

the United States today. Lipa instructs us to employ as our sampling frame *oral* utterances to investigate *literary* dialect. Analogous to his design would be the recommendation that we dissect fishes to arrive at conclusions about amphibians.

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Ian Hancock replies:

I thank my colleagues, Lipa and Cohn, for their anticipated observations. The final interpreters must, of course, be the readers themselves; I continue to stand completely by the claims made in the piece under scrutiny, and hope that those who might be persuaded by the protestations of Messrs. Lipa and Cohn go to my referenced sources and decide for themselves.

Their respective arguments seem to rest upon the comparative “recentness” of the Romani reunification and language standardization movements, and the fact that, as yet, comparatively few individuals are involved in them. This is certainly true, as it must be at the beginning of *any* organized movement for ethnic self-determination, but it surely cannot be used as an argument to discredit or delegitimize these efforts. This both puzzles and saddens me.

Briefly (though I look forward to lengthier productive dialogue in future issues), let me suggest that Mr. Lipa would surely benefit by becoming more acquainted with what is going on within the Romani language movement; perhaps he might attend one of our summer schools which have been well attended in different European countries for the past few years. Mr. Cohn is certainly invited to contact The International Romani Union for copies of press and other reports, from various countries, of our congresses, and thereby acquire more “convincing ethnographic detail” about those in attendance.

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To the Editor:

As one of the “Promoters” referred to by Werner Cohn (note 6) and I suppose one of the ‘organizers’ referred to by Ilri Lipa, I hope that I may be allowed the right of reply.

I am not clear what sort of a “Promoter” Werner Cohn considers me— one who is “swarming around the Gypsy people trying to win converts” (converts to what, I may ask?) or a non-Gypsy advocate of “Gypsy rights” whom Werner Cohn finds “amusing.”

My own definition would be a “participant observer” in the sociological sense, for I both write about Gypsies (based on personal observation and the literature) and take some part in their lives.

A “teller of tall tales”? Not really, my joint work with Grattan Puxon on the Gypsies in the Nazi period was done under the supervision of a professor from Sussex University, has received favorable review and has the lowest figures for deaths of any book on the subject. My report on the Gypsies of England, *On the Verge: The Gypsies of England*, Runnymede Trust, London, 1990 (again a joint work, this time with an expert on law), is also a carefully documented study.

My first contact with Romanies was with musicians in east Bulgaria and I have since written the sort of stuff that Jiri Lipa would approve of, a grammar and texts on a localized dialect spoken by some 4,000 people. But I am also a member of a western European working group (half Romany, half non-Romany) which is trying to produce a standardized literary language. I make no apologies for the latter activity. Macedonia, Ireland and Norway are examples of artificial attempts to produce quickly a standard language and, for me, it is an opportunity for wider readership rather than the development of a nationalistic feeling that is the impetus for this work. The work of Shaip Jusuf, in trying to produce a union grammar for two dialects of Skopje, has been of considerable use in our work; not least for showing us mistakes to avoid.

I really don't know how to convince Werner Cohn that there are several million Romanies (called Tsigani by the majority populations) in Eastern Europe who could and do converse without difficulty with the Kalderash Romanies, including those of North America. Yet they do not all practice the bride price or follow the ritualized feast system of the latter; rather, they have a dowry system and a range of occupations including teachers, doctors and lawyers. To those of your readers for whom the comparison is relevant, it is as if Werner Cohn were to say that the only real Jews are the Chassidim who speak Yiddish and cut married women's hair, and that all other Jews, Sephardim, non-Orthodox Jews in Israel, *etc.*, either are not real Jews or do not exist, being a figment of the imagination of Zionist “Promoters.”

As for civil rights, I am not clear what Werner Cohn's objections are. The first Gypsy I met in England on my return from Bulgaria was of the Romany *chal* group, who did not speak Romani but whose grandparents certainly did. More importantly, she was in the eighth month of pregnancy and about to be evicted from the piece of waste land where she was living in a caravan. I find nothing “amusing” about my moderately successful attempts as an individual to defer the eviction until her admittance to hospital.

It was to help such cases that the Gypsy Council was set up in 1966 and I was later asked at a meeting of Gypsies to take over the secretaryship from Grattan Puxon. I attended as an interpreter at all four international Congresses about which Cohn has doubts. (It would certainly be useful to establish attendance lists of those present before memories fade and documents such as hotel and restaurant bills, notes of speeches, *etc.*, disappear.)

Finally, in my defence, I have to say I simply am a non-Gypsy (not “a self-professed non-Gypsy”) and I do cite both of Cohn’s favorite authors, Ljungberg and Yoors (where relevant, though I have considerable doubts about the reliability of the latter as a historical source).

Dr Donald Kenrick
London 1992

To the Editor:

I would like to comment on the criticisms made by Jiri Lipa and Werner Cohn of Ian Hancock’s article.

I do not have the time (and I doubt your journal would provide the space) for a line-by-line analysis of Dr. Lipi’s and Professor Cohn’s letters. Both, I fear, suffer from that dreadful intellectual disease, hardening of the categories; both argue that *their* position is right, Hancock’s is wrong.

To ‘prove’ this, both assume there exists a world of neutral, impartial, value-free, verifiable, objective ‘facts,’ there to be simply observed and collected; ‘facts’ which will reveal, and thus help to ‘preserve,’ the real, true, authentic, genuine Gypsy folk culture and practices.

These epistemological assumptions are quite at odds with the intellectual underpinnings of current social science, do not recognize the fluid, changing, problematic, constructed nature of behavior and ‘reality,’ and do not recognize the variety of Romani adaptations and responses to widely differing circumstances in different countries.

All too often, an appeal to ‘objectivity’ is not just epistemologically outdated, but is a reinforcement of hegemonies of privilege, power and control. Academics who have their own agendas, contribute to such reinforcement. Having said all this, the *real* issue is...what?

An *embryonic* Romani Nationalism, must, by definition, start from small beginnings, and evolve. We believe there is a right and proper role for such political activity *by and for* Romanis.

There is no dispute that an International Romani Union exists; there is no dispute that there are many national Romani organizations affiliated to the International body, and there are indeed many Romani groups that are *not* affiliated, but who operate as independent organizations. All these, however