced assimilation, have resulted in the loss of language by some groups, but there are still many Romani communities worldwide that retain vestiges or full use of the language.

The colloquial name for the Roma, *Gypsies* (and, later, its corresponding verb “to gyp”, meaning “to cheat”) is derived from “Egyptian”. Egypt, specifically a place called Little Egypt or Egypt Minor, was the place of origin commonly supplied by the Roma during their initial contacts with the Europeans in the Middle Ages (Fraser 1995: 61 – 118; Kenrick 1993: 9). The word has remained curiously tenacious long after linguistic analysis disproved ancestry from Egypt, and even after the “Gypsies” themselves formally abandoned the name in 1971 when the Romani nation was formed. “Rom” means, simply, “man” in the Romani language, which, as Kenrick points out in reference to the Indian “Dom” and the Inuit, is “a common way of people referring to themselves as opposed to outsiders.” (Kenrick 1993: 37) More than forty years later, the name change to “Roma” remains incomplete for a number of reasons, and in the meantime, the words remain in use simultaneously. Although both ostensibly refer to the same group or groups of people, it cannot be said that they have equal meanings.

Early documentation of the itinerant “Egyptians”, dating from the 15th century onwards, shows that they were initially well-received by host countries. Some groups had letters of safe passage (similar in spirit to an early passport) signed by various religious or local authorities (including the Pope), describing their travels as a pilgrimage and thus affording them a certain degree of hospitality in the highly religious climate of Europe at

¹⁵ For a comprehensive discussion of linguistic origin and present-day dialects, see *The Romani Project* by the University of Manchester, available online at <http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/index.shtml>

that time. Whether these letters were authentic or not is open to debate, but Fraser notes that forgeries of this type were not uncommon for the times (see Fraser 1995: 61-83). Local documentation from the time shows many groups of these people travelling about at the same time, each with a leader, "...showing unity of action and close connection with each other." (Fraser 1995: 79)

After a period of time however—varying by country but up to about a hundred years—the letters of safe passage began to lack believability by the same communities which had previously been so hospitable. Gradually the Gypsies began to be the target of widespread persecution, deportation, and slavery. A document from 1522 states:

At this time, that thievish race of men, the dregs and bilge-water of various people, who live on the borders of the Turkish empire and of Hungary (we call them *Zigeni*), began to wander through our provinces under their king Zindelo, and by dint of theft, robbery and fortune-telling they seek their sustenance with impunity. They relate falsely that they are from Egypt and are constrained by the gods to exile, and they shamelessly feign to be expiating, by a seven year banishment, the sins of their forefathers who turned away the Blessed Virgin with the child Jesus. (Fraser 1995: 84-85)

What is most interesting about this quote is that public perception of the Roma has hardly changed in five hundred years, and also that this image is virtually identical in almost every country in which the Roma live. Fraser speculates that the change in religious climate from Catholicism and the Franciscan ideal of poverty to Lutheranism probably contributed to a great deal to the shift in reception (1995: 127). He also points out that non-Roma tradespeople, particularly those belonging to guilds, were not inclined to look favourably on itinerant professional competition (1995: 81). Further, the Roma themselves, under pressure to assimilate and become sedentary, were not inclined to do so, probably in large part because of cultural beliefs that emphasized exclusion from the mainstream community. Although there is no documentation from the middle ages, Romani cultural practices associated with the idea of "marhime", or ritual pollution due to outside contact, has been documented in Romani settlements in many countries (Fraser 1995: 244-246). In the recent past, these practices serve to isolate the Roma from mainstream society since the Roma consider the *gadze* (non-Roma) who do not adhere to these practices to be ritually unclean.

However, these rituals and beliefs, observed in varying degrees by present-day Roma, are by now secondary to the problems of exclusion facing the Roma, which is simply that many countries don't want them. Centuries of marginality, deportation, incarceration, and slavery have propelled the Roma into a distinct socioeconomic stratum while at the same time depriving them of the skills with which they were accustomed to make a living, such as coppersmithing, goldsmithing, and travelling

entertainers.¹⁶ The Roma were the second-largest group targeted for elimination by the Nazis in World War II, and they remain the targets of hate crimes around the world in the present day, in almost every country in which they live.

Today the Roma are scattered about the globe. From India, they migrated throughout the Middle East, but little is known in North America about this dispersal due to the lack of available English literature. There is a great deal of English literature available about the Roma in European and Balkan countries, however, such as Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, the Czech and Slovak Republics, Turkey, Macedonia, Greece, Italy, Spain, Mexico, Portugal, Germany, France, as well as England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. Although there are well-established Romani communities in Canada and the United States, very little academic research has been conducted in these areas.

What is particularly interesting about the Roma from a Canadian perspective is that Canada, in a sense, already has a sort of indigenous Roma: a formerly nomadic dark-skinned people of diverse cultural practices whose way of life has been destroyed, who live in poverty and stigma on the margins of society, and who have now banded together for political recognition—the First Nations peoples. As full citizens of an economically wealthy country, many live on poverty-stricken reservations very similar to the Gypsy *mahalas* (settlements) in wealthy European nations, with similarly unequal access to housing, health care, and education. For both the Roma and the First Nations peoples, societal problems are endemic, and upwards mobility is sharply limited by the deep-seated prejudices, or outright racial hatred, of mainstream society. The difference between the Roma in Canada, the Roma in Europe, and the First Nations peoples in Canada, is that the Canadian Roma do not have the baggage of centuries of marginalization and “othering” of the other two groups.

Advocacy publications and in-depth news coverage point to tremendous difficulties in overcoming cycles of poverty and discrimination (UNDP 2002: 42; CBC News, 12 December 2012, “Hungarian Roma hope for sanctuary in Canada.”). Scheffel, in the Slovak Republic, found that the Roma are unemployed because no one will hire them, which leads them to social assistance and crime, becoming less employable as a result (Scheffel 2005). “Millions of euros have been spent on Roma integration programmes with little result, and the number of poor Roma families living in ghettos has actually increased.” (Toth 2010: 6) Each act leads away from societal reconciliation, and it has

¹⁶ “In September 1445 Prince Vlad Dracul (Vlad the Devil) captured from Bulgaria some twelve thousand persons “who looked like Egyptians” and took them home to Wallachia, “without luggage or animals”; thus he became the first wholesale importer of Gypsies as slaves.” (Fonseca 1995: 174) As Gypsies became national commodities, the initial supply was soon exhausted: “As their value increased there were fewer and fewer unclaimed Gypsies in the principalities, and so the Crown kept up its stock by importing them. They were brought over in large quantities from south of the Danube specifically to be used as forced labour—a practice that alone explains why Romania is home to by far the greatest number of Gypsies (some 2.5 million) in any single country.” (Fonseca 1995: 179)

been this way for centuries. The administrative and monetary effort required to reverse this momentum would be tremendous, and many countries are neither able nor inclined to attempt it.

Skin colour and physical appearance are factors that determine how the Roma are treated in some circumstances. Tamas Banya of Toronto relates that in Hungary, the light-skinned Roma, who can pass for *gadje*, fare better than the darker Roma. Tamas himself, with fair hair and eyes, was able to find employment in Hungary that would normally be barred to a “Gypsy”, by simply concealing his Romani heritage and keeping silent around the anti-Roma slurs in his workplace (Interview with Tamas Banya, February 2012). Brigette Daczer, a non-Roma Canadian violinist with ethnically ambiguous features like myself, was repeatedly harassed by the Amtrak conductors when travelling through the Czech Republic, because she was also carrying a violin and wearing a long skirt and, she found out later, they assumed she was a Gypsy. After she showed her Canadian passport (presumably not mentioning the fact that there were also Roma in Canada) the harassment stopped. But later that trip, shopping with a friend, the store owner shouted about at the “thieving Gypsy” to get out of his store. Although Brigette had a very middle-class Canadian upbringing (she grew up in Calgary) and a Master’s degree in Communications, she had, on that trip, a small taste of how life might be for those who could not take refuge in their passports to escape the colour of their skin (Interview with Brigette Daczer, January 2010).¹⁷

Within Canada, the First Nations peoples are externally administered by the federal government, which releases transfer payments based on proof of ethnicity, validated by possession of a “status card”. Individuals are thus financially motivated to claim membership in the First Nations, and at the same time, under Canada’s legal system, they are promised freedom from racial persecution as affiliates of this group. It is certain that they do not enjoy complete a truly egalitarian existence free from racial discrimination—I grew up in a northern Alberta village that bordered a First Nations reserve, and I can vouch for the very real presence of discrimination against this group in Canada, having endured it second-hand as a child much like Brigette Daczer on the Amtrak. It is not necessary to ethnically “be” an Indian to share the persecution—it is enough to simply look like one. However I doubt very much that the level of discrimination endured by the Canadian First Nations peoples is at a pitch approaching the Roma in most parts of Europe.

The Roma in Canada are in a very different situation than European Roma, largely due to the enormous geographical distance between them which creates vastly different contexts for the two groups. Although it is easy to say that international travel is

¹⁷ Fonseca (1995) also examines the issue of skin colour, and she includes in her ethnography the impact of how a lighter or darker skin colour can profoundly affect a Roma’s life in the various countries in which she travels.

accessible and common, the reality is that it is very expensive, and many Canadians do not travel to European countries more than once or twice in their lives, if at all. It is possible but not very likely that a Canadian abroad would internalize the “Gypsy trope” to the degree of an individual who grew up surrounded by Roma. It is also possible that the children of European immigrants would internalize some of their parents’ (probably negative) beliefs concerning the Roma, but in the absence of a large group of Roma in Canada, and particularly in the absence of large groups of socially and economically impoverished Roma (some countries refer to this as the “Roma problem”: UNDP 2002), it is likely that these attitudes and beliefs would dwindle.

Although there has been a certain amount of media attention paid to recent Romani refugees that has not portrayed them in a flattering light, and there has been a certain amount of right-wing ethnic hatred and anti-immigrant backlash in very recent media publications, ultimately Canada lacks the centuries of bad feeling between the Roma and mainstream society that follows them elsewhere. Also, perhaps not insignificantly, the First Nations peoples currently occupy the lowest rung of society (and the Roma, who, after all, emigrate from Europe, enjoy a certain degree of positive associations due to this, which stands them in particularly good stead in Montreal which values the European connection very highly). Lee’s publication about the Roma in Australia parallels many of the issues facing Canadian Roma:

There are many Australian *gaje* who have *never* actually seen, or recognised, a Romani....Regretfully, it must also be said that the Koori (Aboriginal) population often provides the ideological labour of functioning as the dirty, idle, shiftless, hedonistic, fringe-dweller scapegoat... (1997: 75)

He sums up with a conclusion that could have been written about Canada: “Thus, the context of identity construction for Romanies is significantly different from virtually all other locations in Europe and the Americas.”(1997: 75-76)

I would not care to argue for the point it is necessary for a country to have some specific group at the bottom of its social hierarchy, but I do believe that the nature of the opposition, perhaps if only from a “colonized versus colonizers” perspective, helps to give the European Roma an inherent advantage over the First Nations people; or perhaps this “advantage” is merely a lack of historical *disadvantage*. It is also possible that there is a great deal more anti-Roma sentiment extant in Canada than anyone so far suspects, and that it has simply not come to the forefront for the simple reason that the Roma themselves are barely visible in Canadian society. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that the refugees who arrive in Canada do so at enormous financial loss on the belief that Canada represents their best hope for egalitarian treatment.

The Roma in Canada can easily pass as members of other ethnicities like Greek, Lebanese, Portuguese, and so on, and since virtually no one in Canada can identify a

Roma by sight, this means that most or all “Romani” public identity is voluntary. An individual of ambiguous ethnicity, like myself, will certainly be publically identified as “other”, but there is a range of choices; I myself could choose a new one every day if I wanted.¹⁸ Since many Roma emigrate from countries in which Roma are the lowest class of society under rigid class hierarchies that discourage mobility, it is not surprising that many choose to abandon their undocumented “Roma” identity.

It is refugees who have the most compelling practical motive to establish their Romani identity within Canada, as Romani persecution has been well documented in many countries, and the pre-existing body of literature on this topic helps to facilitate entry into Canada. Ironically, due to the disappearance of recognized cultural markers such as language, some Roma refugees cannot establish their Romani identity to the satisfaction of Canadian officials, and must return home, where their Romani identity is in no doubt whatsoever to the locals who compelled them to leave in the first place (Interview with Carmen Piculeata, July 2009).

Historically, the Roma have been passive participants in the production of identity, as it was wholly created and disseminated by outsiders to the culture; and, as mentioned, there is really no way to verify that all of the groups subsumed in the historical “Gypsy trope” were even remotely connected to what is now politically imagined as “the Romani nation”. Centuries of social exclusion and poverty have resulted in a lack of self-representation that is proportionally profound given the very large numbers of Roma found in many European countries such as Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria. In these countries and many more, identity is not so much produced as assigned, and the boundaries between worlds are largely immutable. If possible, some will assume a non-Roma identity (an option for those born with lighter skin) in order to access services and employment not generally available to Roma (Interview with Tamas Banyas, February 2012), and this is a clear survival strategy which, while certainly welcome to those who are able to employ it, is often not available to Roma in European countries.

Building the Canadian nation: Strategies of identity, inclusivity and exclusion

Whereas the United States was looked upon as an exuberant land of opportunity in which all comers were transformed into members of a new and dynamic breed, in its own eyes and those of the world Canada was a country in

¹⁸ By “other” I mean, in this context, a new Canadian, someone who has recently arrived from another country. Although there is no real reason to suppose that someone with “ethnic” features is a recent immigrant, this seems to be a relatively robust belief, as I have been asked dozens of times in every city in which I have lived, “Where are you from?” (And it is worth mentioning that the answer of “Canada” is considered to be an insolent reply.)

which disparate cultures and peoples retained their identity while forming parts of a static and not particularly colourful whole. (Burnet and Palmer 1988: 7)

Although initial English and French explorations began in the 16th century, Canada's population remained relatively low until the late 1800s. Up until quite recently, the English and French were the preferred immigrants, with secondary considerations to northern Europeans and Scandinavians. (Burnet and Palmer 1988: 27) Racial discrimination for other groups, such as the Italians and the Jews, was enormous, and many would-be settlers returned home in droves (Burnet and Palmer 1988: 32). Immigration was largely halted during the Depression and WWII but began in full force afterwards during the post-war boom. Mackenzie King believed that immigration was a privilege, and it was not until 1967, when Canada had largely exhausted the resources for white immigrants, that racism was officially removed from legislation and entry was based on a point system (Mackey 1999: 53).¹⁹ The 1980s saw a return to the politicization of immigration issues, particularly those of refugees: a boatload of refugees of Tamils and Sikhs had their claims dismissed as "bogus", and the plight of refugees served to advance agendas calling for tighter immigrant control (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002: 46).

To summarize the Immigration Canada webpage very broadly, there are currently three main types of immigrants.²⁰ The first category is made up of professionals, skilled tradespeople, and investors. "Family-class" comprises the dependent families of the first category who rely on sponsorship from the first group, and the third group is the refugees. Although the numbers rise and fall depending on circumstances, Canada's immigration policies consistently favour immigrants from the first category while admitting as few as possible of the second and third categories. (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002: 62) In 1994, Canada lowered the levels for family and refugee categories (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002: 66), viewing them as "non-contributors" under the assumption that non-economic contributions were worthless (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002: 66). As one analysis suggests, the current immigration system "...can be read as treating immigrants as commodities...", valued only for what they can contribute to Canada's economy with no attempt at reciprocation (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002: 65).²¹

¹⁹ It is an official of the King administration who is credited with turning away a boatload of Jewish refugees during WWII along with the now-infamous quote: "None is too many".

²⁰ <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/index.asp>. Accessed September 2013.

²¹ The stance of the authors, a decade ago, seems prescient given Stephen Harper's recent changes to Canada's immigration policies, which opens the door even further to a wave of commodity-type of immigrants ("temporary foreign workers", similar to Germany's system) who are welcome in Canada strictly for employment—at 15% below minimum wage—and will likely never achieve permanent resident status (The Globe and Mail: "Changes to immigration policy could transform society", 3 May 2012). As the article points out, even the Chinese labourers who built Canada's railroad were granted landed immigrant status.

In terms of national identity, Canada for most of its history was simply a “state without a nation.” The English settlers, who came to Canada not to rebel but to continue the British Empire, were content in their identity as British subjects, and Canada began to articulate its national needs only in the 1950s, in the aftermath of the Second World War (Corse 1997: 49). Once the European model of generational descent was made defunct upon emigration from the country of origin, Canada joined other settler colonies in the search for new ways to create national identity (Mackey 1999: 13), in this case through strategic opposition to Canada’s colonial heritage and its powerful southern neighbours. Specifically, Mackey argues that the “...myth of national tolerance... [is] the central foundational myth of Canadian nationhood and identity” (Mackey 1999: 24). In a similar spirit, another tenet of Canadian identity is the valuation of strong social relationships: Corse found that American literature emphasizes individuality and independence, while Canadian literature focuses on the importance of social relationships to combat a hostile wilderness (Corse 1997), and Abu-Laban and Gabriel state: “One of the assumptions that underwrote the post-war state was that social justice and equity were legitimate goals.” (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002: 158). All of these statements can be summed up as both a commitment to and a national belief in the value of social inclusivity. The fact that the welfare system has been greatly dismantled over the last two decades (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002: 166) has not significantly impacted the national myth, and public institutions like universal healthcare, especially vis-à-vis the United States, are still a critical component of national solidarity.

Official multiculturalism was implemented by Trudeau in 1971, who saw it as a “great national bandage” which would allow the state to “highlight and manage diversity without endangering the project of nation-building.” (Mackey 1999: 68) Congruent with the concepts of social inclusion and social welfare, it was a formal recognition of the minorities that already existed inside of Canada, and a foreshadowing of years to come when the Canadian nation would be composed of unprecedented numbers of minorities. For decades it has played a unique role in the creation of a uniquely Canadian identity, and by now it is a well-established trope in the Canadian national imagination:

Canadians take a lot of pride in the multicultural, ethnic mosaic of their society and country. They support their fellow Canadians’ desire to retain and maintain diverse ethnic and cultural identities and practices. In the 2006 Canadian census, more than 200 different ethnic origins were reported as making up our multicultural society.... You can help Canada maintain and strengthen her multicultural identity and your fellow Canadians retain their beloved ethnic identities by becoming culturally aware. (Alberta Council on Aging 2011: 21)

Li believes that the popularity of multiculturalism is partly derived from its discourse, or perhaps the trope, of “cultural tolerance” as compared to the “assimilation” policies of

the United States (1999: 149). The trope can only have been strengthened in recent years as the press reports failures of multiculturalism in France, England, and Germany (Reuters UK, 11 February 2011, "Sarkozy joins allies in burying multiculturalism"; Reuter's UK, 5 February 2011, "Multiculturalism has failed in Britain—Cameron); when racial tensions in the United States threaten to divide the country (Christian Science Monitor, 7 April 2012, "Poll: Trayvon Martin case divides US by race, age, wealth, and politics"); and led to massacres in Norway (MSNBC, 16 April 2012, "Anders Breivik to Norway court: I killed 77 people but am not guilty"). Canada's successful multiculturalism platform—curiously juxtaposed with widespread intolerance for the First Nations peoples, memorable instances of ethnic hatred, and the never-ending "Where are you from?" query that challenges the validity of an ethnically diverse population—is yet, within Canada, commonly regarded to be a distinguishing national characteristic on the global stage.

Whatever public opinion may or may not be concerning Canadian multiculturalism, this initiative that was originally created and administered by the federal government has changed significantly in scope since its implementation under Trudeau in 1971. Although it was initially very popular among ethnic minorities, its appeal had faded by the early 1980s as its limitations became clear: It was neither helping to eradicate racism nor meeting the needs of the immigrants. At the same time, dedicated efforts to combat racism were hampered by underfunding and inefficiencies (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002: 108-109). In 1988, Mulroney's Conservative government passed a Multiculturalism Act that was intended to replace Trudeau's original version. At this time, multiculturalism became formally linked with business interests rather than with human rights concerns or nation-building. Mulroney instituted the "Multiculturalism Means Business" slogan, and he is quoted as saying: "We, as a nation, need to grasp the opportunities afforded to us by our multicultural identity, to cement our prosperity with trade and investment links the world over..." (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002: 110-111). Mulroney's vision, then, situated multiculturalism as a transnational resource which would link Canada to other languages, markets, and services that would ultimately advance economic interests.

Under Chrétien, multiculturalism was rolled into a mega-department called "Canadian Heritage" which became "the flagship of Canadian identity" and was meant to foster attachment to Canada (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002: 112-113). During this time, funding for ethnocultural and advocacy groups was greatly reduced, and the budget went down by almost half (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002: 114-115). At the same time, multiculturalism gained momentum as an integral part of Canadian identity, both locally and abroad. Harper's Conservative government shows itself to be following in Chrétien's footsteps, emphasizing the myth of multiculturalism and national tolerance while at the same time working to restrict entry from ethnicities which are economically or educationally disadvantaged. Recent federal strategies of restricted immigration and refugee entry, ostensibly implemented to protect Canada from unscrupulous individuals

who would take advantage of a generous welfare system, are seemingly at odds with the strategies of purposeful inclusivity implemented by Trudeau only a few decades earlier.

However it is imagined, federally mandated multiculturalism has spawned a right-wing populist backlash. In this trope, “Canadian-Canadians”—a term coined by Mackey to define those who situate themselves as mainstream, without overt ethnic affiliations—redefine themselves as newly-disempowered victims of multiculturalism, defending white culture not in defense of whiteness itself but rather as a defense of “national identity and unity”. A sense of crisis is disseminated, which is then used to mobilize intolerance and hierarchy using “discourses of equality, rationality, and progress” (Mackey 1999: 142). Consider the following segment as it aired in September 2012 on the Canadian Sun News Network, in which the Roma refugees are situated as an urgent threat to Canadian unity:

Gypsies aren't a race, they're not a religion, they're not a linguistic group. They're the medieval prototype of the Occupy Wall Street movement. A shiftless group of hoboes that doesn't believe in property rights for themselves - they're nomads - or for others. They rob people blind. Now the scourge has come to Canada through fake refugee claims... Stealing is part of their family-crime organization. Being a Gypsy isn't like being Black, or being Gay, or being a woman or even Romanian, where many Gypsies come from. Just like being from Sicily doesn't make you part of the Mafia. Being a Gypsy is a positive choice, like being a Blood or a Crip, like joining the Cosa Nostra. For centuries, these roving highway gangs have mocked the law and robbed their way across Europe. Now, because of our broken refugee system, they're here in Canada in the thousands. And they've brought the Gypsy Crime Wave with them. (“The Source” with Ezra Levant)²²

Although various cultural groups come under attack by these right-wing populists (the Muslims and Sikhs are current targets) it is hard to imagine one more defenseless than the Roma, and the Canadian Roma particularly, who lack even the support of powerful NGOs that operate primarily in European countries. Of course the far-right backlash does not speak for all of Canada, and it is important to note that Levant’s segment was duly investigated and found to be in violation of broadcasting standards. However, the

²² Transcription provided courtesy of the Roma Community Centre. The original video clip and has been removed from the Sun News web page and is no longer available for viewing. More information about the segment can be found at <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/rabble-staff/2012/09/ezra-levant-openly-promotes-hatred-against-roma>. After a letter-writing campaign instigated by the RCC, the broadcast was reviewed by the Canadian Standards Broadcast Council, and Sun Network later aired a formal apology for this segment of Levant’s show.

fact that it managed to air on national media was viewed with alarm by the Roma advocates of Toronto, who have no corresponding media platform from which to disseminate their own agenda.

Mackey (1999) and other authors (Saloojee 2004; Stein 2007; Bannerji 2000) find that the national trope of “multiculturalism” functions much better as a commodity than as a tool for the implementation of social change. Additionally, its emphasis on the beneficence of the Canadian nation pits the refugees directly against “the nation” in a struggle for legitimacy that the Roma are so far losing in huge numbers. It is in the free market, therefore, that the Roma of Canada must prosper if they are to join the rest of Canada in egalitarian expression of their ethnic roots. Canada’s Roma currently play two roles in the multicultural mosaic. In Toronto, the “Roma” are a perceived threat to the mythologized benevolence of the Canadian nation as it struggles to assist “real refugees”, and in Montreal, the “Gypsies” serve as shining examples of multicultural inclusivity, with highly effective Gypsy music marketing campaigns that romanticize and, to some degree, gentrify the “Gypsy” trope by situating “Gypsies” as a leisured class that exists free of societal constraints, while largely bypassing the struggles of the “Roma”.

Although countries such as France are assigning the blame of their fragmented societies in part to multiculturalism, multiculturalism is more likely a scapegoat in these scenarios, as the institutionalized conditions for failure of integration (lack of language resources, social resources, or egalitarian treatment for new immigrants) were established well before officially enacted “multicultural” strategies. Ironically, the vicious circle that is created by ethnic enclavism, such as the Muslim enclaves of France—lack of integration leading to greater distrust between the two cultures, and therefore less integration—is an almost exact parallel to the difficulties experienced by the Roma for centuries with their host countries. They, and countless NGOs, can attest to the near-impossibility of breaking the poverty cycle once it has gained momentum. Nations dealing with incipient ethnic enclavism would do well to examine the global situations of the Roma as a cautionary tale of the great expense of failure to integrate.

The populist backlash facing the Toronto Roma is very similar in spirit to the current populist sentiment surrounding the First Nations’ “Idle No More” movement (2012-2013), which is generating increasing hostility in the public media. Since Canada has for centuries failed to integrate its First Nations peoples in a manner that would eradicate social and structural class divides (such as equal access to safe housing, education and health services) it seems unlikely that the Roma, as a completely stateless people, would be able to establish a place in mainstream society if they too succumb to this degree of marginalization. In the mosaic of multicultures within Canada, these two are among the “least of equals”; the First Nations peoples endure enormous public hostility when they lobby greater inclusion and political accountability, while the Roma are subject to the

sentiments for asking Canada to fulfill its international commitment as a country of asylum.

In the case of the First Nations, there is a growing and very recent movement of young activists, primarily educated women, who are fighting the backlash and marginalization (The Globe and Mail, Mail, 18 January 2013, "What's behind the explosion of native activism? Young people.") Within the Canadian Romani community, young women are also rising to the forefront of activist concern. Gina Csanyi-Robah, the executive director of the RCC, is a young teacher who was raised in Canada; Lelissa Savic, the only person so far who has expressed interest in starting a Roma advocacy group in Montreal, is a university student in her twenties; and Zoe DuVal of Red Deer, also in her twenties, has recently created a Central Alberta Roma Network (Communication from Ronald Lee, January 2013). Among the non-Roma, it must be remembered that Romani Yag was hosted both times by Ljuba Radman, a Montreal activist in her twenties or thirties.

These ladies, telegenic and media savvy, are perfect ambassadors for the Canadian Roma, but it is too soon to tell if they will be able to bypass the populist and exclusionary forces that have been imposed upon the Roma in other countries for centuries. Although more rational, their voices are neither as loud nor as emotive as those of Levant and his kind, and with meager financial and human resources, with the majority of the Canadian Roma community living in poverty as first-generation immigrants, it remains to be seen what strategies they will implement to situate the Roma among the more widely recognized and accepted members of Canada's multicultural society.

A brief history of Romani settlement in Canada

We cannot pinpoint with accuracy the first Romani entrance into Canada, but both the Toronto and Peterborough City Archives of Ontario document Roma in Peterborough and Toronto from the early 1900s. Micheal Butch, a Toronto Romani musician, is a fourth-generation Canadian who describes all four generations as exclusively Roma, in that all members of his family married only members of other Roma families, and there was no marriage outside the local Romani community. He is not positive when his family arrived in Canada, but it was likely in at the turn of the century (Interview with Micheal Butch, February 2012).²³

Ronald Lee thinks it is probable that the Peterborough Roma arrived via the US from Mexico and Argentina (Lee 2006: 25). There is no record of where this group of Roma

²³ It is worth noting that the social phenomenon of divorce has affected Micheal, as he is now divorced from his Romani first wife, and currently lives with a non-Roma Russian singer and dancer. Also, his daughter has married a non-Roma man, and the tradition of endogamy seems to be at an end for Micheal's immediate family.

went after leaving Peterborough, but it is probable that some ended up in Toronto. Whether the Roma in the Toronto pictures are part of the same group or not, we will likely never know. What is certain is that both cities were visited by the Roma in the early 1900s. We know from Micheal Butch, of course, that there were at least enough Roma in the Toronto area to avoid intermarriage with mainstream society (Interview with Micheal Butch February 2012).

Currently, many new Roma arrivals settle in the Parkdale neighbourhood of Toronto, which has an enormous immigrant population in general and a high percentage of Roma families specifically. Queen Victoria Public School, the Parkdale library, and the local community/recreation centre have all hosted events for Roma in the last few years, such as a block party (The Globe and Mail, 8 October 2010, "Parkdale Roma: The neighbours may relate to their plight, but tensions prevail") and a special "Roma" day (Interview with Gyongyi Hamori, February 2012). When I visited the Parkdale area, I saw Romani youth dance preparations for a talent show at the Masaryk-Cowan community centre; a candlelight vigil at Parkdale Collegiate to protest Harper's proposed Bill C-31 limiting refugee entry (InsideToronto.com, 29 February 2012, "Parkdale's Roma community gather for candlelight vigil"); and a non-profit community resource centre that offered translation services in Romani. In line at the Parkdale Tim Horton's, I heard the Romani language being spoken. The fact that this reasonably obscure elusive language had arrived intact from Europe and could be heard in the quintessentially Canadian "double-double" context of Tim Horton's seemed to underscore the broad diversity and inclusiveness of Canadian mainstream culture.²⁴

The Parkdale area seems to be an ideal cultural enclave; the Roma are close enough to easily form a community, yet, unlike Roma in various European countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, et cet.), or Canada's isolated, reservation-dwelling First Nation's peoples, they are still in the heart of mainstream society and can easily access public schools and services. Also, the degree of assimilation is voluntary: Tamas Banya chose to send his daughter to a different school from the other Roma, so she would learn English more easily (The Globe and Mail, 8 October 2010, "Parkdale Roma: The neighbours may relate to their plight, but tensions prevail"). Not all Parkdale residents are happy to see the influx of Roma, or "Gypsies" (thestar.com, 11 April 2012, "The Roma of Parkdale: Yin and Yang"), but the dissatisfaction is limited to grumbling, and there are significant

²⁴ Some Canadian Roma have not adjusted to a society that is (relatively) free from discrimination and are still dealing with habits learned in more hostile environments: "Mr. Banya.... Recalled a scene outside a Tim Horton's, the day a police cruiser pulled up. His brother-in-law began fumbling for his ID, a habit leftover from Hungary, where Roma are routinely subjected to random checks. Mr. Banya marveled, "The police officers got out of the car and said, "Hi."" (The Globe and Mail, 8 October 2010, "Parkdale Roma: The neighbours may relate to their plight, but tensions prevail."

advantages to living in such a multicultural neighbourhood, such as easy access to new-immigrant social services. One of the most useful is the Parkdale Intercultural Association, which provides free services in translation, law, child-minding, education, computers, citizenship preparation, and so on.²⁵ When I visited in February 2012, their front window had a listing of about a dozen languages, including “Romani”, in which they provided services.

The Toronto Roma community—which is a community in every sense of the word, with shared goals, events, and social networks—is in a state of rapid flux due to daily international entries and exits, the great majority of them refugees.²⁶ For some Roma, this is their first opportunity to live in an integrated society with equal economic and social opportunities, and the RCC is there for immediate assistance. The RCC provides assists new arrivals in their settlement, such as housing and employment, as well as assisting refugee claims if necessary, with help such as filling out forms, contacting Legal Aid, or finding translation services. Many of the claims are time-critical and there is a great deal more need than volunteers, leading to an almost palpable sense of urgency about the office. For community members, the RCC organizes events such as picnics and get-togethers, seminars, and continuing education opportunities. For the public, the RCC schedules educational events and informational sessions aimed at combating racism and stereotypes. In addition to these things, the RCC is committed to social activism to improve the political climate for all Roma—nationally as well as internationally—such as organizing the candlelight vigil to protest the incipient Bill C-31, or the letter-writing campaign to the Canadian Standards Broadcasting Council to protest Levant’s TV segment. There is a great amount of energy among the Toronto Romani community that is directly attributable to the presence of the community centre, and it is hard to imagine how Toronto’s Roma would fare without this resource.

By contrast, the Roma whom I met in Montreal are not centralized at all; they are scattered across the city, living integrated, comfortable middle-class lives. Generally they have married non-Roma partners; they buy cars and houses; their children own bikes and take diving lessons. Although almost all are first- or second-generation immigrants, many don’t speak Romani or know more than two or three other Roma, nor are they particularly interested in meeting more (Interview with Lelissa Savic February 2010; Interview with Kristen Molnar February 2010; Interview with Phillippe Caignon February 2010). There is another, less-integrated, group of Roma in Montreal, but my access to them was limited by linguistic and cultural barriers; some spoke neither English nor French, and some were not keen to talk to a female researcher. I lacked an intermediary/translator to meet this group: Carmen and Sergiu, both well-respected in the Romani community, were initially willing to act in this capacity, but ultimately they

²⁵ <http://www.piaparkdale.com/index.asp?page=home&language=english>

²⁶ In March 2012, there were about 30 Roma arriving daily (Interview with Gina Csanyi-Robah, March 2012)

were very busy with professional responsibilities which conflicted with the research. From what I could understand from people who knew the members of this group, it was fairly small, and by the end of my stay I had at least met some of them at music events, even if I was ultimately unable to interview them. In this case, a longer fieldwork component would have been useful. From a fieldwork perspective, the great advantage of the Toronto community is the RCC, where the mandate for recognition and education opened many doors in my short stay.

Most of my Montreal interviewees, then, were drawn from the integrated middle class, who had predominantly lost the language. After five months in Montreal I met, and heard about, only a handful of people who spoke Romani. Ronald Lee, my gateway to the Canadian Romani community for almost a decade, and who knew many people in Vancouver and Toronto, knew almost no one in Montreal. Although only a few hours' drive from Toronto, Montreal seems to exist as a sort of independent entity, and aside from the large amount of "Gypsy" music, there seems to be very little in the way of a Romani "community". As the months rolled by and I went to concert after concert—there really is no shortage of Gypsy music in Montreal—it even supports a dedicated "École Jazz Manouche" (Gypsy jazz school) music conservatory—I had clearly met most of the people that I was going to meet. Further networking attempts met only dead ends such as wrong numbers, disconnected numbers, unanswered emails, and so on. The Montreal Roma community is either very small, or well hidden, or both. From the Montreal contacts who did participate in the research, I had the strong impression that any "Gypsy" or "Roma" identity they presented was only a very tiny part of their lived experience, and one which was likely being foregrounded to a great degree for the purposes of inclusion in the research, or promotional advantage in the music industry. For quite a while I knew more "Roma researchers" (that is, non-Roma people like myself who had an interest in researching and disseminating Roma issues) than actual Roma, and it must be noted that networking among these contacts didn't help my own research significantly as they didn't have any more Canadian Romani contacts than I.

It is important to note that the number of educated, middle class Roma who have largely integrated with the mainstream population will always be speculative, since Romani identity in Canada is voluntary, and those who do not choose to claim it would be largely invisible to this research. Among those who do claim Romani identity, and who are by far more visible than all the other Roma in Canada, are the intellectuals and activists working towards cultural recognition and advancements in human rights. They are the wordsmiths: the letter writers, the media publicists, the speakers at public schools, and so on. A great deal of their (usually unpaid) time is spent in advocacy for the benefit of both the local and the global Romani community. It is important to note that this group includes the artists who are involved in the creation and dissemination of a collective identity for the Canadian Roma, although to date these efforts are not well

disseminated or documented. Such works as exist reference the themes of pain, loss, strength, and invisibility or misrepresentation among the general Canadian populace.

The present day: Romani refugees in Toronto

There are a few multigenerational Roma in Canada, although many are first-generation arrivals, and of these, most are refugees. Over the years, Canada's Roma refugee population has been largely drawn from countries that do not require visas for travel to Canada. Many of the Toronto Roma originate from Hungary, where the rise of right-wing politics and in particular the popularity of the Jobbik Party has made life unsupportable for many Hungarian Roma. In 2011, Romani refugee claims from Hungary outpaced refugee claims from all other countries, including Africa and Asia (CBC News, 12 December 2012, "Hungarian Roma hope for sanctuary in Canada").

There can be no doubt that Canadian immigration officials are concerned about the vast number of Roma claiming refugee status, and the acceptance rate—reflective of rapidly changing policies and great legal controversy—plummeted at the same time as the claims increased radically. In 2006, 52% of the refugees were accepted, compared with a 2% acceptance rate in 2010 (Maclean's, 16 December 2011, "Canada: The Roma's next stop?"), and 3% in 2011. The rate of applicants from Hungary rose from 34 in 2007 to 2,297 in 2010 (Maclean's Magazine, 16 December 2011, "Canada: the Roma's next stop?") and in 2011 this number rose to almost 5000 (The Catholic Register, 8 March 2012, "Canadian refugee reform makes it us vs. them"), of which 167 were accepted (Correspondence from Gina Csanyi-Robah of the RCC, 10 September 2012).

Toth speculates that Canada is reluctant to accept a significant number of refugees from countries with whom they have entered into trade relationships, since that act would lend validity to the claimants' statements and undermine the country's reputation (Toth 2010: 9). "The placement of EU countries on the list is thought to be designed to remove a major irritant in the process of negotiating a Canadian trade agreement with the EU." (CBC News, 14 December 2012, "Kenney names 27 countries as 'safe' in refugee claim dealings.")²⁷ Mary Jo Leddy, the co-founder of Toronto's Romero House for Refugees, states: "No country wants to be labelled as unsafe. That would be bad for trade and tourism. Thus, countries such as Hungary and Mexico are lobbying hard to ensure that refugees from those countries are labelled "bogus" (The Catholic Register, 8 March 2012, "Canadian refugee reform makes it us vs. them").

²⁷ In spite of a great amount of protest from the Canadian Roma and activists, Bill C-31 was passed, and has effectively halted almost all Roma entry into Canada (Huffington Post, 5 May 2012, "Bill C-31: "Gypsy Fiction" being fanned by Conservative refugee legislation, Roma Advocate Says").

As of December 2012, the Harper administration passed a bill to block all refugee claims from EU countries. The reasoning given for its creation is that since Hungarian Roma, as members of the EU, have the ability to travel freely within EU borders to escape regional persecution if necessary, they do not need to seek refuge from persecution in Canada. In theory this argument is sound, but it does not take into account the significant practical problems of the Roma in other EU countries. Internationally, the economic and social gap between Roma and non-Roma is widening in almost every country in which they live, and problems of near-crisis proportions currently exist in many communities. International aid agencies have amassed a huge amount of documentation on the wide-scale persecution and gaping social inequalities throughout the EU, and the failure of local governments and the international community to reverse these trends, which are particularly pervasive (UNDP 2002; Toth 2010; Scheffel 2005; Ringold 2005).

Roma issues have gained increasing international attention over the past decade because of emerging evidence of human rights violations and seriously deteriorating socio-economic conditions within many Roma communities. These developments have caught the attention of international organizations such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Council of Europe, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), as well as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including the Open Society Institute (OSI), Save the Children, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (Ringold et al 2005: xvi)

Canada's recent influx of Roma refugees, first from the Czech Republic and then from Hungary, is directly attributable to the absence of visa requirements to travel to Canada from these countries. Following the influx of Czech Roma, Canada re-imposed the visa requirement from the Czech Republic, but as of this time of writing, there is still no visa necessary for travel from Hungary, although Bill C-31 has effectively closed the door for Hungarian refugee claims.

Establishing a refugee claim is a long and difficult process. Persecution must be both documented and proved to be racially or ethnically related, which is difficult in countries where racially motivated crimes may be neither formally recognized nor investigated (Tóth 2010: 4). In Canada, the Roma refugees often encounter language and literacy difficulties in the complicated forms submission process. Applicants are often dependent on translators, who are expensive and in short supply. The Toronto Roma refugees have recently had a number of problems with administrative errors and dishonest lawyers, such as those appointed by Legal Aid (The Dominion, 20 April 2012, "Roma refused: Changes to refugee law shut doors to persecuted minority"). These and other difficulties, such as poor morale within the Roma community itself (Communique by Gina Csanyi-Robah posted to the Roma Community Centre Facebook page, 17 September 2012) result in a high number of abandoned or withdrawn claims each year, which caused Jason Kenney, Canada's current Minister of Immigration, to remark that

since only five percent of Roma refugees showed up for their IRB hearings, he doubted whether their claims were genuine (The Catholic Register, 8 March 2012, "Canadian refugee reform makes it us vs. them").

The home countries, meanwhile, embarrassed by international attention to the mistreatment of Roma within their borders, are quick to downplay the degree of severity, while simultaneously refusing to admit the Roma into their community associations within Canada. In 1997, the Czech government emphasized to the international community that "racism and persecution of Roma were illegal in the Czech Republic" but "...failed to acknowledge the substantial evidence that the government was unable to enforce such law and truly protect the lives of Roma in the country." (Toth 2010: 6) On arrival to Canada, the Czech Roma were not welcomed by the Czech and Slovak Association of Canada, who stated, "We do agree they sometimes face discrimination, but not because of government policy. So now en masse, somehow everyone is persecuted against. I don't know. I doubt it." (The Christian Science Monitor, 27 August 1997, "Gypsies find Suspicion, not Warmth, in Canada.") Likewise there is a "Hungarian House" in Toronto to assist immigrants and refugees from Hungary, but my Toronto Roma contacts state that Roma are not welcome there (Interview with Tamas Banyas, February 2012; Interview with Gyongyi Hamori, February 2012).

Rejected claims for asylum as determined by the IRB are based on several factors, such as incomplete documentation of abuses, incorrectly filed legal documents, or withdrawn or abandoned claims. All of the unsuccessful claimants are currently being labelled "not real" or "false" refugees in media relations spearheaded by Jason Kenney, Canada's Minister of Immigration. Here, Kenney shows a purposeful disconnect between the decisions of the IRB, which merely distinguishes between successful and unsuccessful claims, and further justifies his use of the words by explaining that "the high volume of abusive claims of economic migrants undermined the ability to help genuine applicants seeking protection." (Toth 2010: 18-19). Conway, observing that this practice is not limited to Canada, notes:

Questioning the character of a group of refugees based on their national, ethnic, or religious origin has become a way to delegitimize the group as a whole and to question their moral and ethical background. This is a means to exclude refugee claimants from the asylum granting country, all without establishing whether or not they face persecution. (Conway 2011: 11)

This "false" label, implying fraudulent intent, is very useful in the promotion of a right-wing, anti-immigrant rhetoric that is emotive rather than factual, but has been hugely detrimental for the remaining 3% of "authentic" refugees, as they are now affiliated with a group whom the government has indirectly stated has a 97% rate of willful deception. The new refugees make a visible target for hate speech such as Levant's, and although they are not necessarily subject to widespread persecution in Canada, ethnic

hatred is certainly a fact of existence for Canada's Roma. Julia Lovell, as featured in the Canadian Film Board documentary *Opre Roma* (1999) had her tires slashed for promoting the Western Romani Canadian Alliance in Vancouver; Ronald Lee likes to tell the story about when the Czech Roma started to arrive as refugees, and protesters surrounded the hotel where they were staying, holding up placards facing the street that encouraged drivers to "Honk if you hate Gypsies"; and recently in Alberta (February 2013) Zoe duVal, a Roma advocate in Red Deer, received a death threat for stating on CBC radio that she was in the process of opening a Central Alberta Roma Network (whereas I myself, also featured in the interview with Zoe, received none). There are not very many in Roma in Canada, and many of them are well connected electronically, and if specific individuals have not personally been subject to ethnic hatred in Canada, most Roma know someone in the community who has.

Additionally, the online news media forums, particularly in 2012-2013 with the publicity surrounding the controversial Bill C-31, shows that there are a great number of Canadians who are truly antagonistic to the Roma. Although it is true that anonymous online commentators are notoriously known for seeking shock or provocation value (colloquially called "trolls"), the reader comments that I saw, dozens of them after every article—and I read them all—were overwhelmingly in favour of zero refugee status for the Roma, based solely on ethnic hatred and the promulgation of the worst stereotypes. The comments were derogatory, hateful, and dehumanizing, and to say that I was absolutely shocked at the degree of visible ethnic hatred in modern-day Canada is to put it mildly.

If I had been a Roma myself, reading those comments, I would have felt hugely burdened to see the depth of the venom that exists even in a country that is highly desirable as a refugee destination due to its comparative lack of discrimination. I could not agree more with law professors Berger and Rehaag, who point out that genuine political discourse about immigration and the refugee process has become conflated with ethnic hate speech that vilifies the target group itself (*TheStar.com*, 15 September 2012, "Stop Vilifying Roma Refugees").²⁸ Whether or not the Canadian government should or is able to admit more Roma is a completely separate discourse from that which often takes place, which is the moral character of the Roma as interpreted by others on the basis of their ethnicity.

Canada's current administration, conversely, is also fiscally minded to admit as few refugees as possible, who, in the short-term, generally require social benefits without being able to contribute meaningfully to the economy. Although Canada has a reputation for a generous social welfare system, the reality is that this system is being slowly dismantled through a succession of cost-cutting administrations (Mackey 1999:

²⁸ The situation of the Romani refugees in Canada, particularly those from the Czech Republic, is covered in further detail by Conway 2011.

102; Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002: 115), and the great influx of Roma refugees has greatly challenged the neo-liberal spirit and “fiscal restraint” platform of Canada’s current political climate.

The migratory Roma face equal and opposite pressures on both sides of the migration. As my Hungarian interviewees related, they are made to feel unwelcome in their homeland and in some cases they are actively encouraged to leave (Interview with Tamas Banya, February 2012; Interview with Gyongyi Hamori, February 2012). As victims of hate crimes and scapegoating from local populaces and political parties, the Roma in many European countries are in much the same situation as Jewish refugees immediately prior to WWII, in that they are unable to find a country in which they are welcome. Fonseca 1995 documents families of Roma who occupy liminal spaces in railway stations between borders, raising their families there because they are unable to gain access to any of the surrounding countries.

According to Tamas Banya, the Hungarian Roma feel that they are being pressured to leave their own country, which they are happy to do, but find that the Canadians do not want them either (Interview with Tamas Banya, February 2012). After Bill C-31 was passed, Canada went to the extreme measure of placing a large placard in the Hungarian village from which most of the refugee claimants originated, stating that the Roma should not seek refugee status in Canada because they would not be granted asylum. A photograph of this sign, bearing the Canadian government logo of the red maple leaf, was taken in Hungary by local Roma and relayed to the RCC in Toronto, where it was distributed widely, on the Facebook feed and elsewhere, touted widely as a shameful example of institutionalized Canadian ethnic intolerance. The phrase “None is too many”, referring to Canada’s World War II refusal of Jewish refugees, who eventually returned to Germany to face death camps, was the rallying slogan on the RCC Facebook feed for weeks after that. Whether it could be argued quantitatively that the Roma were in an exactly parallel situation to the Jewish refugees of World War II, I believe it would be true to say that, based on the number and the strength of the comments that appeared on the RCC Facebook feed, a great many of the Canadian Roma feel this to be true.

On entering Canada, however, the Roma refugees face repulsion as the Conservative government’s commitment to slash social spending and promote international trade relations has caused an increase in right-wing rhetoric to justify the refusal of the majority of the Roma refugee claims, which are unprecedented in Canadian history. For both parties this is a very real struggle for survival: while the Roma are understandably seeking a fresh start free from pervasive persecution, the Canadian government is equally loathe to commit to a policy that could set a precedent for wholesale Roma migration to Canada along with, very probably, many of the crises of integration currently faced by numerous host countries. Canada, after all, is still dealing

unsuccessfully with the integration of its own indigenous “Roma”, the First Nations peoples.

In terms of identity, the refugees are engaged in a battle for survival with the IRB and with the Canadian populace. In order to have any hope of remaining in Canada, incoming Roma must identify themselves unambiguously both as Roma—a difficult task in a group that defies straightforward categorization—and also as a victim of ethnically motivated persecution directed towards the Roma.²⁹ It is also in the refugee claimant’s best interests to establish the complicit character of the state in the perpetration of these acts of violence. In this scenario, overt acts of non-reciprocal ethnic violence towards specific individuals are foregrounded within the context of a country unable or unwilling to protect its citizens. Successful refugee claimants, although in theory entitled to define and claim their unique cultural space among others in the multicultural mosaic, find this difficult to achieve in practice due to barriers of language and poverty. The shifting demographics of forced repatriation make it difficult for the community to commit to long-term cultural projects, and the few Romani “ethnic products” that are marketed in Toronto seem to lack resonance with the public. In Toronto, to my knowledge, by far the strongest collective identity is found in the Roma Community Centre, with its strong focus on advocacy in a transnational context. It is possible, of course, that there are other strong (if more informal) Roma community groups in Toronto that were simply not visible to me due to the extremely brief duration of my field research, but it is safe to say that the RCC is by far the most visible.

In many cases, the identity strategy of the RCC focuses less on the creation of identity in the sense of “who we are” and more on identity in the sense of “who we are not” (specifically, not fraudulent refugees, not criminals, not magicians, and so on), with its clear mandate to reduce anti-Roma discrimination and persecution both locally and abroad. To this end, the RCC seeks to redirect culpability away from the Romani refugee claimants, towards the judiciary and administrative systems of the nation-states who have failed them. Above all, the purposeful identity of the RCC reflects a mood of bare survival in which resources are always short, and there is a sense of racing time to halt the flood of anti-Roma sentiment that is developing recently, threatening to turn Canada as hostile as other countries. Although the RCC operates within a Canadian framework and makes use of resources such as the federally funded CultureLink, and volunteers from academic and legal institutions, there is a clear transnational focus in its efforts to improve conditions for all Roma everywhere that defies the focus on identity creation among the Canadian Roma specifically or exclusively. Organized cultural

²⁹ As Tóth notes, establishing Roma ethnicity once in Canada is difficult. In 1997, the Canadian government created a questionnaire that could be distributed to IRB judges to help determine ethnicity, but since it drew heavily on material collected from the Vlach Roma culture, while most of the refugee claimants at that time were Romungere Roma or Sinti, “... the kit was useless because there is no universal or homogeneous culture/language of Roma.” (Toth 2010: 16)

activities exist primarily on a small scale, and are often directed within the community or immediate locale rather than on a broad national scale.

Chapter Two: Ethnogenesis and transformation: Romani Transnational Identity in Toronto

The Declaration of Nation, which the Congress of International Romani Union approved at its fifth meeting in Prague last year (24 to 28 July 2000), clearly states that Roma have a dream of representation of a Romani nation at the international level, without the ambition of creating a state. It is the first time IRU [sic] made such a request since its foundation in 1971. (Sobotka 2001)

Based on a pre-existing melody, the Romani national anthem *Gelem Gelem* (“I was walking”) tells the story of someone walking a “long road” after having lost his family to the Nazis, murdered by the Black Legion (“e kali legiya”, the term used by the Roma for the Nazi guards).³⁰ Rather than being notated (fixed, static) in the style of classical music, *Gelem Gelem* is performed like a jazz standard in that all musical parameters are negotiable and each musician creates his or her own rendition. The text itself is not fixed but corresponds roughly to the same general meaning. Below is the text and translation as shown on the home page of the Toronto Roma Community Centre (<http://www.romatoronto.org/djelem.html>).

Ushten Romale!

Djelem, djelem, lungone dromensa
Maladilem baxtale Romensa

Get up Roma!

I have traveled over long roads
I have met lucky Roma

³⁰ Given that there are at least 50 known Romani dialects; that very little written literature (in terms of stories, plays, and poetry) exists in any of the Romani dialects; and that there are currently no standardized versions even within dialects, the spelling of the lyrics vary widely, as do the words themselves and the English translations. The song can be found online with a number of different spellings, such as: “Zelem zelem” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIHmNvze53o>); “Jelem jelem” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKnEB4LleXI&feature=related>) (Toronto: Gypsy Rebels); “Gelem gelem” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9webTBSuRz8>) (Hungary: Romani school); “Djelem djelem” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BdVVXt29bos>) (Serbia: Saban Bajramovic); “Dzelem dzelem” (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UilcfH0_Z3g&feature=related) (Macedonia: Esmā Redzepova); and sometimes it is titled “Opre Roma” (<http://www.grthmlondon.org.uk/information/romani-nationalism-flag-and-anthem/>) (England: text only) (in this version, the incipit is spelled “Gyelem gyelem”).

Djelem, djelem, lungone dromensa
Maladilem baxtale Romensa

I have traveled over long roads
I have met lucky Roma

Ay Romale, Ay Chavale,
Ay Romale, Ay Chavale
Ay Romale, katar tumen aven
Le tserensa baxtale dromensa

Oh Romani adults, oh Romani youth
Oh Romani adults, oh Romani youth
Oh, Roma, wherever you come from
With tents along lucky roads

Vi-man sas u bari familiya
Thai mudardya la e kali legiya
Aven mansa, sa lumiyake Roma
Kai phutaile le Romane droma

Once I too had a big family
But the Nazis murdered them
Come with me, Roma of the world
Where the Romani roads are open

Ake vryama, ushte Rom akana
Ame xutasa mishto kai kerasa

Now is the time, stand up Rom
We will succeed where we try

Opre Roma!

Arise Roma!

— *Words by Zarko Ivanovich, 1969*

Nicolae Gheorghe, a Romani academic and activist, believes that the Roma are in the state of ethnogenesis, moving from a social identity “occupying a despised and inferior position” to a cultural one with “some kind of respectability with a sort of equality with other social groups.” (1997: 158) In the spirit of nation-building, he argues that it is necessary “...to move from Gypsies to be Roma or Romanies.” (1997: 159) As a stateless people, the Roma have no parallel homeland in which to transform, but there is an emergent sense of transnational identity that is arising from the efforts of Romani activists and intellectuals around the world.

Romani Nationalism: Past, Present and Future

As the word “Gypsy” cannot feasibly be separated from its “Roma” counterpart, neither is it feasible to separate the two platforms of Romani activism, which seeks to address human rights abuses for all Roma, and Romani nationalism, which seeks to create a collective “Romani” identity that transcends national borders. Keeping in mind, however, that the main drive towards collective national identity was predicated on the need for political reform in order to address current human rights abuses, I argue that it is impossible to discuss Romani nationalism without acknowledging the great role of Romani activism, which is an integral aspect of all Romani political platforms. On a purely theoretical level the goals of both nationalists and activists are often very similar,

such as seeking recognition for their grievances, redress for wrongs endured by the ethnic or cultural group, and the desire for representation and change at a macro level. On a practical level in Canada, nationalism and activism are conflated to such a degree that it is often impossible to tell where one ends and the other begins. For these reasons, I have chosen to discuss them concurrently in the following sections.

As not only a stateless entity but one that lacks both written and oral tradition, the Romani nation has few resources with which to work and a number of handicaps as well, most notably a long history of decentralization and poverty. The International Romani Union now has “consultative status” with the United Nations, and the idea of a Romani nation, or at least an incipient Romani nation, is widely accepted among activists and intellectuals, yet it has not achieved “nationhood” in a global understanding of the term, and “... with its members dispersed worldwide, its existence is more symbolic than otherwise.” (Gheorghe and Mirga 2001). The European Roma do not aspire to the role of a territorial nation-state, yet in many cases do not meet the criteria for a national minority since they lack a European mother country (Gheorghe and Mirga 2001).

In 1997, Gheorghe expressed the desire for the Roma to “...evolve in a different way from nation states and national minorities”, and while this has certainly been the case, it is difficult to agree on the result so far. Romani leaders have tried out various terms such as “stateless nation”, “nonterritorial”, “transnational”, or “truly European people” (Gheorghe and Mirga 2001)—the last excludes the great number of Roma who live in non-European countries—but if a consensus has been reached it has not yet been widely disseminated. I myself favour “transnational”, as it has a positive nature which emphasizes the links between the countries rather than focusing on the lack of territory or other commonalities.

The Romani nationalist movement is not an isolated phenomenon in the global context. Several factors have been contributing to a rise in stateless nations around the world: the rise of transnational institutions such as NAFTA and the UN; the homogenizing effect of globalization, which acts as an impetus to protect minority cultures and languages; and the growing recognition that a single state often cannot effectively address all the needs of its populace (Guibernau 1999: 20-21). Guibernau equates the new nationalist movements with social movements dedicated to ending injustices, stating: “In the nationalist discourses of nations without states which are currently seeking recognition, it is common to find a detailed description and a list of grievances against the state.” (Guibernau 1999: 26) The IRU was formed according to this pattern: central to its existence is both a long litany of grievances as well as a desire for cultural recognition. Certainly persecution against the Roma is easy to document, and transnational NGOs are listening. The Roma are now widely recognized as victims of persecutions that take place as a result of social issues (such as poverty, crime, and education) if not culture or ethnicity.

What the Roma lack, however, is the existence of a viable political platform. The Romani nationalist movement has had consistent and long-standing problems with the creation of a significant political presence, while the leadership itself is well known for being internally divided. The IRU is not the only incarnation of Romani nationalism, but other attempts have failed (Gropper and Miller 2001: 97) and indeed it sometimes seems surprising that the IRU has made even modest gains in its efforts when one considers the impediments from both inside and outside the organization.

Nation-building relies on a small pool of dedicated elites. Guibernau states that they are often those who are most dissatisfied with the current system, who have the most to gain by change, or who have the strongest regional ties (1999: 91). These intellectual elites are responsible for creating the new nationalist agenda (Guibernau 1999: 89), and if successful, are the new potential leaders (Guibernau 1999: 91). Since the Romani nationalist movement is based in Europe, English-language publications are not the norm, but two of the best-known English-speaking activists, Gheorghe and Hancock, can be referenced on this topic. Gheorghe documents the European Romani elite as beginning in the 1950s and 1960s when they received education during Communist rule, and embracing self-identity after 1989, calling them "... a small Gypsy bourgeoisie, an important group of people educated and articulate..." (1997: 157-158). However he goes on to state that there is currently a "crisis of legitimacy" towards the Romani "ethnic identity" and its own constituents (1997:158).³¹ Hancock states the problem in a metaphor: "Sar laci and' yekh vadra" ("Like crabs in a bucket"), saying that while there are enough educated people to organize things for the Roma, the organizing does not happen because "harmishagos" (to meddle or disturb) is "their national disease." (Fonseca 1995: 295-296)³²

Within the crusading Roma community every step forward also entrained a half-step back, as a reactionary and growing Roma movement sought to thwart any organization in the public eye. ...These Romani "crabs" didn't see how far and how fast their own elite had come. (Fonseca 1995: 304)

Lack of consensus within the Romani community affects political goals as well as political leadership. The UNDP reports that "Roma elites in the CEE [Central and Eastern Europe] region are generally characterized by political fragmentation and the absence of common political strategies." (UNDP 2002: 74) Another author writes: "Political division

³¹ Gheorghe himself was arrested by the Romani Kris (tribunal) on charges of embezzlement and corruption as some Roma believed, despite his fiscal transparency and frugal lifestyle, that he was hoarding funds intended for the common good (Fonseca 1995: 283). Other Roma have attempted to discredit his involvement in the movement by casting doubt upon the legitimacy of his Romani heritage (Gheorghe 1997: 157).

³² Fonseca, present at a 1992 international Romani forum in Slovakia, and in spite of her clear advocacy platform, describes the assembled Romani leadership as "...scattered, vain, egomaniacal, ignorant, power-mad, back-stabbing...to new non-Gypsy observers [such as herself] it was frankly alarming." (Fonseca 1995: 296)

has further weakened the Roma...Instead of taking advantage of the synergy of joining forces, they continue to disagree.” (Ristic 2001) The element of internal sabotage has also been a severe problem for NGOs working with the Roma to improve their living conditions. (Scheffel 2005)

The nation-building elites are also responsible for engaging membership in the new nationalist movement (Guibernau 2000: 180), but here again the Romani leaders are having difficulties as the IRU faces problems of recognition and acceptance by its own populace. The UNDP reports that in Central and Eastern Europe, Roma trust in intermediaries, NGOs, and even informal leaders is very limited (2002: 6). The situation in Canada is so far largely undocumented, but Gropper and Miller find the United States to be much like Europe.

A few of the Roma in the United States, mostly leaders or would-be leaders, were mildly interested in the Union in the 1970s. But interest has waned. If they know about it at all, the Roma usually consider the Romani Union as an elaborate (but commendable) attempt to exert pressure on the European nations that would include reparations for the Roma comparable with those being granted to Jews...” (Gropper and Miller 2001: 97)

In a territorial nation, a sense of solidarity or national identity can be instilled via the education systems and media (Guibernau 1999: 163) but in the case of the Roma, this strategy is less feasible. Nation-building thus relies on the creation and dissemination of traditions, a role which again falls to the elites. Hobsbawm states: “...the most successful examples of manipulation are those which exploit practices which clearly meet a felt—not necessarily a clearly understood—need among particular bodies of people.” (1992: 307) and goes on to state that new traditions must resonate with the populace (1992: 264).

Aside from the Romani anthem and the creation of International Roma Day, it seems that for the most part, similar practices have not been implemented to assist the incipient Romani nation. The anthem, of course, is very popular and widely disseminated on many levels, and it is safe to say that it is widely, if not universally, recognized and respected among the Roma. The Romani flag, although less well known, incorporates old and new traditions by borrowing the imagery of the Indian flag with the wheel (chakra) and the solid colour blocks and combining them with the new elements of blue and green backgrounds, signifying the heavens and the earth, and the wheel (with 16 spokes rather than 24) to represent a nomadic lifestyle.

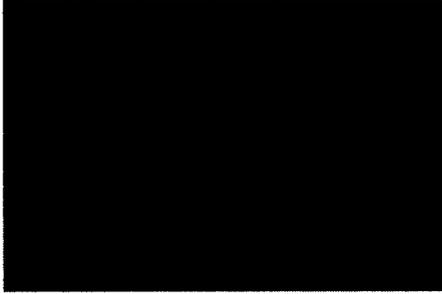


Figure 2: The Romani National Flag. Wikipedia.

While the Roma now have an anthem and flag, their diversity and lack of access to mass media—in many cases a direct result of poverty—impedes the creation and dissemination of tradition on a transnational scale. International Romani Day, April 8, is probably the most successful example: celebrated around the world as the day of the first International Romani Congress held in London in 1971, it is very significant to the Roma both as an internal celebration of their solidarity and as an opportunity for outreach (recognition and representation) to the general public. “This year there has been a vociferous call for unity to Roma across the worldwide [sic]. An official announcement encouraged all Roma to “gather at noon to cast flowers into our nearest river, sea, ocean. Let the spirit of the International Roma Day unite us!”³³

It is not clear if any other pan-Romani traditions have been successfully disseminated across national boundaries: the flag, anthem and International Roma Day are the only three I have found that are represented in publications from multiple countries.

As heterogeneity is the hallmark of Romani culture, encompassing the language, the anthem, and even the flag, so too are the ultimate goals of the Romani national movement often heterogeneous. According to Guibernau, recognition—first by the state, and then by the international community—must be the “paramount objective” of stateless nations (1999: 25). Recognition, of course, is an ambiguous word at best, a sort of political live grenade that can be freely interpreted and tossed into the already-sizzling Romani nationalist fray, since it is not clear for what purpose, or for what attribute, the Romani nation wishes to be recognized. “[The] IRU hopes that recognition of the status of Roma as a non-territorial nation will improve their representation in the field of international politics and make the Roma population of 12 million in Europe feel recognised.” (Sobotka 2001)

While “representation in the field of international politics” is fairly straightforward, especially given the focus of the Romani nation on the redress of human rights abuses, the goal of “feeling recognised” is more opaque. Ronald Lee, in one of Canada’s only first-person Roma narratives, relates the Romani existence as one of invisibility and

³³ <http://romediafoundation.wordpress.com/2012/04/08/international-roma-day-when-a-romani-movement-and-anthem-were-born/>

insignificance in mainstream society, so it may be that “feeling recognized” in this context is a desire for acknowledgment as a member of society capable of human agency.

It had been years since Hassan had left his home state just ahead of the Ku-Klux-Klan, an uppity nigger fleeing for his life. He had crossed the border into Canada hoping to find refuge, equality, freedom and justice. Instead, like me, he had simply become invisible. Nobody hated him, he just didn't exist. He was treated politely, allowed to eat in any restaurant and have a love affair with any white girl. But he could never aspire to anything beyond his allotted role. After all, there's really no colour problem in Canada, there aren't enough niggers. (Lee 1971: 226)

Recognition and Representation

“The basic discourses date back at least to 1971 in London, when the Romany Union was founded and are based on the concept of discrimination. Much of this discourse... is highly ideological. They are realities but there is also a political exploitation of these realities in creating a language to promote it. I have found this language less and less satisfactory...This is part of the reality but I don't think that it is the full reality.” (Gheorghe 1997: 161)

Self-representation by the Roma is a relatively new concept. For a thousand years their history has been written by outsiders; their voices have been silent through centuries of slavery and illiteracy, through the Holocaust, and are, in the present day, largely silent through the increasingly-severe ethnic hate crimes visited upon them in many countries. The representation by the IRU is the first significant breakthrough in this area but it is only forty years old and fractured at best. As Gheorghe states, the IRU discourses were initially based on the concept of discrimination, but others, like Gheorghe, are also finding the language to be unsatisfactory, trying to steer the discourse away from images of injustices and wretchedness towards a more positive notion of identity, however that might be imagined in the minds of the Roma populace and of the Romani representatives (Interview with Lynn Hutchinson Lee, February 2012).

In North America, the best-known Romani representative is undoubtedly Ian Hancock of the University of Texas at Austin, who campaigns and publishes tirelessly for Romani rights and recognition. Hancock's focus is education; he seeks to dispel harmful myths and attitudes about the Roma while simultaneously making the public aware of the large-scale persecutions against the Roma worldwide. It was Hancock, a linguist, who disseminated the word “porrajmos” meaning “the great devouring” (Hancock 2006), referring to the Nazi Holocaust in which Roma died in numbers between 50,000-200,000 (most estimates) or 1.5 million (Hancock's estimate). Although many Roma wish to

forget the Holocaust, Hancock not only refuses to forget, but has pushed it to the forefront of public discourse, taking the number beyond other estimates.³⁴ The image of “Roma as victim” is very much alive in Hancock’s narrative and has been well disseminated throughout North America for decades.

There is no doubt that images of pain, poverty, and suffering, of which there are plenty in Romani communities around the world, are deeply emotive and highly resonant with a global community which has perhaps been not quite as aware of the Roma—either in terms of their simple existence or of the scope of the problems—as it might be. As Central and Eastern European nations move towards democracy, the Roma have been left far behind in the economic shuffle, and a number of Roma rights groups and NGOs have sprung up to assist them. Many of these groups, like Hancock, choose to focus on “information tactics” such as testimonies of marginality and discrimination (Vermeersch 2005: 452-453). The great advantage of this approach is that it is easily tabulated, easily photographed, and easily consumed by a global audience. As a highly effective emotive strategy, it has attracted international attention to the plight of the Roma, and successfully introduced the word “Roma” into the dialogue, but it has not been instrumental in committing the Roma themselves to a Romani identity in any sort of “unified mass movement.” (Vermeersch 2005: 453) Some argue that in a worst-case scenario, the experience of suffering becomes commodified as a global export and a consumer good, in which images of suffering lead to a “consumption of the other”, eventually leading to an obliteration of the other. (Razack 2007: 387) In this way, products of pain and poverty function in the global marketplace in much the same way as “ethnic” products, in that they are sold as authentic representations of “other” yet achieve little in positive terms for the represented group itself.

Some activists prefer a methodology based on “appreciative inquiry” which focuses on positive cultural attributes rather than negative, with the ultimate goal of overcoming “perceptions of deprivation and powerlessness” (Impey 2002: 18). Gheorghe states that the Roma are in a new-to-them position of having to state what they want as opposed to what they do not want: “At this point we must ask: what is this culture?” (Gheorghe 1997: 154) Importantly, he advocates a positive approach to a Roma identity as opposed to a negative one, but ultimately was unable to convince the Romani national delegations of this strategy and was forced to accept the negative definition “...instead of positive affirmation in economic and administrative terms.” (Gheorghe 1997: 156)

When the politicians of Romani parties do veer away from the more problematic social issues of the Roma in favour of a platform based on cultural identity, it is sometimes due

³⁴ Fonseca writes that Hancock’s main goal in Romani activism is to “take back the narrative”, going on to state: “Hancock’s theory of a single-tribe mass exodus out of India was not much endorsed, nor was his claim of 1.5 million Holocaust victims. But who could doubt the *gist* of his history? And who would deny his propriety in telling it? Was it possible to exaggerate the wrongs committed against Gypsies?” (Fonseca 1995: 302-303)

to a hesitancy to base their platforms on marginality, knowing that some people will blame the victim, saying that the Roma are hopeless (Vermeersch 2005: 46). Vermeersch goes on to say that the Roma populace itself is not necessarily enthusiastic about this strategy of identity politics, as they would ultimately prefer to have equal access to jobs and houses than official cultural recognition. "Here we have an interesting paradox: Romani politicians have an identity-based agenda, but simultaneously they are unsure about how to turn that agenda into clear, unambiguous policy demands." (Vermeersch 2005: 463)

Activists too sometimes seek minority cultural recognition to the exclusion of social equality (Vermeersch 2005: 451), and by focusing on "minority recognition" to the exclusion of other issues they risk reinforcing collective stereotypes, which can ultimately be harmful to the drive for social equality (Vermeersch 2005: 452). As Vermeersch argues: "...not the recognition of cultural and ethnic difference in itself should be the target of activism, but the elimination of structural inequality." (Vermeersch 2005: 469) Benhabib, in a longer view, prophesies the ultimate demise of fundamentalist or culturally essentialist groups who work to demarcate boundaries in today's increasingly global and hybridized world (Benhabib 2002).

As academics have been complicit in the validation and dissemination of the concept of "multiculturalism" (Li 1999), so too have they been complicit in the creation and maintenance of Romani ("Gypsy") cultural boundaries. Vermeersch argues that George Borrow and the Gypsy Lore Society of "Gypsiologists" have been presenting the idea of "Gypsy identity" with "an essential, unchanging core" since the early 1900s (Vermeersch 2005: 469), and it is still possible to find current publications devoted to the premise of a "genuine Gypsy" identity (Marian-Balasa 2002; Kertesz-Wilkinson 1992), although as Gheorghe points out, most current academics are more interested in the diversity of Romani culture than the homogeneity. Gheorghe and Vermeersch advocate the purposeful construction of a flexible cultural identity, defying "immutable" boundaries in favour of the local and immediate. Gheorghe, speaking of his own identities as a sociologist and a Roma, says "...I play with it, as people play with their identities all the time; that capability is part of the resources with which we meet necessities." (Gheorghe 1997: 157) As Vermeersch states, advocates may at times find it advantageous to play up the "stable notion of Romani identity", while at other times they may need to deconstruct that idea (Vermeersch 2005: 468). "Essentialism... may stimulate further oppression, but it may also be used to support an emancipatory agenda." (Vermeersch 2005: 469)

Fifteen years ago, Gheorghe clearly articulated his ambiguous role as a member of the Romani elite: "I am not a social worker but I find myself carrying out social work or community development work without having a clear image about what I am doing or in what direction we are going." (Gheorghe 1997: 162) Transnationally, discourses of Romani identity are informed by two primary and oppositional forces in which the need

to address human rights concerns, and the accompanying visual proofs of abuse and poverty, is juxtaposed against the less urgent and “identity politics” movement that would construct and disseminate a Romani identity based on positive cultural traits and skills. The question, then, is how the fractured Roma leadership of a fractured Romani populace will be able to create and disseminate a version of Roma identity that *simultaneously* allows for the collective identity necessary for nation-building, yet does not assume immutable cultural barriers; that focuses on the positive aspects of the culture rather than the negative ones, yet still resonates with the global community and transnational institutions committed to social justice.

Romani Nationalism and Activism in Canada

VISION: The Roma Community Centre (RCC) works to strengthen and unify Roma peoples across Canada in striving for self-determination, social justice, and human rights. We celebrate Roma cultural diversity, history, and achievements.
(Home page of the Toronto Roma Community Centre:
<http://www.romatoronto.org/>)

Melaena: So you don't think that the Roma in Canada need this nationalism the way they need it in Europe?

Philippe: It would be needed if they [the Canadian people] had a reaction against them, but I don't see... if they did, then it would raise a question and then nationalism would come in, but right now it's not that bad. (Interview with Philippe Caignon, January 2010)

In some European countries, Roma number as much as 10% of the population. In Canada, the most generous population estimate of Roma is the one disseminated by the community itself, 80,000, which is only .2% of the Canadian population (based on the 2011 Statistics Canada figures available at <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/12-581-x/2012000/pop-eng.htm>) This low number, plus the geographic distance between Canada and the Roma-dense countries in Europe, means that Canada as a country is largely unfamiliar with Romani culture and politics. Many Canadians do not recognize the word “Roma” other than in association with tomatoes (I know this from a decade of trying to explain the word to Canadian-born friends). There are, as mentioned previously, instances of ethnic hatred and intolerance in Canada, but for the most part the Roma pass into obscurity in Canadian society, although whether this obscurity is due to their low population base and ethnic ambiguity, or whether it is due to a genuine mainstream acceptance (or at least indifference), there is no way to know at this point.

The activism required in Canada, then, is not the same as in European countries, most notably Hungary, where most of the current Roma refugees originate. Toronto's Roma Community Centre, as the sole Romani cultural centre in Canada, oversees a variety of projects that combine nationalism and activism, such as organizing International Romani Day celebrations, or bringing local police officers and Romani youth together for the purpose of dispelling stereotypes on either side. A number of these projects are educational in nature and aimed at schools and the general public, designed to prevent racism, stereotypes, and anti-Roma sentiment in Canada by building a positive image of the Roma and debunking the more common myths. Occasionally it is necessary for the RCC to tackle overt hate propaganda such as Ezra Levant's, but in general much of the emphasis is on refugee and immigration issues. These are central to the organization on many levels: on an individual basis, such as assisting new refugees and immigrants with paperwork and procedural difficulties; on a national level, such as protests against Immigration Bill C-31, which some speculate was drafted largely in response to the flood of Hungarian Roma refugees to Toronto; and on a transnational level, documenting and disseminating the scope of Roma persecution abroad.³⁵

The RCC makes a significant effort to promote positive imagery of the Roma culture rather than overly simplistic tropes of despair and poverty. Lynn Hutchinson Lee, a Romani visual artist active with the RCC, has spearheaded several local collaborations in visual and narrative projects depicting Romani traditional culture and imagery of Romani (particularly *Romni*) strength. Images such as those by Montreal photographer David Ward, depicting the most wretched of Roma, are not widely disseminated by the RCC, and the Toronto Facebook page recently featured a blog entry by an American Roma who denigrated what she termed "poverty porn", saying: "...all these articles do is perpetuate stereotypes and give weight to exclusionist policies. While honest reporting is necessary, I have to admit I am quite weary of seeing ghettos and walls and dirty children and poverty." (Public blog entry by Qristina, 8 November 2012) When RCC representation does feature negative imagery of Roma, such as their "Hate Kills" campaign showing a small battered girl, a victim of a hate crime in Hungary, the focus is very much on the *gadje* (non-Roma) and their crimes rather than the Roma. In this context, suffering is depicted as a direct result of institutionalized injustice fuelled by ethnic hate, and the RCC foregrounds its role as a transnational body demanding justice, in a sense distancing itself from the association with victimization that has followed the Roma for centuries.

So although some of the imagery is the same as that seen on the global stage—wretchedness and suffering, foregrounded for maximum effect—the text is vastly different, effectively reducing interpretations that the Roma themselves might be

³⁵ The Dominion, 20 April 2012, "Roma refused: Changes to refugee law shut doors to persecuted minority"; The Huffington Post, 5 May 2012, "Bill C-31: "Gypsy Fiction" being fanned by Conservative refugee legislation, Roma Advocate Says"; Levine-Rasky 2012.

responsible for their own wretchedness. Certainly a “blame the victim” attitude is present among the key players in European politics; those who do not subscribe to the view themselves are aware of its presence, and Roma politicians in Europe purposefully distance themselves from discourses which seem likely to validate this view. By focusing on the culpability of mainstream society instead of the plight of the Roma, the RCC is able to portray dire human consequences without attaching stigma to the Romani culture. In the sense that the RCC situates itself as an observer of Romani issues around the world (although in practice this is currently largely limited to Hungary) that also advocates for accountability and redress, its mandate is congruent with other transnational regulatory bodies or localized task forces that monitor societal levels of corruption, injustice, and inequality.³⁶ Ultimately, however, the majority of the abuses are taking place in European countries; not only are Canadians ill-equipped to fight them from Toronto, but the Canadian Romani community is small and currently lacks the influence necessary to lobby for broad-scale political change. It was not even able to influence federal immigration decisions made in Canada, such as Bill C-31, which was a devastating blow to the Roma and effectively closed off Canada as a refugee asylum.

The fractured leadership that plagues European nationalist movements seems not to have been an issue of note in Canada so far. Although power struggles within the movement are not unknown, its leaders have remained constant: first Ronald Lee, and now Gina Csanyi-Robah. The RCC itself, a highly effective organization with a tiny budget, relies heavily on a pool of volunteers and certainly does not seem to be in imminent danger of malfunction due to internal politics. The intellectual elite attached to the RCC are a small but dedicated group, and it is their efforts behind the modest amount of national attention that the Romani culture has received in Canada. Gina Csanyi-Robah, as spokesperson, speaks at a number of media and public relations events. I visited the RCC to meet with Gina in 2012, and met some of the other volunteers at various points over the years: Lynn Hutchinson Lee (visual artist), Gyongyi Hamori (social worker), Micheal Butch (musician) and Hedina Sijercic (journalist).³⁷ Ronald Lee (no relation to Lynn), although not as actively involved with the group now due to health reasons, is still an honoured guest speaker and member of the community. Sarah Barbieux from Quebec has also been greatly involved in Romani activist/nationalist causes such as education. The RCC also receives assistance from non-Roma immigration lawyers, activists, and volunteers.

³⁶ A recent Globe and Mail editorial takes almost the same stance as the RCC, calling for international change by foregrounding the chasm of inequality in EU countries: “If EU did more for Roma, they wouldn’t seek asylum in Canada.” (21 October 2012) <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/commentary/editorials/if-eu-did-more-for-roma-they-wouldnt-seek-asylum-in-canada/article4624862/>

³⁷ Hedina now lives abroad but during her time in Canada she was editor-in-chief of the Romani newspaper, *Romano Lil*. She still publishes (Sijercic 2007), and collaborates on projects with the Toronto RCC (Chirikli Collective 2011)

Many of the more involved members of the Canadian Romani community use the Facebook page to post national and international news articles, videos, exhibitions, communications, and opportunities of interest to the Canadian Romani community at large.³⁸ As a Canadian Romani “national” forum it is catholic in its inclusiveness, spanning multiple languages, interests, and countries. A random sample of daily postings in October 2012 include: an article in Hungarian about Roma immigration to Canada; an article in English titled “Czech hockey club apologizes to Canadian player for fans’ racism”; an article in Hungarian about Hurricane Sandy; an article by Reuters news service titled “Insight: Hungary’s far-right party gains as it targets Roma”; a photo of the Roma Holocaust memorial in Berlin; a press release stating that the documentary “Our School” is broadening its Swiss release; and so on.

The Toronto community centre, with a much larger population of Roma on which to draw, relies primarily on Romani volunteers while remaining open to assistance from non-Roma. The creative and representational products of the Toronto community, however, are often Roma-only collaborations, which function to give voice to perceived invisibility among the community members. These collaborations tend to remain in the community, not, I believe, for overt reasons of cultural privacy or boundaries, but because the Roma lack proper distribution channels outside of the community.

Reflexivity: Reflections on advocacy and research

Ursula Hemetek, an ethnomusicologist who worked with the Roma in Austria, found that her role as activist was expected by her Roma partners (2006: 44), and she believed that she could not have studied the Roma without becoming an activist, which meant not publishing things they didn’t want published, becoming unequivocally “on their side.” (2006: 48). This is congruent with my experiences with the Canadian Romani community *in Toronto*: it would be difficult to study Romani culture without becoming an advocate, at least if one wanted to make more than one publication. The researcher, if not expected to give back to the community directly, is at least expected to disseminate images and statements that are congruent with the goals of the advocacy community. The general sense is that the Roma have already suffered a great deal historically from pejorative representation, and that researchers are expected, like medical doctors, to at least do no harm.

Some prominent activist-academics in Canada and the United States include ethnomusicologists Petra Gelbart and Carole Silverman³⁹, Canadian anthropologist

³⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/10460095897/?fref=ts>, currently with more than 700 members

³⁹ Both ladies are on the Board of Directors of the Voice of Roma, a non-profit advocacy organization in the United States. <http://www.voiceofroma.com/index.html>. Accessed July 2013.

David Scheffel, Canadian sociologist Cynthia Levine-Rasky, American sociologist Ethel Brooks, and of course the unstoppable Ian Hancock at the University of Texas at Austin; of this list, Drs. Gelbart, Brooks, and Hancock are Roma. Anyone making a publication that was disparaging to the Roma would be accountable first to the Romani community that assisted the researcher, and then within the academic community itself. As Romani nationalism is almost always conflated with activism in publications, so is Romani research almost always conflated with advocacy in North America. The recent Romani Studies conference I attended at New York University, run by Dr. Petra Gelbart, was not ostensibly aimed at advocacy but nevertheless included a large advocacy component in the program such as a round table with local Roma to address and discuss issues of Romani representation and identity. Several other prominent Romani and non-Romani scholars were active at the conference, including Dr. Ethel Brooks, Dr. Carol Silverman, and Dr. Barbara Lange; I doubt anyone was surprised by the advocacy slant to the conference.

Having said that, I believe that Gypsy music as an isolated phenomenon could be studied in Montreal quite easily with no particular affinity, or possibly even much knowledge, of Romani transnational issues. The Montreal musicians are, of course, aware that Gypsy music is the product of “Romani culture”, and although many have a fairly deep knowledge of the idiom and of the culture, ultimately most are not Roma, and neither are any of them particularly involved in advocacy; the most that can be said is that they will participate in advocacy efforts if actively recruited by someone else. In Montreal, what mattered most to my contacts was that I had the technical and historical musical skills to follow their discussions of Balkan rhythms, of flamenco dance forms, of elaborate improvisations. The strongest sense of advocacy I had in Montreal was a sort of “advocacy by omission” from Sergiu Popa, who alluded a few times to “not so nice” (in his words) activities by members of the Roma community in Montreal, but declined to elaborate. I was left with the strong impression that he was purposefully censoring the “Roma image” so that it couldn’t be portrayed negatively in my upcoming publication(s) (Interview with Sergiu Popa, October 2009), and this censoring, in its own way, constitutes a type of advocacy in its purposeful representation of positive rather than negative imagery. I did hear some negative comments about Roma society, specifically the patriarchal elements, from my *Romni* contacts in Montreal, but overall very little mention was made of Roma society either way, not because the musicians were necessarily self-censoring like Sergiu, but because for the most part, I believe, they didn’t see its relevance to Gypsy music.

Toronto, of course, with its very vocal advocates, is entirely different. On the RCC Facebook forum, the Canadian Romani community is quick to condemn media releases that are not flattering. CBC drew criticism recently for airing a show called “Gypsy Child Thieves”, and more recently Global TV produced a documentary about the Roma called “The Outsiders”, which was received very poorly by the community. Several of the RCC

Roma, including Ronald Lee and Gina Csanyi-Robah, had participated in the project only to be hugely disappointed in the final result:

Shame on you Hannah James [journalist] for violating our trust by producing such an unbalanced, inaccurate, stereotypical film about us Roma. Exploiting and marketing 'Gypsy Criminality' is not original. I expected much more from you than this dumb-downed piece of sensational journalism. (November 9, 2012 RCC Facebook post by Gina Csanyi-Robah, used by permission)

With a few exceptions such as Karl Nerenberg (journalist and owner-blogger of *therabble.ca*) and Joe Fiorito (journalist for *thestar.com*), many of the Canadian media releases concerning the Roma (nationally and abroad) are regarded by the RCC advocates as inaccurate or distorted to a large degree, and it is widely understood that the lack of self-representation in the media is a huge handicap. The Toronto Romani community advocates have few resources with which to combat or reverse negative media coverage, and a strategy of exclusion is almost their only recourse. Whatever other projects Hannah James may pursue, it is unlikely that she will ever again be allowed entrée into the Toronto Roma community via the RCC. Whether she would be able to find other Toronto Roma not connected with the RCC and make further productions is open to debate, but my understanding is that, because of the nature of the migrations in extended-family groupings, the Toronto Roma community is very well connected: if the RCC advocates advised the Toronto Roma to refuse contact with Hannah James, their wishes would likely be respected.

Academia, conversely, prioritizes deep research processes that are not commonly utilized by the media, and has no economic need to sensationalize articles for sale. Academic publications about the Roma tend to be more balanced, but less disseminated. Researchers in anthropology and ethnomusicology in particular, who have a fieldwork component to their studies, are unlikely to publish material that could be perceived negatively by their new friends and colleagues, and indeed it is unlikely that any academic would proceed with fieldwork at all without having a certain degree of pre-existing sympathetic interest.

In a music degree, of course, the nature of the sensitive information that I would come across is limited: largely the conversations with my contacts focus on music and cultural identity. While confidences of a sensitive or controversial nature can and do occur, these are usually parenthetical in nature, tangential to the research, with no clear academic benefit to be gained from its inclusion in the final publication. If it was the case that I felt I needed to include certain information about the Roma that was not necessarily flattering to the group, such as the existence of the Romani "mafia" in Montreal, I would seek to do so in a way that presented a balanced and factual account with no hint of gratuitous sensationalism. There is, of course, a certain risk with advocacy publications that they become so distorted in favour of the group that their

validity is challenged, as Fonseca has written about Hancock (Fonseca 1995: 302-303), and I would hope that this publication do not render me equally susceptible.

In terms of character, my work is now and has always been intrinsically activist in nature, as I believe it is impossible to study the Roma in any depth without being aware of the gross injustices that exist throughout the world regarding the Roma, and impossible to study current political trends without being increasingly alarmed at what seem to be ever-spiralling social crises in countries which host large populations of Roma. While I would never deny the myriad of social and economic problems within many Romani communities around the world, these issues cannot be separated from the national contexts in which they occur.

In Canada, the Roma I have met are largely middle-class and well educated individuals, musicians or advocates who are concerned with Roma social welfare both locally and abroad. These contacts have led to my own understanding, which I believe to be largely emic in nature, about the nature of Canadian-based Roma advocacy, which is intended to be both a supplement and catalyst to the mobilization of Roma advocacy in countries with poor human rights records. Over the ten years that I have been in communication with members of the RCC, I have found their goals and aims to be both consistent and logical in nature: An end to ethnic discrimination; equal access to voting, employment, and schooling; safe communities in which to live, and so on. I do not find any of these goals to be unreasonable nor do I feel that the average Canadian citizen would find them so. The fact that no one has so far turned these goals into reality is a more complex issue.

From a Canadian perspective, the transnational struggles of the highly heterogeneous Roma seem to be unfolding virtually in parallel to Canada's First Nations peoples, who remain marginalized despite a great many attempts to reverse the situation. I watch the progress (or not) of the Canadian Roma with fascination as they struggle to reverse tropes of racial hostility, which are curiously pervasive when juxtaposed against the "Canadian" tropes of inclusion and social equality. Many applied projects, even within academia, have enormously high fail rates (see Scheffel 2005 for a description of the difficulties of his applied anthropology project among the Roma) and if a wealthy, social-net-enabled country like Canada has not managed to guarantee access to education, safe housing, public health services, and freedom from discrimination to the First Nations peoples after centuries of co-existence and countless failed federal programs (one of the most notorious being the residential boarding schools), the future seems bleak for the European Roma, particularly those in impoverished Eastern European countries.

Once the cycle of marginalization has begun, it seems, it is almost impossible to reverse, and the Roma of Canada would do well to create new societies within the Canadian nation (not outside as has happened to them throughout Europe) before social

momentum and hostilities reach a pitch that creates a circle of poverty and despair comparable to the First Nations peoples, or possibly worse. Although this seems an unlikely scenario for Canada, it is important to remember that it is happening to the Roma in many so-called democratic countries at the time of this writing. Effective integration strategies are necessary to address humanitarian concerns, and should also be implemented to alleviate financial concerns, as the social costs of sustainable solutions are significantly less than the social costs of crisis intervention (as municipalities across Canada are now discovering with innovative approaches to the urban homeless).

Direct advocacy efforts such as might be made easily with the Toronto Roma, who are always in need of volunteers, are difficult to implement from Alberta and largely limited to letter-writing, which I have done along with informal talks and seminars about the Roma for years.⁴⁰ In my Master's degree, I sent all of my song transcriptions to Ronald Lee for use within the community, and we are hoping to start another, more ambitious project involving transcriptions, translations, arrangements, and cultural storytelling, this summer. Within this degree, I find that my thoughts are constantly dwelling on ways that the Roma of Canada could make use of the beloved Montreal "Gypsy musicians" to launch the Roma out of invisibility at the same time ameliorate a certain degree of vilification by the media. Ljuba Radman, of course, had the same idea with the two Romani Yag symposiums which were intended to do exactly that, but they were plagued by difficulties, and it seems therefore that there must be another, better way to integrate Canada's excellent Gypsy music resources with the needs of the community itself. It is my hope to continue working with members of the Roma community in informal projects, within the parameters of applied ethnomusicology, for many years to come.

Toronto Ethnographies: Music and Activism

Hemetek argues that ethnomusicology plays a crucial role in the process of political recognition among ethnic groups in Europe, particularly applied ethnomusicology (2006: 44). Like Pettan 1996, she argues that the demand for applied ethnomusicology is based on a growing recognition of emergent identities (diaspora, minorities, immigrants,

⁴⁰ In January 2013, Ronald Lee asked me if I would assist Zoe duVal, a Roma from Red Deer, Alberta, in starting an advocacy and cultural centre in Alberta, so that is currently in the very tentative planning stages, although it remains to be seen how viable it will be given the lack of Roma in the prairies. Zoe took the cause to the media, which, combined with the recent crisis of Roma refugees from Hungary, resulted in both of us being interviewed by CBC for a recent article, 28 January 2013: "Rule changes threaten Roma refugee claimants, charges Alberta woman". However it was Zoe, not I, who received a death threat after publicizing the plan to open the centre.

refugees, and ethnic groups) that struggle in opposition to the dominant culture and often suffer discrimination (2006: 36).

Within Toronto, music has a prominent role in both activist projects and those projects which might be considered to have a “nationalist” flavour in that they are manifestly concerned with the cohesion of the Toronto Roma community, and its representation as a national player in a multicultural environment. While it would be facile to say that “immigration” informs the Romani music of Toronto and “multiculturalism” informs the music of Montreal, there is indeed a significant difference in the scope and focus of the Romani (“Gypsy”) music of the two cities based on the demographics and the surrounding cultural environment. Whereas Gypsy music in Montreal is so popular that it is flooding the market, the same does not seem to be true in Toronto, where it seems to be aimed inwards at the Romani community rather than out towards a broader, more diverse audience. The differences between the two cities in terms of the technology and production processes of the groups are significant, and whether these differences are caused by different market forces, or different levels of marketing ability within the musicians themselves, or other reasons, is difficult to say.

One obvious question, of course, is why there are so many more Romani refugees in Toronto than Montreal. One possibility is Montreal’s mandated bilingualism: perhaps the prospect of becoming fluently bilingual, an almost-necessary skill for long-term life in Montreal, seems like an overly daunting task for new immigrants who cannot yet speak one. Tamas Banya said that he chose Toronto over Montreal because he considered English easier to learn than French (Interview with Tamas Banya, February 2012). There is also a certain momentum that governs peoples in diaspora; more Roma arrive in Toronto simply because it already has more Roma. Also, the Roma frequently travel in family groupings, so many of the new arrivals are related or well-known to others, making settlement and social networks easier. It is also likely that the existence of the RCC and Toronto’s many services for new immigrants in the Parkdale area is a significant draw.

Music, in the context of cultural and economic survival against a backdrop of national rejection, or at best, national indifference, has clear roles and is used strategically by the Toronto advocates and activists for various purposes: to establish good relations with the local community (such as the “welcoming party” hosted by a local Parkdale MPP (Member of Provincial Parliament): *The Globe and Mail*, 8 October 2010, “Parkdale Roma: The neighbours may relate to their plight, but tensions prevail.”); to promote advocacy causes (such as Micheal Butch bringing his guitar to play the Romani anthem at the candlelight vigil protesting Bill C-31); and to connect or safeguard a very fragile, transient community. Gyongyi Hamori runs Romani dance practices for youth to help maintain their heritage, to help teach them good values, and to give them something to showcase at cultural events and talent shows (Interview with Gyongyi Hamori, February

2012).⁴¹ Tamas spoke of creating his group in order to retain Roma cultural memory, stating that as he had already lost his language and his home, he wouldn't know who he was without his music. (Interview with Tamas Banyá, February 2012)

Local Romani musicians such as Micheal Butch of the Gypsy Rebels—who was completely unaware of the RCC a year ago—and Robi Botos, a jazz pianist, have been drawn into the RCC's advocacy platform. Micheal donates his time both as a musician and Romani language translator to local RCC endeavours, and Robi provided the music for various advocacy causes, including a recent documentary about the Roma, "A People Uncounted." (2011) In this instance, then, music takes place in the context of poverty, linguistic fragmentation, and constant upheaval in the form of involuntary repatriations, working to connect fragile and displaced community members who, through the refugee claims process, have been forced to identify as Roma in Canada, rather than being allowed to choose to identify as Roma.

Commercially, there seems to be little demand for "Gypsy" music in Toronto. Robi Botos, who has made a name for himself in the music industry, markets himself as a jazz pianist rather than a "Gypsy" or Roma. Micheal Butch, leader of the Gypsy Rebels, has not yet been able to lever his group into commercial success, and Tamas' group, Ungro Rom (meaning "Hungarian Roma) has yet to perform publicly as of the time of this writing. Gypsy Flame, in which Peter Ferencs performs periodically, has no commercial or online presence at all aside from a YouTube video depicting the performers in overly-exoticized, stereotypical "Gypsy" dress ("all in polyester": Interview with Peter Ferencs, February 2012), mandated by the non-Roma leader of the group and presumably for the benefit of an audience who believes that that is how "Gypsies" really dress.⁴²

Overall, the national buy-in to "multiculturalism" does not seem to be selling much music in Toronto, as neither the Gypsy Rebels nor Gypsy Flame seems to have achieved any significant degree of recognition among a wider audience. The only other "Gypsy" music group I could find in Toronto, or heard about, was Lemon Bucket, which markets itself as a "Balkan-Klezmer-gypsy-party-punk super band". Lemon Bucket has a significant online presence but since none of the musicians are Romani, it was not mentioned by members of the Roma community, and its inclusion of "Gypsy" music

⁴¹ One of the songs that Gyongyi taught to the young children was very similar in melody to the North American children's song "If you're happy and you know it", although in a minor instead of a major mode. Sung in Hungarian, there were actions for each verse that Gyongyi modeled for the children. When I asked her about it, she explained that it was a song to help teach them good moral values, and the lyrics were along the lines of "Be careful what you do with your hands, be careful what you see with your eyes", and so on (Interview with Gyongyi Hamori, February 2012).

⁴² For this research I have discounted Ronald Lee and Nina Bottacini's CD *E Zhivindi Yag* ("The Living Fire") as it was produced in 2003, and they were not performing regularly at the time of my doctoral field research. However, this recording is a definitely an important part of the Gypsy music narrative in Canada, which has been discussed at length in my Master's thesis (Grierson 2006).

seems so tangential, I have excluded it from this research. Although there is an immediate and clear need for the ongoing tradition of Romani music performance from a community perspective, its commercial value in Toronto seems to be minimal.

Chapter Three: Montreal Ethnographies

Montrealers, and Quebecois, are pretty open for world music. They love it. They play it, they love it, they dance it. So it's a great place if you want to do something ethnically different. Toronto is 'okay', I find it hard to bring the communities together. In Toronto we get mainly the Bulgarian community to come. (Interview with Lubo Alexandrov, January 2010)

Ethnic music is very big here, but the other cities, you cannot find it. In Toronto, everybody think about work, work, work... it's a different kind of life there. But in Montreal? It's different. They like relaxing. I think people love the Gypsy culture... the Gypsy culture is different, fun, and... I remember that last year, I had the show with Lubo, it was the Gypsy night too... and the people coming there with the Gypsy costume, they go fun, they love it." (Interview with Suleyman Ozatilan, January 2010)

Toronto and Montreal, with populations of 5.5 million and 3.8 million respectively, are the two largest metropolitan areas in Canada.⁴³ Both cities of high volumes of new immigrants, yet they nevertheless offer very different Romani or "Gypsy" music products. The only offerings in Toronto that I was able to find were, in total: The Gypsy Rebels, Ungro Rom (which has yet to make its first Canadian performance), Lemon Bucket, and the perhaps-defunct Gypsy Flame. Montreal, by contrast, turned up the following offerings in the Gypsy music genre (the list has been compiled over a three-year span and is probably no longer inclusive given the lapse of time between my field research and the final writing of this dissertation): Te Merav, Djoumboush, Kaba Horo, Carmen Piculeata and the Gypsy Orchestra of Montreal, Les Gitans de Sarajevo, Soleil Tzigane, Gaji Gajo, the Sergiu Popa Ensemble, Jorge Martinez, L'École Jazz Manouche, Suleyman Ozatilan, and, an hours' drive from Montreal, Sarah Barbieux and Troupe Caravane.⁴⁴ Although, as noted earlier, the majority of the musicians in these groups are non-Roma, it is important to note that the groups generally promote a strong link to the ethnic heritage of the musicians or the music, and sometimes both: for example through imagery (Kaba Horo); emphasis on the cultural heritage of the Roma musicians (Sergiu Popa); and language (the group Gaji Gajo translates as "non-Roma boy, non-Roma girl" in the Romani language).

The majority of Canada's Gypsy music, then, is produced in Quebec, and focuses in Montreal. Here, Gypsy music thrives in a city where multiculturalism is enacted as a

⁴³ (Statistics Canada web page, accessed September 2013: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/demo05a-eng.htm>)

⁴⁴ Attempts to find other Gypsy music performers or groups in other Canadian cities met with indifferent success, and the few that existed—primarily in the "Gypsy jazz" genre—were often only very tangentially associated with "Gypsy" or "Roma" in any sense.

trendy urban or global movement informing daily consumer decisions about what food to buy, what clothes to wear, and so on: African-inspired clothes to wear at work, Korean cuisine for dinner, Gypsy music in the evening, and so on. Although many large Canadian cities subdivide into enclaves according to ethnic and economic strata in which the “ethnic” populations often coincide with the lower socioeconomic population, this trend is largely absent in Montreal. Of course there are geographic divisions according to wealth, and affluent stone mansions still live beside other stone mansions, but throughout Montreal there is a greater sense of mingling of cultures than in other places.

For this research, I spent a total of about seven months in Montreal: a five-month stint, a six-week stint, then a couple of shorter one-week periods. I rented an apartment in the city, rode the metro, and ate as many chocolate croissants as I could while meeting and talking to all the Roma and “Gypsy musicians” I could find, going to any concert that seemed to have any remote association with my topic, and absorbing the culture of the city and its people.

When I lived on Rue St. Catherine, our closest grocery store was a cluttered, chaotic-looking Indian import store, which on any given day was packed with people of all ethnicities. The Korean BBQ restaurant was not just for Koreans, and the Japanese gift shop was full of white people buying Hello Kitty teapots and sushi mats. These scenarios were reenacted not just in downtown Montreal but throughout the whole city. Everywhere I went, people of all different cultures were browsing and looking through import stores, buying, discussing, sharing, eating Jamaican meat pies and Jewish lox, buying Turkish coffee sets and African scarves not as a curiosity but simply as a matter of course. I’ve lived in a number of other cities in Canada (Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Prince George, and Ottawa, plus visited Toronto a great deal) and had some awkward shopping encounters in import stores where I, as a cultural outsider, seemed to be largely unwelcome. In my experience in other Canadian cities, most ethnic import stores are clustered together geographically and patronized largely by people of that ethnicity. But in Montreal, the import stores, and the people of different ethnicities were found everywhere: in the affluent areas, in the suburbs, in the downtown core. One of the Middle Eastern grocery stores, Akhavan is “Superstore”-sized and so busy that it hires three staff members each for the olive counter, nut counter, bakery, and deli. If there are cultural enclaves in Montreal—and I can’t say definitively that there are not, only that I didn’t see them—they are better hidden than in other cities, and the core of the city itself is visibly ethnically integrated in every dimension.

So rather than being pushed to the margins of middle-class respectability the import stores and products are brought into the core of the city and gentrified, sought after by urban, chic, global-savvy Montrealers. Many of my contacts were completely in love with Montreal, saying that it was the best city in Canada because of its European connection and influences. Here, the local incarnation of globalization is celebrated to a

degree that is unparalleled in other Canadian cities, and this quality makes it a perfect venue for “Gypsy” music. The Montreal musicians, surrounded by import stores, have developed a working strategy for marketing Gypsy music, neatly matching sales to an urban, global audience, adroitly sidestepping the political shadows that often follow the Roma. It may be that issues of ethnicity are overshadowed by the more pressing and politicized issues of the French/ English language debate and the ever-present shadow of possible separation, or perhaps the “European” (as my contacts called it) or global nature of Montreal acts in a transformative manner that is unique to Montreal specifically.

The Toronto RCC fills a great need for the Roma community and could safely be much larger before volunteers would be in any danger of being turned away; there are never enough people, hours, or money to fill all the needs of the incoming Roma. By contrast, many of my Montreal contacts said they had little to no interest in the idea of a Toronto-style community and advocacy centre, and probably wouldn’t visit one even if it existed. My Montreal contacts seemed to have little interest in nationalist or activist agendas, and there is no corresponding Facebook page or community centre. During our interviews, they focused on music, their families, their Montreal friends, and so on. Those that shared their stories of immigration with me did so in ways that largely bypassed references to Roma persecution abroad; their narratives focused on the immediate and the local, rather than the past and the global.

It’s possible that there are Roma in Montreal who are desperately in need of a Toronto-style RCC and that I couldn’t find them for all the same reasons that the RCC exists: transience, language barriers, and poverty barriers. But it is fair to say that while the RCC’s few dedicated volunteers, primarily drawn from the educated middle class, are overwhelmed with demand, there are no similar volunteers at all in Montreal who are willing to create or maintain an advocacy group.⁴⁵ Montreal’s most similar offering to the advocacy-oriented RCC has been Romani Yag, a large “Gypsy” festival aimed at advocacy and cultural awareness, which was spearheaded for both of its two years (2005 and 2007) by the same non-Romani advocate, Ljuba Radman. Congruent with other forms of Gypsy music in Montreal, Romani Yag was staffed largely by non-Roma volunteers and featured a great many non-Roma “Gypsy musicians”. The first Romani Yag symposium occurred before my doctoral research, but I know that the second Romani Yag in 2007 had far fewer attendees than expected, and despite sponsorship from many public and private agencies and corporations, it ended in debt. Ljuba herself was financially and emotionally drained, and moved abroad shortly afterwards. I believe

⁴⁵ Although I should add that recently Ronald Lee has been communicating with Lelissa Savic, a Romani university student in Montreal, and Carmen Piculeata for the purpose of creating and maintaining a Romani Community Centre in Montreal. This is still very much in the planning stages and it remains to be seen whether it will be viable in the near future. (Communication with Ronald Lee, January 2013)

that Ljuba, like myself when I began this research, vastly overestimated the interest and actual level of support for Romani activism in Montreal and perhaps in Canada in general.

Identity as dialogue and musical practice: Kaba Horo at Les Bobards

Les Bobards is a dance club in downtown Montreal, surrounded by other dance clubs and encircled by taxis in an area that is busy at most hours of the day and night. At “Bobards”, the local name, the beer is cheap and the clientele represents the spirit of diversity found so strongly in Montreal: gay mixes with straight, twosomes dance beside threesomes, twenty-somethings wait at the bar with fifty-somethings, and women in arty tunics are pressed by the crowd into young leather-clad men with multiple piercings. Unified in purpose, however, all of them were vying for possession of the few tables close to the stage. It was Saturday night and I was there to hear Kaba Horo’s “Bulgarian Gypsy Groove” live in concert.

While I was standing by the bar in my own bid for diversity as the only visibly pregnant attendee, the band’s accordionist arrived and whisked me off downstairs to meet the band members, who were lounging on shabby couches in a rec room, killing time with hip flasks until the club filled up. I knew Lubo, the leader, and Sergiu, the accordionist, and had been trying unsuccessfully for a month to meet Suleyman, the Turkish Romani vocalist, who it turned out had been receiving and ignoring my emails. Sergiu and Lubo introduced me to the group, I told them a little bit about my research, and Suleyman made a charming apology.

Awkwardly, the introduction of my research topic seemed to spark an argument between Sergiu and Suleyman about national identity. It began when Sergiu introduced Suleyman to me as “Rom, Gypsy” and Suleyman protested that he wasn’t—he was Turkish. Sergiu said that yes, Suleyman was Turkish “...and Gypsy” like Sergiu was Moldovan “...and Gypsy”. Both started off using the term “Rom” interchangeably with “Gypsy”, but after a few minutes they switched exclusively to “Gypsy”. Suleyman, in between free hits of vodka, was trying to explain that in Turkey, there were 45 different ethnicities and nobody said where he came from; everyone was just “Turkish”. As a coup de grace, he added, “What are you going to call *your* kids, Sergiu?”

Sergiu, who is married to a Hungarian-Polish Jewish Canadian lady—which would make their children, following this train of reasoning, Hungarian-Polish-Jewish-Romani-Moldovan-French-English-Canadian—wasn’t ready to quit; he stuck to his point, saying that when he had children they would retain their other identities. What had begun as a leisurely and theoretical discussion was turning acrimonious and I, the catalyst, was

feeling awkward that I had broached what was clearly a sensitive topic right before showtime.

Then, as abruptly as it began, the argument ended; accord, it seemed, was unnecessary. Suleyman threw himself into Sergiu's lap to make friends (and flirt), Sergiu accepted the truce with a laugh and began, with difficulty, to push Suleyman off his lap, and the band members all laughed. Lubo went upstairs and came back to announce that the club was full—the argument had gone on for quite a while—it was time to start the show.

Kaba Horo's onstage presence was as diverse as their audience's. There was no focus on a group image, a theme, or any kind of costuming; most of the band was dressed in casual shirts and jeans that comprise the de facto uniform of the average Canadian city. Only Lubo and Suleyman differed in dress: Lubo wore a cotton shirt with a bandanna trailing from the back pocket of his jeans, and Suleyman wore a white shirt with black pants and a black velvet vest. Likewise the group did not seek to establish any "Gypsy" identity, or even any group identity, with the audience; the band members simply walked onstage, and without preamble, began to play. Visually, they looked like many other mainstream North American rock groups except for the presence of a saxophonist and accordionist, and Suleyman's flamboyant stage manner and Turkish dancing.

The dance floor was packed when the band was playing. During breaks, many patrons migrated to the smaller dance floor at the back, which had its own DJ and disco ball. One of the songs had a strong 2/4 beat, sounding very like a polka with Romani vocals. Most of the words were indecipherable above the bass, but I could hear just enough to identify it as Romani: "Romale, shavale" ("Romani men, Romani youths", used in the sense of calling them together). The DJ showed me the disc when I asked: Emir Kusturica and the No Smoking Orchestra (Kusturica is a non-Roma musician who produces music in much the same genre as Kaba Horo). Clearly the Gypsy music fad had legs at Les Bobards.⁴⁶

The next time I saw Sergiu, I apologized for bringing up a sensitive topic between him and Suleyman, but Sergiu just laughed and waved his hand dismissively, saying that he and Suleyman had the same argument at every gig. The conversation between Sergiu and Suleyman, Roma of two different countries subsumed by a multicultural ensemble in a multicultural country, underscores the discourses that arise when simultaneous and purposeful iterations of identity are forced to compete inside an attenuated heuristic: "What are you going to call *your* kids, Sergiu?" It is both a philosophical question and a practical challenge: How *will* Sergiu choose among the variety of labels available to his children? While some people, like Suleyman, advocate simplicity ("I'm a Turk"), others

⁴⁶ And a few years later, the Montreal Jazz Festival has slated Sergiu Popa to open for Emir Kusturica in the upcoming 2014 concert:
<http://www.montrealjazzfest.com/program/concert.aspx?id=10641>.
Accessed September 2013.

try to negotiate a complex and dynamic identity based on geographic, ethnic, and linguistic fusions that, whatever else they may be, are ultimately informed by the presumption of equality and value in diversity as exemplified by Canada's real or imagined commitment to social inclusivity and multiculturalism. This ethos of multiculturalism is now an important part of Canadian Romani or "Gypsy" music, used by the Roma and non-Roma musicians alike to inform the creative process and to identify and market their musical products within Canada's larger population base.

Fieldwork in Montreal: New mother, new roles

Until I got pregnant, I had been staunchly in the camp of "Women can do anything men can do" which included brilliant careers, international travels, and so on, and I was passionate about my studies with no reason to pause. But I hadn't accounted for the inevitability of biology and the question of children ("yes or no") that I faced in my late 30s. Some women "do" pregnancy well: I was not among them. Pregnancy-related illnesses postponed my doctoral candidacy exams twice, and by the time my daughter Rowan was born, I realized that if I didn't do the fieldwork immediately, it was never going to happen at all; the temptation to drop out and stay home with my baby was almost overwhelming. In the end I packed us all up, including the elderly dog, and we set off for Montreal when Rowan was five months old. I didn't have enough experience with parenthood to know how ambitious (insane) that was. She was still nursing and not sleeping through the night, needed new diapers hourly, and fell victim to every cold and flu virus passing through.

Three days after my husband and I arrived in Montreal with the baby, the dog, and whatever clothes and baby toys we could squish into the car, I discovered I was pregnant again.

The fieldwork was a humbling time as I learned first-hand the power of biology, and the depth of feeling for a new baby that challenged all of my previous convictions about my commitment to the degree. Between nursing and pregnancy, I was literally feeding two babies with my body, so I was tired all the time, and nauseous in the first trimester. I was a *de facto* disabled person as regarded public transit, and my comfy middle-class amenities had been traded in for an apartment with windows that didn't lock, bugs in the drain, lint in the baseboards, a broken fridge and oven, and pot dealers on the corner. I didn't mind the apartment on my own behalf but I was beyond-rationally worried that something horrible would happen to the baby. Anyway, we were there and I had to make the best of it. The apartment didn't get broken into, the lint never harmed the baby, and the bugs turned out to be harmless. But the anxiety of new motherhood, combined with the anxieties and uncertainties of fieldwork, were a wearing combination.

Away from my home, my books, and my colleagues, completely impoverished from paying rent in Montreal plus a mortgage in Edmonton, and holding a new baby, I didn't feel much like an academic. The total furniture in the apartment consisted of a futon on the floor, a playpen for the baby, and two folding camp chairs. The first time I had a Romani musician over for an interview, he looked with surprise at our miniscule apartment, and folding himself gingerly into a folding chair, he tried to put me at ease by commenting that he had known whole families to live this way in Moldova, eight or ten people inside an apartment the size of mine. (He himself lived in a comfortable house in the suburbs of Montreal). At that point I felt far more "Gypsy"—impoverished and nomadic—than my interviewees.

The temporary impoverishment didn't bother me, although I was experiencing life as a handicapped person for the first time, and, baldly, it was awful. Although I myself was fairly mobile (nausea aside) the umbrella stroller, my lifeline, was not. My husband worked full time, and putting Rowan in childcare, which had seemed like a reasonable and sensible option before I gave birth, was an unthinkable, almost taboo concept to me as a new mother: There was nothing in the world that was going to induce me to hand my baby over to strangers. So Rowan and I went everywhere together with that stroller, to interviews, concerts, meetings, and classes. And Montreal is full of stairs.

In 2009 when I was there, only five Métro stations were wheelchair accessible with elevators. Montrealers have adapted to the Métro stairs: fellow commuters simply grab the stroller, without asking, and carry it down or up as a public service. Although it was kindly meant, I never really got used to strangers hauling my baby away. Other places had multiple steps leading UP to the elevator, like McGill University, where I went to attend a meeting of Roma activists. At other times I was scolded, and yelled at, by passengers on the bus for bringing a stroller on board when the bus was crowded. This hostility was new to me and obviously very unpleasant: Not only had I taken on a voluntary impoverishment to do the Montreal fieldwork, but also a role as someone who could be vilified in public for bringing a child on public transit.

The first two months of fieldwork produced almost nothing but dead ends, which coincided nicely with the first trimester of sleepiness. No one got back to me: the phone numbers I had been given were disconnected, the concerts were cancelled, the emails bounced or were ignored, interviews were postponed, and so on. I spent a lot of time waiting by the phone. I was almost ready to throw in the towel on the whole thing, degree and all, but eventually I started meeting people at concerts, who gave out contact information that worked, and the fieldwork picked up. I started to run into the same people over and over again, getting a sense of who they were and how they connected. The only group that I missed over and over again was Les Gitans de Sarajevo, which was particularly frustrating as I knew they were regulars at Café Sarajevo.

Rowan came with me everywhere except the concerts in bars, and all my interviewees were gracious about the unexpected presence of a baby, which certainly brought a degree of informality to the interviews. Rowan played peek-a-boo with Sergiu, danced at Carmen's late-night concert, sat on Suleyman's lap to clap her hands with his "Gypsy dance" class, and spilled coffee all over Lelissa's expensive jeans (not our best moment).

There is no doubt that I had to make some sacrifices to the fieldwork: passing up a chance to see Jorge Martinez in concert because (in the fifth month, when my husband had returned to Edmonton already) there was no one to watch the baby; missing Kaba Horo in rehearsal because of a conflict with an OB/GYN appointment, and so on. The biggest sacrifice, of course, was the long-term Toronto stay, and this would have been a far better project with that inclusion, but Toronto was as distant as the moon at that point. I'm pleased that, by a combination of luck (such as my husband being able to get a transfer to Montreal), sheer doggedness, but mostly ignorance about how hard it would be, I finished the fieldwork even in an attenuated capacity, but if I had the decision to make again, and although it goes against everything I believe, I would likely choose to abandon the degree. The time-critical exigencies of childbirth and new motherhood were far more influential on the fieldwork than I could have imagined. The information presented here was very hard won and I hope that it will stand as a significant contribution in the area.



Figure 3: Rowan Allen-Trottier and Sergiu Popa, playing at his house. Montreal, January 2010. Photo credit: Melaena Allen-Trottier



Figure 4: Suleyman Ozatilan, giving a dance class with the help of Rowan Allen-Trottier. Jack Purcell Community Centre, Ottawa, Ont. February 2010. Photo credit: Melaena Allen-Trottier

“Ours” versus “Theirs”: Café Sarajevo and other venues

Gypsy music didn't seem to have a particular audience demographic in Montreal. At Les Bobards, the audience was wildly diverse in terms of demographics such as age, lifestyle, and income. Other audiences that I saw were equally diverse, such as the primarily older and more affluent crowd present at Les Maisons de Culture (“Houses of Culture”) hosted by the City of Montreal, the young and primarily female crowd present at Le Divan Orange for Kristin's flamenco shows, and the affluent urban diners of the upscale restaurant L'Assomoir, where Carmen performed with Jazz Manouche. At each place, though, no matter how informal, what was undeniably present was an outsider gaze, awareness of a division, however casual and accepted, between “Gypsy” and “non-Gypsy”.

Montreal has never had a Roma community centre along the lines of the RCC in Toronto. The closest thing to a community centre, until its closure in 2012, was Café Sarajevo, which provided an informal venue for both Roma and non-Roma to hear

Gypsy music and music of the Balkans. Café Sarajevo on any given night had a mix of Roma and non-Roma clientele, and the musicians were often drawn from a pool of local talent, Roma and non-Roma, sometimes with an emphasis on Gypsy music, and sometimes not. (*Lapresse.ca*. 2 February 2012. « Le Café Sarajevo ferme ses portes : fin d'une belle aventure. »)

The night I went to hear Carmen play, the Friday night gig had been moved to Saturday, which meant he had two engagements back-to-back. The first was with Jazz Manouche at L'Assomoir, and then we literally ran to Café Sarajevo, arriving around 11 pm, where Carmen played until 2:30 am.

L'Assomoir and Café Sarajevo were entirely different, and the differences could be summed up in terms of cameras. At Assomoir, the "Gypsy musicians" were the paid entertainment and the audience took pictures of them as they played (and in the Montreal norm, it must be mentioned that the group that evening was composed entirely of non-Roma except for Carmen). Put simply, the "Gypsy musicians" were "other", which constituted a camera-worthy event. There were no cameras at Café Sarajevo, though, and the act of picture-taking would have seemed odd or ridiculous in context. It was an ordinary evening with ordinary music as far as they were concerned, and, as much as I would have loved to take photos of some of the impromptu dancing, I was fairly certain that photos taken by an outsider would have been seen as a huge intrusion, a potentially offensive action, into their close-knit community.

The performances at Café Sarajevo were casual and unscripted. Every so often an audience member would wander up to the mike, seemingly more or less at random, and sing, which was certainly not the case at L'Assomoir. Other differences between the venues included food (\$26 for an appetizer and drink at Assomoir, but Café Sarajevo served no food at all). At L'Assomoir, there was a physical demarcation between musicians and patrons, with a table in the way, but none at all at Café Sarajevo, where the musicians were in the centre of the bar and the audience was free to dance as close to them as they liked, or with the musicians if they wanted.

After weeks of Romani language practice, Carmen wanted to pass me off as a Gypsy at Café Sarajevo, but since I refused to cooperate with this scheme, he settled for introducing me as a (non-Roma) musician, a piano player, even though he had never heard me play piano, he had (previously) bluntly denigrated my piano skills, and he knew that I was in Montreal for a research degree. He introduced me to the "nephew of the King of the Gypsies" (meaning that Zoran was related to Saban Bajramovic, the famous Serbian musician⁴⁷), telling him I spoke Romani; mostly, I believe, for the linguistic novelty of hearing me speak Romani to other Gypsies in a Gypsy setting. Zoran had just become a grandfather, and showed me several baby pictures; we spoke about

⁴⁷ *The Independent*. 12 June 2008. "Saban Bajramovic: 'Gypsy King' of Serbia".

this in Romani over the excruciatingly loud music, and we ran out of conversation. I ordered a beer in Romani, because I could.

The one thing that was the same for both gigs was that Carmen seemed bored and watched the doors a lot as if wanting to escape, or perhaps hoping for a more interesting audience to walk in. At L'Assomoir, the only person he seemed engaged with was Damien, the young guitarist, in a breakneck improvisatory spree that lasted only a few minutes. At Café Sarajevo, the only time he came to life was when Mile, an elderly Gypsy man, started dancing with the musicians (and Carmen danced back from under the violin) and tipping them five-dollar bills. I had read about Gypsy musicians being tipped this way in Europe and was curious to see it in action. It seemed that the act of receiving the money would surely disrupt the music but the musicians were clearly used to it, because the money disappeared with no missed beats. The dance with Mile was the only animation Carmen showed during the performance, and he was clearly thrilled to be interacting with the dancer, who was equally thrilled to be interacting with the musicians. It was a few minutes of a perfect happy fit, and then the song was over, the tips were dispensed, and Carmen went back to watching the door.

At break, everyone in the bar went outside to the sidewalk to smoke and talk. I was immediately marked as an outsider by virtue of language: I could speak none of the languages in the conversations (Romanian, Bulgarian, Hungarian) and my marginal French skills were defeated by the strong regional accents. I could have hazarded some Romani, which was far more uniform than the Quebecois French at Café Sarajevo, but since the Romani women clustered together on the sidewalk were eyeing me with hostility, I thought it would be better not to try to break into their conversation in Romani. In fact the whole idea of me speaking Romani in that venue seemed ridiculous as it was clear that the women were switching into Romani when they wanted privacy. Zoran translated for me that the women were making plans to see a fortune-teller, and then made a point of stating loudly that he thought all fortune-tellers were fakes, which probably did not endear either of us to the women. Carmen was ignoring me, talking in a closed group of men (the genders did not mix during break, it seemed) which left me alone to fend off romantic advances from a love-struck Bulgarian, and a confusing business proposition from Mile, who must have assumed I was a Roma, that seemed to involve me fronting a Roma music group while wearing a long red dress.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Mile claimed to be very interested in positive cultural representation of the Roma, but since most of his conversation focused on the type of dress I should wear while singing—and he hadn't yet asked if I could sing—it was hard to get too enthusiastic about the project. And while it seemed that he thought I was a Roma, it was hard to know how to address that assumption directly, especially since his English was very poor. In the end, I decided, as Brigitte had done many times, that nothing needed to be done, since there was no harm done and the explanation would be a hugely complicated procedure. I knew I was never going to see Mile again, and if he cared after the fact, he could ask Carmen, who might have told him I was a Roma anyway.

I believe it would be more accurate to say that Café Sarajevo was an informal Gypsy music community centre rather than a “Romani” community centre, since what bound the Roma and non-Roma together in ongoing collaboration and attendance was an interest in Gypsy music rather than a specific interest or membership in the Romani culture. This is very similar to the platform expressed in the mission statement of Les Gitans de Sarajevo, which states: “Due to their love of music, seven musicians (all of former Yugoslav origin) have decided to overlook their backgrounds, be it Serbian, Croatian, or Muslim, and have united together to play Gypsy music.”⁴⁹ The word “overlook” is telling, as one would “overlook” a handicap, and implies a sense of determination to succeed as a multicultural group in spite of great odds.

Les Gitans de Sarajevo gigged frequently, and I believe almost exclusively, at Café Sarajevo, although I missed hearing them live in concert during my fieldwork. The live music at Café Sarajevo had a random and impromptu character: Carmen had been scheduled to play the day before but the owner had cancelled the gig at the last minute, then rescheduled it for the next day at the last minute. The musicians seemed willing and able to accommodate this unpredictability; although Carmen fumed about the peremptory nature of the demand, in the end he capitulated, and this was probably a fairly regular phenomenon as Café Sarajevo had operated for years under the whims of the same owner.

The phenomenon of intercultural blending is perhaps easier to achieve at a great distance from the source, in a country with a national myth of equal valuation of different cultures. At Café Sarajevo, Roma and non-Roma drink together in a manner not common to European countries. Although it was a favourite Roma venue, the owner was non-Roma (a Turkish Muslim, according to my contacts) and it was accepted that there would be many non-Roma patrons, and if those other patrons weren’t necessarily given a warm personal welcome, they were still free to enjoy the music.

The day after the L’Assomoir/ Café Sarajevo performances, Carmen was noticeably defensive about his decision to play at Café Sarajevo. He, of course, recognized that the musicians at Café Sarajevo were not of top technical caliber—they were more along the lines of well-rehearsed amateurs, with a popular repertoire in simple styles—and also knew that I knew that, and felt that he, as a self-professed top caliber musician, needed to justify his involvement with the group. I don’t have an exact quote of his words, but they were very much along the lines of “This is *our* music, you know, real Gypsy music, and maybe they don’t play it the best but they play from the heart. I play with them because the Gypsies are my people and this is my music.”

In the know and in demand: Finding the hubs

⁴⁹ http://worldmusiccentral.org/artists/artist_page.php?id=2141

In Montreal, it seemed that I was always hearing about and listening to the music of three Romani musicians in particular: Suleyman Ozatilan, Sergiu Popa, and Carmen Piculeata, who were hubs of both the Roma community and the “Gypsy musicians”. They knew everyone, played with everyone, and were in demand everywhere. All three of them had a great deal of training and formal music education; Carmen and Sergiu were raised in musically dynastic families and received training in classical idioms as well as popular and folk music, while Suleyman was the only Gypsy music musician I met in Montreal who had a postsecondary music degree.

Suleyman is a formally trained dancer and singer from Turkey. During my stay in Montreal, I saw him perform with Kaba Horo at Les Bobards; with Soleil Tzigane at Lion D’Or; as a soloist at La Gitane Turquoise, a Turkish Gypsy bar; and as a teacher of Turkish and Gypsy dance at the Jack Purcell community centre in Ottawa. He had also been a member of the Turkish Gypsy group Djoumboush while it was still active (Interview with Lucas Moore, January 2010). While Suleyman’s public identity as a “Gypsy” is negotiable (with reference to his argument with Sergiu at Les Bobards), his identity as a proficient musician in the “Gypsy” genre is beyond doubt, and he is a hot commodity in the Montreal Gypsy music scene.

Five minutes’ interaction with Suleyman is enough to feel the force of his public persona, which is flamboyant and charismatic, utterly charming in its audacity. I saw this particularly at the Turkish bar where he displayed a celebrity character, flirting with the patrons, granting requests when it suited him, keeping the audience engaged in a showman style. He knew the names of the patrons, and it was clear that they loved him. During the dance class in Ottawa he endeared himself to me by plunking himself on the gym floor with my baby and moving her little arms around to the music while shouting instructions at the teenagers. The professional Suleyman, it seemed, loved everybody.

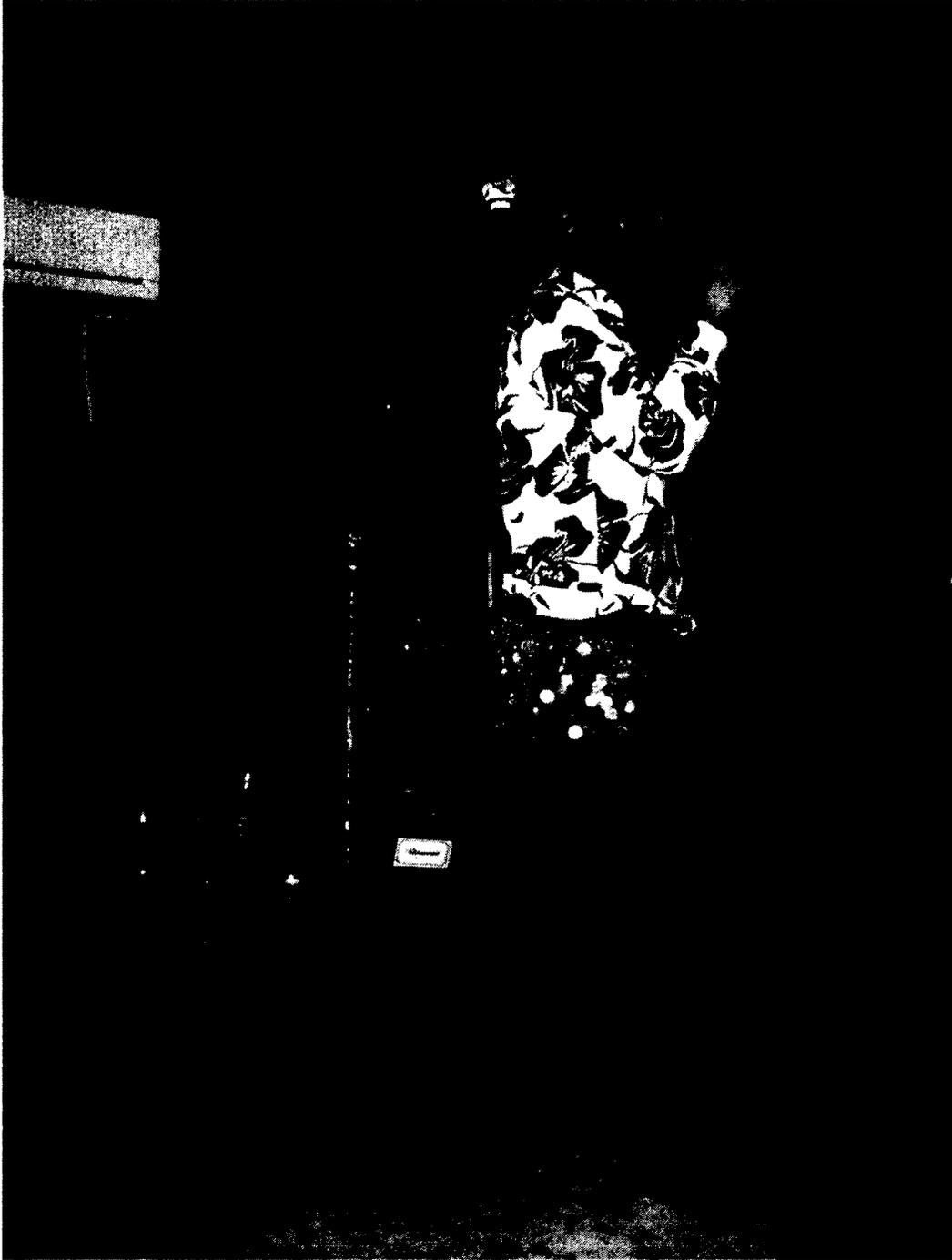


Figure 5: Suleyman Ozatilan at La Gitane Turquoise. Montreal, February 2010. Photo credit: Melaena Allen-Trottier

Suleyman in interview, however, was reticent and discriminating. He dodged my question about why he had come to Canada, and was dismissive of the idea that the Roma could be, or should be, a transnational alliance.

Melaena: “So you haven’t met a lot of this [Montreal Romani] community?”

Suleyman: “You know, I would like to see them, but you know... Okay, my father is Gypsy, but I’m more Turkish, because I don’t speak Gypsy language... All the Gypsies, where they are living, they got other culture. For example, Turkish Gypsies, they have the Turkish culture, Spain, they have the Spanish culture....everywhere is different.”

Melaena: “You feel you would have more different than similar?”

Suleyman: “Why I’m different? Think about it. For example, our English, Anglophone? Canadian Anglophone, or Angleterre [British] Anglophone, or Australian Anglophone, do you think you are the same thing?”

Melaena: “No.”

Suleyman: “This is it, you know. And even, you speak English. But me, I cannot speak Gypsy language. Think about it. That’s why.” (Interview with Suleyman Ozatilan, January 2010, Montreal)

Although Suleyman identified profoundly, professionally, with a “Gypsy” identity, it seemed almost to be a non-issue for him personally, literally a point of academic interest, as Gypsy folk dance was the focus of his music and dance degree.

Sergiu, an accordionist from Moldova, is another hub in the Montreal music scene, and he was my most helpful contact during the 2009-2010 fieldwork trip, trying constantly to connect me to other musicians, answering all my questions patiently and at length. Sergiu, young and ambitious, is the half-Roma son of a musical family. He had recently married Jessica, who was Carmen’s violin student before she met Sergiu, and it is not hard to see that this marriage will be a continuation of the Popa musical dynasty as the two now run their own groups and promote their own albums.



Figure 6: Sergiu Popa and Jessica Gal at Romani Yag. Montreal, October 2008. Photo credit: Melaena Allen-Trottier

Ljuba Radman, the organizer of Romani Yag, had booked big-name musicians to play during the evening, but Sergiu and Jessica, possibly because they were less established than other groups, played only during the day between seminars. While the evening concerts uniformly had a very formal feel with clear divisions between performers and audience, this daytime performance was far more informal and relaxed, and audience members pushed the wooden chairs out of the way to dance in the aisles. In the photo above, Sergiu and Jessica are in fact playing on the floor, a few feet away from the audience, in front of the stage rather than on it.

From speaking with the organizers and other attendees, I know that there were very few Roma at Romani Yag, and the evening ticket prices, not included in the admission fee, were fairly pricey, so Sergiu and Jessica's performance may have been most of the music that the Montreal Roma themselves heard during the symposium. It was easy to see that their music was loved, and that Sergiu was terribly pleased by fact that people were dancing. In fact the audience kept calling for more music, so Sergiu and Jessica played for much longer than scheduled. The next day, Sergiu's daytime show included two other Roma musicians whom he had just met: Mielutza on accordion and Cornell on guitar. Again, they are playing in front of the stage.

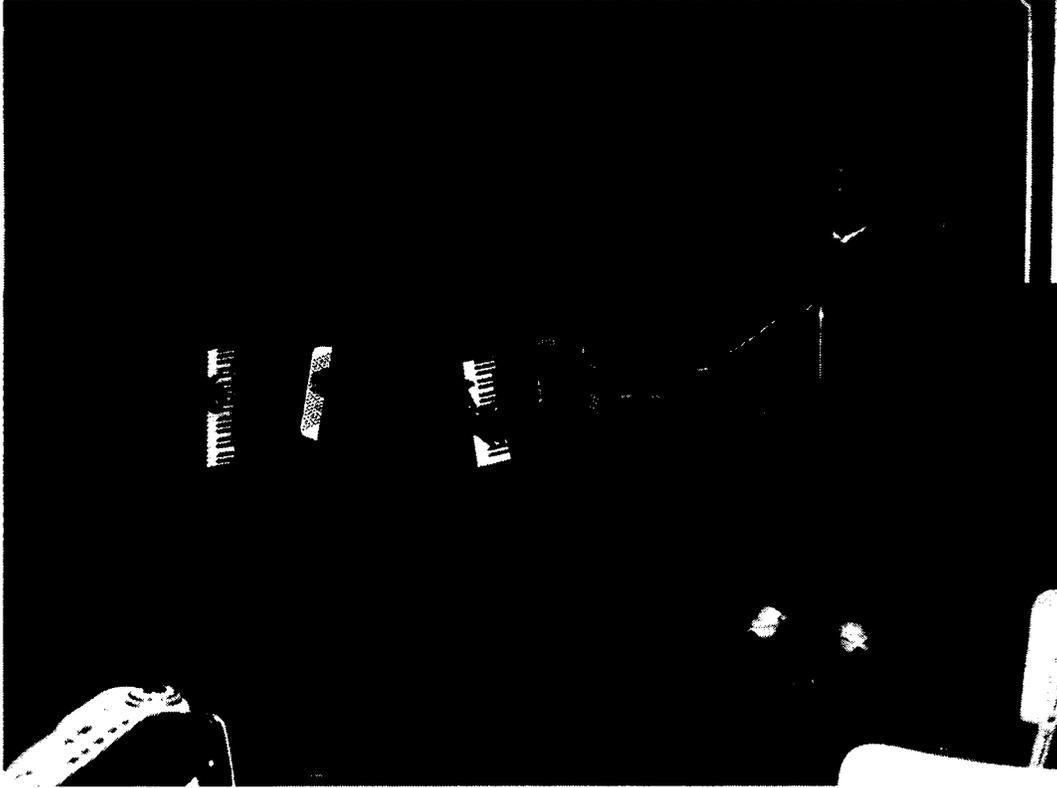


Figure 7: Left to Right: Sergiu, Mielutza, and Cornell at Romani Yag. Montreal, October 2008. Photo credit: Melaena Allen-Trottier

Sergiu is completely geared towards professional success; he teaches, performs, produces albums, and enters competitions. He is also invested in a long-term strategy of establishing a professional reputation, for instance by performing at subsidized cultural events such as the “Maisons de Culture” (concert venues) throughout Montreal. These performances, which seat up to 200 audience members, are hosted by the city of Montreal, and admission is free. There is minimal remuneration to the performers, perhaps a hundred dollars for the evening, who must understand that this is a time investment that will advance their careers (Interview with Sergiu Popa, January 2010).

As a teacher, Sergiu was meticulous, arranging my fingers just so on the keyboard, making me repeat and repeat each chord progression, correcting (what seemed to me to be) infinitesimally small infractions in rhythm.⁵⁰ The approach was very classical in nature, including sheet music and technical exercises, and whether this was because Sergiu was trying to accommodate my background or whether this was his normal teaching style was not completely clear, but he seemed so comfortable with the classical idiom, and supplied so many photocopies of sheet music and technical

⁵⁰ I had to rent an accordion in Montreal, which was a difficult exercise in itself as the only music store that rented them didn't want to accept my out-of-province identification, and then didn't have any in my size for a long time. One of the employees told me that because accordions were such a popular instrument in Montreal, the store had difficulty stocking enough to rent.

exercises, that it was hard to imagine that it was a deviation from routine. Ironically the whole experience was a bit anticlimactic for me, as I had expected to have to flex my very weak aural skills by learning music in the “Gypsy” way. Of course there were some rhythms and ornaments that had to be learned aurally, but fewer than I expected, and the melodies and harmonies were all notated, some with fingering already written in, and Sergiu would rewrite fingering and ornamentation for me during the lesson if necessary. The topic of improvisation did not arise as it was clear that I would have had to study for years in the genre to be able to improvise to any real degree. The song below is one that I was learning with Sergiu.



Figure 8: Excerpt from Romanian folk song *Cu Mindrele* with Sergiu's preferred fingering and ornamentation written by hand.

As a musician of the first caliber, Sergiu is greatly in demand by other musicians. As a Roma he has further cachet, and guaranteed entry into the ethnically exclusive venues, such as the large house parties hosted by the very reclusive and non-integrated Roma of Montreal. These private parties, sometimes hosted by members of the Romani underworld, can be extremely lucrative, but only musicians of the top calibre, the “true Roma” musicians with virtuosic skills, are solicited. Sergiu tried, and failed, to get me in with him during a gig, and Jessica said that she wouldn't attend or play at them herself because her own Gypsy music skills, though impressive, wouldn't be enough to satisfy the hard-core Roma of the private house parties. (Interview with Jessica Gal and Sergiu Popa, February 2010).

Sergiu speaks no Romani, but is aware of the transnational ambitions of the Roma, and was the only Roma person I met in Montreal who said that they would participate in a Romani cultural centre if one existed. Young, ambitious, and internationally aware, Sergiu straddles the local Montreal phenomenon of “Gypsy” music and the global nature of the emergent transnational Romani identity, moving contextually between the words “Gypsy” and “Roma”, using “Gypsy” in speech and in reference to music, and using “Roma” in print or to reference the political movement. Even Sergiu, though, never referenced global Roma human rights abuses, only the collective nature of the group, which is vastly unusual in any discussion of Roma collective identity, but clearly the norm for Montreal.

Perennially cheerful and helpful, I never saw Sergiu without a wide smile, and he and Jessica were invaluable to my research during my long Montreal fieldtrip of 2009-2010. They made a point of introducing me to everyone they could think of, making sure I was taken care of at concerts (Sergiu whisking me away to meet the band members at Les Bobards was a typical example), fed me tea and cakes at their house while I petted their friendly and unbelievably rotund cat. Sergiu played with my baby at every opportunity and it was a source of great sadness to him that she was frightened of him, but she finally saw his merits towards the end of our stay, and my last, best interview with Sergiu and Jessica involves a lot of “peek-a-boo” noises in the background. Sergiu and Jessica were always professional, always discreet, slow to speak ill of anyone, strongly rooted to their families and their careers. Above all, Sergiu and Jessica conveyed an attitude of deep respect towards their different heritages, determined to value them equally.

My interactions with Sergiu and Jessica were quite different than my experiences with Carmen Piculeata, whom I had met a year previously in the summer of 2008 when I had come to Montreal for six weeks alone. A half-Roma virtuoso violinist from Romania, Carmen had been in Montreal for almost twenty years when I met him. With fair skin and blue eyes, Carmen was not at all Romani-looking, and since he also grew up in a prestigious house in town among the non-Roma with a father who played in an orchestra, he certainly enjoyed the social benefits of being a *lautari* (upper-class Romani Romanian musician as described by Beissinger 2001). (Conversation with Carmen Piculeata July 2008) In contrast to the seriousness and focused professional goals of Sergiu and Jessica though, life with Carmen was irreverent, whimsical, and unpredictable.

The summer I met him, Carmen seemed to be at a loose end, not teaching or performing to any great degree. I was using the Internet to find “Gypsy musicians” since my contacts from Romani Yag had gotten me nowhere, and Carmen was the only person who called me back. He was interested in my goal of learning to speak the Romani language (I had book learning but no aural skills), and offered to tutor me so that he himself could improve his spoken Romani (which was far better than mine) and English.

The Roma people he knew kept switching to other languages, out of politeness, when Carmen tried to join in, because his level of Romani was not quite enough to participate fully. So my arrival allowed him to practice both languages, or at least that's what he told me every time I tried and failed to pay him for tutoring me. I wasn't even allowed to buy the coffee, which we drank in prodigious amounts sitting on the patio at Starbucks all summer, and Carmen told me sternly that I was "too Canadian" when I tried.

Carmen did truly love languages; he was fascinated by obscure words, odd phrases, and discrepancies between dialects. His dialect was slightly different than the one I knew, and he kept a comprehensive list of all the differences we found, carrying around a little pocket notebook so as to be able to record words at any moment. He spoke several languages already: Romanian, English, French, and Bulgarian, and saw the acquisition of the Romani language as a step that would allow him to reclaim a cherished part of his identity and a half-remembered childhood, visiting his cousins in the Romani *mahala*.

Carmen knew everyone in Montreal (or so he said) but was cagey about introducing me, and my own networking attempts at music events resulted in a lot of dead ends: postponed interviews, unanswered phone calls, and so on, as well as some quite chilly receptions from people I had expected to be friendly. A year later, when I returned to Montreal and learned about Carmen through outsiders, I was shocked that someone so well connected hadn't been able to put me in touch with anyone else in six full weeks. What seems most likely, piecing together bits of information afterwards, is that many of Carmen's acquaintances, knowing that he was recently estranged from his wife and small son, assumed I was Carmen's new girlfriend, and possibly the cause of the estrangement. Carmen, for his part, was (so I speculate) possibly very happy to have some attention from a not-visibly-attached younger woman, handily collating me with a long-standing Romani language reclamation project, and was perhaps not in a rush to accelerate my departure towards other musicians and experiences.

Carmen saw all Canadian musical standards as being far, far below those of Europe, and Gypsy musicians to be above all the rest, and while he introduced me to his colleagues as a musician rather than a researcher, in private he completely dismissed my musical skills, considering my music degrees to be completely irrelevant to any serious production of music. It is true that my rather ordinary classical piano background would not have allowed me to participate in any way at his level, whereas he could have performed my music in his sleep—and, indeed, in the performances at Café Sarajevo and L'Assomoir, he possibly was only a few minutes from a light doze.

Having nowhere else to go and no one else to talk to, I spent a great deal of time with Carmen that summer. Carmen and I ate Chinese food and Polish food and bagels and ice cream; we sat at cafes and drank endless amounts of coffee with Ronald Lee's "Learn Romani" textbook between us, making up sentences about things we saw: the street cleaners, the cars, the coffee, the possibly gay ("*bulesh*") sales clerks. I was far, far, more

fluent in Romani by the end of the summer and I wished that I could have repaid him somehow for all the time he spent. He taught me how to swear in Romani, fluently and inventively, and he grilled me in Romani as we walked, for the names of the numbers, the days of the week, the names of the months, and it was easy to see that he was an excellent teacher, at least until he got bored and started telling dirty jokes, which always signaled the end of a day. He told me about the Gypsy culture as he knew it in Romania (and for Carmen, it was always “Gypsy”, never “Roma”): dice games (which women weren’t allowed to play), Gypsy customs (don’t say “thank you”), Gypsy music (which to Carmen was defined primarily by *skill*: technical and improvisatory talent), plus personal stories about his life growing up, how he hated to practice the violin as a child and bribed the teachers to pass through school, how he gigged in Montreal’s Metro (underground train station) when he came to Canada, and so on. I played with his cat who was named (appropriately) Guarneri (Carmen was yet another Canadian Gypsy with a cat), napped on his couch when I was tired, and listened a lot. Carmen was intense, mercurial, generous, and completely unpredictable, charming when he wanted to be, utterly impossible when he didn’t.



Figure 9: Carmen Piculeata listening to Sergiu Popa give a concert in the park. Montreal, July 2008. Photo credit: Melaena Allen-Trottier

That summer what I heard most from Carmen was a sense of loss: of the brilliant musicians he had left behind in Romania, of the family and children he didn’t see enough, of missed opportunities, of perceived betrayals. Carmen was in limbo and I had

provided a distraction. He treated his gigs lightly, bordering on contempt, and rarely had anything positive to say about musicians of any ethnicity. He must have had some close friends, but I never saw them, although I met his daughter Andrea, who did not live with him, but came and went at will through the fire escape, like Guarneri. She was twelve and treated her father with the friendly contempt of twelve-year-olds, visibly alarmed at the idea that she might be pressed into learning the Gypsy language with us, which she perceived as a boring and useless project. Carmen's estranged wife had taken their two-year-old son to Bulgaria with her, but Carmen refused to leave Canada and Andrea.

Carmen's sense of "Gypsy" was tied inextricably to his professional identity, where he used it to situate himself at the top of the musical hierarchy. It was more than clear—it was the assumption on which his existence was based—that for Carmen, Roma musicians outranked all others in terms of skill, and Carmen himself occupied the top of this tier. European non-Roma occupied the tier underneath, and they (according to Carmen) played so much better than Canadians that the lowliest busboy from Romania could get a job in Canada as a musician. Canadian musicians like me, with a music degree but not a professional performer, sat at the bottom of Carmen's hierarchy.

Personally, Carmen's "Gypsy" identity was hugely flexible. Although he loved his home country of Romania and often identified as a Romanian, he had no desire to return to what he perceived as little more than corruption and crime. He loved Montreal and Canada, but knew little of national politics outside of the Quebec nationalist movement, and almost nothing of Canada outside of Montreal. For Carmen, "Gypsy" was the Romanian *mahala* with its extended family and its network of top-calibre musicians that was now denied to him by virtue of geography.

I had been planning to return to Montreal almost immediately for extended fieldwork, but ended up having a baby instead, and didn't return to Montreal until almost a year and a half later. By that time, Carmen had a new group and a new girlfriend in lieu of the absent wife, and the time available for me was almost nonexistent. We had one amicable coffee date in which he played with my baby a great deal, and I went to hear his new group at a local restaurant.

This group had an almost Brazilian sound to it, with rhythms evocative of the samba and bossa nova, with light instrumentals and an almost clichéd "easy listening" atmosphere, with one or two exceptions for some virtuosic flights of fancy on the violin played by Carmen himself. Although Carmen had a stellar reputation as a musician and could theoretically pick and choose his co-musicians, this group was formed almost entirely of emergent musicians who seemed to be primarily Carmen's students. The performance in many ways resembled a student recital, with Carmen as benevolent teacher, presiding over all, calling up various audience members (colleagues and students) from their suppers to perform one or two songs. Several of the performers were clearly intensely uncomfortable in the limelight, and kept their eyes on Carmen, as if he was a

lifeline, throughout their performances. Carmen did perform also, although not throughout, and there were one or two highly competent musicians in his group, such as the keyboardist, whose brilliant engagement with Carmen's playing was slightly jarred by the special "sparkle" effects (such as a Disney movie adds when Tinkerbell grants a wish), which added another incongruous note to an incongruous gathering. Further, Carmen was in full showmanship manner, telling jokes, flirting, being charming and self-deprecating; he could only be described as wooing the audience. From someone I had known only as being utterly recalcitrant and disdainful of other peoples' opinions, and knowing that Carmen didn't even like to take requests from audience members as it made him feel like a "street bitch" (whore), his purposeful courting of the audience that day seemed stagey and contrived. This was especially so when he played, and everyone sang, for an audience member's Saint Day (a Quebec custom, a celebration of one's patron saint in much the same spirit as a birthday). I could only conclude that Carmen had given up trying to get along with the more established Montreal musicians and had embarked on a long-term project to train his own in a manner that best suited him, filling in time as a musical "street bitch" until the group matured and his creative vision was completed. Carmen has both the knowledge and networking contacts to make such a thing come to pass, and it will be interesting to see how the group develops over time.

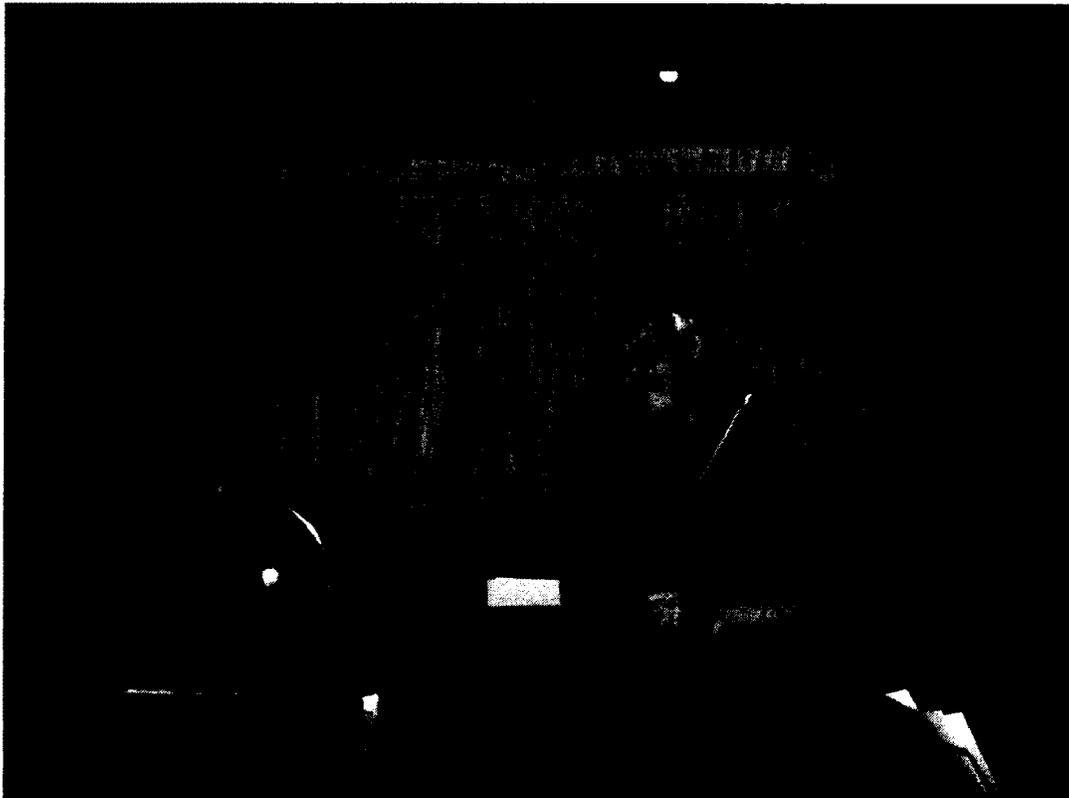


Figure 10: Carmen Piculeata with the Montreal Gypsy Orchestra. Montreal, February 2010. Photo credit: Melaena Allen-Trottier

Networking through Sergiu and Jessica, on my return to Montreal, was much more successful than networking through Carmen, and I was eventually able to meet most of the people I needed to meet. Carmen had been much more of a hub than I had realized; many of the people I met had worked with Carmen, and those who hadn't worked with him knew him by name. Not everyone had worked happily with him, but everyone had an extraordinary amount of respect for his musical skills; in Montreal, he was the unquestioned king.

Traditional music: Soleil Tzigane

Soleil Tzigane ("Gypsy Sun") was the group to which all my Montreal contacts referred me to as having the "best" Gypsy music, in a context in which "best" almost certainly meant "most authentic". Soleil Tzigane was difficult to find as they don't gig often, their media presence is virtually nil, and my contact information didn't work, but I was finally able to attend a concert and speak to some of the musicians on my very last night in Montreal. Soleil Tzigane is a group of about seven musicians, primarily Bulgarian non-Roma, many of them related. It seems to operate largely by word of mouth, and I was able to attend one of their concerts only by chance. Although the performance was ostensibly open to the public, the audience seemed to be almost entirely Bulgarian expatriates who knew each other, and it was clear that most of the crowd knew the music and the performers very well.

Their concert was highly emotive and indeed did evoke the sun, as promised by their name ("Gypsy Sun"), in that it was warm and full of life; plus, the audience clearly knew and loved the group. Perhaps I was being oversensitive to the general spirit between the audience and the musicians but that sense of total happiness and engagement, of a perfect fit between the musicians and audience, was so strong that it was almost tangible. It was the most emotive and affective concert I had attended in my life.

The audience, who seemed to be largely Bulgarian, was fully engaged with the music, dancing and shouting to the songs, chatting with the musicians during breaks. Although there were many empty tables, no one except me and an academic colleague sat for more than a few minutes; everyone else was dancing or mingling (I considered myself exempt from the social pressure of dancing due to being seven months' pregnant). The dance floor was packed, and against all legal probabilities given that the venue was a bar, a great number of small children were in attendance, dancing and running and playing with toys. The general impression, even though this was not the case, was that my colleague and I had crashed a large and private celebration. But it did explain why Soleil Tzigane was able to remain viable with almost zero media or advertising.

All my contacts knew that the musicians were non-Roma, but from all of them I heard nothing but the highest praise for Soleil Tzigane. If anyone was bitter about "Gypsy"

music being appropriated by non-Roma musicians, it was exceedingly well hidden. Soleil Tzigane could do no wrong, it seemed, and given all the accolades that I heard and saw it was surprising to find that they were virtually unknown by a larger Montreal audience.

Flexible identities: Kristen Molnar, Jorge Martinez, Lelissa Savic

I first heard Kristin Molnar perform at Romani Yag with her group Te Merav (“If I die” in the Romani language). Kristin, from Hungary, has one Roma parent and one non-Roma parent, and now lives in the suburbs with her double-bass player non-Roma husband, and two children. Professionally, Kristin is multifaceted; she plays the violin, sings, and dances flamenco. At the time of our interview, Te Merav was already defunct, and Kristin had decided to focus her professional efforts on flamenco singing, stating that it was more profitable as there was great deal of demand in Montreal and very little competition. And while Kristen doesn’t have international acclaim or run large groups like Sergiu, Carmen, and Lubo, her calendar was the most full by far, with several gigs weekly.

Kristen has an ambiguous identity as a Roma. She made a point of mentioning that her Hungarian ancestors (not the Roma side) were descended from royalty, and that she didn’t have much to do with the Roma side of her family or with other Roma. She didn’t speak the language, and although she was interested in learning it (via Ronald Lee’s book, from which Sergiu and Carmen were also learning) she hadn’t quite gotten that far. Her life as a Montrealer seemed utterly Canadian in scope; she packed children’s bag lunches as we talked, and her children arrived home from diving lessons during our interview, a hobby that stamped them indelibly as comfortably middle-class. By and large she seemed to have chosen not to be a Roma anymore, and my overwhelming impression was that “Roma” was primarily an identity that she foregrounded situationally for professional purposes rather than lived and experienced daily. She also mentioned that she had had a number of other previous interviews based on her identity as a “Gypsy”, so she was certainly aware of its potential for publicity.

Jorge Martinez, a Montreal guitarist in the flamenco style, makes even less use of the “Roma” label than Kristen, stating that in Canada, the “Gypsy” label is not very useful in the flamenco field as most Canadians cannot tell the difference. During our interview, Jorge discussed the Romani side of his family in Argentina, but he didn’t feel any particular roots to any specific heritage, and ultimately he made it clear that his music was more informed by the artistic freedom allowed in Canada than by any direct musical tradition or ethnic heritage

Reality is what you live. My reality is being a guy who doesn’t have roots. And that I take from everything, because I feel free in that way, because the society in which I’m living, it lets me do that. I’m not living in East Europe, where

everyone does the same music. So, I'm not saying that I'm doing real Gypsy, that I'm doing real flamenco, that I'm doing real Latin music either, because if I say that I will be lying. No, I'm doing a new thing. That's me being real.

And I'm seeing here that that starts to be the reality of a lot of people, people that don't have roots hundred percent somewhere, and so they're doing the same thing. That's what I'm saying, probably in a hundred years Canada will have a tradition, but we have a chance now to be free in a way, to do new things. (Interview with Jorge Martinez, January 2010)

Jorge aims his music at high-art audiences looking for a focused listening experience rather than a dance idiom or dinner music, and is actively trying to bridge the gap between audience expectations of flamenco (which is in the "world music" idiom of low art) and a new, multicultural idiom that can make the jump into the realm of high art, merging influences such as Luigi Nono and Manitas de Plata. Like Sergiu, he considers himself to be a member of the musical elite, and in that role he is trying to educate Canadian audiences in order to create a market for a new, less accessible musical idiom that is not currently popular. While Sergiu plays any gigs that present themselves while simultaneously promoting his own brand of music, Jorge has chosen to focus only on classical venues that promote his artistic vision of a solo instrumental art form, bypassing traditional flamenco associations with throaty vocalists, flamboyant dancers, and smoke-filled bars.

I met Lelissa Savic through Brigette Daczer, from whom she took violin lessons. Lelissa was not a professional musician but rather a university student in her twenties, articulate and opinionated, dressed in expensive jeans, and harbouring a desire to be a filmmaker. Her father met Brigette during one of her performances at a Gypsy music concert, and asked her to teach his daughter. Lelissa, like Kristen, is not keen to return to the Roma way of life, citing gross injustices against women; she narrowly escaped being trapped in an arranged marriage by her Romani relatives and is now fearful of returning to Serbia. During our conversation, Lelissa fluctuated between extreme candor couched in academic feminist language, and a sort of performative "Gypsy" role, at one point saying that she knew what gender my baby would be (I was five months' pregnant at the time) because she was a Gypsy and Gypsies knew those things (Interview with Lelissa Savic, January 2010). The sense of performative and mystical "Gypsy" identity was not limited to the professional musicians; other people who referenced this mystical aspect were Philippe Caignon, a Roma from France and head of the Translation Studies Department at Concordia University in Montreal, and Zoe DuVal, a Roma advocate and small business owner from Red Deer.

Philippe: And sometimes I make jokes and tell them [my academic colleagues], If you don't do what I say, I'm going to curse you. (laughs)

Melaena: Do they believe you?

Philippe: Sometimes they do. Depending. (laughs) (Interview with Philippe Caignon, January 2010)

Hybridity: Troupe Caravane, Shukar Roma, Kaba Horo

Of the groups that I listened to in Montreal, the only one with musicians of the same ethnic heritage was Soleil Tzigane, which also had the reputation of the “best” Gypsy music (and again, in the context of the conversations, “best” almost certainly meant “most authentic”).⁵¹ They didn’t seem prone to experimentation, fusion, or outside influences; the sound was singularly “Bulgarian Gypsy”, and whether or not this is how Bulgarian Gypsy music truly sounds in Bulgaria (where it might be less static, more open to outside influences) is a topic for another discussion. Most of the other music which was commercially produced and marketed in Montreal as Gypsy music, however, was far more multicultural in nature (such as Kaba Horo), aimed at a demographically diverse and mainstream audience.

Although Sergiu is well trained in the Romani virtuoso style of playing and does occasionally supply this very idiomatic music (such as Romani Yag, or the private Roma house parties), his own musical offerings are generally multicultural and collaborative in nature. When I was in Montreal, his group (“The Sergiu Popa Ensemble” at that time) had a very jazz sound to it, with a conservatory-trained jazz pianist making a prominent contribution to the group. His latest album, *Shukar Roma* (meaning “lovely/ beautiful Roma” in the Romani language) includes a Romanian guitarist and a Moroccan darbouka player of Jewish and Berber background. The website for the album states that Sergiu “...loves the freedom in music of Montreal where he can mix different musicians [and] different styles.”⁵² He also plays Klezmer music with his wife Jessica, and I have heard from another source that he went through a Rastafarian phase, complete with dreadlocks. It seems that Sergiu really does love the freedom of music in Montreal, and is eager to explore different sounds and types of collaborations.

Sarah Barbieux lives with her husband Alain in a home they built themselves out of salvaged materials in Trois Rivieres, Quebec, about an hour’s drive from Montreal.

⁵¹ The fact that all my contacts supplied the name of Soleil Tzigane as their first choice also seemed to indicate that they fit the “Gypsy music” model most precisely. A typical conversation went like this: “You’re studying Gypsy music? Oh, you want Soleil Tzigane. And there are some other Gypsy music groups in Montreal too.” My other reason for thinking that “best” meant “most traditional” is that both Carmen and Sergiu, self-styled members of a musical elite, used the label, but since it is unlikely that they would privilege someone else’s technical skills over their own to say that someone else was the “best” in a technical sense, they probably meant something else by their use of “best”.

⁵² <http://popmontreal.com/artists/shukar-roma/>

Inside and out, the house looks like it grew naturally out of the evergreens around it. The house itself is very much in the spirit of Sarah and Alain, creative, resourceful, and artistic. Sarah's grown daughter, Thais, paints mandalas, and with the three of them design and build fantastic creations: masks, hybrid musical instruments, and gigantic marionettes on stilts.

Troupe Caravane is largely Sarah's creation, based on memories of her youth on the streets of France. It is a theatre-based group, evocative of Cirque du Soleil, with spectacle and pageantry as the main attractions. All three family members perform: singing, dancing, engaging with the audience, and operating gigantic puppetry as needed. Some of my clearest memories of Romani Yag 2007 are of Thais inside an elaborate eight-armed Kali Sara (the patron saint of the Roma),⁵³ Alain walking through the crowds inside a 20 foot high marionette, and Sarah dancing with the crowd, throwing dozens of silk scarves into the air for people to dance with.



Figure 11: Sarah Barbieux (left) and Thais Barbieux (right). Trois Rivieres, Quebec, December 2009. Photo credit: Melaena Allen-Trottier

⁵³ For a description of Kali ("black") Sara, see Ronald Lee's home page at: <http://kopachi.com/articles/the-romani-goddess-kali-sara-by-ronald-lee/>. Accessed September 2013.

Sarah is half Roma and Alain is half Native American, so they draw on these influences to create their performances and products, but are not defined by them. Troupe Caravane, composed of the three family members plus a few other non-Roma, has a strong Romani influence but also draws freely from other inspirations. The group describes itself on the web page as “une troupe familiale multiculturelle et multidisciplinaire”. Sarah believes that, although her artistic contribution as a Roma is important to the group, the contributions of the other members are no less so, and should be equally valued (Interview with Sarah Barbieux, December 2009).

Kaba Horo, as previously mentioned, is described on the webpage as a collaboration between “Bulgarian Gypsy” and “New World” musicians, with “urban funk/ rock/ jazz grooves” in the music. Lubo, like Jorge, is focused on the creative process of new sounds and repertoire rather than the repetition of pre-existing idioms, although his music is focused on club audiences who want to dance, and his group, composed of non-Roma and Roma from many different countries (including Haiti), playing to an ethnically and demographically diverse audience, exemplifies the multicultural, inclusive, and global nature of “Gypsy” music and Romani musicians in Canada.

Lubo: “I love Gypsy music, I’ve been listening to that stuff for years and years, and learning how to play it, but I didn’t just want to be the next person playing traditional Gypsy music from Bulgaria. Because there’s enough of those.”

Melaena: “There’s enough of them in Canada, or...?”

Lubo: “Well, in Bulgaria definitely, in Canada there’s beginning to be a lot of people that play pretty straight ahead.” (Interview with Lubo Alexandrov, January 2010)

Chapter Four: Buying and selling identity: The Gypsy musicians of Montreal

This chapter examines the creation, branding, and dissemination of Gypsy music as it occurs within Canada and within Montreal city limits specifically. Here, there is a vast difference from the representations of “Roma” that are disseminated in Toronto. The “Gypsy musicians” (Roma and non-Roma) of Montreal, needing nothing personally in the way of human rights agendas, instead focus their representative efforts on what they perceive to be positive and marketable aspects of the culture. Masters of self-promotion and comfortable in the limelight, these performers employ strategies that allow their products to be branded while still allowing flexibility for artistic input, and of course it is necessary for their musical offerings to resonate on some level with the hearts and minds of the populace if they are to remain viable.

It is important to note that arts marketplaces in Canada are not entirely “free” (in the sense of a “free market economy”), since they are subsidized by the federal government, both directly to the artists themselves (in the form of grants or funding) and also in the form of festivals that stimulate local business. If musicians are struggling for economic survival during the winter, they can lie dormant and wait for the summer festival season, which is quite lucrative, to renew their fortunes (Interview with Lubo Alexandrov, January 2010). Nevertheless, the great majority of musicians rely on income from private sources rather than public, and economic survival in the free market economy must be considered the driving force behind strategies of identity and representation among the “Gypsy musicians” of Montreal.

Ethnic identity as commodity: globalization and multiculturalism

In a nutshell, all cultural objects today are commodities, or at least able to be turned into commodities, and cultural exchange is now synonymous with capitalist exchange. Culture is therefore no longer an ideological field as its objects have no fixed social meaning or context once they become commodities. (O’Byrne and Hensby 2011: 136)

As “Gypsy music” in Montreal is imagined and marketed as a separate idea from the Romani culture, discussions about how and why culture becomes commodity are not only relevant but essential to understand the phenomenon.

The word “ethnic” currently enjoys a great deal of media attention as a socially relevant concept that is nonetheless very vague. As a noun and an adjective, “ethnic” multitasks in a variety of different contexts, its malleable nature making it vulnerable to every power struggle between dominant hegemonies and those who would seek to challenge them. Stokes points out that historically, the word “ethnic” often had harmless or light connotations, but lately has taken on a darker tone as terms like “ethnic cleansing”

become part of global dialogue, their innocuousness denying the magnitude of the atrocities (Stokes in Stokes 1994: 7). Roma in many countries know the word to their sorrow as a preface to the phrase “ethnic hate crime”.

In a global marketplace, however, “ethnic” enjoys a privileged economic valuation that is seemingly at odds with darker political agendas. Within Canada, the multicultural platform that indirectly referenced the economic advantages inherent to multiple ethnic populations (through use of slogans such as “Strength in diversity” and “Multiculturalism Means Business”) has foregrounded the role of the free market economy in the essentialization, demarcation, and dissemination of “ethnicity” in the realization of ethnic products or services. As Abu-Laban and Gabriel state: “...Globalization has resulted in a selling of diversity, whereby the skills, talents, and ethnic backgrounds of men and women are commodified, marketed, and billed as trade-enhancing.” (2002: 12)

Internationally, “ethnicity” has become very marketable as a commodity due to an increasingly globalized marketplace, which brings to bear global free market influences on local cultures and produces a wide-scale demand for “ethnic” products, and, via the “global marketplace”, also provides the means for their sale. O’Byrne and Hensby argue that for globalization to occur, global interconnectedness and global consciousness must coexist, and that both are experienced through mass communication (O’Byrne and Hensby 2011: 15). As Anderson stressed the importance of national media in the creation of nations (Anderson 1983: 104), so too are transnational media crucial to the process of globalization: “...The media effectively offers us a round-the-world ticket for free: via books, magazines, television and the Internet, the media provides us with the knowledge from which we derive most of our understanding and ‘mediated experience’ of the world.” (O’Byrne and Hensby 2011: 24) In this world, media shape our awareness of world places and events: “...the globalization of media raises and extends our understanding of society, as the consumption of symbolic forms change the way we view ourselves, and our understanding of the rest of the world.” (O’Byrne and Hensby 2011: 25)

As a commonality, then, the processes of both globalization and multiculturalism provide economic motivation to populations to produce and market “ethnic” goods and services which are often based on widely-recognized (and often essentialized) ethnic tropes. How these tropes are created, and who controls the dialogue, is a complex matter. Critics argue that dominant political forces control most of the narrative for their own purposes of creating hierarchical class structures (Vermeersch 2005; Gellner 2006; Bannerji 2000), and although these forces are undeniable, I believe there are also complex market forces at work which must be negotiated between all actors in both local and global communities, and political and market forces: the producers, the consumers, the dominant hegemony, and, importantly, as O’Byrne and Hensby point out, the media.

The “authentic ethnic product”: Narrative and value in a free market economy

Via online shopping, international shipping, and large conglomerates, consumers have an enormous number of choices of goods and services at their fingertips, and shopping has become a way for individuals to not only express their personalities but create and refine them. These personalities can be as temporary or permanent as the actor chooses: “Performance in this field [of consumer culture] invokes Bakhtin’s notion of ‘carnival’ where consumerist revelers are free to try on a set of masks or identities.” (O’Byrne and Hensby 2011: 138) The narrative of the consumption process—the meaning of the exchange as understood by the consumer—invisible to the eye, is an essential aspect of the transaction that cannot be underestimated.

It is in the purchase of luxury goods and services that the narrative of “authenticity” becomes a value-added component. A consumer bidding for Paris Hilton’s trademark sunglasses on eBay would not be pleased to find that she had received a pair “just like” Hilton’s instead of the original pair. In this case, the authenticity of the item, and the corresponding experience of owning the item, is of paramount importance. This narrative, of course, is invisible, and so the products themselves (authentic and not) are often indistinguishable from each other, yet global consumers are widely complicit in the valuation of this hidden narrative. Everywhere, a diamond is worth more than a cubic zirconia, a Prada handbag is worth more than one sold by China’s black market, and a Mondrian is worth more than a painting by a child.

Discourses of authenticity are inextricably linked to social class, and the dominant class has the most to lose if or when the boundaries of “authenticity” become permeable and valueless. “It is precisely because only a few people can partake of implicit, genuine authenticity that there is a market for the more explicit, fake kind.” (Potter 2010: 135) Authenticity, as a feature actively sought by consumers, is an act of conspicuous consumption, and in most cases it is expensive: the jeweler’s certificate, the passport stamp, the signature of the artist. Experiences such as tourism, which cannot be faked, presuppose a certain amount of disposable income, a classic marker of the wealthy. In some cases, such as when warranties or safety issues are at stake, purchasing the genuine article is a better strategy (does the jungle guide really have 15 years of experience, or did he start yesterday?) but these issues are less relevant to luxury items or experiences, which offer, in addition to the product itself, an opportunity for social mobility through conspicuous consumption. “Being seen” at the opera carries a much different narrative than “being seen” at a karaoke bar.

In every consumer transaction, the product's value needs to be assessed before purchase. In some cases this is straightforward: Prada stores sell Prada handbags, jewelers sell diamond rings, and so on (barring exceptionally sophisticated scams such as the 17 bogus Apple stores recently found in China: "Fake Apple Store in China fools even Staff", Reuters, 21 July 2011). In ambiguous situations such as private purchases, consumers can enlist experts, such as jewelers or art historians, to help them determine an item's authenticity and its corresponding market value.

The underlying narrative of ethnic products is very similar to that of luxury products, although it occupies a different social niche. Although of course these could also be purchased for the purpose of upwards social mobility, the underlying *brand*, or chief selling point of the item, is ethnicity or nationality (authentic Russian vodka; real Hawaiian seashells) rather than association with a particular person (a Michael Jackson glove) or a socioeconomic niche (a diamond tennis bracelet). The purchase of "ethnic goods", in the past largely limited to those who could afford to travel, has become a global phenomenon for those who value "ethnic quaintness" (Cohen 1997: 93) The product, then, arrives with a narrative of "ethnicity", which must also, like all luxury goods and services, be verifiably authentic in its ethnicity. Travel souvenirs marked "Made in China", almost *de rigueur* for tourist stores, are easily identified as the cheapest form of product, less valuable than locally-produced items. Import stores like Ten Thousand Villages handily combine ethnicity with authenticity by narrating the journey of their items ("These bracelets were made by single mothers in Pakistan") and combining it further with social activism.

Music can be bought and sold like any other "ethnic" product, but in some cases the musical products lack verisimilitude, and the consumer can be in doubt that he or she has received the item that was paid for. Consumers who purchase goods from a reputable distributor (such as Ten Thousand Villages) can rely on its reputation to deliver authentic ethnic products, but many "ethnic" vendors live on low profit margins and thus have more informal venues: the back of a truck, a table in the street. In these cases, verifying authenticity can be nearly impossible.

In the music industry, the consumer can rely on some labels that specialize in world music offerings, such as Putamayo and Rough Guide, but many independent releases offer no such guarantee of authenticity. Verification is therefore difficult and the consumer must turn to prior knowledge, referrals, or contextual clues to help assess the market value. This is an easier process for live performances than recorded ones: a North American consumer unfamiliar with Turkish music might not know the difference in sound between the Whirling Dervishes on tour and a local highschool band, but they are easy to distinguish in terms of performative practice, audience size, breadth of publicity, and so on. In short, the consumer can rely on contextual and social cues to assess the situation.

Authenticity is closely connected to essentialization in many cases. If there is no significant price difference between one ethnic recording and another, then logically, the consumer might look for, and purchase, the recording that is the *most* ethnic, however that is imagined. Ethnicity, after all, is an area where quantity is relevant: while a purse cannot be “almost” or “half” Prada, a musician could easily be “half” or “one quarter” Roma, and so on. And since authenticity is known to increase the product value in the global marketplace, the essentialization of ethnicity, then, becomes a process with tangible economic benefits to both musicians and marketing agencies. “More ethnic” is in most cases synonymous with “more authentically ethnic”.

While most people would be hard pressed to describe their own ethnic backgrounds in one or two words, the reality is that this strategic identity is a basic marketing strategy. In order to access a large audience that is unfamiliar with the underlying concept, the product is reduced to a “brand” with a few simple core concepts. The hated “essentialization” of activists therefore becomes the necessary “branding” of musicians and producers, who, for economic viability, need their products to resonate with as large an audience as possible with the fewest words. “The paradox of all branding is that the more complicated things get, the simpler the message has to be...” (Potter 2011: 183)

In order for the branding to be effective, it must be largely congruent with audience expectations. Mason, in his study of the tourist experience of Irish music as heard in Ireland (2001), found that the perceived relative worth of Irish music was closely correlated to media- derived tourist expectations prior to entering the country, and that ultimately this affected the music of the service providers, who were financially motivated to fulfill the pre-existing expectations of the tourists (Mason 2001). Fonseca, a journalist who lived among the Roma of Albania, found that the more “genuine” the Gypsies looked, the more acceptable they become “in the local imagination, if not the local pub” (Fonseca 1995: 239). Malkki, in her study of refugees, found that authorities had expectations of what constituted an “authentic” refugee, which were not necessarily congruent with the lived reality (Malkki 1996). In each situation, the members of the culture were highly motivated to conform to the expected appearance of the authentic and the genuine. In the music industry, this can result in a sort of feedback loop from the media to the musicians and back to the media, where one informs the other in a cycle that is reinforced by the buying power of consumers.

When music is out of context with space or place, issues of authentication become more problematic. Stokes argues that the “world music” phenomenon presents music as “authentic” when it is situated in its home environment, but that the same music is perceived as nothing more than a cheap copy when it is presented in another place. It is “...difficult for us to think of transcultural music experiences as anything other than models of authenticities gone on ‘elsewhere’. Music out of place, we are too readily inclined to believe, is music without meaning.” (Stokes in Stokes 1994: 98) This is a

problem for the Roma because they do not currently have, nor have they ever had, a country of their own. Lacking a “Romanestan”, all places would be, according to Stokes, equally inauthentic for the production of Roma music, although in practical terms the Roma are well-recognized as an authentic cultural group within certain countries where they form a larger percentage of the population, such as Hungary and Romania. Any consumer assessment of a “Gypsy” cultural product that values exposure to a recognized home country, however, poses a problem for Canadian Roma and particularly for multiple-generational Canadians.

Hybridity and Authenticity

Moreover, questions of ‘authenticity’ are rendered obsolete by the fact that nobody or indeed nothing in consumer culture is capable of sustaining any degree of cultural purity; as Bauman notes, a claim to authenticity is no longer even desirable for it sets an artificial limit to the self-empowering ‘flexibility of self’. (O’Byrne and Hensby 2011: 138-139)

Authenticity and essentialization converge with hybridity in complicated ways. Hybridity is commonly understood as a purposeful strategy to individualize and maximize the benefit of consumer products; from this impulse we see the rise of “fusion cuisine” and “Labradoodles”. Neologisms like “Brangelina”, disseminated and popularized by the media, have entered the public consciousness as a representation of the fusion of two discrete and authentic forms: of celebrities, of gourmet cooking, of purebred dogs, and so on. Whether the world is becoming more hybridized is not the question: rather, the main point here is that the idea of hybridization is greatly accepted in the public mind.

It must be further noted that this hybridity is predicated on the underlying premises of value, a pedigree in a sense (for example, a union such as “Brangelina” or “TomKat” could only be formed from two celebrities, not one celebrity and one bricklayer) and simplicity (Thai-Japanese cuisine, not Thai-Japanese-Jamaican-Russian cuisine) and even essentialization (in which, perhaps, cilantro represents “Thailand” and sushi represents “Japan”). Products that are too complicated in nature, or formed of components that lack value and/ or a pedigree of some manner, will be handicapped in the consumer arena.

Here I must mirror Hobsbawm’s line of reasoning when he says that successful new traditions do not necessarily need to have a link with the past, but they must be *perceived* as having a link with the past (Hobsbawm in Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992: 2): I argue that the underlying authenticity of the parent genres themselves is not as important as the *perception* of authenticity. O’Byrne and Hensby posit that in this new kind of authenticity, the association of the product is more important than the product

itself: "The dubious cultural value of a 'mongrel' creation such as the chicken tikka masala comes from its generalized association as an 'Indian dish', despite it being virtually unknown in India." (O'Byrne and Hensby 2011: 142) In Montreal, the cultural value of this music is derived from its association with "Gypsy", and because there is so little knowledge nationally about Gypsy music to challenge the myth of its existence as a cohesive genre, the trope of authenticity is easy to fulfill in the public imagination. Whether the musicians are in fact of "Gypsy" heritage, and whether they are conveying "Gypsy" culture and music accurately is, from a financial perspective, not nearly as important as whether they are conveying it in a manner that is similar to audience expectations and understanding.

In this case, crossing Gypsy music with "Klezmer", two very widely recognized (i.e., well branded) genres, and, importantly, genres with an association of "Other", might be more marketable than fusing Gypsy music with "Canadian music". It may also be that "Canadian" is not well enough recognized as a musical genre to be an easily identifiable (and thus marketable) brand in Montreal. Micheal Butch, a fourth-generation Toronto Roma, has tried to market his music as a Canadian-Gypsy hybrid, with indifferent success.

Toronto's The Gypsy Rebels is a band featuring traditional Gypsy music mixed with elements of Reggae, Funk, R'n'B, and Soul. Micheal T. Butch of the group describes their sounds as urban Canadian Gypsy. Gypsy Rebels recently released a new CD called *Between Worlds!* They'll be playing from it at the Gladstone Hotels' Melody Bar November 25th.⁵⁴

Here, "traditional Gypsy music" is combined with two less widely-recognized brands of "Urban" and "Canadian", and complicates it by adding "Reggae", "Funk", "R'n'B", and "Soul." Although undoubtedly his description of the music is very precise in the same way that would be entirely accurate to call himself a truly "Canadian" Gypsy, these labels are complicated, and I personally find it more, not less, difficult to imagine the music as more influences are added. Further, the trope of "Canadian Gypsy" is itself very murky: The RCC, after decades of activism, is still trying to bring the Canadian Roma out of invisibility, and I believe that Micheal will have an uphill battle to disseminate his music until the "Canadian Gypsy" trope is as well-known as "Hungarian Gypsy" or "Romanian Gypsy". Micheal has so far not found a great deal of (paying) demand in Toronto for his particular style of music, although his skills are very much in demand within the parameters of the RCC.

Lubo Alexandrov markets his music essentially the same way, but much more successfully, although whether this is due to marketing technique (which is possible) or the fact that he is in Montreal while Micheal in Toronto, is unknown. Lubo, like Micheal,

⁵⁴ From CBC Radio Show Program Logs: 2011/11/16.
http://www.cbc.ca/radioshows/HERE_AND_NOW/20111116.shtml

identifies his music as a complicated hybrid, but rather than using the word “Canadian” or even “North American”, he uses the old European phrase, “New World”, which in itself references traditional and European forms of knowing, drawing on the European ancestry of the Roma to create an implication of upper-class origins, which is a perfect fit for Montreal’s deep pride in being a city of very European character. Lubo also names the home country of the “Gypsy” music rather than trying to market it as “Canadian.” So the resulting description of “Bulgarian Gypsy” and “New World” musicians, with “urban funk/ rock/ jazz grooves” is, to my mind, both more descriptive and emotively more appealing than Micheal’s description, although they are actually similar in description and general approach to the genre.

Marketing the products: Selling “Gypsy” music in Canada

Artwork is a way that the marketing process simplifies the complexity of a musical genre and its corresponding culture to an “ethnic product” aimed at a mass audience. Even if the consumer market was not predisposed towards simple, straightforward tropes, most artists would find it difficult to challenge or effect change of stereotypical or essentialized tropes using only a three-by- three-inch square of cardboard.

Micheal Butch’s CD cover “Between Worlds” whimsically depicts a portal through which the band members are walking. The science fiction reference might be a bit esoteric for some consumers, but the “Between Worlds” title is clearly a reference to the different cultural influences found in the music itself. As in the CBC snippet, Micheal has chosen to play the “many cultures” card, visually depicting himself seamlessly transitioning from one to the other. The idea of “Gypsy” is not at all dominant in the pictorial representation of the band members, and only vaguely referenced on the home page of the group, with elaborate scrollwork of the type commonly found on *Gypsy vardos* (covered wagons).

Further emphasizing his activist interests, Micheal’s web page explains:

The Gypsy Rebels fully support the important work being done on behalf of the Roma Gypsies by the Roma Community Centre, and in turn, thank them for their ongoing support. In particular, they would welcome participation in any upcoming venues involving the Community Centre.
(http://www.thegypsyrebels.com/fr_home.cfm)

Kaba Horo’s web page, by contrast, is heavily evocative of “Gypsy”, featuring elaborate gold scrollwork of the kind found on traditional *Gypsy vardos* (horse-drawn caravans), done in the colours of the Romani flag (blue, green and red), and also depicting the Indian wheel of the Romani flag. Stamped across the bottom, like yellow border tape, is the repeating word “Contrabanda”, implying something forbidden, illegal; perhaps referencing the well-known “Gypsy crime” trope, or maybe intending it in a more



Figure 13: Sergiu Popa's CD cover. Photo credit: Roberta Gal

Even though the CD features other musicians, Sergiu is the only one pictured on the cover, showcasing his accordion skills as the main feature of the group. His wife and business partner, Jessica, commented on the photo and title:

I wish I could say it was something profound, but it was what we came up with as a title that was kind of bilingual (touchy issue in Quebec as you know!), and also reflective of Sergiu. I don't think it's much of a stretch to say that he truly is accordion obsessed! He is part of an exclusive international 'club' of true accordion aficionados, beyond his own style of East European music.

Jessica mentioned further that they were trying to avoid the "usual kitschy traditional costume pose" yet still incorporate some of the colours associated with Roma identity, red in particular. (Conversation with Jessica Gal on Facebook, January 30, 2012) So although Sergiu incorporates elements of "Gypsy" on the cover, the portraiture suggests that he has chosen "Sergiu the virtuosic accordionist" as the primary brand, with "Gypsy" and "Balkan" as supporting or supplemental brands.

Carmen Piculeata has released four CDs. Three of them look very similar to Sergiu's in their choice to foreground the individual rather than the repertoire, featuring Carmen and his violin in the foreground against a black background. Two of these were released by Carmen's "Gypsy Orchestra of Montreal/ L'Orchestre Tzigane de Montreal" and the third features only Carmen's name, playing "Gypsy and Classical Music" (written in English with no French translation).

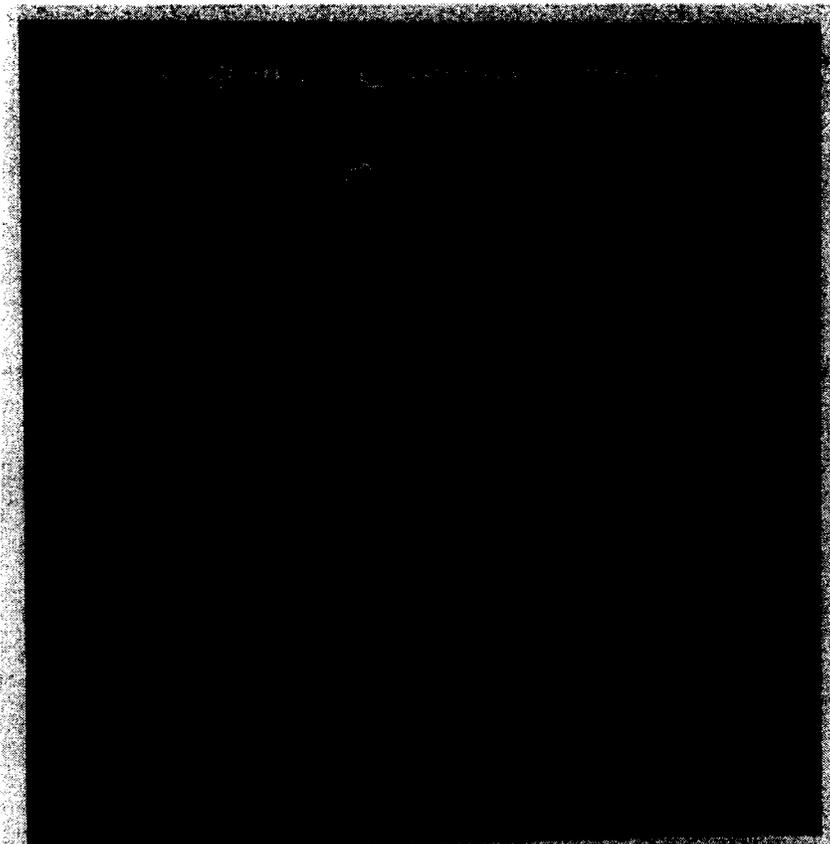


Figure 14: Carmen Piculeata's CD cover. Photo credit unknown.

"Bahtalo: Chante Moi, Mon Tzigane" was released in 2000. It shows a picture of Carmen's daughter at age 5, writing a letter. "Bahtalo: Chante Moi, Mon Tzigane" means "luck" in Romani (usually in the context of wishing someone good luck), and the French translates as "Sing to me, my Gypsy". In this case, we presume, the "Gypsy" is a reference to Carmen himself, the musician who, as we know, eschews use of the word "Roma". The association with children and innocence portrays a whimsical and perhaps carefree identity as "Gypsy" to a much greater degree than the other albums.



Figure 15: Web page of the Gypsy Orchestra of Montreal, displaying all four of Carmen's album covers. Accessed April 2013.

(<http://www.orchestretziganedemontreal.com/discographie.htm#nane>)

While some less-active groups such as Soleil Tzigane or Les Gitans de Sarajevo rely largely on word-of-mouth and local networks, with neither web pages nor albums that can be discussed here, other musicians such as Sarah Barbieux use the Internet to promote a wide variety of products. Sarah and her theatre troupe, Caravane, promote "Romani" associations rather than "Gypsy", but, like Kaba Horo and The Gypsy Rebels, cite numerous cultural influences in their product, and label themselves "artistes multidisciplinaires", offering informational seminars, children's entertainment, puppet-making workshops, and so on. (http://www.troupecaravane.com/troupe_art.php) Their web page clearly shows the troupe's association with the fantastic and the spectacular, not directly referencing the well-known "Gypsy trope" of magic, but certainly intentionally soliciting the same effects of wonder and the surreal.

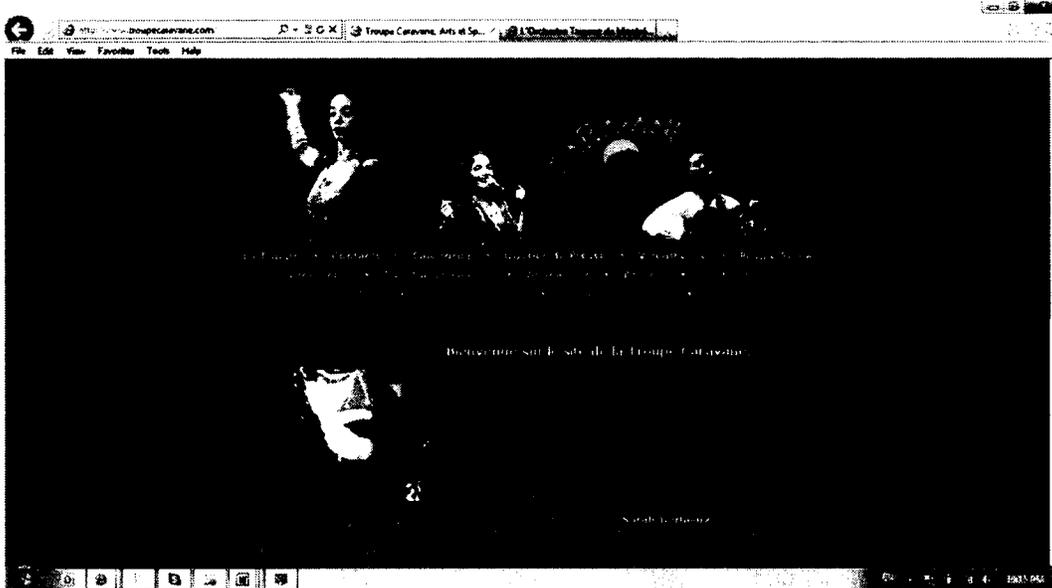


Figure 16: Troupe Caravane web page. Accessed February 2013.

Kristin Molnar, a violinist, vocalist, and flamenco dancer, has not released an album under her own name, although she has several collaborations to her name. The biography on her home page describes her Hungarian “gypsy” (spelled with a lower-case “g”) heritage in the second sentence, and the rest of the page is filled with her accomplishments, many of which are pertinent to the world of classical music, such as academy prizes and participation in master classes. Kristen’s web page does not focus on her “Gypsy” identity but rather seems to exist to showcase her many diverse talents.



Figure 17: Kristin Molnar’s web page. Accessed February 2013.

However, the “Critiques” page introduces the word “authentic” in the first review: “...Il y a la contribution d’une authentique tzigane hongroise, Kristin Molnar...” (“There was a contribution from an authentic Hungarian Gypsy, Kristin Molnar...”) which, like immigration minister Jason Kenney’s recently-publicized “legitimate” refugees, foregrounds the quality of “authenticity”. Since the individuals could just as accurately be described as “Hungarian Gypsies” or “refugees”—one doesn’t call a chair a “real chair”, or a truck a “legitimate truck”—the emphasis on the real, the legitimate, and the authentic implies a doubt about the validity of the luxury product (“a real Prada”, “a genuine diamond”), which both presupposes the existence of an oppositional group, and takes for granted the value of one over the other.⁵⁵

The web page of Jorge Martinez, flamenco guitarist, similarly emphasizes the real, the authentic: “...Jorge Martinez is the Real Deal”, “Jorge Martinez: When Authenticity Touch the Absolute” (sic), and “Jorge Martinez knows how to write music that goes straight to the soul, that takes us back to who we are.”⁵⁶ Here again the concept of the real, the authentic, and the journey “back to who we are” (a sort of authentic self, untainted by time) are privileged in the media. What is ironic about these quotes is that Jorge considers himself to be rootless: his music is created by a process of fusion that has been inspired by his self-perceived rootlessness and his perception that Canada does not yet have any fixed musical traditions. (Interview with Jorge Martinez, January 2010).

Robi Botos is another musician who downplays his Romani heritage. He is active with the RCC in Toronto and his website lists his heritage as “Romani (Gypsy)”, but his music is listed as “Experimental/ Funk/ Jazz”, and his visual presentation is very much of a sameness with Sergiu’s and Carmen’s, choosing to brand the musician rather than the genre. <http://ca.myspace.com/robibotos>

⁵⁵ <http://www.kristinmolnar.com/critiques.html>

⁵⁶ <http://www.jorgemartinez.ca/en/index.html>

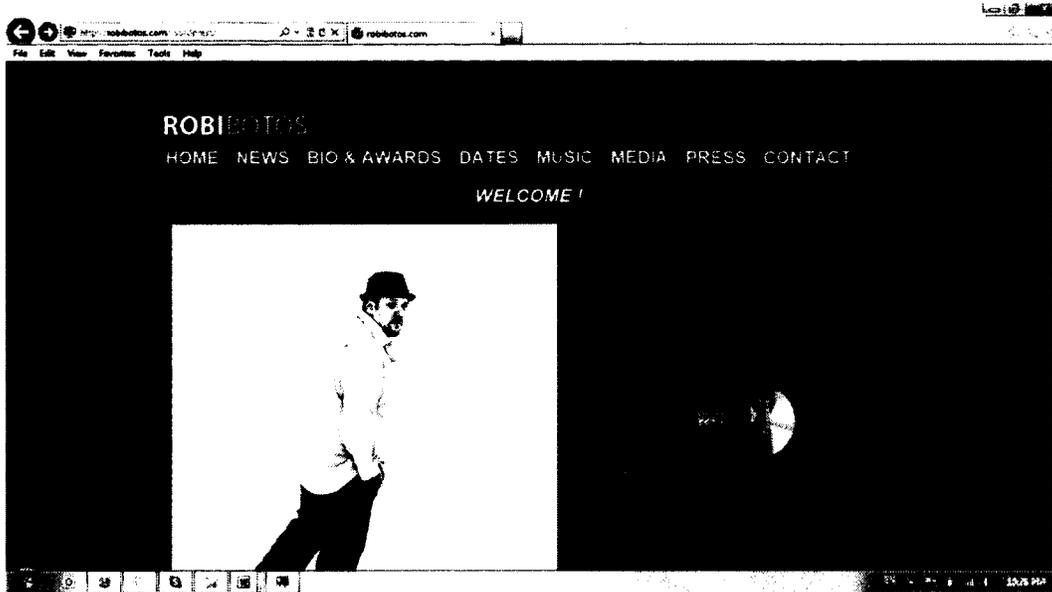


Figure 18: Robi Botos' web page. Accessed February 2013.

In total, I found a fairly even split in philosophy between Canadian “Gypsy musicians” who focus on themselves as the main “brand”, and musicians who promote the genre as the main brands. Among the groups who focus on genre, “Gypsy” music is foregrounded, but not to the exclusion of other styles; rather its character is portrayed in a clear context of “multicultural” music in a sort of “First among equals” situation. Personal identification as “Gypsy” or “Roma” is self-evidently perceived by the musicians to be value-enhancing to the final musical product, since public relations media would certainly not include aspects that might be deemed to be publically undesirable. Nevertheless, the musicians have not made this heritage the sole component of their public musical identity: although in most cases, the purposeful public identities establish and foreground a certain amount of “authentic” “Gypsy” or “Romani” identity, at the same time they do not rely exclusively on “Gypsiness”. The general sense is that the musicians begin the journey with a “Gypsy” identity and then expand it in some way, either through a reputation for technical skill (in the sense of musical proficiency/ virtuosity), or through cultural hybridity (by fusing genres and cultures to create a highly specialized sound), or both.

It seems, then, that in the Canadian Gypsy music industry, the appearance of authenticity and the existence of the discourse itself—in short, the public presentation of the concept—is more important than any measurable “authenticity” of the final product, such as through provable “traditional” repertoire, musical skills learned in the “old ways” (for example, aurally, through virtuoso Romani teachers), or by birthright (for example, having a group that is composed only of pureblood Roma).

Upon establishing personal or musical authenticity as “Romani” or “Gypsy”, Canadian musicians then take on complementary musical identities to realize their own artistic visions, seemingly unfettered by any sense of impermeable cultural boundaries.

Dominance and essentialization: “Gypsy” depiction in the media and free market economy

A powerful media is a precondition for globalization. “...The globalization of media raises and extends our understanding of society, as the consumption of symbolic forms change the way we view ourselves, and our understanding of the rest of the world.” (O’Byrne and Hensby 2011: 25) Stokes argues that the recording industry in particular has been very influential in defining ethnic groups (Stokes in Stokes 1994: 20), pointing out that the media are highly motivated to sell to as large an audience as possible (Stokes in Stokes 1994: 21). Ultimately, the market-driven nature of most media results in a series of products that are designed to achieve as broad a resonance as possible with the greatest number of consumers. Entertainment media in particular often rely on standardized tropes to depict different cultures: whether these depictions are seen as truisms is not as important as the fact that they are widely recognized.

Due to the underlying prevalence and influence of American media in Canadian culture, any discussion of Canadian media must include American media. Most of Canada’s entertainment media are imported directly from the United States, which results in a certain homogenization of values and knowledge. Canadians rely on the predominantly American media for information about subjects of which they have no personal knowledge, and Canadians who have never met a “Gypsy”—which is most of them—nevertheless have some awareness of the sensationalized “Gypsy” tropes.

The most positive trope is drawn from the Western European stereotype of the Roma, as described by Gheorghe and Mirga (2001). It depicts “Gypsies” as a romanticized, nomadic people who enjoyed freedoms forbidden to the rest of society. The fact that the Roma could be romanticized in any country, and their lifestyle seen as desirable, points to the great distance between the lived reality and the public perception. Malcolm Chapman, speaking of the revival of “Celtic” music, argues that Romanticism is a “re-evaluation...of peripheral features.” (Chapman in Stokes 1994: 41) He states that the people in the centre of mainstream culture benefit from “...some feature, abstract or tangible (instrument, language, dance, attitude, costume, furniture), which is dying out on the periphery...and very little known in the centre; if moral and political conditions in the centre are appropriate, the transported peripheral feature can be turned, at the centre, into a fashionable and glamorous rarity. The process requires a distance between centre and periphery...” (Chapman in Stokes 1994: 41) And, as Gropper and Miller point out, “We see changes occurring all around us, but we insist that the Roma should not change. We refuse to follow their example, resisting the need

to update our own attitudes and make the discordance vanish.” (Gropper and Miller 2001: 106)

As the Roma in Canada have turned to jean jackets, sneakers, and iPhones, the image of the long-skirted “Gypsy” remains curiously anachronistic. In this case, the distance between the centre (Canada) and periphery (the *mahalas* of Eastern Europe) allows Canadians the opportunity to believe in the myth of a perfectly preserved and unchanging culture. The fact that Canada’s Romani population is tiny and largely invisible doubtless helps a great deal, as the public imagination is largely unhampered by visible denial of the “Gypsy freedom” trope, such as Romani refugees waiting in lines at food banks, as I witnessed at the Masaryk-Cowan Community Centre in the Parkdale neighbourhood of Toronto, (February 2012) and so on.

To explore depictions of “Gypsies” in the entertainment media, I watched a number of movies that featured or included “Gypsies” or “Roma”.⁵⁷ I expected to find the “glamorous Gypsy” trope alive and well in the entertainment media, but this was not the case. Collectively, the Gypsies in these movies read Tarot cards, participate in fight clubs, run underworld crime syndicates, have telekinetic ability, and cry tears with magical powers. There is a surprising juxtaposition of supernatural elements with very realistic and gritty depictions of the “Gypsies” as an impoverished, vulnerable, or criminal class. Scenes of freedom and glamour were notably lacking in these movies; rather, the Roma were more likely to be depicted as victims instead of free-spirited nomads. In “Borat”, the main character tries to capture a Gypsy for her tears; in “King of the Gypsies”, a young man rebels against his abusive father; “Korkorro” reflects the desperation of Roma in WWII; and in “Snatch”, a Gypsy woman is burned alive in her caravan.⁵⁸ “The Hunchback of Notre Dame”, aimed at children, was the only movie I saw in which “Gypsies” were depicted in any sort of glamorous manner. Based on these media, then, the “glamorous Gypsy” trope appeared to be an oxymoron; they were neither glamorous nor free. Rather, they were portrayed as oppressed and victimized, and while the crime aspect was played up disproportionately, the overall effect seemed much more realistic—at times bordering on advocacy in its clarity of “victim-oppressor” roles—than the “glamorous Gypsy” trope.

⁵⁷ These included, among others, “Korkorro”, “Gajo Dilo”, “Latcho Drom”, “Where the Road Bends: The Gypsies and their Journey”, and “King of the Gypsies”. I also watched movies in which “Gypsies” were supporting characters, such as “Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan”, “Sherlock Holmes: Game of Shadows”, “Snatch”, and “The Hunchback of Notre Dame”. Some of the movies were unavailable in North America, such as “Time of the Gypsies” or “Black Cat, White Cat”, but there was enough information available online to get a sense of the plot and general depictions.

⁵⁸ Documentaries such as “Pretty Dyana”, “The Gypsies of Svinia”, and “Opre Roma” must be excluded from this list, as they are not intended to entertain but rather to educate, and great lengths are taken to ensure accurate representations. Also, their distribution is nowhere near that of entertainment media.

It was in literature, and the amateur world of media, that I found the free-spirited nomadic “Gypsy” trope alive and well. On YouTube viewers can watch richly-dressed, highly sexualized “Gypsies” traveling in horse-drawn wagons.⁵⁹ A Google search for compound terms such as “romantic gypsy” and “free spirit gypsy” turns up a huge amount of online content supporting the coexistence of these phrases: A “romantic gypsy” is described in a blog as “... a modern woman of substance, a free spirit who marches to her own beat.”⁶⁰ Another web page begins: “Sometimes we just need to get away from it all.... Away from modern life as we know it. Enter our newest tiny house obsession: the gypsy caravan.... It’s the perfect design solution for the urban doldrums.”⁶¹ Another blogger, appropriating a ground state of “Gypsiness”, states: “We all have gypsy roots if we go back far enough as we all started as nomads who lived off the land in tune with Nature.”⁶²

The “glamorous Gypsy” trope is still alive in literature, particularly the fantasy and children’s genres, perhaps as a continuation of highly romanticized literature of the early 1900s.⁶³ In *The Gypsy Princess* (Gilman 1995), the main character, a Gypsy girl who has prophetic dreams, runs away to be a princess at a royal court, but soon tires of the constraints of formal life in a classic early-century rebellion against urbanization. Another recent publication (Bow 2010) conflates the “magic Gypsy” trope with accurate Romani research: In *Plain Kate*, nomads called the “Roamers”, who speak Kalderash Romani among themselves, befriend a woodcarver and protect her from another Roamer, a sorcerer who wants to use her life spirit for evil purposes. In these genres, the associations with magic and nomadism are particularly important as useful literary vehicles.

“Gypsy”, too, exists as a useful children’s trope like “Pirate” or “Princess”, a mythologized occupation or role that allows for fantasy and experimentation. Adults are expected to understand that real-life Somalian pirates don’t really dance on the decks singing “Yo ho ho”, and it doesn’t follow that the gypsy trope would be any more believable, yet there seems to be some rather widespread vestigial belief in place. This could be best described as a suspension of reality in the domain of magic and superstition, in which “Gypsies” occupy a privileged position as practitioners. Meeting a “real life Gypsy” would in this sense be a significant life event, akin to meeting Harry

⁵⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oj4yQlkjEDQ>

⁶⁰ <http://romanticgypsy.blogspot.ca/>

⁶¹ <http://www.flavorwire.com/270693/gypsy-wagos-romantic-adventurous-and-liberating-design>

⁶² <http://www.intuitiveintegralhealing.com/1/post/2011/10/honouring-our-gypsy-free-spirit-within.html>

⁶³ Ian Hancock cites Judith Okely (an anthropologist who specializes in Romani studies) as saying that George Borrow’s literature, dating from the mid- to late-1800s, is probably responsible for many of the current “Gypsy” stereotypes (Hancock 2007).

Potter or Gandalf, and it is easy to see how the continuation of this trope would handicap an accurate assessment of the Roma as a real people.

Tropes of magic are not only for children and Tolkien fans. The notion of “Gypsies” as magical practitioners or fortunetellers is a very old one and can be documented from the 1500s (Fraser 1995: 47). It cannot be understated here that the Roma themselves are complicit in the continuation of this trope. It is likely that they found it to be a profession that was highly compatible with their then-nomadic lifestyle, and that the trope of supernatural abilities has continued to serve them usefully in the centuries since. The belief in the existence of magical powers still exists and is widespread enough in present-day Canada for the Roma to make a living as “reader-advisors” (psychics); Micheal Butch, for example, took his daughter out of school in Grade 8 to work as a reader-advisor (Interview with Micheal Butch, February 2012).

The “Gypsy magic” trope, however, is so incompatible with the “oppressed Roma” trope that it seems impossible to believe in both concurrently. Following the logic that anyone bestowed with supernatural powers would use them to improve their own situations (for how could a practitioner of magic be oppressed in any sense?) it is very possible to conclude that the Gypsies or Roma live in squalor by choice, perhaps out of disdain for worldly goods, as wizards and elders of great wisdom are sometimes depicted in fantasy novels. Or, assuming the tenet that magical powers are an ethnic marker of the “Gypsies”, it would be possible to logically conclude that the impoverished Roma are not affiliated with the magical “Gypsies” in any way. Although modern politicians do not acknowledge the existence of supernatural powers, or the fact that reader-advisors have a small but permanent niche in modern mainstream society, the conclusion itself is congruent with right-wing rhetoric that situates the Roma as culpable in their own misery.

News media, naturally, disregard the “magic” element of the “Gypsies”, and focus on the Roma as a problematic socioeconomic group that is composed primarily of impoverished or fraudulent welfare recipients with a high crime rate. Although this is a sad reality in some cases, media depictions rarely investigate the correlating factors of cultural and institutionalized discrimination, such as the fact that Roma are generally jailed over more trivial offences than others; that Roma children in many countries receive inferior schooling compared to mainstream children (UNDP 2002: 51); that aid organizations are often corrupt or negligent in their disbursement of resources intended for Roma (UNDP 2002: 73); and so on. This simplified “Gypsy crime” trope, which is currently helping to propel the Hungarian Jobbik Party to power, has existed for centuries (this has been thoroughly documented in many places, of which the best historical overview is Fraser 1995) and is curiously persistent despite the vast amount of documentation and literature showing the enormous culpabilities of the nation-states themselves. However, this trope can be found all over the news media, particularly right-wing news media such as the Sun Network, but also in national news media such

as the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) and CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), which are institutions not generally known for sensationalism.

The pressing issue in Canada is that the media-disseminated stereotypes regarding Romani culture are not only inaccurate but, due to their gross pejorative quality (with terms like “Gypsy crime wave” and so on) have both the history and potential of damaging relations between the Roma community and mainstream Canadian society. If the amateur media or literary tropes are not intrinsically negative—there is nothing, after all, particularly alarming about long skirts and hoop earrings—neither are they particularly positive, and they are not enough to counterbalance allegations that “all Gypsies are thieves/ bogus refugees/ bogus welfare claimants” and so on.

“Gypsy musicians”, who live in the world of entertainment media and who are well-documented performative members of society (that is to say, not welfare cheats or indigents, as evidenced by their public delivery of musical services), are not subject to the “fraud” label of news media. Likewise, as the musicians are clearly in command of their own successful performing careers, the “victim” label of entertainment media is visibly an inappropriate trope. In fact the “Gypsy musicians” are largely disassociated from “Roma” culture in most cases, and this respectability is based in part on their distance from the grit of the culture on which the music is based.

These musicians have the luxury to play with the more positive and exoticized tropes from amateur media and literature as they see fit. Certainly the carefree lifestyle associated with “gypsies” is congruent with the carefree lifestyles often expected of musicians, and although tropes of magic are not usually associated with musical performance, the two are not at all incompatible. Both Carmen Piculeata (Cirque du Soleil, *Varekai*)⁶⁴ and Sarah Barbieux (Romani Yag 2007) have participated in musical performances that emphasize the spectacular and the fantastic, with visual imagery evocative of magic and the supernatural.

It is important to remember that (successful) musicians, as a necessary part of the business industry, prioritize public relations through the creation of MySpace pages, Facebook pages, press releases, bios, and so on. For them, positive self-representation and widespread dissemination are a necessity of survival, and therefore they are financially invested in branding and marketing these personas which they have linked to “Gypsy”. It is also important to remember that many of the “Gypsy musicians” are not, in fact, Roma, but have chosen to purposefully affiliate themselves with the Roma ethnicity, and of the Roma “Gypsy musicians”, many have only one Romani parent, such as Carmen and Sergiu, who were raised as members of an elite class outside of the impoverished Romani settlements. Thus the reclamation and public dissemination is

⁶⁴ “Varekai”, the name of this Cirque du Soleil production, is actually a Kalderash Romani word meaning “Somewhere” (Conversation with Carmen Piculeata, July 2008); as a title it is highly evocative of a nomadic lifestyle.

being done, in the main, by people who have not experienced the full forces and pressures of persecution and discrimination in highly segregated societies. It is, in part, the privileges of (comparative) wealth and education that qualify them to be successful in the music industry, but these qualities also perhaps act to downplay the full force of Roma marginalization globally.

Less talented members of Canada's Romani communities, however, many of whom have recently entered as refugees, lack access to media outlets as well as the direct personal economic motivation to create and disseminate positive ethnic affiliations. Thus they are subject to representation by the news media, in which every peccadillo reported and amplified as a "Gypsy problem", and every rejected refugee applicant is labelled "bogus". The RCC does its best to disseminate positive aspects of the culture but ultimately its audience is relatively small, and the high turnover rate within the community hinders long-term project planning. Until the Roma are able to produce and disseminate their own media products, their condition of being "voiceless" on the national stage will likely continue, as will the essentialist and potentially harmful stereotypes produced by non-Romani productions. The Romani community's anger over being essentialized, reduced to a few key terms, is perhaps not as great as their anger over having little to no control over the discourse. For the Toronto Roma, it is doubly unfortunate that the "Gypsy" musicians (Roma and non-Roma) of Montreal, who would seem to be ideal cultural ambassadors in that they have great facility in performative settings and are also seemingly immune to the pejorative and pervasive nature of "Gypsy" stereotypes, seem to be largely unengaged with Romani advocacy efforts.

Chapter Five: Intersection: Gypsy music, Romani nationalism, and Canada

A number of different identities emerge at the Canadian intersection of Gypsy music and Romani nationalism. One is advocacy, as Gypsy and Romani musicians must decide on purposeful strategies to represent (or not) the Romani nation in a way that is congruent with their own beliefs and that of the audience. These representations are often filtered through very diffuse and vague North American expectations about what “the Gypsies” (or Roma) should be, and the musicians must negotiate their public identities not only with a paying audience but also with the Roma advocates and the Gypsy music community itself. These expectations are equally present in more straightforward issues of marketing and economic transactions that are not ostensibly for advocacy purposes. In the latter area, the main priority of the musicians is economic survival, and while advocacy may be a component of the final Gypsy music product, ultimately most musicians rely on the pared-down approach of branding to market their products, which, due to great simplification, is generally considered to be counter to the depth of awareness needed for advocacy. The two approaches are not necessarily conflicting, as they are both marked by a mindful approach to identity creation and the awareness of being able to utilize different strategies as circumstances warrant.

The second main identity is that of performative (in the sense of visibly demonstrable) “Canadian” identity within the Canadian context. This is crucial to the Roma of Toronto and Montreal as they either struggle with or benefit greatly from national tropes that emphasize social inclusivity, meaningful and regular contributions to society, and the value of diversity. While the “Gypsy musicians” of Montreal (many of them non-Roma) ride the coattails of a quintessentially “Canadian” multiculturalism which is perhaps amplified by the ongoing French/ English debates, the Roma refugees of Toronto suffer from national imagery that portrays them as predators of an overly-generous system of social welfare. In this scenario, “Canada the nation” is portrayed as the victim, and the Roma of Toronto are juxtaposed against the nation as both fraudulent Canadians and fraudulent refugees. In both cities, dialogues of “authenticity” take place with or without consent of the performers. For the IRB, Canadian Roma must prove both that they are authentic Roma and that they are authentic refugees, while the “Gypsy musicians” are generally taken at their word (or by implication) regarding their “Gypsy” heritage or of the “Gypsy” nature of the music.

“You can’t tell a musician what to play”: Nationalist discourse in “Gypsy” music

One of the featured musicians at the 2007 Romani Yag festival/symposium was Carmen Piculeata. In 2007 I hadn’t met him yet, but during his concert I sat in the audience with Ronald Lee, whom I had known for years. During the concert, Ronald kept leaving the

table to have discussions with his colleagues. Eventually, I found out that the topic was Ljuba, the organizer of the festival, who was unhappy because Carmen was playing classical music (specifically the Romantic composers) rather than “Gypsy” music. Although Ronald was very involved in Romani Yag and one of its keynote speakers, he was surprised by Ljuba’s stance: “You can’t tell a musician what to play!” (Conversation with Ronald Lee, October 2007)

The role of the activist is a delicate one, as the outsider always risks forcing change in a direction that is not consistent with the goals and resources of the group. Much of the current literature in applied anthropology deals with subjective and potentially problematic areas such as collaboration, right to self-determination, and public outreach. Although these issues are discussed at length by many authors, none states them so concisely as Sol Tax in his American Indian applied anthropology project review from the 1940s (Tax 1958). In this he sketches three values that were at the root of the project and which could be considered guidelines in general: Truth (the anthropologist’s commitment to truth, both in her findings and in the role of advocacy to the general public); freedom (the group must be free to choose its own path without undue influence from the anthropologist); and parsimony, which involves the anthropologist making as few moral, theoretical, and universal decisions as possible. Many Romani activists, such as Ian Hancock, have devoted their lives to correcting and debunking myths and stereotypes about the Roma people, a problem which Tax addressed directly: “But as some myths are part of the problem of American Indians it [the act of correcting the myths] is also a duty to humanity and to outraged justice. Our action anthropology thus gets a moral and even missionary tinge that is perhaps more important for some of us than for others.” (Tax 1958: 252)

However, it is the concept of “freedom” (as according to Tax) that is most relevant in the context of Romani Yag. Tax stated explicitly that the Fox Indians must be free to choose whatever they want, even if it means not being Fox Indians anymore:

But to impose their choices on the assumption that “we know better than they do what is good for them” not only restricts their freedom, but is likely to turn out to be empirically wrong. The point is that what is best for them involves what they want to be...we defeat ourselves to the degree that we choose for them. (Tax 1958: 253)

At Romani Yag, Carmen wanted to be recognized as someone who had mastered the classical idiom, and whether mastery of the art music canon in some way negates his intrinsic “Gypsiness” is not the relevant discourse. Instead, we must look to a discourse that negotiates activist interests (outsider and Roma alike) while respecting the right to individual identity creation.

Activism intersects crucially with music in two ways. First, music is a crucial cultural marker in many societies, perhaps more so for the Roma who currently have so few. Although it could not be plausibly argued that there is an established transnational repertoire of Gypsy music (other than *Gelem Gelem*) there are some commonalities in Romani performance practice that are widely recognized across national boundaries. A great deal of Romani music is transmitted aurally since musical illiteracy is a common feature of Romani communities. Second, the skill tends to run dynastically, passed down between generations as a trade, like classical music centuries ago—most famously the Bach and the Mozart families—leading to virtuosic levels of skill achieved through an environment of total immersion. Third, a tendency to individualize the music to a great degree is evident with most Romani musicians, often through elaborate improvisations and embellishments, and also through manipulation of all available musical parameters such as tempo, meter, mode, and harmony. These performance practices are common to jazz and indeed the skills grew out of the same socioeconomic conditions as jazz: non-standardization based on a dynamic aural tradition which stemmed from illiteracy, and ultimately from poverty. They are not, however, common classical music traits, where standardization based on literacy is the norm. In this regard, classical performance practice and Romani performance practice would seem to be diametrically opposite, and it is easy to understand how the act of privileging classical music over Gypsy music, by a well-known musician of the Gypsy music idiom, and in a forum designed to showcase Romani arts and culture, could be interpreted as a denial or negation of Romani culture itself. Carmen, as a member of the *lautari* from Romania, moves easily between classical and Gypsy music. Ljuba's surprise over his repertoire choices may have stemmed from incomplete understanding of his sociological niche in both Romania and Canada.

The second way in which activism intersects with music is that, simply, music is generally a profitable endeavor requiring little overhead. The performances, if not necessarily the repertoire itself, have a critical role in activism as they generate audience interest and revenue to support ongoing advocacy needs. Whatever Ljuba thought of Carmen's repertoire choices, there was no denying that Carmen was one of the main headliners and money-makers for the symposium.

Ronald's surprise at Ljuba is part of an ongoing discourse that articulates and challenges expectations of behavioural roles based on cultural identity. Ronald saw Carmen's main identity as that of a tenured musician who had earned the right to choose his own repertoire, while Ljuba saw Carmen's main identity as "Gypsy representative", with corresponding expectations about his musical performance. Ultimately, of course, it was Carmen, the musician and the de facto cultural representative who was literally in the spotlight, who had the final say that evening about repertoire.

Ursula Hemetek, who has studied Romani music extensively in Europe, has views congruent with Tax in that she makes a point of stressing artistic freedom above

outsider expectations: “Ethnomusicologists’ mediation of cultures has paved the way and given a platform to minority musicians who are now free to choose to deny the “ethnic” stereotypes expected by the majority.” (2006: 53) The relevance to Romani Yag could not be more clear. Whether Ljuba Radman herself as an individual represented the “majority” or not, she clearly had certain expectations that Carmen had unwittingly breached. It is easy to understand how Ljuba, who not only was an experienced activist but had invested a great deal of time and money to host Romani Yag, would feel that she deserved input to the musical programme. This is juxtaposed, however, with the commitment of current Romani activists to breaking cultural boundaries and stereotypes. It is ironic that Carmen, whose whole world is consumed by music and who has almost zero interest in politics of any type, ended up being the Roma’s most thought-provoking advocate that day by saying nothing at all.

Years later, I asked Carmen why he had played classical music at Romani Yag instead of more traditional Gypsy repertoire, and he said that he had been about to release a CD of classical music, and his agent had suggested that he play some of the songs to promote the album (Interview with Carmen Piculeata, July 2008). There was no underlying message or snub implied by his choice of classical music: he was simply a musician trying to sell an album. The liner notes on this CD state: “I dedicate this album to all of my fans...and I hope to not upset certain musicians in the classical realm, due to my very gypsy way of interpreting some of these pieces.” (*Gypsy and Classical Songs: With Carmen Piculeata*, 2009)

While Carmen is certainly aware of the advantages offered by his flexible “Gypsy” identity, it doesn’t define him by any stretch. He had a privileged musical upbringing in Romani as part of a musical family; his father was a classical musician and his family lived in town among the *gadze* rather than in the Romani *mahala* (settlement). Although he primarily plays non-classical music, he is certainly capable of playing classical repertoire. As a musician of significant standing in the international community, it may not have occurred to him that the organizer might want to choose his concert repertoire, and indeed the idea of assigned repertoire is one that is more commonly thought of in association with less financially successful “Gypsy” musicians who take requests in restaurants, at parties, and so on. But in many areas of the arts, it is assumed that once an artist reaches a certain level—perhaps marked by economic independence, or a strong audience base—he or she is free to pursue creative ideas without a great deal of interference. Carmen has a great deal of identity invested in his status as elite musician, and told me several times that he hated taking requests for music as it made him feel like a “street bitch” [whore] (Interview with Carmen Piculeata, July 2009). In a situation where requests were unavoidable, he retained some control over the repertoire by simply telling the customers he didn’t know the song if it was one that he didn’t want to play.

From a nation-building perspective, Carmen's decision to play classical music is congruent with Gellner's premise that an emergent nation must have a high art culture (Gellner 2006: 49), and Romantic repertoire was a particularly good choice, whether by accident or design, due to its well-known affinity for "Gypsy" musical influences. As high-art composers such as Brahms and Liszt interpreted (or appropriated) Gypsy music, so too was Carmen interpreting (or appropriating) their repertoire; the interpreters interpreted, so to speak. By asserting his dominance over both the repertoire and the performance practice, Carmen's performance at Romani Yag was an almost-prescriptive innovation necessary for nation-building according to theorists. Other musicians attempting to bridge the gap between "ethnic" and high art are Jorge Martinez of Montreal, via flamenco guitar, and Robi Botos of Toronto, inasmuch as jazz can now be considered, at least controversially, a "high art" form.

The Montreal musicians, in fact, were almost uniformly uninterested in Romani nationalism, and it is hard not to draw a parallel with Beissinger's study of Romanian Romani elite musicians, the *lautari*, in which she speculates that they form a third socio-economic class that is neither Roma nor *gadze*. The *lautari*, for the most part, have been neither raised nor educated among the Roma, and they do not identify themselves as being truly Roma, although neither are they fully accepted by the Romanians, who, at the same time, are utterly dependent on them for live music. The *lautari* are generally not interested in Romani politics, and some stated that music and politics were mutually exclusive (Beissinger 2001: 48).

Carmen, with a *lautari* history from Romania and a present-day international music career, is certainly at the top of the Gypsy music genre in Canada, but his reputation is based neither on stereotypical "Gypsy" identity nor any kind of purposefully constructed "Romani" activist identity. Carmen recognizes that many traditional "Gypsy" musicians are subject to the whim of their patrons, and in an upwardly-mobile *lautari* sense, he aspires to surpass what he perceives as musical servitude. Although he is proud of his professional success, one has the feeling that money and prestige are ultimately only important to Carmen because they allow him greater artistic freedom to play what he likes, when he likes, and with whom he likes; often changing, often unpredictable, but always within his own control, a right earned by skill. When Carmen performs, it is in jeans and a t-shirt; he has no onstage "Gypsy" persona.

Likewise many other Montreal Romani musicians maintain a very "generic North American" onstage presence, dressed similarly to Carmen with no real effort to visually portray "Gypsiness" or any other type of exoticism. Like Carmen, their disinclination to conform to "Gypsy" imagery possibly springs from a fundamental disassociation with the Romani movement in general, but for the duration that they label their music as "Gypsy", they also paradoxically promote the Romani activist agenda by visibly debunking stereotypes of exoticism and challenging normative cultural boundaries.

Romani activists are eager to encourage Roma to use their skills to achieve professional freedom, surpassing now-stereotypical roles as unskilled labourers or welfare recipients to become doctors or hairdressers or teachers. The irony of this strategy, though, is that the upwardly mobile risk cultural rejection if their professional careers place them beyond the boundaries of “Romani” identity as articulated or enacted by their local Romani community members. This happened, as we know, to Nicolae Gheorghe himself, who exceeded cultural norms and was rejected by the Romani community itself. Carmen and Micheal, however, as musicians, enjoy a cultural congruency not shared by Gheorghe, since music, unlike academia, has for centuries been a widely recognized Romani career. Although Micheal extends the scope of his music to other genres, he stays within the Gypsy music paradigms, but Carmen leaves it completely. For some people this would be a daring move, but Carmen, as one of the most financially successful and influential “Gypsy musicians” in Canada, enjoys a position of privilege not available to most others, comparable to the academic idea of tenure, which protects intellectuals who might have unpopular or radical creative output.

Although Carmen is welcome anywhere, both inside and outside of the Romani community, at the time of my fieldwork he was disconnected from the local Montreal Roma community in a linguistic sense. Growing up among the gadze in Romania, Carmen visited his relatives in the *mahalas* only infrequently, and didn’t acquire enough of the Romani language to be fluent as an adult. Like many of the other Roma I met in Montreal, he has largely assimilated into local culture. He owns an urban apartment where he lives in complete comfort; he knows all the Montreal musicians and can largely choose his own musical direction. He identifies himself only sometimes as a “Gypsy” (never as a “Roma”) and while he enjoys the company of other Gypsies, he doesn’t subscribe to Romani nationalist or activist agendas; his interest in Gypsy identity is both personal and professional, but not political. Our conversations about “Gypsy” identity, then, centred on these two spheres. Carmen taught me how to swear like a Gypsy and eat like a Gypsy, and we discussed Gypsy music and performers at great length, but rarely did we discuss politics, global activism, or the “Roma” as a nation, and neither did most of my other Montreal contacts.⁶⁵ For Carmen, my time with him signified an opportunity return to his roots via the Romani language, and a chance to talk about music with an endless listener.

As my first Romani contacts in Canada were both activists—Mario Ines-Torres in Vancouver and Ronald Lee in Toronto—it took a long time to realize that the activist agenda was largely dormant in Montreal. Although Roma musicians there do create and

⁶⁵ The look of disbelief on Carmen’s face when I asked whether there was such thing as “Canadian Gypsy music” was memorable. After he’d recovered from what he considered to be an absolutely ridiculous question, he answered that no, there was no such thing as “Canadian Gypsy music”, although it could possibly come into being in fifty or a hundred years (Conversation with Carmen Piculeata, July 2008).

maintain purposeful cultural identities, especially vis-à-vis the paying public, they have the sense of being created in a privileged space where cultural egalitarianism is taken for granted, and cultural identity is a source of pride. Gritty Toronto, by contrast, is home to impoverished refugees facing an uncertain future, and cultural identity is not so much a matter of pride as a necessity; it is solidarity for economic and cultural survival. No one cared if I knew how to swear properly or where to find the best music; they cared that I knew about the dire situations faced abroad by millions of Roma. The Toronto advocates—Lynn, Ronald, Gina, Hedina, Tamas, and Gyongyi—spoke of local and international hate crimes, discrimination, and cultural retention in the face of hostility or apathy. I have known Ronald for ten years, and Lynn for six, and I know that they would not continue to aid my research if they didn't believe I was sympathetic to the Roma. My role as an outside observer, equally outraged at the injustices (which I am) and potential ally was taken for granted.

However apolitical the “Gypsy musicians” of Montreal might be, they do assume cultural representation of the Roma in terms of cultural or political recognition. The fact that financially successful musicians generally exist in a more privileged socioeconomic sphere than the great majority of Roma worldwide makes it even easier for arts efforts to become conflated with activism.⁶⁶ As the great awareness of socioeconomic inequality combines with the economic viability of music, the observer becomes a participant; the cultural borrower becomes a cultural representative, and so forth. In these representations, individuals who are perceived by the gatekeepers (the advocates, particularly those who are in charge of allocating social resources at the RCC) to be damaging the community through their representative efforts (such as Hannah James, cited previously) risk expulsion from the group.⁶⁷ This may not be a huge penalty for Hannah James, but it might be more meaningful for a newly-arrived refugee who relied heavily on the RCC for social support and networking. Of course a newly-arrived refugee would probably not have the means to be making grand gestures of representation, but Carmen could have been the object of some community “cold shoulders”, starting at the

⁶⁶ The custom of celebrity-studded benefit concerts for globally-felt crises, such as AIDS, famine, earthquakes, and tsunamis, is now commonplace, and need not be detailed here. In a more specific type of activism however, Madonna, after touring with Roma musicians in Romania, recently drew fire from audiences for speaking out on behalf of the Roma and publically criticizing the country for its discrimination. (*The Guardian UK*. 28 August 2009. “Romanian fans boo Madonna for supporting Gypsies.”)

⁶⁷ The Toronto advocates, whom I have known for years—specifically Ronald, Lynn, and Gina—feel that they have had their trust broken over and over again by reporters who promise to relay an unbiased account of the Roma, but break this (explicit or implicit) promise in the final publication by focusing instead on the lurid and negative aspects of Roma culture. Examples include “Gypsy Child Thieves”, a BBC production which was roundly criticized on the RCC forum, and National Geographic’s “American Gypsy” series, which was criticized by Roma and non-Roma scholars alike at the Romani Studies conference I attended at New York University in April 2012. In all situations, the academics and advocates agree that the only solution is to refuse any further collaborations.

top with Ronald, who was at that time one of the most influential advocates in the Canadian Romani community.

At Romani Yag, Carmen's risk of censure was small for many reasons: because Ljuba herself was an outsider to the group; because his decision was within normative professional boundaries; and, perhaps, because his expansion of "Gypsy" identity essentially mobilized it upwards, an act which was congruent with some activist goals, if not Ljuba's specifically. As the "Gypsy musicians" of Canada are motivated to create an onstage identity that is recognizably "Gypsy" (through performance practice, repertoire, costume, and so on) yet still allows for personal and artistic freedom—in other words, an identity that is identifiably "cultural" yet without immutable barriers—so are the Romani activists and refugees motivated to create a purposeful public identity that will be beneficial from an immigration standpoint yet does not perpetuate immutable stereotypes, negative or otherwise.

While Canadian Roma undoubtedly lead better lives here than abroad, they face a new challenge of living as a much smaller group relative to the host country in which they are largely invisible. The qualifications for group membership are negotiable and not currently mandated, but if inclusion were to be restricted to a greater degree, for example by having two Romani parents, or knowledge of the Romani language, the group would essentially disappear, and many of the human resources with it. It is therefore greatly to the advantage of the community to be as flexible as possible about group inclusion.

Romani nationalism abroad may be fractured but within the relatively tiny Canadian Romani community, there is no reason to believe that fractured politics or conflicting in-group identities (such as Hungarian Roma versus Romanian Roma, or professionals versus non-professionals) are causing any significant problems. Having been in contact with the RCC for ten years, I can vouch for its stability: the advocacy arm of the Toronto Roma has remained constant, first with Ronald at the helm and then Gina. Some of the board members have also remained constant for several years, as have the non-Roma advocates affiliated with the RCC. Certainly it is not feasible to think that the RCC runs smoothly all the time, and I have heard about internal disputes that result in individuals suspending their advocacy works for a time, but this phenomenon is hardly unique to the Roma, and within the RCC there is demonstrably enough accord to maintain a stable roster of volunteers.

Within the arts community, and for the same reasons, it likewise would not be sensible to restrict performance of "Gypsy" music to "Romani" musicians, even though this is at least theoretically possible at advocacy fundraisers such as Romani Yag. Rather it is in the best interests of both the advocates and the musicians alike to embrace a widely heterogeneous identity that is able to utilize all the human resources that are found in Canada, from any country of origin, whether Roma or non-Roma. The goals of the

advocates, musicians, and populace may not always be exactly congruent, but while they keep working towards diffuse goals such as “recognition”, and concrete goals such as increased immigration, it is greatly to their advantage to both solicit and utilize a number of heterogeneous skills and ideas. In the long run, this heterogeneity, coupled with a spirit of inclusion not necessarily seen among the Romani musical elite in European countries, might turn out to be the biggest asset to the Canadian Romani community as they implement new strategies based on available resources, some of which might develop into perfect solutions that are resonant with the community and congruent with the ultimate goal of transnational recognition.

Reflexivity, appropriation, and counterfeit goods: survival of the quickest

The media are partly responsible for shaping public opinion about how Gypsy music should look or sound (exotic) or how “Gypsies” (Roma) should act, and the Roma and the “Gypsy musicians” on Montreal invest a certain amount of time in energy in addressing these expectations, whether it is to flout them (such as through emphasis of the educated Roma within their community), conform with them, such as by wearing long skirts onstage, practiced by Sarah, Thais, Lynn, and Hedina (at Romani Yag 2007, Lynn and Hedina changed back into blue jeans and leather jackets as soon as they were offstage), or simply ignore them (as with Carmen’s choices of dress and repertoire). In all cases, the individual is free to make the choice, and someone may choose to make different choices at different times. The main point here is to emphasize the negotiation between media representations or expectations and a purposeful identity creation that is externally-focused, with an awareness of being observed by mainstream members of Canadian society.

The impact of media affects not only identity which is publically oriented, but also identity within the group itself. In 2012, Gina Csanyi-Robah took the unusual step of censoring media news releases on the RCC Facebook page, requesting that the community stop posting media articles of a negative nature (such as *Ottawa Citizen*, 9 October 2012, “Canada rejects Roma activist despite claims of neo-Nazi attacks in Hungary”) as many refugee claimants were already so discouraged that they were thinking about abandoning their refugee claims in the face of what they perceived to be certain rejection. These individual decisions have had disastrous effects for the community, as Immigration Minister Jason Kenney has repeatedly cited the high number of abandoned claims as “proof” that the Roma are not “genuine” refugees. In trying to stop the potential damage to the community from this feedback loop—withdrawn claims leading to more justification to refuse further claims—Gina felt that its members would be better served by not knowing about the negative media surrounding the refugees. In this case, the media served as a conduit for a self-

reinforcing trope within the community itself that the Roma (at least the Roma refugees) were not welcome anywhere.

While the Toronto Roma community is dealing with a surfeit of negative media coverage that is threatening to overtake its efforts at positive forms of cultural representation (such as through music and visual art), the “Gypsy musicians” of Montreal are dealing with the opposite, a wave of popularity that is likewise threatening their survival. As the popularity of Gypsy music in Montreal has increased, so too has competition, of varying degrees of technical skill and familiarity with the idiom, and the media machines that work so well for Romani musicians (YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, and so on) work equally well for other musicians. In Canada, Sergiu is having difficulty acclimating audiences to his tonalities and performance practice, because previous exposure from other groups has taught his audience that Gypsy music is different—specifically, much simpler—than his own.

“No, that is hard. Someone coming and having some fun, and “dee dee dee” playing some simple songs, and you come with some raw material, really wild, and they [audience] look: “What is this? Uh, it's good, but...” But they already got used to that [previous] style.... And we try to educate them, but it's been a long road.”

As he said later to me, imagine how professionally insulted I would feel if someone who had read three books came up to me and said that they had a PhD also. (Interview with Sergiu Popa, October 2009)⁶⁸ Here, Sergiu posits himself as the “real thing” against a group of interlopers, who have preconditioned Canadian audience expectations to their own style of music, which is not the same as Sergiu’s. Sergiu, for his part, does not necessarily have a problem with other groups appropriating Gypsy music; for instance, he was very positive about the Gypsy music group *Soleil Tzigane*. The problem, from his perspective, is that they have appropriated the audience. Culturally speaking, Canadian audiences are quite accustomed to “three-chord” groups and genres (such as the comfortable I-IV-V harmonic progressions of country music); it is a stretch to think that they could adapt quickly to Sergiu’s improvisatory, highly ornamented technique or the tonally ambiguous sounds of Balkan Gypsy music even without the existence of groups like *Gaji Gajo*, and it is easy to see how competitors disseminating vastly different sounds would confuse the issue.

⁶⁸Although Sergiu didn’t name any groups specifically, it is likely that one of them is *Gaji, Gajo* (literally “Non-Roma girl, Non-Roma boy” in *Kalderash*), who can be seen on YouTube performing at the Montreal Jazz Festival; they are indisputably far less skilled than Sergiu, but clearly have some good networking skills to perform at the prestigious Montreal Jazz Festival, where they would reach thousands.

Sergiu's insightful phrase "...they got used to..." refers to transmission, and is congruent with Mason (2001), who found that pre-existing media-derived expectations informed the corresponding economic outcome for the musicians. Sergiu doesn't want to change his own music, but rather hopes to establish himself to Canadian audiences as the definitive "Gypsy" sound. In this race to establish authenticity, Sergiu needs a great deal of media exposure, if not to discredit the other groups entirely (as Jason Kenney seeks to discredit the Roma refugees), but at least bump them from the top of the hierarchy. This need to establish "authenticity" in the sense of "the authentic sound" is not an aesthetic one; for Sergiu, it is economic survival, similar to Kenney's battle for political survival (to prove the refugees "inauthentic") and the Toronto Roma's struggle for social survival (to be recognized as "authentic" claimants of persecution). The struggle for "authenticity" has ramifications in all areas as different groups seek to establish their identities of authenticity vis-à-vis other groups who seek to oppose them.

It may be that Sergiu is in a fairly unique position among the "Gypsy musicians" of Montreal. Many of them have day jobs to supplement their infrequent gigs, while Sergiu, young and trying to establish himself as a career musician, does not work at a day job. The only other full-time "Gypsy musician" I met in Montreal was Carmen Piculeata, who is older than Sergiu and has been in Canada much longer, and is better established than Sergiu. Carmen, too, complained about the vastly inferior musical skills of Canadian musicians as compared to those in Europe, and particularly as compared to the Roma musicians specifically, but he did not view appropriations of music as a threat to his career. Rather Carmen was bored and frustrated by his colleagues' skills; his main complaint was that their appropriation of the "Gypsy" idiom was incomplete and their skills were insufficient to engage him on his own level. When I was studying Romani with him in the summer of 2008, he made a list for me, broken down by country, of all the Gypsy musicians (meaning in this context, the Roma musicians who played Gypsy music) who he considered to be the most significant. On this list he includes a non-Roma musician even though that was not at all the initial purpose of the list.

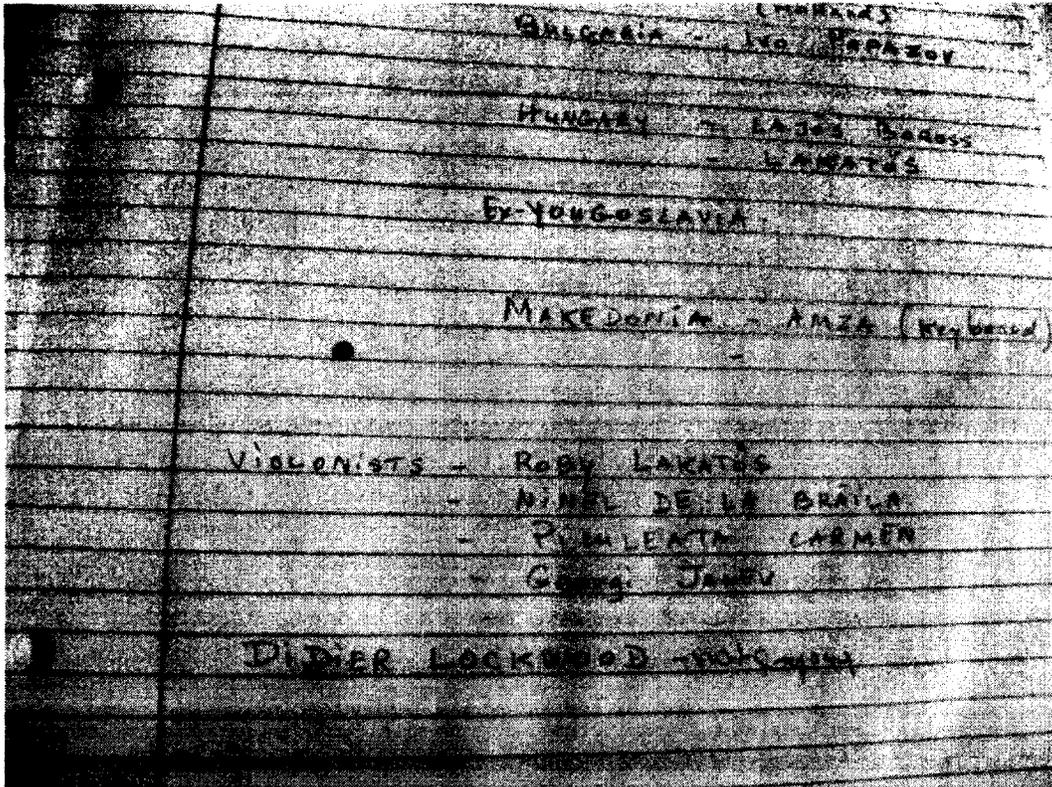


Figure 19: Excerpt from the list written by Carmen showing the names of all the great Gypsy musicians. Montreal, July 2008.

I did hear some reflexive concerns about appropriation from non-Romani musicians, Jessica Gal (Sergiu's wife) and Brigette Daczer. Jessica, as a highly trained classical violinist with a history of aural skills in the Irish music style, regularly plays in Sergiu's group, but refuses to perform with him at private Roma house parties since she believes absolutely that, since she was not born into the Romani culture and taught during her formative years, her skills will never be on a par with a "real" Gypsy musician. While happy to play for the general public, Jessica believes that the first-generation Roma from Europe would be a more critical audience, taking a very dim view of her musical skills and of her presumption in delivering "Gypsy" music to a Romani audience. In other words, Jessica has branded herself a counterfeit product, one that will satisfy a general Canadian audience but not the original community. In the private homes of the musicians, the authenticity discourse is foregrounded as a component of professional survival.

Brigette Daczer, by contrast, had been hired by a Roma man to teach violin to his daughter, which is not necessarily a reflection of her superior violin skills compared to Jessica, but rather underscores the point that there are very different attitudes within the community about the concept of outsiders performing and repatriating Roma music. It must be mentioned here that by far the majority of conversations I had on this topic showed a lack of concern regarding appropriation of the music, and even of the dress

(Interview with Suleyman Ozatilan, January 2010). Even though most of these conversations took place with musicians, who relied on non-Roma musicians to accompany them and might understandably be more inclined to view appropriation in a favourable light, I had similar conversations with Roma who were not musicians. It is likely that attitudes of the Roma at the house parties is attributable to the fact that they are fairly recently arrived from countries in Europe (my contacts didn't state their origins specifically) and almost completely segregated from mainstream Canadian society, still following traditions of a Roma/ non-Roma split that is common across heavily stratified European countries like Hungary and Romania.

Suleyman: "I remember that last year, I had the show with Lubo, it was the Gypsy night too... and the people coming there with the Gypsy costume, they go fun, they love it."

Melaena: "What do you think about these people dressing up as Gypsies?"

Suleyman: "Yeah, yeah, it's good."

Melaena: "It doesn't bother you?"

Suleyman: "No, why?"

Melaena: "Some people I know say they shouldn't."

Suleyman: "No, not me." (Interview with Suleyman Ozatilan, January 2010)

Brigette Daczer is frequently mistaken for a Roma because of her dark colouring, but is Hungarian and French. She doesn't advertise herself as Roma, but if asked by an audience member if she is "Gypsy", she often shrugs and agrees, even though she has qualms about it, partly because it is in her best professional interest to let audiences believe what they like, but also it is tedious to explain her heritage over and over, particularly after concerts when she is exhausted (Interview with Brigette Daczer, January 2010).

Brigette also has a Master's degree in Communications and is very familiar with the situation of the Roma abroad—in fact Brigette was the most advocacy-oriented person I met among the musicians of Montreal—so issues of appropriation weigh heavily on her, and she walks a line between ethical representation and simple logistics in the sense of wanting to avoid confrontations with audience members who expect and want her to "be" a "Gypsy". The audience, in purchasing their luxury goods (the "Gypsy" performance) is reluctant to be cheated of the authentic experience.

Brigette and Jessica were the only Montreal musicians I interviewed who expressed concern over what they saw as their appropriation of Romani music. Jessica, of course, being married to Sergiu, is keenly aware of her status as an outsider to the Roma

culture, and Brigitte's graduate degree in Communications would have provided her with a global awareness to supplement her pre-existing interest in Romani culture. The word "appropriation" itself is interesting in ethnomusicology, because in addition to the meaning of theft or at least illicit borrowing, it carries an implication of hierarchy: One cannot, for instance, "appropriate" classical music, as it is presumed to be transnational and accessible to all performers. To "appropriate" in the ethnomusicological sense implies a sense of theft of not only the music from a culture that may have limited resources, but also theft of the right to self-representation. In this context, then, the expression of self-reflexive concerns, such as those expressed by Brigitte and Jessica, about "appropriation" of Romani music is a simultaneously expression of awareness of their precarious socio-economic position globally. When discussing the issue, Brigitte was frank in her role as what she saw as appropriation of the music and the cultural representation, but also pointed out that the other musicians did not necessarily worry about these issues.

I'm constantly asking myself the question, Do I have the right to do this? And I mean, what's the point? Lubo probably doesn't ask himself that question... But when I really think about it, sincerely, I'm composing music that comes from my heart, and that's how it comes out, and I'm not going to deny who I've spent time with, who I've met on the road of life. (Interview with Brigitte Daczer, January 2010)

During my time in Montreal, I saw only one clear example of gross appropriation, and it was unclear who, exactly, was being appropriated. During Soleil Tzigane's concert at Le Lion D'or, the Roma anthem *Gelem Gelem* was highjacked (there is no other word for it) by a "Gypsy dancer", dressed in what she probably thought was the "Gypsy style", with a scarf, a long skirt, and theatrical makeup, dancing in a dreamy, floating manner around the floor. She was clearly using the song to showcase her skills and personal brand (and, as I found out later, her dance studio).⁶⁹ She tried many times to engage people to dance with her, and while participation for the other dances was tremendous, she could only find two men to dance with her, who both left the floor as soon as politely possible. Applause at the end, thundering for all the other songs, was perfunctory at best for the anthem—bordering on rude—as everyone knew that the dancer would appropriate the applause in the same way she had appropriated the song. It was all too easy to imagine how the audience, largely from Bulgaria, which has an enormous Romani population, felt about watching this non-Romani woman in a sea of gauze float around the floor in what she undoubtedly imagined was a "Gypsy" manner.

⁶⁹ I'm not certain, but I believe this lady to be a later-generation (ie, second or third-generation) Canadian, since I spoke to her after the concert (actually she lectured me at great length about "the Gypsies" until a band member rescued me) and I didn't hear any accent in her speech. Local gossip after the concert was not very kind to her, and the musicians took pains to point out that she was not affiliated with them.

What I found most interesting about this tableau was that ultimately, all participants—who, as far as I was able to make out, were all non-Romani—were appropriating Romani music equally. The difference is that some people were doing it based on prolonged contact with the Roma and intense study of the idiom, while the gauzy dancing lady was clearly more of the fantasy re-creation genre, out of touch with the harsh reality of the Roma abroad. While this type of Gypsy trope is perhaps successful in some places such as science-fiction conventions, it was nothing but awkward at the Soleil Tzigane concert, an embarrassment at best and an insult at worst. It was not only juxtaposed against musicians who had clearly spent decades studying the idiom at the source, but it also denied the poverty and social trauma that every single person in that room, regardless of any personal feelings towards the Roma in general, must have known was a critical component of the mythical “Gypsy” existence that the dancer was referencing.

The only acid test of “Gypsiness” in music in Montreal, as far as I could tell, was musical ability. Carmen only wanted top-level musicians to play with and would happily collaborate outside the “Gypsy” genre to achieve this (such as Denis Chang, jazz guitarist, whom he praised highly); Sergiu wanted other musicians to disseminate a sound that was congruent with his (very high level) ability; Jessica refused to play Romani music to Romani people, who would be far more discerning in the idiom than Canadian audiences. There was zero hostility—only respect—towards the entirely non-Romani group Soleil Tzigane, whereas even the Bulgarian non-Roma were negatively judging the “Gypsy fantasy” dancer. What I encountered several times was the adjectival use of the word “Gypsy” in relation to music, always in a positive sense: “He plays like a Gypsy” was the highest compliment that could be given. (“You drink coffee like a Gypsy!” was also meant as a compliment, as was “Your baby is partying like a Gypsy!” when I took her to an evening concert that lasted till midnight.) Carmen mentioned that his violin students were competitive among themselves as to who could play the most “like a Gypsy” (Interview with Carmen Piculeata, July 2008). In this context, the phrase “bad Gypsy” music (i.e., poorly performed Gypsy music) would be considered an oxymoron.

Taking into account all that I had seen and heard in Montreal concerning the “appropriation” of Gypsy/ Romani music, it seemed that ultimately the main concern was not that the music was being “appropriated” in the sense of being stolen from a people who constituted a weaker minority, but rather that it was being disseminated badly, in the sense of poor musical technique and lack of knowledge about the idiom, in a way that sometimes handicapped musicians of Roma origin. In fact I didn’t meet anyone who believed that Gypsy music had to be played by a Roma person to be authentic, or at least I didn’t meet anyone who told me this to my face. The only time birthright entered into the ability/ authenticity dialogue was in reference to the newly-arrived, unassimilated Roma, who as a collective audience would only accept musicians

of Romani origin. In those cases, Romani origin was seen as a necessary prerequisite for having extensive musical knowledge/idiomatic virtuosity not available to others.

But for mainstream performances, which comprised the great majority of the musicians' livelihoods, it seemed that a certain (very high) level of ability was the main criterion for deciding which performers were supplying real "Gypsy music." Dialogues of authenticity within the musical community, then, were strictly confined to the music itself and more specifically to the technical expertise and performance practice of the performance itself rather than to any conception of "authenticity" of Romani heritage or even of Romani repertoire. Chong, in her discussion of cultural transmission in a Balkan women's singing group, asks: "...is passion...combined with extensive research of that culture enough to constitute a credible cultural bearer?" (Chong 2006: 36) There can never be a single answer to the question, but general consensus among the Montreal "Gypsy musicians" seems to be that it is.

Lynn Hutchinson Lee, a long-term advocate with the Toronto Roma community, summed up the issue in terms of respect, saying that it was acceptable for non-Roma to play Gypsy music as long as they did so respectfully (Interview with Lynn Hutchinson Lee, February 2012). For the Roma musicians of Montreal, respect is synonymous with skill.

How "Roma" becomes "Gypsy": Exclusion and attrition in the music industry

Immigration and refugee concerns play a significant part in the lives of many Canadian Romani musicians throughout Canada. The Canadian immigration points system, which favours formal education, language learning, and wealth, works against Romani immigration, as these assets are historically in short supply among the Roma around the world. While musicians such as Carmen Piculeata who have international reputations and financial reserves are welcomed by the IRB, musicians who are less financially secure must enter through the refugee system (such as Sergiu Popa, Tamas Banya, and Peter Ferencs).

On arrival in Canada, the refugees must establish their claim to the IRB, which is by no means a sure entry to Canada. Tamas Banya of Toronto's Ungro Rom was accepted for entry but his sister and her husband, who played with him in Galbeno Yag, their music group in Hungary, were not (The Catholic Register, 8 March 2012, "Canadian refugee reform makes it us vs. them"). Sergiu Popa's refugee claim was rejected, and he was days away from repatriation when he and Jessica Gal, a colleague in Montreal's Gypsy music community, decided to be married (Interview with Carmen Piculeata, July 2008). Peter Ferencs, a dance choreographer from the Czech Republic who plays with Gypsy Flame, a Gypsy music group in Toronto, is looking for any kind of work, waiting

anxiously for his refugee claim to be established (Interview with Peter Ferencs, February 2012).

Once settled into Canada, a musician of any background requires a certain degree of specialized industry knowledge to succeed, and some of my interviewees knew Romani musicians who were musically knowledgeable but had failed commercially due to lack of understanding of the administrative nature of the Canadian music industry. As Carmen Piculeata pointed out, even busking in the Métro (commuter train) station requires a permit from the City of Montreal (Interview with Carmen Piculeata July 2008). Brigitte spoke of musicians who didn't understand that they needed a work visa to perform in the US, and due to entry violations have now been permanently barred from travelling there, which curtails their career opportunities sharply (Interview with Brigitte Daczer, February 2010). Sergiu spoke of the frustration of working with Romani colleagues who cancelled or arranged engagements at the last minute, not understanding the long-term scheduling commitments necessary in Canada (Interview with Sergiu Popa, January 2010). Jessica and Sergiu had known a virtuosic Romani pan-flute player who left Canada penniless after making a string of poor business decisions and being taken advantage of by unscrupulous colleagues (Interview with Jessica Gal, January 2010). So it is difficult to know how many more Romani musicians might be active in Canada had they been better equipped to navigate the administrative and marketing aspects of the business.

Another reason for the successful entry of Canadian-born Roma and non-Roma into the Gypsy music industry might be their proficiency in online social networking and advertising media such as home pages, online sales, and the promotion of events through sites such as MySpace and Facebook. Locals are also better situated to include themselves in the summer festival circuit, which Lubo Alexandrov states to be very lucrative (Interview with Lubo Alexander, December 2009). Brigitte mentioned that there were a number of government grants available to musicians but that the difficulties of finding and obtaining them tend to be beyond the scope of new Romani immigrants (Interview with Brigitte Daczer, February 2010). (And it is worth noting that even many locally-born Canadians have probably never heard of the Canada Council for the Arts.)

Tamas Banya states that, in Hungary, the Roma are slowly being pushed out of the professional music industry, as local Hungarians are in the process of turning to non-Romani musicians to provide Gypsy music (Interview with Tamas Banya, February 2012). Sergiu mentioned that the same movement occurs in Montreal, although it is doubtful that the root cause, as in Hungary, is ethnic discrimination. Rather, Sergiu believes that a type of amateur and rather simplified Gypsy music is flooding the market, and that repeated exposure to this easily accessible music has caused audiences to reject his own harmonically and rhythmically complicated idiosyncratic playing style as incompatible

with what they now believe is Gypsy music. (Interview with Sergiu Popa, February 2010).

In theory, Romani musicians who are granted permanent entry into Canada as refugees or immigrants have the opportunities to acquire the skills needed to succeed in the Canadian music industry, but in practice this is difficult, especially without strong social networks. In the end, musicians may decide to abandon their careers altogether, or, like the Roma pan flute player, return penniless to their country of origin. The Romani musicians whose claims are denied by the IRB are, of course, repatriated as quickly as possible. All of these factors together produce the result that Canadian audiences have a greater likelihood of hearing Gypsy music provided by non-Roma musicians than Roma musicians.

The high turnover rate affects not only fellow musicians but also clientele and students. Peter Ferencs spoke of the frustration of trying to establish groups or organize dance classes when his students kept disappearing, and he is waiting to see if his own refugee claim is established, and who else from the community will be staying permanently, before committing to the energy of starting his own group (Interview with Peter Ferencs, February 2012). Further, the anxiety inside the community is very high as the members wait for subjective and seemingly-capricious IRB decisions. Establishing a successful refugee claim in a system with a current fail rate of 97% must surely be a time-consuming and emotionally draining process, leaving very little time and energy remaining for musical activities.

Even musicians like Carmen and Sergiu, with excellent reputations and successful careers in their home countries, face difficulties in Canada as they begin their careers again in a country where their music does not represent the dominant hegemony and is simply another “culture” in the “multicultures” of Canada, and not a very well-known one at that. To make ends meet in Montreal, Carmen, who drew international audiences in Romania, busked in Métro (subway) stations, and Sergiu worked in a factory; both positions represented an enormous loss of status for these elite musicians. Sergiu, certainly, was miserable on his arrival to Canada (Interview with Sergiu Popa, October 2009).⁷⁰ When Carmen asked me how he could get a job teaching violin at a university, he was surprised and not very pleased by my answer that university music teachers generally needed advanced degrees, such as a D.Mus. (Doctorate of Music Performance) in the classical idiom (Interview with Carmen Piculeata, July 2009). Lacking formal qualifications or any administrative recognition of equivalency, Carmen’s mobility in

⁷⁰ Both Carmen, from Romania, and Sergiu, from Moldova, fit the description of the elite musicians described in Beissinger’s study of the *lautari* (highly skilled Roma musicians). Deeply concerned with social mobility, they have constructed a space for themselves in which, as a musical elite, they are equal or above the Romanians (whom they regard as highly desirable) and far above the Gypsies (for whom they hold disdain). Many have lost the language and do not consider themselves to be Roma in any real sense (Beissinger 2001).

Canada's educational system is sharply limited, and he will remain in the "ethnic enclaves" of cultural music, albeit the prestigious ones such as Cirque du Soleil. Canada's emphasis on formal education will be a persistent barrier for entry of the Roma, who are chronically lacking in this area, into post-secondary institutions.

The low numbers of Roma musicians in Canada result in a sort of "multiculturalism by necessity", which is of course the very reason it was instituted by Trudeau in the first place: there simply weren't enough immigrants of a single ethnic heritage to make the nation viable. Most Gypsy music groups are run by one or two Roma (or non-Roma) who teach the idiom to the other group members, but contributions from non-Roma musicians are valued, and in the end most projects are more ethnically collaborative rather than solely derivative. Tamas Banya of Hungary's Galbeno Yag, a Romani folk music group committed to the reclamation and dissemination of old Romani folk songs, is now part of a Canadian ensemble that has no other Romani musicians. Tamas is teaching them Romani music, but inevitably the musicians bring their own indigenous sounds and training to the group (Interview with Tamas Banya, March 2012), and the result is a *mélange* of multicultural labels and musical idioms. These collaborations are by far the norm in Canada, and lead to hyphenated or compound labels such as "Gypsy Punk". Since some combinations, like Gypsy Jazz, have set the precedent for becoming well-established idioms in their own rights, it is very likely that other "Gypsy" collaborative styles will become mainstream at some future point.⁷¹

The tensions and collaborations between the Roma and non-Roma thus take on a number of different forms. In some cases, there is purposeful competition between the two groups as one seeks to usurp the other; we also see a certain amount of attrition of Canadian Roma musicians due to insufficient business management, and barriers to advancement due to the emphasis of formal qualification in the post-secondary education system. These professional losses are a direct or indirect result of ethnicity, and the ensuing identities are informed by narratives of opposition, exclusion, and marginalization. The fact that this exclusion is implemented on a nation-wide administrative and policy level rather than through personal narratives of racism is not necessarily of practical comfort to the Roma musicians. The basic point is that Canadian

⁷¹ In Vancouver in 2005 I heard "Romani rap", a collaboration between Mario Ines-Torres (flamenco singer and guitarist) and a local rap duo AMP. Mario rapped in the Romani language, listing Roma persecutions and grievances in flamenco "*duende*" (sorrow, heartache) style against the rhythms of an Indian drummer (Grierson 2006). The performance was hugely compelling and I expected the genre to be more mainstream by now, especially since the combination of music and narrative, and the implied affiliation with another well-known marginal group (black Americans) provided a vehicle for transnational concerns that would be hugely useful to the Canadian Roma. However, I have seen no more examples of Romani rap, so it was perhaps an isolated incident, dependent on Mario himself, who since that performance has fled to Mexico ahead of deportation and possible arrest. (*Canada.com*, 29 September 2007, "Terrorist suspect lived in B.C. as 'Lolo' the singer.")

society is geared towards literacy and standardization in all areas, neither of which are traditional Roma skills, and the preference for Canadian-born musicians will likely continue until there are enough Roma from subsequent generations of immigrants to make their presence felt.

In the majority of the situations in Canada, collaborations—either with non-Roma or with Roma of other origins—are currently the norm as there are simply not enough active Romani musicians to meet the market or even community demand for Gypsy music. Even the activist-oriented Romani Yag (2007) featured a great deal of Gypsy music performed by non-Roma musicians, such as Denis Chang Swing, and Les Imposteurs. In this case, collaboration rather than competition is the key to survival, and inclusion becomes the key mandate, accompanied by narratives of social equality and opportunity that are more or less guaranteed under the national myth of multiculturalism. Ethnicity, when it enters this situation at all, is framed not in terms of marginalization and exclusion but rather in terms of authenticity and privileged means of knowing. The Roma who arrive as refugees have fewer resources to navigate Canada's music industry than those who have been settled for longer periods, but even well-established Romani musicians find it beneficial to engage in collaborations with non-Roma musicians, which in turn exposes them more strongly to multicultural, integrative, and upwardly mobile social pressures.

Speculating on a truly “Canadian Romani” or “Canadian Gypsy” identity in music

R. Murray Schaffer argues that people come to an understanding of a national musical idiom by listening to a great amount of repertoire and slowly, perhaps even unconsciously, recognizing common elements and themes that constitute a “national” sound, stating: “If the Canadian musical style is not evident it is because it is not allowed to countervail.” (1994: 225) Like the high art music of Schafer's discussion, Canada's Gypsy music seems to be in a similar situation. As mentioned previously, Carmen was frankly incredulous that I could even imagine such a concept as “Canadian Gypsy” music, and his opinions were borne out for the duration of my field work as the word “Gypsy”—on posters, in conversation, in media—generally had a geographical prefix (“Russian”, “Balkan”, “Hungarian” and so on), and this prefix, with the single exception of Micheal Butch and the Gypsy Rebels in Toronto, was never “Canadian”.

In terms of ethnic identity, many Canadians foreground their non-Canadian heritage by the use of hyphenated labels (“Scottish-Canadian”, “Polish-Canadian”, and so on; Mackey 1999 discusses this phenomenon at length) in their public identities. What is interesting about these labels is that in common usage the word “Canadian” is always placed last, indicating meta- or umbrella identity over the other terms. For Roma or Gypsy, however, we see the opposite; these words are commonly placed last, as in

“Bulgarian Roma”, “Turkish Gypsy”, and so on. (In the United States, the National Geographic channel has popularized the term “American Gypsy”, but there has as yet been no similar popularization in Canada, however poorly regarded such an item might be by the Roma themselves.⁷²) In these cases, “Gypsy” or “Roma” functions as the umbrella term, replacing Canadian or American national affiliation. There may be at some point a widespread use of the term “Romani-Canadian”, and while “Canadian Roma” is a term that I did hear during fieldwork, it is hardly widespread, as the habit of using the geographical preface is strong even within the Romani community, such as Micheal Butch saying “I’m Russian Roma”. We both knew that his family had been in Canada for four generations and that by any legal definition he was fully “Canadian”, but he foregrounded the identity that was tied so strongly to his Romani and Russian heritage. Yet at the same time, Micheal was the single musician I saw who used the adjective “Canadian” to describe his music. Micheal and the Gypsy Rebels, if not the trendsetters, are perhaps the advance team to establish the meaning and sound of “Canadian Gypsy” music. It is my belief that the fact that there is no real cultural trope of “Canadian Gypsy” is not really an impediment towards an understanding of “Canadian Gypsy music”, as long as there continue to be Roma in Canada, and in some of the Gypsy music groups, to validate its cultural existence.

In any discussion of “Canadian” Gypsy music, it is important to mention that almost all of my contacts made a point of situating themselves geographically within Canada when discussing the creative processes behind their music. By far the most common references concerned the degree of artistic freedom available in a Canada due to its willingness to accept non-traditional forms of music, although Brigette also made a more direct comment that she, as a woman, enjoyed more professional advantages in Canada than she would in Eastern Europe (Interview with Brigette Daczer, January 2010). In Gypsy music, the musicians create public identities based on ethnicity that combine the positive qualities of “Gypsy” culture, such as strongly superior music skills and a sense of entitlement to a “free spirit” lifestyle that is congruent with what the public would like to believe about “Gypsies”, with the positive qualities of “Canadian” culture such as an egalitarian social structure and the valuation of ethnic diversity.

Moreover, since the “Gypsy musicians” themselves constitute a “community” in the practical sense of the word, with a great deal of interchange and collaboration on professional and personal levels, a certain degree of homogenization is inevitable. Suleyman brings the same overall effect to a performance with Kaba Horo as he does to

⁷² At a conference I attended recently at New York University in April 2013, “(Self) Representations: Music and Arts in the Romani Diaspora”, there was a round-table discussion concerning, among other things, the fact that some of the attending Romani scholars had been approached by the producers of “American Gypsies” to be contributors to the project. Everyone present had refused due to their very strong suspicions that the producers would simply distort or misrepresent whatever factual material they provided, and the round table discussion focused on the ways that the distortions had in fact come to pass.

Soleil Tzigane, as does Sergiu playing for Kaba Horo, then for Shukar Roma, and so on. It is not a stretch to think that mainstream audiences have a generalized sense of the sound of Canadian groups who play “Gypsy music” based on repeated and common listening experiences, although it must be pointed out that any emergent understanding of the term would be, at this point, strictly limited to Montreal, and, as Jorge points out, is probably linked to a specific geographic region of Europe.

And sometimes you can say, My flamenco is more Gypsy, and they say, Oh, okay, but they won’t understand the difference. And for me, here, for my experience, people that they know Gypsy music, is going to be related to East Europe. They would call that “Gypsy music”. (Interview with Jorge Martinez, January 2010)

Questions for further research

As the underlying focus of this research has applied ethnomusicology, specifically advocacy on a national (Canadian) and transnational (Romani) level, the main question for further research must be: What can be done to harness the musical resources of the Roma and non-Roma “Gypsy musicians” in Canada? From the standpoint of applied ethnomusicology it seems straightforward enough to state a goal that the benefits and resources of one group (the “Gypsy musicians” of Montreal) should apply to the other (the Roma, particularly the Roma refugees, of Toronto) in some way, but from a practical viewpoint there are many problems with this plan, starting with the fact that there is very little communication between the two groups. It may be, in fact, that the culturally inclusive nature of Montreal audiences simply does not export to other cities within Canada—and that Montreal’s unique nature is one of the reasons for the current lack of collaboration between the two cities—which would leave Toronto to find its own cultural ambassadors. Obvious solutions such as benefit concerts have of course been used in the past, but they have had limited usefulness, and it seems that there must be different and more effective solutions, not even in terms of collaborations between the two cities, but in terms of dissemination of knowledge. While the “Gypsy musicians” of Montreal may not be the most accurate nor the “best” (however that is imagined by any specific person or group) advocates of Canada’s Roma, they have many resources that the RCC and the Toronto Roma in general lack. Since they already serve as de facto cultural ambassadors, and since their professional identities are predicated on the existence of the Roma culture, it would probably be mutually beneficial for the two groups to come to some informal understanding in terms of representation and advocacy.

Loose ends from the research include the “hidden” Roma community of Montreal, which I was unable to access, and I have only a very rough idea of its size and nature. It is likely that a male researcher would be able to gain entrée to this community more

easily than myself, as I understood from my contacts that any research overtures I might make to the male members of this community—the only ones available to me since my contacts were primarily male—could be easily misconstrued as romantic overtures. My understanding of these Roma was that they were very concerned about cultural retention and they were purposefully maintaining a distance from mainstream Canadian society in order to avoid integration. The group, then, would be very different from the Roma I met in Montreal, and research done among them would probably develop along very different lines.

Another interesting topic in Canada that could be explored further surrounds the recent influx of Hungarian Romungre, many of whom (in Hungary at least) are Pentecostal. The impact of Pentecostalism, and its impact on existing Romani populations in Hungary via musical performance in the church, is a fascinating topic and one which has been explored by Lange 2003. How the Roma communities behave in diaspora, however, and particularly in Canada, would be interesting to track, particularly since one main draw for the Roma in Hungary is egalitarian treatment among the church community, which is probably less of a rare commodity in Canada than in Hungary. It would be worthwhile to explore how immigration to Canada has changed (or not) musical participation in the Pentecostal church.⁷³

The last area which must be mentioned as inconclusive is Toronto. While I spent a few days there and followed their correspondences online for over a year (via email lists and Facebook forums), it must be said that I did not meet many members of the community, and those I met were largely advocates. A longer stay in Toronto would probably turn up a huge repertoire of music among non-professional musicians that would be of huge academic interest. There are also many Roma youth in the Toronto Parkdale area, and some study of children's songs could perhaps be done, which was the original topic of my Master's thesis, but showed itself to be non-viable at the time due to lack of a sizeable children's community at that time. The community exists now, and there is a great deal of music to be learned, but whether this will be taken up by me or by some other researcher is still unknown.

Summary: Identity production among the “Gypsy musicians” and Roma of Canada

This research highlights both the vast differences and the interdependencies between the processes and forms of identity creation among the Canadian Romani advocates, based out of Toronto, and the Canadian “Gypsy musicians”, largely based out of

⁷³ At a 2007 Canadian Society for Traditional Music conference in Edmonton, I met an ethnomusicologist named Heather Peters who was researching this area. Her presentation concerned the difficulties of field research among this group as her contacts disappeared due to deportation, and I have seen no subsequent publications from her on this topic.

Montreal. Although there are many more Roma in Canada than those listed above, the advocates and the musicians are by far the most concerned with cultural maintenance, identity creation, and cultural representation vis-à-vis the Canadian public.

The major similarity between the groups, which are generally but not always two discrete groups in Canada, is in the ways that they enact identities of Romani and Canadian nationalism. In most countries in which the Roma live, Romani “national” identity is predicated on the global understanding of the Roma as an ethnic group which is subject to forces beyond their control in the context of nation-states that view the Roma as undesirable “other”. In Canada, and with the exception of the refugees, there are very few situations which work to situate the Roma as undesirable “other”, and Canadian Roma are free in large part to decide the nature and depth of their nationalist identities, even if it means, to paraphrase Tax (1958), “not to be” a Roma anymore.

The new refugee claimants, however, who constitute a significant percentage of Canada’s current Roma population (and one of the most visible), are being situated by the federal government (specifically Immigration Minister Jason Kenney and the IRB) as working in opposition to the socially inclusive ideals of the Canadian nation. The refugees, many of whom feel that they have been driven out of their homelands, struggle to define their Roma ethnicity and identities in ways that will validate their claims, in a country which has comparatively very little context or knowledge about the Roma.

The “Gypsy musicians”, by contrast, create a “Gypsy” identity that is largely based on positive “Gypsy” or “Roma” characteristics and which is generally apolitical. Since many of the “Gypsy musicians” are in fact non-Roma, a “Gypsy” or “Roma” public identity is not only voluntary but borders on purposeful misrepresentation, and while the “Gypsy musicians” do not seem to be perceived negatively by the Roma (for the most part) there is an awareness among some of the musicians that overt representations of “Gypsiness” are of a questionably ethical nature. While appropriation (or borrowing) of ethnic music and identity is hardly a practice that is limited to Canada, most of my contacts stated that their music is greatly informed by the Canadian societal acceptance of ethnic diversity. At a time when the Toronto Roma refugees, and, by affiliation, other Roma, have been labelled by Kenney in national media as “cheats” and “bogus refugees”, the “Gypsy musicians” of Montreal, through careful neglect of political issues and a focus on the more positive (and occasionally fictional) elements of the “Gypsy” trope, have self-popularized their ethnic products to the point of flooding the market.

On first glance, it seems not only unlikely but impossible that the two groups could be connected on any meaningful level, let alone engaging in complicated and interdependent maneuvers, yet they are highly conflated on a practical level in personal and professional constructions of identity. First of all, there is a great deal of confusion among Canadian mainstream audiences concerning the characteristics of “Gypsies” and

“Roma”, which neither the “Gypsy musicians” nor the Roma themselves are quick to correct. The “Gypsy musicians” benefit greatly from the musical expertise of the Roma musicians, either personally or through recordings, or both, and have been able, in some cases, to build professional careers based on this secondhand knowledge. It is the non-Roma, in large part, who have popularized Gypsy music in Montreal to the point that the “authentic” ethnic Roma themselves are in high demand as musicians. The Roma musicians, for their part, benefit from the participation of non-Roma colleagues as supplemental musicians, and also to provide Canadian networking skills and contacts. Also, because the most economically viable “Gypsy musicians” (Roma or not) originate primarily from the educated middle class, their dissemination of “Gypsy” or “Roma” culture is congruent with one that situates it within the range of the middle class rather than the one that assumes its place at the bottom of society, such as might be advanced by those who entered Canada as refugees fleeing persecution abroad.

At the same time, Roma advocates have demonstrated a potential, if not a habit, of being able to harness the local resources of the “Gypsy musicians” and the corresponding “feel good” emotive nature of the romanticized “Gypsy” trope, to promote and benefit their own work with impoverished and marginalized Roma both locally and abroad. Further, the Roma community sometimes relies on the Roma and non-Roma “Gypsy musicians” to be musical culture-bearers, as the professional musicians have access to public venues and opportunities that are not generally available to members of the general public. It is the indisputably middle-class nature of Canadian Gypsy music, along with the (mostly non-Roma) musicians themselves who are largely secure in their role as contributing members of middle-class society, which works to validate Romani culture in Canada in the eyes of mainstream audiences.

By situating the Roma as a vital community in a socially inclusive “multicultural mosaic”, the “Gypsy musicians” undermine recent allegations by the federal administration that the Roma as an ethnic group are a threat to social inclusivity. The fact that the “Gypsy” and “Roma” cultural tropes are so diametrically opposed (freedom versus oppression) highlights the differences between the two groups as well as the need for greater communication and more purposeful representation if both are to succeed together. While it could be said that the Toronto Roma activist community is probably aware of the many benefits that could result from greater music and advocacy alliances, it is unlikely that the Montreal “Gypsy musicians” currently have similar interests, even though their music undoubtedly benefits from the existence of “authentic” Roma in Canada.

Above all, Canada is seen by the musicians and the refugees alike as a place which is seen as lacking a rigid sense of musical or cultural tradition. For the Roma, this offers the opportunity to escape from rigid social hierarchies and corresponding ramifications of social exclusion, allowing a degree of social mobility that is rarely seen in countries which host Romani populations. Canada also lacks a widespread common understanding

or set of beliefs about “the Roma”—or there is at least an ambiguity that exists to be exploited—and individuals use the opportunity to create, imagine, and maintain a “Roma” or “Gypsy musician” identity in any way or ways that they see fit, drawing on a number of situational and negotiable “ethnic” identity traits such as magic, nomadism, musical virtuosity, the exotic “other”, and a perpetual willingness to provide an emotive, feel-good party atmosphere.

In general, most Romani individuals are free to join or withdraw from the transnational collective and its related platform of advocacy, and likewise free to join and withdraw from Canadian society as members of a mainstream middle class. Similarly, most mainstream Canadians are free to adopt or reject associations with Romani ethnic or transnational identities. Both musicians and music groups who choose to foreground aspects of their “Romani” or “Gypsy” identity do so through complex understandings of authenticity (of what it means to be a “real Gypsy”, and a “real Canadian”) and a certain degree of essentialization required for economically successful branding of the musical products. This in turn is balanced against a cultural hybridization predicated on a mainstream tolerance for ethnic diversity and a widespread lack of knowledge about the “Gypsy music” idiom as it is practiced in other countries.

The Roma “Gypsy musicians” of Montreal constitute a *de facto* privileged class of Roma in Canada. The existence of this class may be possible only in Montreal, but that does not negate the daily lived experiences of the musicians in the city, who have found “Roma” identity to be a professional and even personal asset. Since there are virtually no societal or in-group restrictions on the ways in which individuals enact their Roma identities, they do so in ways that are the most advantageous and meaningful to them personally. In many cases “Roma” or “Gypsy” identity was only a small part of the individuals’ current lived experience, and it is doubtful that I would have found these individuals at all if they were not leveraging their cultural identity through music. The experiences of these Roma “Gypsy musicians” are congruent with other Roma in Montreal, who likely enjoy elevated status from the current popularity of Gypsy music and culture.

What is most interesting about Gypsy music, and the corresponding “Gypsy” or Romani identity, from an advocacy perspective, is the fact that it is entirely voluntary and self-directed. While Roma identity in Toronto, specifically that of the refugees, has been demonstrably lacking in self-direction due to lack of resources and a certain degree of targeting by the federal government, and the publically-disseminated ethnic identity promoted by the Toronto advocates has not extended far beyond the community itself, the “Gypsy musicians” of Montreal have succeeded in disseminating cultural offerings among a much larger audience, which works (at least in Montreal) to validate and accelerate the place of Gypsy music in mainstream society. Further, this local and unique valuation of ethnic diversity, coupled with the widespread understanding among the “Gypsy musicians” that Canada lacks rigid pre-existing musical traditions, acts as a

creative catalyst for the music, which parallels the musicians' lived realities of transnational origins and experiences.

No longer predicting their identity on the role of "undesirable other", Canada's most inadvertent, and perhaps most progressive, Romani advocates are composed of Roma and non-Roma alike—the "Gypsy musicians" who are opening middle-class doors for Roma culture in Canada. While the advocates' emphasis on the global and historical is sometimes in conflict with the musicians' focus on the local and the immediate, ultimately both perspectives are valuable, and it would be greatly to the benefit of both groups to work collaboratively to a far greater degree.

To paraphrase Nicolae Gheorghe, when he states that he is often involved in advocacy projects, yet has no clear direction about what he is doing or where he is going (Gheorghe 1997: 162): Who is driving the bus? The Toronto advocates know where they want to go, but the Montreal "Gypsy musicians" know how to get there.

Reality is what you live. My reality is being a guy who doesn't have roots. And that I take from everything, because I feel free in that way, because the society in which I'm living, it lets me do that. I'm not living in East Europe, where everyone does the same music. So, I'm not saying that I'm doing real Gypsy, that I'm doing real flamenco, that I'm doing real Latin music either, because if I say that I will be lying. No, I'm doing a new thing. That's me being real. ((Interview with Jorge Martinez, January 2010)

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Appendix A: Romani language learning (Kalderash dialect)

Although I had been through Ronald Lee's "Learn Romani" textbook (2005) in Edmonton, I hadn't grasped the completely aural nature of the Romani language until I started studying with Carmen in Montreal. There is no standardized orthography for the Romani language, so Lee uses English phonetic rules to spell out the Romani words, with the result that pronunciation is very intuitive for native English speakers. However, Carmen, whose first language was Romanian, transcribed words very differently, and these small differences along with the inevitable variations were very confusing as I tried and tried to spell the words "correctly". Also, the concept of correct spelling was clearly non-intuitive to Carmen: When I asked how to spell them, Carmen would stare at me in disbelief and say "I don't know. Spell it how you want."

After a week or so, I began to understand that the best way to reconcile my textbook knowledge with Carmen's speech tutorials was simply to shut my eyes and open my ears. When I spoke the words, I often saw similarities that I had missed in reading; Carmen's and Ronald's Romani sounded identical in spite of being different on paper. Learning Romani meant letting go of the desire to "get things right" from a standardized viewpoint, and it was this very great emic understanding that led to a much more complete grasp of the extreme fragmentation among different groups of Roma.

Carmen and I also used French as an intermediary language when English failed us, primarily because our only Romani dictionary was "Romani to French" (Calvet 1993) (Lee 2005 offers a brief dictionary in the back of his text but we exhausted that vocabulary fairly quickly). This meant that between Carmen, Ronald, and Calvet, we sometimes had three different Romani words for the same concept. Carmen was fascinated by the differences and made careful notes on them so that he could retain them for future use when speaking to Roma of different backgrounds.

We studied Romani in French sometimes because Carmen didn't know the English word, and sometimes he would slip into French without realizing, and sometimes I would make the effort in French so that I could learn both at the same time; this was especially true towards the end of my stay when my French language was more secure. Having the third language to fall back on in our studies was helpful to fill in gaps that would otherwise have remained open considering our different national backgrounds (a Romanian Roma versus an Anglophone Canadian), and it partially explained why the Roma might speak so many languages: it was simply an easier way to learn.

Some phrases from my notebooks that illustrate the variations and linguistic flexibility:

Xoxovav = I lie = dit les mensonges; je ment, je suis menteuse

(Ronald) *pushav/ pushes/ pushel/ pushas/ pushena/ pushen* = to ask

(Carmen) *puchav* = to ask → *Puchimos* = question, as in *Siman yekh puchimos tusa* = I have one question for you

(Ronald) *me bishterdyum* = I forgot (past tense)

(Carmen) *me bisterdjum, tu bisterdjan, etc.*, = I forgot (past tense)

(Ronald) *me dav-duma, tu del-duma, etc.* = I speak, you speak, etc.

(Carmen) *me vakerav/ tu vakeres/ wo vakerel/ amen vakeras/ tumen vakeras/ won vakeren* = I speak, you speak, etc.

(Ronald) *kothe* = here

(Carmen) *kate, akate* = here; *katke* = “exactly, specifically here”

Ka –ka e Melaena (chez Melaena); and *Gi ka –jusqu'à –until* (also *zi ka*)

Hartiya (or *xurtiya*) = paper, newspaper

(Ronald) *shon* = moon (versus Calvet *shenuto*)

(Ronald) *khangri* = church (versus Calvet *khangeri*)

Verbs: To have (present tense) –the last letter is optional for first two conjugations

Sima(n)/ situ(t)/ silo, sile/ simen/ situmen, silen

To have (future tense):

(Carmen) *Kaovelma/ kaoveltu/ kaovele,la/ kaovelmen/ kaovelmen/ kaovelen*

(Ronald) *kam-avel man/ kam-avel tut/ kam-avel les, la/ kam-avel amen/ kam-avel tumen/ kam-avel len*

Te zhindo (or *te jindo*) = to count → *trobul te jindo* = it is necessary to count

Trobul te zhav ko pozari = I must go to the market versus *Trubanela te jav ko pozari* = I must go (different spelling of “zhav”, different conjugation of “it is necessary”)

Dukhal = to feel (pain) ; *Me dukhalma o shorro molatar* = My head hurts from the wine

Piyem = to smoke (lit: to drink), past tense; *Me piyem yekh tsigara o Karmendor* = I smoked one cigarette of Carmen's

Naj (nai) *mange le muri lole* = Je n'aime pas les framboises

Briquet (*briketo, birketo*) = cigarette, lighter; *Muro briketo nango lo* = mon briquet est vide

Appendix B : Interviews

Sample questions for musicians

Tell me about your group : When and how did it form? What are your main musical influences? Where do you get your repertoire from, and how do you learn it?

How do you find your band members?

What kind of music do you play mostly?

What does your average audience look like? Do you play at some venues more than others?

Do you tour? Record?

Questions about Roma nationalism, Gypsy music specifically, and the Canadian multicultural environment emerge as the interview progresses: generally the direction favoured by the interviewee becomes clear the early questions are out of the way.

Partial interview transcription with Suleyman Ozatilan, February 2010, Montreal:

Melaena explains what she is studying, introduces the topic as “Gypsy music in Canada”

Suleyman explains that he has been in Canada for 13 years. He has no idea about Toronto or Edmonton, but thinks that Montreal, with the French people, is more open to other cultures ---says Gypsy music is very popular here, that everyone loves Gypsy music (specifying that he means Spanish, Balkanic).

[1:30] Suleyman explains that his father’s side is Gypsy and that he grew up in Izmir, finished at the Conservatoire in Izmir at age 26. (This is a traditional dance and music degree). He teaches folk dance with Turkish Association, classes on weekends –this is traditional Turkish dance.

[2:30] Melaena asks about traditional Gypsy music and dance. Suleyman says that every country has a different kind of Gypsy music: Turkey is similar to Bulgarian and Macedonian Gypsy music. 9/8 is the Turkish rhythm, just for Turkish people, and Gypsy music is always 9/8. Some written music is 9/8 but it is different from the “Gypsy 9/8”. Suleyman says the lyrics and emphases (my words—I understood him to mean accents) are different.

[4:30] Suleyman says that people like Gypsy music because it’s so fun (in general, not just in Canada). For the Gypsies, the music is fun, but also a little painful, “sometimes they crying”: it’s a sad association.

[5:30] Melaena asks if Suleyman uses these Gypsy 9/8 rhythms with Kaba Horo? Suleyman replies that he cannot use exactly the same thing because the other drummer (ie, the one from Canada) knows 9/8 but doesn't know the Gypsy rhythm properly: "He's well, he's well, but he plays so simple." Suleyman knows the rhythm, but cannot drum when he sings.

Melaena: "Do you sing most of the time?" Suleyman: "Yeah".

[6:30] Melaena comments that she could barely make out the words, asks what language they were in—Suleyman sings in Turkish, Lubo sings in Bulgarian sometimes but mostly in "Gypsy language".

Melaena asks if Suleyman speaks the Gypsy language, he says just a bit. "People mostly forget it, especially the new generation, you know? I didn't hear the language in my own family..." "I know just little things but I cannot understand all. "

[7:15] Asks Suleyman when he started playing with Kaba Horo, Suleyman says 1 ½ years ago. He started working with other group first, Djoumboush, made an album this year. Then Lubo asked if he wanted to work with Kaba Horo, so he did.

Suleyman also plays at Café Gitans by himself on Saturdays, with Turkish Gypsy music. He sings, but sings in different styles, not just Gypsy music—Turkish, Kurdish, classical, Gypsy, everything.

[9:00] Melaena asks why is this? Suleyman says because he wants to give everyone a little bit of their own music, and he loves that—he likes to sing "so many different kinds of things". At Café Gitans he is working just with a clavier player (piano), "is maybe not enough, but it's hard to play, because Café Gitans is small place."

[9:30] Melaena asks how Kaba Horo learns repertoire. Suleyman says they listen to recordings, and also he teaches them some songs. Melaena asks where he learned them from and he says [with a look that indicates the stupidity of the question]: "I know it."

[10:00] Suleyman: "I give them [Kaba Horo] the music, they are so smart, they write and they play. Actually I like working with Lubo because is very nice group."

[The interview has been edited at this point to delete a not-very-positive statement that Suleyman made about one of the other Montreal music groups, which was clearly in confidence—while the exact nature of the statement is not necessary to the research, it serves to indicate a sense of community in the loyalty that Suleyman felt to other local groups]

[12:00] Melaena asks how Suleyman sees the Gypsy music in Canada, what it looks like – For example, Melaena says, Kaba Horo’s music has a strong dance beat, and Lubo wants people to dance. Melaena asks if that is a North American phenomenon. Suleyman starts to talk about other groups.

[12:30] Suleyman knows a couple of Gypsy music groups in Montreal: “Some of them is good”. A couple of years ago he played at a Gypsy music festival at Jean Drapeau Park— there were five groups there, two years ago.

[13:20] Suleyman: “If you want to listen to Gypsy music exactly, you should listen from the original.”

Melaena: “What do you consider the origin?”

Suleyman: “Like from Turkey...” “That’s what I’m telling you, is it’s so different.”

Melaena: “So what happens when it comes to Canada?”

Suleyman: “It’s changing a little bit, because... okay, when the Gypsy plays the music, it is from the heart, but if the music coming, for example, Canada? So do you think the people playing from the heart from the Gypsy, and don’t forget a Gypsy in this world is the best musicians. If someone playing the violin, I’m listening, but when the Gypsy playing the violin, it’s killing me, I say OH MY GOD.”

“When the Kaba Horo drummer plays, he can’t give the same feeling exactly.”

Melaena: “Why is that?”

[15:30] Suleyman: “Because they are not Gypsy, first, and they are not grow up in the culture.” He goes on to explain that even if someone grew up in Turkey but was not Gypsy, he could play it mostly, but still wouldn’t be Gypsy—but the Kaba Horo drummer didn’t even grow up in Turkey, he’s Canadian (Melaena supplies: Haitian-Canadian)

Suleyman: “So music is coming here, it’s too dry, you know, too dry.”

Melaena asks where he thinks it will be in 20 years: Suleyman doesn’t know.

[16:20]: Suleyman loves music here (Canada) because people like to listen to music of other cultures; he says that music gets mixed as people travel, so maybe in 20 years Gypsy music will be “Canadian”.

17:20 Lucas and Lubo have both tried different things, ie Lubo mixing Gypsy music with rock : “Why not?” “Because everybody try different things? “

Melaena: “Do you see that happening in Europe, in Turkey?”

Suleyman: “Yes, yes”.

Melaena: "Or is it more preservation?"

Suleyman: "No, no. Most groups, they making differently."

Melaena: "So even in Turkey they're looking for new influences".

Suleyman: "Of course, that's normal. Traditional is traditional, but the people, they want something different."

Melaena: "The audience, you mean, or the musicians?"

Suleyman: "The musicians or the people."

[18:00] Melaena: "So it's kind of two forces, the musicians want to do something different and the audience wants to do something different?"

Suleyman: "Yes, yes, you're right. Because, think about it, the world is always turning, everything is always changing, music is the same thing too."

Melaena: "And how do you feel about that? Because you have a traditional music degree."

Suleyman: "I'm more traditional. I don't like the new one. I'm listening, but I don't like it. For me it's traditional, always, I don't know why... but for me, traditional always is good."

[18:55] Melaena asks what other groups he knows in Montreal. Soleil Tzigane, Suleyman says is a really nice group –he mentions Gitans de Sarajevo, doesn't know of others.

[19:30] Melaena asks if putting the word "Gypsy" or "Roma" on the posters or advertising is a draw for people in Canada: "Is it a marketing success strategy to use the word "Gypsy"?"

Suleyman: "Yeah, yeah. They see the word "Gypsy", and they are going."

Melaena: "Do you think it's more popular than other cultures?"

[20:30] Suleyman: "Yeah."

Melaena: "Why is that?"

Suleyman: "Gypsy name, just the Gypsy name".

Melaena: "Do you have any guess why?"

Suleyman: "I think people love the Gypsy culture... the Gypsy culture is different, fun, and... I remember that last year, I had the show with Lubo, it was the Gypsy night too... and the people coming there with the Gypsy costume, they go fun, they love it."

[end of excerpt]

Partial Interview Transcription with Jorge Martinez, January 2010, Montreal

[12:30] Jorge: "And the composition [mine] is more musical."

Melaena: "In what way?"

Jorge: "It's not based... it's more simple, I'm not just playing fast notes all the time, sometimes it's just more about the music."

Melaena: "Less ornamented?"

Jorge: "Yeah, a little bit less. That's why I keep saying that I play flamenco, because I use the rhythms the way they should be, but the music is totally different. Totally different. So that's why, sometimes you have people that know me, they said to me, You're not playing flamenco. I respect what they say."

"So yeah, I'm using flamenco as much as I'm using other kinds of rhythms, sometimes I use the rhumba from Cuba... I respect the rhythms. You have to learn the rhythms to break the rules."

"That's why I feel okay doing what I'm doing right now. And also because I'm in a new place that allows me to do that. If I were in Spain, probably they would kill me. You know, they allow you to break the rules, but the centre has to be traditional."

"And I understand, because for them it's an identity."

Melaena: "So why is it different here?"

[14:00] Jorge: "It's because here, when you are an immigrant, and you move out from your country, and you re-start life, a new life somewhere else, you definitely finish one day being the same person as you were before. I'm not a Spanish guy, I'm not an Argentinian guy, but I'm not a Canadian guy as a Canadian should be. I'm like a mix of all that now, I'm a different person. It's not bad, it's not good, it's a different thing. If you don't adapt, you can't live here."

"As much as you start to integrate yourself, you start to become someone else. Not totally different, a little different. And now you want to integrate yourself, you are a little more open, and now you will be able to change more things."

[17:30] "And when you start to change, all that gives you a different point of view of music. And music for me is life. It's my life. It's not like work.... But for me, music is my life, to play guitar is my life."

Melaena: "So you think Canadian audiences are more accepting of this original style of music?"

Jorge: "Yes."

Melaena: "Why is that?"

Jorge: "Because they are not into the original stuff. They are open to everything that's new, because you are in a place that is not that old, and there is traditions, but there is a lot of new things going on, there is a lot of new people coming in the country every year, so there is a lot of new things going on all the time. Probably in a hundred years, there's gonna be a traditions in Canada, with all these things going on, but until then there is a lot of new things every time."

"So everything is new, and you will meet here African guys, and they come here and start to do their music, and probably they will do the same as I'm doing... they will start to listen different music here too. I mean, definitely you will go somewhere else with the things that you do."

"Me, I prefer the new thing."

"So the audience here is different, and they accept more these kinds of things. If I come here and do the traditional flamenco style, there is a lot of people here that don't even know that."

[20:30] "There is a lot of people, they don't even know flamenco here. And they don't even say flamenco, they say flamingo, like the animal. So they don't even know how to say it. And that's okay too, they don't have to know everything."

[28:00] Melaena: "So, do you meet any other Roma people here?"

Jorge: "Yeah, in the beginning. Because I used to play in the Metro here, to start a new life. I needed a place to play, because I was not known. And in the beginning, it was very hard, and I didn't even know how it works, I never did that before in my life. And people passing by, they say, Oh, you're a Gypsy."

"And those that stay the same, I lose contact with them, because we're not the same anymore."

[30:00 to 45:00] Long discussion: Jorge spends a lot of time talking about how transient people are, and how hard it is to keep in touch with everyone, even musicians within the community.

[45:00] Jorge: "There is a lot of Gypsy flamenco, but not necessarily.... I guess people associate.... Even Gypsy flamenco, it's just Spanish flamenco here."

"The difference between Spanish flamenco and Gypsy flamenco....There is not a lot of people that understand the difference, if there is a difference or not.. So I don't think people associate flamenco to Gypsy necessarily."

"And sometimes you can say, My flamenco is more Gypsy, and they say, Oh, okay, but they won't understand the difference. And for me, here, for my experience, people that they know Gypsy music, is gonna be related to East Europe. They would call that "Gypsy music". But people don't have a concept of Gypsy flamenco. They don't have it."

"There is a different way that Gypsies play flamenco, from the little Spanish guy who came from the Conservatory. You don't have to be necessarily clean... it's too hard to say."

Jorge talks about Manitas de Plata, whom he loves, and discusses new musical influences in Canada.

[48:00] Melaena: "So I have a question for you. One thing that people say to me a lot, they say that it's not real Gypsy music here. How would you answer that?"

Jorge: "What is real? The tradition is real? That's perfect. But the tradition had to be done. For tradition to become tradition, it had to be created, so when is the point that you created tradition? And the tradition that we are living is the tradition that we make a future and we are free to incorporate things."

Jorge: "What is real? I'm not a real Gypsy. What is being a Gypsy?"

Melaena: "What is a real Gypsy then?"

Jorge: "Reality is what you live. My reality is being a guy who doesn't have roots. And that I take from everything, because I feel free in that way, because the society in which I'm living, it lets me do that. I'm not living in East Europe, where everyone does the same music. So, I'm not saying that I'm doing real Gypsy, that I'm doing real flamenco, that I'm doing real Latin music either, because if I say that I will be lying. No, I'm doing a new thing. That's me being real."

"And I'm seeing here that that starts to be the reality of a lot of people, people that don't have roots hundred percent somewhere, and so they're doing the same thing. That's what I'm saying, probably in a hundred years Canada will have a tradition, but we have a chance now to be free in a way, do new things, without having to respect something."