



101 WEST HALL
1085 SOUTH UNIVERSITY AVENUE
ANN ARBOR, MI 48109-1107
734 764-7274 FAX: 734 763-6077

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Pre-defense Report for *"We speak clean Gypsy, I am a pure Roma": Performing difference through linguistic and artistic practices in Kotel, Bulgaria*, By Camilla SALVATORE:

This dissertation is clearly structured in five chapters that move from 1) explication of relevant theory, 2) an account of historical and geographical contexts (e.g. memory of Turkish occupations and Socialist regimes), 3) a focus on festivals as sites for following discourse on "authenticity," 4) an account of ways people claim "pure" forms of speaking Romani by refracting geographical and occupational differences among Roma, and 5) further development of "purity" as a shifter through discussion of musical institutions and practitioner interviews.

In addition to the chapter structure, the work might also be understood as constructed in this way: it alternates sections that 1) summarize/describe secondary theoretical/topical influences, 2) summarize historical context, 3) present transcript data, and 4) restate the denotational/semantic content of the transcripts.

To most fully realize the promise of this material (as for publication as a book, for instance), the candidate should work to integrate the sections and materials so that they inform each other more directly to build a set of arguments. So far, this begins to work best when the argument discusses how certain statements in the transcripts demonstrate the semiotic process of rhematization, and also where the transcript quotations are shown to express competing linguistic ideologies. Other ideas that are signalled in the theory review sections, however, are not yet developed (for instance, commitment to a contextually-grounded semiotic approach--e.g. as regarding performance framing in real time--is signalled, but not carried through by analysis of transcripts).

The practical solution requires strategic selection: rather than asking readers to digest long stretches of transcript (lacking guidance about where to focus attention), the writer should pick out small pieces from transcripts that are the most relevant to the argument (the full transcripts can go into an appendix). This will then open space for the author to develop the contextual, social situations, and to describe links to previous encounters in a way that will allow development of the arguments about performance and the workings of social indexicality and entextualization.

I would also recommend, instead of a long theoretical section, a briefer one. Then, the author could engage relevant theoretical points in more detail where they matter to the arguments around the transcripts, without too much repetition. The point being less to deliver accurate book reports on previous theory, but to engage it, and even debate it, while testing out how it works to explain the matters at hand.

In regard to other discussions of secondary lit, here too, more careful and explicit contrasts and comparisons could be useful in developing a unique argument about the case. For instance, Lemon 2000 (using this example because I am obviously most familiar with that corpus) is cited for its discussions of “authenticity” as a category, but not for that book’s overarching, sociologically grounded argument: that Romani anxiety about “authenticity” was animated by talk about Romani occupational and geographical differences. Romani discourses about more/less pure forms of Romani developed historically in Russia along with labor categories and practices (reinforced and even invented by the state) that often pitted urban Romani performers and intellectuals (as “our, Russian Roma”) against metalworkers and others (labeled “foreign Roma”). The arguments of that 2000 publication find echoes in this dissertation, and so questions arise, of course, about how these phenomena work similarly or differently in these two formerly socialist states. (Probably it is in order as well to encourage scholarly citation of the 2000 publication on this topic, even if extended comparison is not undertaken at this stage).

The writing is mostly clear, and does not obscure the summaries and claims. One mechanical suggestion: the text would do well to deploy paragraphs. It is difficult for readers to track over many pages without the logical chunking that is signalled by paragraph breaks with their transitions.

If we apply the not uncommon standard that a dissertation text can serve as a kind of draft repository for research materials and preliminary descriptions that lay the ground for a published monograph that will synthesize the argument, then I can affirm that this manuscript is suitable for defense.

Sincerely,



Alaina Lemon
Professor
amlemon@umich.edu