Gypsy Names: Anthroponymic Identity vs. Assimilation
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Abstract

Among the ethnic groups that co-exist in the area I have investigated – Romanians, Hungarians, Ukrainians etc. – the Romani distinguish themselves through several particularities: a distinct kind of culture, specific customs and traditions (also related to the nomad way of life) and their own language, strongly influenced by the ones it has been in contact with, but also through a series of names which are perceived by most people as being incongruous (*Ambasador, Ambulanța, Dollar, Tarzan, Zorro)*. The main premise is that an individual's name is determined by the psychological factors involved in the act of naming (the psychological configuration of the onomastic agents), as well as by the individual's belonging to a certain historical or geographical background, to a certain socio-professional category, to a specific creed etc. The great number of informers and of extralinguistic parameters brings extra value to the multidisciplinary interpretation of the anthroponyms found with the Romani community in the northwestern part of Romania.

The present study[1] is part of a more consistent research project (the winner of a CNCSIS competition in Romania) stretching over a three-year time span, which considers the multiethnic connections reflected in the anthroponymy from the northwestern part of Romania, a central European area. In some of the previous studies, I have underlined the *Romanian-Ukrainian Connections in the Anthroponymy of the Northwestern Part of Romania* (Felecan, 2009), the *Romanian-Hungarian Bonds in the Anthroponymy of the Northwestern Part of Romania* (Felecan, 2010a), and *Il contatto linguistico romeno-romanzo attuale, riflesso nell'antroponimia* (presented at the 26[é] Congrés Internacional de Lingüística i Filologia Romàniques, Valencia, Spain, 2010b).

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Introduction

The present study focuses on the ethno-, socio- and psycholinguistic analysis of contemporary Gypsy forenames from the northwestern part of Romania,[2] a topic which has been almost completely unexplored so far for reasons that pertain to "political correctness". We shall leave aside any restriction, preconception or bias, and we shall try to trace the main elements that determine the act of naming within the Roma ethnic group. This presents certain peculiarities which individualise it within the European landscape: "The Gypsies were the last people of Asian origin to reach our continent. They, in fact, mark the end of the migration of peoples" (Achim, 1998, 20). Although they are spread in most states worldwide, but especially in Eastern Europe, Gypsies have succeeded in keeping their language and their lifestyle, even in the absence of an independent, Gypsy state.[3] Their language, of Indo-European descent, has a notably oral character and it goes by various names, according to the

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[1] The present paper relates to the field of research of a CNCSIS project, entitled *Onomastics in the Contemporary Romanian Public Space: Socio- and Psycholinguistic Research*, in progress between 2010 and 2013, within the "Human Resources" programme for the forming of young independent research teams (TE), code 3, contract no. 57/2010.

[2] The area is representative for our vast research, and we have used it as a sample for this ethnic group, although examples taken from the media cover the whole country. Most of the Gypsy names were collected by means of an anthroponymic survey, which was conducted directly or with the help of teachers that work in schools that are attended by a significant number of Roma students. The examples taken from Romanian mass media were found on the Internet and they illustrate an onomastic behaviour that typically occurs with Romanian Gypsies, in general, and with those in the northwestern part of Transylvania, in particular.

[3] Which may also be the result of their not being a people of conquerors, besides their practising of a *modus vivendi* that displays a certain distaste for agriculture, even for shepherding (*Encyclopaedia Universalis, Corpus 23* 1996: 6-9).

country or to the significant community with whom the ethnic group has come into contact.[4] "The close relation established between language (vocabulary) and society often highlights valuable information regarding the history of a people: the routes the Gypsies migrated along after leaving India, tracking down words from the languages with which they have come into contact" (Graur, 1978, 6). Similarly, many forenames may offer equally important information concerning the Gypsies' onomastic behaviour, their interaction with diverse cultures, events, as well as certain psychological peculiarities.

Theoretical premises

The historical, cultural, ethnic, sociological, and linguistic contexts also contribute to the act of naming. Based on the sociocultural criterion, we may deal with the structure of the onomasticon in relation to the structure of the society, taking into account the ethnic, social, religious affiliation of the onomastic actants, as well as their level of culture, of education. No onomastic act occurs in isolation from the social dimension and therefore the connection between onomastics and sociolinguistics is inherent. A name is a result of social and linguistic contexts, of situations that belong to the diverse and the unpredictable, and that are often contradictory and disparate, which is why a name may become a strong factor for social cohesion. An individual claims his affiliation to a group through his onomastic preferences, as well as by adopting and promoting certain anthroponyms. Thus names are endowed with the quality of significant social diagnostics, as onomastic borders correspond to social ones. Anthroponymic choices are relevant from the perspective of onomastics, but they also imply a sociological relevance, explaining behavioural structures – pragmatic acts that represent the expression of social structure. Given names become anthroponymic variables, markers with a distribution that is socially and stylistically conditioned by the ethnic and socioeconomic status of the onomastic actants, by culture, religion, age, mentality and preferences. Starting from the premise that the choice of forenames depends on a person, a family or a group of people with various kinds of life experience and with particular personalities, such denominations are integrant parts of culture, of social life and of mental life. "Language, thought, and culture are deeply interlocked, so that each language might be claimed to have associated with it a distinctive world-view" (Gumperz / Levinson, 1996, 2).

To the extent to which speech communicates thoughts, feelings, and determines various reactions, and the act of communication implies elements of thinking, will and emotion, the process of naming, manifested through the will of parents and the consent of state authorities, is a creative, free activity, directed towards a well-defined purpose. Therefore, the act of naming is not mere repetition but continuous innovation determined by a set of complex factors, including language, ethnicity, social status, religion, trend, and the mentality of the onomastic actants. According to Valeria Guţu Romalo (2005, 293), we consider that "linguistic fashion is characterised (a) by an obvious and rapid increase of frequency, (b) which is not determined by an objective social need but by subjective preferences, and (c) which is achieved through mimetic assumption and uncritical use, and which prejudices communication due to the effects of deficiency and encoding" (my translation). This definition may be applied to the field of onomastics, but it has no validity in what concerns the effects of the naming process, because the freedom of anthroponymic innovation proffered by the Gypsies is unlimited, as forenames are integrant parts of a system. Adapted and disseminated in the "lower" social strata, given names lose their peculiar character and enter the common repertoire of ordinary people. According to sociological studies, most Gypsies have an inconsistent level of culture and they come from marginal urban strata

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[4] Of the most frequent ones we mention *romay language, gypsy (gipsy), romaneš, romani,* and so on.

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– other than the strictly notorious ones – and from the outskirts of certain rural settlements, a fact that determines the choice of forenames for their children.

Family names

The history of names used by the Gypsies can only be understood in the broader context of certain mental schemes and specific patterns of creativity. Family names are passed down from generation to generation, from father to son, and they are related to ancestral occupations, to physical or moral traits, to various nicknames/bynames through which Gypsies were identified in the past: *Blidar (< blid* "plate" + suf. *–ar), Bucă* ("Buttock"), *Cioban / Csoban* ("shepherd"), *Cioc* ("beak"), *Ciorbă / Csorba* ("sour soup"), *Ciurar (< ciur* "sieve" + suf. *–ar), Covaci / Covaciu / Kovacs* ("blacksmith"), *Dărab* ("piece"), *Feraru (< fier* "iron" + suf. *–aru), Grebănar / Grebenar (< greab* "the head of a Gypsy family"), *Josan (< jos* "down" + suf. *–an), Lăcătuş / Lacatos / Lakatos* ("locksmith"), *Lingurar (< lingură* "spoon" + suf. *–ar), Nespălatu* ("Dirty"), *Păun* ("Peacock"), *Rostaş* (made up of the name of two tools), *Sărăcuţ (< sărac* "poor" + suf. *–uţ), Slănină* ("Bacon"), *Talpă* ("Sole"), *Teglaş* ("brick maker"), *Ursan (< urs* "bear" + suf. *–an), Varga* ("bootmaker") etc. Such names can be socially explained through the poverty and marginality of the Gypsies, and they are the result of a direct or indirect social interaction with co-existing peoples. Just as "every language seems to have linguistic items that reflect social characteristics of the speaker, of the addressee or of the relation between them" (Hudson, 2001, 120), a particular, semantically motivated name denotes certain mental characteristics of the bearers, as well as their relationship with people around them. This is why Gypsy denominations require a multi-disciplinary approach of anthroponymic facts, both from an onomastic perspective and from a sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic or ethnolinguistic one.

Multicultural context and bilingualism

An important aspect, from a socio- and ethnolinguistic point of view, is that all Gypsies are at least bilingual, if not multilingual, as, regardless of the country, they live nearby other populations. Just as in the other countries, in Romania, besides the Romani language, they speak Romanian, Hungarian etc., according to the linguistic community they live with. Their co-existence with other peoples and their status as a minority group has enabled them to borrow words from the languages of the majority, many of these becoming names used to designate people in the ethnic group in question. In mixed communities made up of Gypsies and Romanians, Hungarians etc., bilingualism is not mutual, as other populations refuse to speak Romani, on the one hand, and to take over specific customs and traditions, on the other hand. "A contrasting scenario is a situation in which bilingualism is stable but largely unidirectional, i.e. group B acquires and uses the language of group A but not viceversa. Unidirectional bilingualism usually arises in circumstances where group A dominates certain activity domains to which group B members require access, but this relationship is not reciprocal. As a result, group B speakers will import into their own language word-forms acquired through interaction with group A in the relevant domains. However, it is not diglossia per se that is responsible for the type of structural changes that occur. This kind of scenario is typical of numerous linguistic minorities or speakers of smaller languages around the world – whether in border areas […] or in an immigrant context" (Matras, 2011, 58).

Forenames

If the dominant majority (Romanian, Hungarian) only occasionally borrows words from the Romani language and subsequently introduces them in the argot, the Gypsy minority borrows much, much more from lexical, morphological and syntactic phenomena for given names.

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"The diffusion of a linguistic feature through a society may be halted by barriers of social class, age, religion or other factors. And social distance may have the same sort of effect as geographical distance" (Trudgill, 2000, 24). If the Roma show no reserve in taking over names from the majority, groups that are socially superior are very reluctant to borrow Gypsy names, and when this does happen, the new acquisitions are marginalised (see argot). It is again Trudgill (2000, 42) who mentions an experiment conducted in the USA, which proved that those that represent the minority in a strong community take over from the majority even the manner of speaking, of expressing themselves. *Mutatis mutandis*, the phenomenon is also valid in the case of forenames, and the Gypsies are no exception. The examples of Romanian forenames used by the Roma community are numerous (*Adrian, Alexandru, Andreea, Bianca, Cristian, Elena, Florin, Ioan, Lucian, Loredana, Maria, Mihai, Nicoleta, Sorin, Ştefan, Valeria, Vasile, Teodor* and so on), just as one is also able to find Hungarian names, especially in Transylvania, where the ethnolinguistic contact is centuries old: *Atila, Edita, Eniko, Erzsebet (Iuliana), Etelca, Ibolya, Janos, Katalin, Laszlo, Lorand, Maria Erzsebet, Piroska, Rozska, Tünde, Zoltan (Alexandru),* etc.[5] As Matras observed (2009, 48), "border-area multilingualism is often unidirectional, favouring the language of economic power", of political influence, with superior prestige. In the cases of multiethnic connections, when the Roma co-exist with other minorities, we may even come across a regional variant of Gypsy anthroponyms (see family names above). Multilingual areas are usually characterised by the continuous circulation of names from one ethnic group to another – especially in mixed families – but the transfer of certain Roma-denominating creations to other peoples is almost completely absent. It is very difficult for the Gypsy onomasticon to become a donor for other ethnicities, as long as most peoples living in Romania, as well as in all of Europe,[6] have a negative view of the Roma, due to their being associated with dirt, delinquency, and inculture. "It has long been known that tolerance for transfer of material from one language into another is variable, some communities being very receptive while others tend to reject elements of other languages" (Coulmas, 2010, 111).

Besides the forenames "borrowed" from the Romanian majority or from the Hungarian minority they live with, Gypsies have their own onomastic repertoire, connoted through the content "expressivity, extravagance". Gypsy forenames result from the interaction of the social axiological system and they prove the closed character of their use, as opposed to the rather open character of the structure. The unity of the onomasticon is ensured by the simultaneous existence of old, traditional forenames with neological ones, of laic and religious ones, of basic forms and hypocorisms or diminutive derivatives.

Of the old forenames that are specific to this ethnic group, we mention *Argintar (Mihai), Benone, Bobiţa, Boier, Ghizela, Manea, Mîndra, Pardalian, Rujica (Raveca), Salonel, Salonica, Suraj, Trandafir, Vălean, Zabar, Zabor, Zoran.* They are representative for the Roma, even if some of them are currently infrequent, in the shape of random occurrences.

Hypocorisms

The traditional Gypsy onomasticon developed, to some extent, from common language. Thus, anthroponyms may be, according to the significance of the form, unmotivated – the form does not have a meaning for the speaker – and motivated – the form derives from a common word, bearing a certain significance. In this latter case, the examples are numerous, regarding both boys' names (*Brăduţ, Firicel, Floricel, Florin Trandafir, Ghiocel, Medalion, Păunel, Strugurel, Trandafir*), as well as girls' names (*Căpşuna, Crenguţa, Cruciţa, Floare,*

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[5] Many of these are incorrectly spelled in Hungarian, but the phenomenon has to do with the extremely low level of education of the Roma community. For details, see Felecan, 2010a.

[6] Various surveys and sociological analyses confirm the statement, without this being a case of outspoken xenophobia.

Frunza, Garofiţa, Gazela, Lămâiţa, Marchiza, Mălina Camelia, Portocala, Porumbiţa, Romaniţa, Stăncuţa, Trandafira, Zambila). Opting for such names, which are particularly unusual, is closely related to the set of values of the onomastic actants. They stem from the mentality, life and preoccupations of the Gypsies, and except for a few cases, they fail to be original creations: *Bananuela*, made up of the common noun *banana* and the mistakenly interpreted suffix *–uela*, found in names such as *Manuela, Consuela*. This can be explained through the Roma's preference for everything that determines them to make a strong display of their attitudes and feelings. The abundance of names is directly proportional to the evolution of the anthroponyms, in particular, and to the evolution of the language, in general, being determined by the social, economic and intellectual development of the denominators. Through their form and content, forenames favour the possibility of becoming aware of certain aspects of social life; they fascinate through their exoticism and familiarity, being simultaneously "distant and near" anthroponyms. They denote the need for expressivity, without perceiving the repetition of certain forenames as a banal experience.

The forenames chosen by the parents may be "dressed up with an affective atmosphere", which reveals the subjective attitude relatives have towards their children, on the one hand, and towards the given names they prefer, on the other hand. Hypocorisms have always enjoyed great fame among Gypsies (see Potra, 2002, 129). The attraction exerted by such secondary onomastic formulas, which have an affective dimension, highlights from a psycholinguistic point of view Gypsies' emotional core, best expressed through music, and their need for affections, which in this case is manifested in relation to newborns. Most hypocorisms are derivatives with simple or compound suffixes which are attached to the primary, initial form: *Ancuţa (Anca* + suf. *–uţa), Angelica (Angela* + suf. *–ica), Anica (Ana* + suf. *–ica), Anişoara (Ana* + suf. *–işoara), Armănuţ* (probably from the ethnonym *armean* + suf. *–uţ), Carmeluţa (Carmela* + suf. *–uţa), Dănuţ (Dan* + suf. *–uţ), Doiniţa (Doina* + suf. *–iţa), Firuţa Ancuţa* (suf. *–uţa), Marinel (Marin* + suf. *–el), Marioara (Maria* + suf. *–oara), Niculina* (the counterpart of the male forename *Nicolae*, suffixed with *–ina), Preduţ (Preda* + suf. *uţ), Romica* (common noun *rom?* + suf. *–ica), Steluţa (Stela* + suf. *–uţa), Vergenica* (probably *Virginia* + suf. *–ica*). Sometimes, the basic form is so uncanny for a proper noun that it cannot be traced back with precision: *Axinel* (we are certain about the suf. *–el), Brăiţa* (suf. *–iţa), Medenţa* (we may assume the false suffix *–enţa*, attached to *Medeea*?), *Mintuţa* (common noun *minte* "mind" + suf. *–uţa), Neguriţa* (common noun *negura* "fog" + suf. *–uţa), Tăruţ* (probably from the adjective *tare* "strong" + suf. *–uţ), Vinuc* (n. *vin* "wine" + suf. *–uc*). Such anthroponyms mirror both the ludic and aesthetic possibilities of the system of onomastics, as well as the creativity of certain onomastic actants endowed with inventiveness. They prove the expressive property of forenames in general by means of expressions that have an emotional content, generated by various states of mind.

I have also found given names with suffixes attached to the shortened, hypocoristic form of a name: *Fănel (Ştefan > Fane* + suf. *–el), Neluţu (Ion > Ionel > Nelu* + suf. *–uţu), Petruţa (Petriana / Petronela > Petra* + suf. *–uţa*). Modifying the original form of a personal name is achieved by phonetic processes, such as aphaeresis, syncope, or apocope: *Adi (Milian), (Alin) Persi, Flori, Gusti (Claudiu), (Ioan) Nelu,*[7] *Mitra (Preduţ), (Maria) Lina, Nina, (Petruţa) Geta*. These forenames are defined by an emotional content, generated by various feelings. If one could talk about norms in the choice of forenames, many Gypsy anthroponyms give the impression that they are intentional deviations from such accepted norms, considered to encompass standard denominations, and to be emotionally neutral. They are the proof that a constant relation is kept between given names and the mentality of the ethnic group.

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[7] In the current situation, the anthroponym *Ioan* is the basis for the derivative *Nelu*, a fact that goes unnoticed by the parents or by the clerk that recorded the double forename at the child's birth.

Anthroponymic borrowings

As compared to the inventory of Gypsy names from the past, which was based on folk lexicon and traditional names, we are nowadays able to notice an increasing preference for neologisms, of the learned kind. The modernisation of the Gypsy anthroponymic repertoire comes from the desire to put an end to their being labelled as uneducated, primitive individuals, a preconception deeply rooted in society. Just as "one person can draw conclusions about another person's character and abilities simply on the basis of how that person speaks, regardless of the content of what they say" (Hudson, 2009, 206), the mere contact with the bearer of a "strange name" may trigger in the interlocutor's mind certain conclusions that could harm their relationship or that could put a negative "seal" on the whole donor-family of names. This is how one builds up the "negative prestige" of traditional Gypsy names.

The contemporary onomasticon is now more than ever subject to a process of internationalisation which is, on the one hand, perceived through the prism of an ease in borrowing/taking over forenames from one language into another, and on the other hand, through that of the loss of national anthroponymic peculiarities, of the influence of certain factors of levelling ethnic differences. If traditional, discordant names betray their bearers' belonging to a certain ethnic group, lifestyle, level of culture and studies, namely to a sociocultural community that is recognized negatively, in the case of Gypsies, modern forenames erase the "negative prestige" gathered over time,[8] and offer a neutral degree of perception. Anthroponymic borrowings outline speakers' mentality, their wish to perform a "linguistic and social escape", since the status of the other cultures/languages with which Gypsies have come into contact is undoubtedly superior. "Working-class speakers far from the sites of definition of what counts as 'good' language or prestigious performance, are placed at a disadvantage in situations where their linguistic performance is judged by members of classes other than their own" (Heller in Jourdan / Tuite, 2008, 66). Among the samples of neological forenames recorded in the area investigated, which are becoming more and more frequently used by the Roma people today, we mention: *(Andreea) Beatrice, Antonio Alexandru, Armand, (Aurora) Denisa, Carina Andrada, Carmina (Valentina), Cerasela, (Claudia) Larisa, Denisa, (Florica) Pamela, Geanina Luiza, Giulia (Maria), (Ioan) Isidor, Janina Larisa, Larisa Mirabela, Manuela (Mirela), Marco (Răzvan), Maria (Iasmina), Mario Robert, Mary, Milian, (Oana) Timeea, Persida, Renata (Andreea), Samir, Sara, Sefora Emanuela*. Some of these, which have more recently entered the Romanian language, are defined by the instability of their form, so that variations, though minimal, are not constantly perceived by speakers. They may be spelled incorrectly both in Romanian and in the source language, but this is an insignificant aspect for the Roma population, as great importance is granted to the effect of novelty: *Cirasela, Francisca, Gena, Jan (Claudiu), Jana, Janina, Janu.*

Names of VIPs: favourite onomastic patterns

The onomastic mobility of forenames occurs at the level of society in the shape of a complex phenomenon, as a result of the social, economic, cultural, religious and political transformations, both within families and within the social classes that appropriate these transformations. The social landscape is not the only cause that leads to the refreshment of the onomasticon. The psychological factor also leads to the accomplishment of this process, which is why the name becomes a fusion between two levels: the individual one (governed by people's spiritual life), and the social one, both comprised by the concrete act of naming

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[8] "A prejudice is a characteristic of a social stereotype which is only weakly predictable from the other characteristics (or even not predictable at all)" (Hudson, 2009, 208).

and by linguistic communication, implicitly. The onomastic performer's preference for foreign anthroponyms may express certain emotional behaviours. The choice of atypical forenames can be seen, on the one hand, as a way of going against the rigidity of classic given names, laic or religious, and, on the other hand, as an attempt to climb the social ladder, stemming from the desire to overcome one's inferior status and to gain an easy access to the hierarchy of values. This is how one could explain the adoption of certain historic, mythological names – *Caius, Cleopatru,[9] Darius (Andrei), Decebal Darius, Francisc, Larisa, Lavinia, Letiţia, Minerva, Onoria, Romulus, Septimiu (Vasile), Tiberia* – or of the names of stars in today's world: sportspeople, singers, actors, characters in feature films or in soap operas. Some forenames enjoy this expressivity, are even eccentric, due to their shocking resonance, as compared to sociocultural background, to mentalities or people considered conservative. The dissemination of uncommon given names is facilitated by the mass media and by emigration to Western, more developed countries, which gain the status of forename exporters.

The manner and the moment in which certain anthroponyms entered the Gypsy onomasticon are rather easy to establish when they are related to important events (the election of Barack Obama in the key function led to Roma children being baptised with the family name of the African-American president of the USA), to the excessive publicity granted to popular stars – sportspeople, singers, actors (*Arnold Diego Armando Maradona, Beckham, Ciaplin, Elvis, Madona, Naomi, Noris, Pamela,[10] Pele, Ri(h)an(n)a,[11] Romario, Romina, Ronaldo*)[12] – or to the broadcasting of films/soap operas by Romanian television channels: *(Anghel) Tarzan, Armando, Bobi, Brenda, Bruzli* (for *Bruce Lee*), *Pamela,[13] Piedone, Sandocan, Superman,[14] Tarzan, Vandana, Vinetou, Zor(r)o.* Some of these names, being related to fashion or to certain events, are short-lived, just as others may lead to false tracks in establishing their etymology, as parents – the onomastic actants – do not know the star whose name they borrowed.

By frequent repetition, the names of "stars" given to Roma children imprint in the collective mentality simplified images and evaluating judgements, being bearers of ironic connotations. Anthroponymic "derivation", through its pejorative connotations, results from the contrast between the name of a star and the inferior social condition of a Gypsy. Sociolinguistic methods identify the status of certain "discordant" forenames, as well as the attitude they express in the micro- and macrosociety. Such anthroponyms used by the Roma ethnic group are not necessarily characterised by exclusive use, but by frequency, by the wish to shock, which is why, in time, such denominations become undisputed onomastic markers. Borrowing the most promoted contemporary forenames is the quality of simple people,

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[9] The parents had expected the child to be a girl, so they did not change the forename of the newborn baby boy. See http://revistapresei.hotnews.ro/stiri-radio_tv-4240330-numele-tigani-romani-madalin-voicu-silviu-prigoana-cleopatru-termopan-termopana-cacatu-comisia.htm.

[10] This refers to Pamela Anderson, the onomastic model preferred by a grandmother in the choice of a forename for a girl – born in 1997 – in Baia Mare!

[11] There are several spellings of the same forename as, according to the onomastic actants, it is not the spelling that matters, but the reference made to the successful American singer. The orthographic hesitations are especially frequent in the case of German anthroponyms, as Romance ones are genealogically compatible with their Romanian counterparts.

[12] I have only mentioned here international stars; however, in the case of the Gypsies in Romania, there are many more names taken from local stars – such as Adi Minune, Bănel Nicoliță, Florin Salam, Gică Hagi, Gigi Becali, Jan de la Craiova, Nicolae Guță – most of whom are manele singers, football players or generous entrepreneurs, who are very popular and constantly present in the tabloid media.

[13] This refers to the positive character in the American series *Dallas*, which enjoyed great success in Romania both during the Communist regime and in the post-revolutionary years.

[14] See http://www.adevarul.ro/locale/hunedoara/EXCLUSIV-_Povestea_lui_Superman-_Sava_Superman-tigan_de_export_cu_nume_de_super-erou_0_418158447.html

poorly cultivated and educated, but who hope to change their status and that of their children in relation to society by adopting "successful names" of "pedigree".[15]

Just as migration usually brings about linguistic changes, settling down in a traditional community does not imply isolating oneself from the world, but the refusal of novelty. The co-existence in denominative use of "the old" and "the new",[16] the mobility that is typical of international anthroponyms or those borne by the most promoted stars, shows the extent to which one is entitled to talk about an onomastic trend, to which the written press and the audio-visual media[17] have contributed. Through people/characters that enjoy high prestige in society or exaggerated publicity, certain names may trigger changes in the onomastic habits of suggestible people who have an inferior social position. "The idea that between a name and the person bearing it there is a connection, which translates, to some extent, the movement from cause to effect, in fact, from wish to fulfilment, […] has not disappeared completely, not even in the contemporary age, but it is undoubtedly gaining other forms of practical application" (Iordan, 1979, 42). Socially speaking, the insinuation of foreign forenames in the Romanian onomasticon, especially in what concerns the Gypsies, is the result of the influence performed by the mass media, by the freedom of travelling abroad. From the point of view of onomastics, the press participates in the formation and dissemination of aesthetic "tastes" concerning the choice of forenames. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the favourite places where parents' destinies changed (where they became rich or where their children were born) became baptismal names: *Anglia, Argentina, Barcelona, Berlin, Brazilia, Constanţa, Florentina, Florida, Geneva, Lasvegas, Lisabona, Londra, Lugojana* (< Lugoj, a town in the west of Romania), *Norvegia, Paris, Spania, Suedia*. They are distinctive, specific to an ethnic group that is to a great extent migrant and poor and they complete the neological borrowings from the nomenclator of prestige foreign languages.

Atypical forenames: their ability to shock[18]

The intralinguistic context plays a decisive role in the onomastic actants' opting for uncommon forenames, in inculcating the idea that religious, national or family traditions are less important than being in line with the latest anthroponymic trends in developed countries. On the one hand, these tendencies are strongly related to the momentary state of mind, to an impulse seen as a deviation from an established norm. On the other hand, they may be explained "through the desire to avoid banal names, or those perceived as such by the majority, and, at the same time, to give an air of 'distinction' to a particular social milieu, and through this, to the one bearing the 'distinguished' name. In effect, once fulfilled, this desire may be situated, psychologically speaking, in the sphere of the concept of 'trend', in a broad sense" (Iordan, 1979, 43). The appearance of forenames that are not very frequently used is related to a certain "onomastic trend", which has generated, during the past years, anthroponymic innovations, subsequently adopted in the shape of emblematic patterns of denomination.

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[15] Letiţia Marc, the representative of "Asociaţia Femeilor Ţigănci pentru copiii noştri", explains why the Roma choose names of celebrities for their children: "Through names, Roma parents unconsciously wish that the qualities of heroes in films (bravery, manhood, celebrity) could be associated with their children. It is a practice common with poor Gypsy families; it is a fashion they share." (See the website mentioned above, my translation.)

[16] On this topic, see Felecan, 2006, Felecan, 2011a, Felecan, 2011b.

[17] For a detailed analysis of the influence of mass media on the contemporary Romanian onomasticon, see Felecan, 2007a.

[18] This subject is also dealt with in Felecan, 2011c.

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In what concerns name-giving, Gypsies' taste for extravagance becomes conspicuous in the use of antonomasia[19] as a specific means of denomination. Uncommon names represent deviations from established norms, with drifts that have a primary sociological and emotional motivation. Choosing unusual forenames instead of standard ones is not restricted by extralinguistic confines; moreover, it is the reason for which, especially during the past 20 years, there has been an increase in the use of given names such as *Ambiţia* "Ambition", *Ambulanţa* ("Ambulance")*, Ambasador, Bogatu* "Rich"*, Bomboana* "Candy", *Ciocolată* ("Chocolate")*, Comisia* "Committee / Board"*, Dolar, Facultatea* "Faculty", *Frate* "Brother"*, Ghidon* "Handle Bar", *Inspector, Jandarmeria* "Gendarmerie / Constabulary", *Judecător* "Judge", *Haiduc* "Outlaw", *Medalion* "Locket", *Marchiza* ("Marquise")*, Mercedesa, Mingea* "Ball", *Ministru* ("Minister")*, Paracetamol, Patron* ("Employer")*, Patron (Trandafir), Poliţia* "Police"*, Prefectura, Seif* ("Safe")*, Semafor* "Traffic Lights", *Televizor* ("TV set")*, Termopan* "Double-Pane Glass",[20] *Termopana* (they are siblings), *Vitrina* "Glass Case" (a fortune teller). As a result of the denominative technique mentioned above, we are witnessing the transformation of common nouns (characteristics, qualities, social/economic/political status), into proper nouns. "In this process, the original word or expression loses its asserted meaning and either preserves or takes on a presuppositional categorical meaning depending on the extension of the names" (Van Langendonck, 2007, 268).

The explanations are diverse. From the Gypsies' point of view, the reasons have to do with superstitions: common names protect their bearers from curses, as these lose ground,[21] by not being able to focus on their target. Since proper names are the only ones which individualise, avoiding them leads to rendering children "immune" in front of "danger" stemming from magic, witchcraft, a traditional occupation shared by this ethnic group. From a psycholinguistic perspective, the subjective factor (parents' onomastic options) intertwines with objective reasons, which refer to day-to-day life or to the sociocultural peculiarities of the ethnicity. Choosing forenames that are uncanny, uncommon for the majority, reveals multiple kinds of interconditioning: the obsessions of the Roma, unforgettable incidents in their lives or their position within the society. Such "magic" forenames, which are used simply because they follow the trend and which are usually short-lived, sometimes happen to become fixed in the onomasticon because they succeed in expressing various nuances of thoughts, experiences, feelings, occurring in particular circumstances of life. Just as "argot is a social variant of language, through which a number of speakers mark their belonging to a group or to a 'marginal' community, and implicitly, their being different from official culture and standard language" (Zafiu, 2010, 15, my translation), recent forenames of the Roma minority are discordant within the contemporary anthroponymic landscape. According to their internal or external source, certain anthroponyms used by the Gypsies have a metaphorical, hyperbolic connotation, being thus closer to nicknames and sobriquets: *Bercea Mondialu, Fane Spoitoru, Gigi Kent* etc.

As expressions of a historical, cultural, social and religious context, forenames are connected to ethnic and social interaction, and if at the level of the collective mentality of the majority they have diminishing connotations, the Gypsy ethnic group has a positive evaluation of them. Although "discordant" anthroponyms may generate irony, even despair in cultivated milieus, they are viewed with detachment in the group that uses them. The attitude

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[19] "L'antonomase est une figure de style par laquelle, pour désigner une personne, on utilise un nom commun à la place d'un nom propre, ou inversement un nom propre à la place d'un nom commun" (*GDLSL*, 2007, 40).

[20] In the mid-90s, double-pane glass windows were the symbol of prosperity for Romanians, a proof of glamour and of being well situated on the social ladder, a fact which is ironically treated in certain songs or humorous sketches.

[21] http://pardaf.ro/2011/02/de-ce-si-boteaza-tiganii-copiii-cu-nume-comune/

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ordinary people have towards such names that are stylistically, ethnically and socially marked, and which are rejected by the standard nomenclator, is a humorous one, of irony expressed outwardly. These names become topics of debate for radio and television shows, for news in the written press, threads that are disseminated via emails or via blogs, to put everyone in good humour. Of the multitude of examples that exist on the Internet, I chose one that is symbolic of the situation in question:

An eccentric Gypsy baptised his child George

Extraordinary incident in the village of Ştefăneşti, Ilfov. A Gypsy member of the community, known for his extravagant gestures, insisted on baptising his child George. The man's fellow villagers found the situation amusing, and they claim that they have seen nothing like it before. For many of them, it is the first time they have ever heard about a Gypsy being named George.

Here is what stated Exponatu, "The Exhibit", the boy's uncle on the mother's side: 'Well, mister, this is not a Roma name, it's a horse's name. He is making a mockery of the child.'

Neither did Expertiza, "The Expertise", George's mother, agree with the name, but she had nobody to reason with. Her husband brutally hit her in her face every time the woman had anything to say. Although she tried subtly to suggest variants such as Termopan "Double-Pane Glass", Lamborghini and Laptop, the man would not hear anything about it and stuck to his idea: either George or Alexandru.

Carusel Potârcă, "Carousel Midget", the boy's father, defended his stubbornness as follows: he does not want his son to become a commoner, someone who does not stand out in any way. 'It's better if the world pokes fun at him than to have nobody notice him at all'.[22]

The publicity such forenames are subject to attracts wide audiences and creates a good rating for the press agencies. We are talking about the effect of introducing the audiences with various frames of perception of certain advertised names in well-defined contexts. The effects produced by an eccentric forename vary according to the circumstances in which it is used, and the distinction between "real" and "supposed" anthroponymic novelties leads to the outline and correct establishment of anthroponymic innovations.

Conclusions

Gypsy forenames promote the fusion of the autonomy of local microcollectivity with the integration of global society, through the intertwining of their onomastic structures and the social organisation of the group who uses them. From the perspective of semiotics, the names in question are signs of external reality; they are the linguistic markers of what the onomastic actants feel, wish or think. Therefore, forenames are characterised by great adaptability, managing to carry over the feelings and the thoughts of the onomastic performers. They compensate for the impossibility of reaching higher standards obtained by birth. Forenames must be studied according to their bearers, and the bearers' parents, wherefrom they get their strong social or individual connotative quality. The conscious character of the act of naming is proved by the existence of neutral forenames – with the role of objective naming – and of expressive forenames – which share an expressive plasticity, just as one could discuss the issue of literary forenames/non-literary (popular) forenames.

Gypsy given names occur as a result of anthroponymic use – a permanent movement of adaptation to the sociocultural needs of the onomastic actants. The appearance of discordant forenames highlighted, beyond trend and its implications, a series of mutations which we consider significant for the dynamics of the present-day onomasticon. The anthroponymic homogeneity of Roma linguistic communities becomes an abstract concept, since the

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[22] http://www.timesnewroman.ro/monden/4008-un-tigan-excentric-si-a-botezat-copilul-george

population's onomastic behaviour is consciously transforming as a result of the changes in mentalities, social mobility, the wish for rejuvenation, etc. However, besides the tendency to innovate, at all costs, by choosing neological forenames, there is also an opposite, puristic struggle, of keeping the "classical" given names. In this case, the function of anthroponymic prestige, associated with the sociocultural superiority of the models or of the country of adoption,[23] and with the positive uniformisation achieved by blending with the native population, fades in front of the function of separation. The rational and selective adoption by the Gypsies of forenames typical of other peoples or of contemporary stars, besides the traditional names, is a reflection of the attempt to raise – at the level of anthroponyms, as well – one's own culture to the standards of civilised European cultures. At the same time, the specific character of anthroponymic patterns must be regarded in relation to the function of unification, which reunites the bearers of classical, traditional forenames within the community/family. In the content and the form of Gypsy baptismal names, there is an implied vision of the world, of which the Roma are aware and which they assume with unconcealed pride.

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[23] In the context in which the onomastic actants have emigrated to Western countries, in search of more favourable socioeconomic conditions, and under the influence of countries such as Italy, Spain, France, Great Britain, these individuals adopt names that are specific to those cultures.

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