

CHAPTER 23

IVANA KUPALA (ST. JOHN'S EVE) REVIVALS AS METAPHORS OF SEXUAL MORALITY, FERTILITY, AND CONTEMPORARY UKRAINIAN FEMININITY

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REVIVALS are an integral part of communal experience and function as a set of social practices that suit a variety of needs at a particular point in time. That which becomes constituted as a revival depends on context and on social forces that create the opportunity for revival. Revivals may be rooted in practices that have gone out of mode or practices that were perhaps censored or abandoned due to broader economic, political, or social changes. They may also be rooted in ongoing processes that are deemed more effective if reconstituted as revivals. Revivals offer connections to sought-after experiences. As such, revivals are common in societies where a consciousness of change is evident. Shared experience is couched in frameworks of nostalgia and remembering that foster a sense of connectedness to other participants and draw on indexes that create understandings of what is being recreated anew.

The very idea of “revival” is a modern one and offers a consciousness of the present in relation to the past. Revivals garner meaning from that which came before but are tailored to suit the needs of the present day. Revivalists may function within a discursive understanding of the past that may be cast in terms of “authenticity,” often by intellectual elites, or a conscious temporal framing of that which is “old” or belonging to that which is not “now” (Bealle 2005; Peterson 2005; Rosenberg 1993). Revivals adhere to the ever-changing social conditions in which they are experienced. As such, revivals are, as Ron Eyerman and Scott Baretta argue, influenced by social movements in which social

actors produce knowledge and cultural goods as part of processes that are defined by institutional frameworks (Eyerman and Baretta 1996).

Not every event that has connections to past traditions succeeds as a revival or is necessarily viewed as such. Certain criteria establish a cultural expression as a revival. First, the practice in question lends itself to being transformed into an expression that is meaningful in the present day. It possesses an ability to be tailored to the needs of the revivalists. Central actors set the tone of the movement and lead revivalists through shared activities that lend meaning to the cultural expression being revived. Second, a revival may assume importance in light of communal gatherings that take place at a certain time of the year or at a certain place that lends symbolism to the revival's meaning. A revival's success often depends on the context in which it is shared and how information and cultural products are disseminated. Third, accompanying images, costumes, music, dance movements, and cultural artifacts that contribute meaning to communal involvement are central to creating public and personal spaces where revivals are experienced.

Participants constitute their identities as revivalists in the established frameworks of the revival in question. Discussions of class identity in revival settings prevail in scholarly literature, particularly with regard to folk music revivals in the United States in the mid-twentieth century (Cantwell 1996). In contrast to class, issues of gender are rarely analyzed in revival contexts. And yet, with respect to issues of tradition and times of "old," gender is one of the most defining aspects of social interaction in revival settings. The nature of gender identity in revivals must be viewed in the context of the broader social, economic, and political parameters within which revivals take place. How are female and male identities ascribed a variety of actions deemed appropriate in revival contexts and how are certain spaces and actions, if any, deemed to be gender-specific? In what ways does gender discourse in revival contexts influence or reflect gender ideologies in nonrevival settings?

REVIVALS IN POST-SOVIET SPACES

If we understand revivals to be a way through which people forge connections to each other via frameworks that are rooted in a certain time that differs from "now," then former Soviet spaces are rife with possibilities for drawing on various interpretations of the past in order to organize and make sense of the present. More than twenty years after the fall of the Soviet Union, a new generation born and educated in independent republics is defining ways in which Soviet and pre-Soviet pasts are being negotiated in new contexts. A popular Russian cable television channel, *Nostalgia*, features films, news, and music from the 1970s and 1980s. Broadcasting in Russia's "near abroad," the channel invites viewers to reconstruct their relationship to Soviet culture. In its logo, "Nostalgia," it replaces the Cyrillic letters *c* and *t* with images of the iconic Soviet sickle and hammer, respectively. The word "nostalgia" itself creates a distance between the present and the

past by objectifying the past, framing it as a new experience. The recasting of information in new contexts is part of a process I term “mediated intimacies”: cultural codes through which social actors create new understandings of physical and emotional sharing and social connectedness through reframed familiarities. A person watching the televised images may experience them on the basis of having lived through the era or of being exposed to them for the first time via a nostalgic rendition of a time gone by. In this way, each person’s interpretation and process of mediation is unique to a set of experiences they have had in the past.

Relationships to the Soviet past in former Soviet republics such as Ukraine are highly politicized in the media due to a long history of Soviet censorship and Russia’s continued stronghold on popular culture, media, and economic and political developments in the region. A heightened need to rediscover the past guides much of Ukraine’s youth, as evidenced in a proliferation of popular culture that deals with historical themes. Films, documentaries, novels, and festivals feature aspects of pre-Soviet life, whether through “rediscoveries” of important cultural and political figures or through a renewed appreciation of village folk music genres and peasant crafts. A proliferation of festivals reflects a renewed nationwide interest in ethnic Ukrainian lore, particularly village folklore that was destroyed through collectivization, Soviet modernization, censorship, and government terror. Since independence in 1991, aspects of village folklore and life that could be salvaged or remembered have become festivalized and marketed for consumption among the emerging middle class. Festivals are perceived as revivals that invite participants to embrace and learn about pre-Soviet traditions that have for the most part fallen out of public practice. A variety of such festivals are organized by local governments as a way to encourage local tourism and to create events that are ethnic Ukrainian in content in a public sphere that is dominated by Western and Russian cultural aesthetics. Some festivals are ethnic-oriented, such as the Kyiv-based festival of Jewish music titled “Klezfest in Ukraine,” which aims to draw awareness of Jewish history through music. Others are culture-oriented, such as the festivals of beer, coffee, and chocolate in Lviv that highlight the city’s long-standing culinary traditions. In many ways, contemporary festivals have parallels with Soviet-era government-sponsored social gatherings. Soviet ideologies were spread through communal celebration, whether concerts, parades, festivals, or widely organized social events with speeches, music, and dancing. Such effective organizing was rooted in the structures of long-standing social traditions in the region that were modified and made socialist in form and content.

Contemporary revivals draw on the organizational tactics of Soviet events but fill the content with traditions that are pre-Soviet in origin. Certain public events borrow the frames of traditional pre-Soviet gatherings but have a distinctly post-Soviet flavor. Reflecting political and economic changes that have occurred since the early 1990s, such events take place with financial support from corporate sponsors, ticket sales, advertising, technology, and financial support from local and national political parties. In Ukraine it is in the interests of the government to support festivals that promote certain ways of being in order to influence society to act in certain ways. Sponsorship of

a tradition such as Ivana Kupala, St. John's Eve (Midsummer's Eve), which forms the main example in this essay and accents traditional beliefs of female fertility, functions in parallel with social campaigns that are rooted in traditional ethics and family values.¹ While the manipulation of tradition for contemporary purposes was characteristic of Soviet times as well, the government of Ukraine is particularly interested in reversing the declining birth rate and a significant population loss due to economic migration to the West. Government campaigns have begun to focus on population growth as a moral responsibility, with slogans such as "There used to be 53,000,000 of us, now there are only 48,000,000—*Kokhaimosia!*" *Kokhaimosia* is a play on words that means "Let's love each other" as well as "Let's make love." As such, government sponsorship of Ivana Kupala festivities taps into local ways in which female purity and courtship rituals were regulated in traditional settings.

Contemporary cultural emphases on female purity and on the female as mother evident in Ivana Kupala marketing processes and celebrations aim to overturn two decades of realities of Ukrainian women entering the roles of internet brides (Taraban 2007), prostitutes, pornography workers (Barker 1999), and sex trafficking victims (Malarek 2003). In the early 1990s, the influx of Western popular culture overturned Soviet-era aesthetics that did not celebrate overt displays of sexuality in the media, a shift that culminated in widespread access to pornography in printed media and on television (Barker 1999). The female, celebrated as mother in the Soviet era, came to be viewed in public media predominantly as a sexual object, reinforced by a spike in local prostitution and sex tourism to Ukraine from Western countries. At this time, Ukrainian women also became the primary targets of international sex trafficking.

An antitrafficking protest in Kyiv by a group of young women calling themselves FEMEN symbolically fused the figure of the crucified Christ and a trafficked Ukrainian woman. The headdress donned by the protagonist in this public action evoked the wreath of flowers donned by young unmarried women during Ivana Kupala festivities. Such artistic public actions tie Ivana Kupala festivities to broader social campaigns that aim to reclaim women's bodies on female terms and overturn the stigma placed on victims of sexual transgressions. Elements of such a "purification" discourse are embraced by public figures such as former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko, who wears her hair in the form of a braid, a hairstyle culturally associated with unmarried young girls.² Tymoshenko's plait also evokes Christian iconography regarding Ukrainian folk portrayals of the Mother of God (forbidden in the Soviet era). It further draws on Slavic pagan mythology from a time when a matriarch, later named Berehynia, the Mother Protectress, was believed to preside over the ancestral Ukrainian hearth (Bilaniuk 2003: 54). The symbolism of Tymoshenko's hair has not been lost on the public, especially her political enemies in Parliament, who taunted her in session to prove that the braid was real. Tymoshenko undid her braid, a symbolic gesture at weddings that signifies the deflowering of the young bride and is usually done by the mother-in-law. However, because Tymoshenko undid her own braid, she held agency over her body and reinforced the popular idea that only a woman can and should decide who will do what with her body, and when.

Political and social symbolism associated with Ivana Kupala capitalizes on a renewed public interest in ethnic Ukrainian traditions that were wiped out or manipulated by the Soviet regime. Kupala celebrations are spaces where people are welcome to explore their heritage via language, music, dance, and costumes while experiencing a context in which female fertility and the nuclear family play a central role. Stripped of their spiritual connotations during the Soviet era, contemporary Ivana Kupala celebrations offer ways through which participants connect to nature, to the past, and to each other. In what ways do Ivana Kupala celebrations influence contemporary understandings of the feminine in post-Soviet society? What roles do traditional expressions play in (re)defining contemporary social values? To what extent do relationships with gendered deities in spirituality-based revivals influence understandings of gender identity among revival participants?

IVANA KUPALA AS REVIVAL

Ivana Kupala, St. John's Eve (Midsummer's Eve), was among the most widely celebrated folk holidays in central and eastern Ukrainian villages before World War II. In the Lemko regions of western Ukraine, the holiday was known as Sobitka. Young people burned bonfires called *sobitky* in honor of Perun, the ancient Slavic god of thunder, fire, and lightning. In the early part of the twentieth century, Ivana Kupala was perceived as a religious Christian holiday that celebrated the birth of St. John the Baptist. Local priests encouraged the blessing of herbs, rooted in the pagan myths that herbs gathered on St. John's Eve had special healing powers. Such myths have been written about by Ukrainian writers such as Olha Kobylanska, who describes Ivana Kupala rituals in her book *On Sunday Morning She Gathered Herbs* (1909). Despite overt pagan references, the association of the pagan effigy Kupalo with the figure of St. John the Baptist marked the festivities as Christian and in opposition to anticlerical Soviet ideology. Nevertheless, Ivana Kupala is represented in Ukrainian literature and in pre-Soviet memory as a night during which freedoms from socially prescribed sexual norms were socially accepted among the rural population.

Traditionally, on the evening of July 6 (according to the Julian calendar), large crowds gathered alongside rivers and lakes to participate in celebrations whose ritual elements are described in chronicles dating as far back as the eleventh century. The term "Kupalo" was itself first mentioned in the Hypatian Chronicle under the year 1262. The Ivana Kupala rituals were so deeply rooted in the folk practices of the Ukrainian people that no attempts to ban them—for instance, by the ruling Cossack hetman Ivan Skoropadsky, who in 1719 decreed Ivana Kupala celebrations to be the root of all evil and disease—were successful. These rituals were once celebrated to ensure a bountiful harvest, as well as the fertility of young women, in rites closely tied to nature.

During the 1960s, Ivana Kupala was restructured as a celebration of agricultural bounty devoid of overt religious and spiritual meaning in the Ukrainian SSR.

Ukraine was known as the “breadbasket of Europe,” and the reconstruction of Ivana Kupala as an agricultural holiday was molded to fit the structure and ideology of Soviet-influenced work holidays. Following Khrushchev’s Thaw (Vidlyha) from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s, certain villages were allowed by local leaders to incorporate new versions of Ivana Kupala into their annual calendar of Soviet holidays that celebrated the worker (Klymets 1990). These holidays were usually organized and run by the *zavkluba*, the head of the local *klub*, who also took on the responsibility of reporting on the festival to socialist media outlets such as local magazines and newspapers, while simultaneously accenting the lack of religious traditions such as the festival’s calendar association with the Christian feast of St. John the Baptist (Kononenko 2004). Such articles, printed in Ukrainian-language Communist journals such as *Prapor* (Flag), *Sotsialistychna Kultura* (Socialist culture), and *Chervonyi Prapor* (Red flag), as well as ethnographic journals such as *Narodna Tvorchist ta Etnohrafija* (Folk culture and ethnography), point to the festivalization and mass organization of Ivana Kupala events in villages and towns throughout the central and eastern Ukrainian SSR by the early 1960s. In a 1963 article titled “New Birth of an Old Holiday” published in the journal *Sotsialistychna Kultura*, the author, M. Tryzna (gender unknown), cultural director of the Bohodukhiv regional Dom Kultury (Building of Culture) in Kharkiv oblast, includes a picture of a *kolhosp* (collective farm) milkmaid, Yefrozynia Pomazan, “Hero of Socialist Labor,” greeting the event participants with traditional bread and salt presented on a traditional Ukrainian embroidered towel (Figure 23.1). She is clad in regular clothing, her chest decorated with Soviet medals. Standing next to her, a man in a Ukrainian embroidered shirt holds the microphone for her. According to the author, Pomazan reportedly stated: “I pass on to you the baton of my work. Hold it tightly, so that the list of worker-leaders of the region fills with new names. The older generation of workers believes that the youth will stand strongly on the frontlines of development” (Tryzna 1963: 25–26). It seems clear that by the 1960s, the Ivana Kupala celebration in this village shifted from a traditional emphasis on spirituality and female fertility and focused on gains in agricultural development, the Soviet celebration of the worker, and communal striving for socialist ideals (Kuveniova 1967; Lohozha 1964; Petrone 2000; Tarasenko 1966).

The artifice of this event is further evidenced through the conscious performance of socialist discourse among rural peasants, the emphasis on influencing generational attitudes toward the land, and the controlled pageantry that interweaves traditional Ukrainian folk elements such as embroidery and traditional Kupala songs with Soviet slogans and a portrait of Lenin onstage. According to Tryzna’s article, more than two hundred singers performed as members of various *kolektyvy*, performance groups usually associated with the workplace or the village House of Culture. Among the songs was one titled “Lenin,” with music by V. Vermenych and words by V. Sosiura.³ Alongside the performance of “Lenin,” young women danced *khorovody* around a Kupala *derevtse* (literally, “small tree”; a branch decorated with ribbons) and sang the well-known traditional Kupala song “Kruhom Marynonky” (Around Maryna): “Around Maryna the girls danced / While the rain came down upon them / And onto my red rose.”



FIGURE 23.1 *Kolhosp* (collective farm) milkmaid Yefrozynia Pomazan, “Hero of Socialist Labor,” greets Ivana Kupala participants in Bohodukhiv village, Kharkiv oblast, 1963. Reproduced with permission of the Periodicals Division of the V. Stefanyk Lviv Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

The emphasis on the gendered pagan effigies of the female Maryna and the male Kupalo reflect the maintaining of the gendered structure of Ivana Kupala festivities from the pre-Soviet to the Soviet era. Kupalo was believed to be the god of love, harvest, and the earth’s fertility. This allowed for the Soviet-era transformation of the holiday as a celebration of agrarian labor tied to the harvest. Kupalo was represented by fire, while Marena was represented by water; similar figures of sirens, water nymphs (*rusalki*), and mermaids reflect associations between water and female sexuality common to many cultures.

IVANA KUPALA SINCE INDEPENDENCE

Since Ukrainian independence in 1991, Ivana Kupala revivals have become celebrations of ethnic pride (Kononenko 2004) and renewed celebrations of community and the nuclear family. The significance of Ivana Kupala celebrations in their present rural and urban forms lies in the reconstructed belief that on some levels Ivana Kupala revivals foster personal and collective forms of Ukrainian identity, particularly through song, revived ritual, and ethnic dress. Concurrently, these events encourage celebrations of ethical values, understood as acts of social responsibility regarding family, community, and the nation (Kuehnast and Nechemias 2004; Rubchak 1996; Zhurzhenko 2004).

Ivana Kupala revivals, particularly those that feature collective singing on stage and communal dancing and chanting among the audience, play a significant role in contemporary discourses regarding the role of women in society by blurring traditional discourses of gender with contemporary social responsibilities associated with population growth. Reconstructions of pre-Soviet versions of Ivana Kupala festivities have contributed greatly to a broader nationwide shift in reconceptualizing the female as mother and protector of the nation's moral and family values in opposition to that of female as sexual object, a discourse that influenced gender relations in the 1990s (Barker 1999; Buckley 1997; Gal and Kligman 2000; Johnson and Robinson 2007; Marsh 1996). Ivana Kupala revivals are marketed in contemporary contexts in Ukraine as family celebrations, with a specific focus on the purity and innocence of young women, who are meant to index the sociopolitically revived figure of the Slavic Berehynnia—the pagan protectress of Ukrainian lands.⁴ The fertility of Ukraine's land is often compared to female fertility. In anti-Soviet discourse, people often personalize the experience of collectivization by comparing Ukraine to a victim of rape by Russian occupiers. To what extent do Ivana Kupala celebrations reflect and influence contemporary perceptions of women as cultural matriarchs and ethnic tradition-bearers? What types of musical, linguistic, and gender discourses inform such revivals? How does corporate sponsorship and financing from nongovernmental organizations or local government influence the ways in which cultural messages regarding tradition and identity are marketed and received among different members of the population?

In posters that advertise Ivana Kupala-themed events, girls adorned with wreaths of flowers signify renewed connections to nature and, by extension, pre-Soviet cultural roots, allegedly untainted by the cosmopolitan and consumerist ideologies that have become the norm in postsocialist society (Humphrey 2002). On a poster (Figure 23.2) advertising an event called Den Dnipra (Dnipro River Day), held on July 6, 2008, the traditional date for Ivana Kupala celebrations, the words "Ivana Kupala" do not appear, but the cultural framework for the festivities is implied through the depiction of the young woman holding a magical flower, *kvit paporoti*, believed to blossom only at midnight on



FIGURE 23.2 Poster on a building in the center of Kyiv advertising Den Dnipro (Dnipro River Day) on July 6, 2008, the traditional date of Ivana Kupala celebrations. (Photo: A. Helbig)

St. John's Eve. People believe that the person who finds *kvit paporoti* will be lucky in love and happy in life. (See Web Figure 23.02 📄.)

The event featured in this poster may be described as a local rock concert held in a public square popular with young people in the Podil district near the Dnipro River in Kyiv. The young people in attendance danced and sang along with the popular musicians who were hired by the festival organizers, which in this case included a radio station, a soft-drink company, a nongovernmental organization, and local government. As in all Ivana Kupala celebrations, there was no entrance fee, and the event was accessible to anyone who wished to attend. The central feature of this event was that it was social in nature and helped participants forge connections with others who arrived at the celebrations from different parts of the city and its outskirts. This forging of community

relations at a time of great change in urban contexts, particularly with an influx of migrant workers from rural areas, has been a central motivating factor behind many such sponsored events.

IVANA KUPALA IN KYIV

To show the variety of ways Ivana Kupala is celebrated and understood, I draw on two Ivana Kupala festivals—one held in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, and the other near Kharkiv, a city close to the border with Russia that served as the first capital of the Ukrainian SSR (1919–34). These contexts demonstrate differing relationships with the past through the medium of pre-Soviet folk traditions gathered and revived by ethnomusicologists and enthusiasts in surrounding villages. Kyiv, the center of Ukraine's post-socialist music industry, is rife with groups who perform a variety of revived folk styles and repertoires. Kharkiv oblast is often viewed by intellectuals from western and central parts of Ukraine as an assimilated region that was not able to retain pre-Soviet folklore due to a longer history of collectivization and the destruction of local traditions during the Soviet-induced famine-genocide of 1932–33 (known in Ukrainian as Holodomor, literally “death by hunger”) that resulted in tremendous population loss. The differing relationship to the past has a direct influence on the ways Ivana Kupala celebrations are staged and the music that is presented at these regional festivities.

On July 6, 2008, I attended the neighborhood-based Ivana Kupala celebrations in Kyiv (referred to earlier) that drew hundreds of participants to the banks of the Dnipro River. The chosen area was a park amid high-rise apartments in an area of the city called Obolon. Traveling for half an hour by metro from my rented apartment in Kyiv's city center and then continuing on foot, I followed scores of people dressed in jeans and ethnic embroidered shirts and blouses. Many young women and girls wore wreaths of flowers and greenery on their heads, recalling how, on the eve of Kupala—as described in Olha Kobylanska's 1909 novel *V Nediliu Rano Zillia Kopala* (On Sunday morning she gathered herbs)—young women would set their wreaths afloat on the water. If a girl's wreath flowed out of a young man's reach, it was believed that she would not wed that year.

A stage was erected from which an emcee (master of ceremonies) guided the early evening festivities and on which a children's folk music and dance group presented “scenes” of traditional pre-Soviet Ivana Kupala celebrations. The apparent purpose of these performances was to entertain and to instruct the festival attendees in traditional Ivana Kupala rituals. The emcee often repeated: “This is how your grandmothers and grandfathers celebrated Ivana Kupala.” This kind of expression of self-awareness functioned as a discursive ritual throughout the evening and established a consciousness regarding Ivana Kupala as a celebration of ethnic identity, cultural memory, and oral history.

The staged scenes were presented by a Kyiv-based children's folklore group called *Dai Bozhe* (Let It Be, God), founded in 1989 by Olha Melnyk, wife of Taras Melnyk, a



FIGURE 23.3 Young performers from Dai Bozhe perform a scene around the straw effigy of Kupalo. Kyiv, July 6, 2008. (Photo: A. Helbig)

well-known figure on Ukraine's festival scene for his work in organizing and running Chervona Ruta, the first Ukrainian-language music festival in independent Ukraine. The scenes performed by Dai Bozhe included spoken word, chanting, singing in traditional *bilyi holos* (white voice) style, and *khorovody*, ritual dancing. *Bilyi holos* refers to the throaty, tense vocal aesthetics associated with female polyphonic singing in rural Ukraine. These vocal aesthetics have become popular through the reclaiming of rural repertoires by young urbanites, as well as through a growing consciousness that the folk ensembles of the Soviet era presented an arranged folklore that altered or did not truly represent village traditions. The children were dressed in ethnic costumes that were similar to peasant everyday wear in villages of central Ukraine more than a century ago.⁵ Stage props included straw and grass effigies of the feast's main pagan figures, Kupalo and Marena (Figure 23.3). (See Web Figure 23.03 )

Following the official program, the emcee guided the audience members through the lighting of the Kupalo fire—a relic of the pagan custom of bringing sacrifice—around which people performed ritual dances and sang songs about lovers' fates. Couples were instructed by volunteers about what to chant as they leapt across smaller fires; people used to believe that those who made it across would marry within the year. Young members of Dai Bozhe intermingled with the crowds and indicated where to dance and when to run toward the burning Kupalo effigy (Figure 23.4). The excited crowds, the tall burning effigy whose falling ashes burned holes in participants' clothing, and a swirl of media cameras gave the event the feel of a semicontrolled social experiment that oscillated between freedom of personal expression and self-aware cultural experimentation. The crowds were guided by the taped Ivana Kupala music, which was punctuated by

instructions on the dance moves given to the revelers by a young woman with a microphone. (See Video Example 23.01 and Web Figure 23.04  .)

IVANA KUPALA IN KHARKIV

Soviet alterations and assimilations of Ukrainian folk traditions have been most evident in eastern and central Ukraine (Noll 2000). Here Lenin's death, together with the relatively low degree of consolidation and the unclear future direction of the Communist Party in the 1920s, allowed for public displays of Ukrainian national consciousness and the promotion of the Ukrainian language and culture, particularly in education and media. The 1930s under Stalin, however, brought vast socioeconomic changes, including the collectivization of peasant landholdings into *kolkhosy* (large communally owned farms), significant investments in industrialization, expansion of the transportation system, and rapid urbanization. At the same time, the Soviet-orchestrated famine-genocide of 1932–33—a horror intentionally induced by Stalin to weaken Ukrainian nationalism and gain control over Ukrainian agricultural lands—took the lives of four million victims in eastern Ukraine in a single year.⁶

Conscious Soviet-era alterations to Ukrainian traditions, such as those described earlier with reference to the village of Bohodukhiv in Kharkiv oblast in the 1960s, have created significant problems for ethnographers and ethnomusicologists wishing to collect and revive pre-Soviet cultural practices in certain regions of Ukraine. Many Ukrainian scholars believe that there is very little actual pre-Soviet tradition left in eastern and central Ukrainian villages. This thinking is so deeply rooted among scholars in other parts of Ukraine that ethnomusicologists from Kharkiv are hardly ever invited to national ethnomusicology conferences held in the capital, Kyiv, and in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, where scholars conduct research in the nearby Carpathian Mountains, where they believe fewer rural traditions were destroyed by the Soviet regime. Assessments regarding processes of Soviet/Russian assimilation among the rural population in central and eastern Ukraine are argued from various points of view (Noll 2000). Villagers in these areas speak *surzhyk*, a mix of Ukrainian and Russian (Bilaniuk 2005), and a significant part of the local population has much stronger beliefs in the overall benefits of Ukraine having closer ties with Russia (in opposition to the population of western Ukraine).

As if reinforcing the alleged stereotype that eastern Ukraine has suffered a more significant loss of tradition, the Kharkiv regional Ivana Kupala festival that I attended on July 5, 2008, opened with young women dressed as *rusalky* (water nymphs) performing ballet-like movements with Kupalo wreaths in their hands. These modernized, “non-traditional” expressions were interpreted by a fellow ethnomusicologist who grew up near Lviv, the ethnic Ukrainian stronghold of western Ukraine, as “evidence of assimilation and cultural destruction.” The wreath-clad female and male announcers invited the audience members to join the traditional Ivana Kupala festivities that had been



FIGURE 23.4 Young performers from Dai Bozhe lead the crowds in *khorovody* around a burning effigy of Kupalo, Kyiv, July 6, 2008. (Photo: A. Helbig)

brought to them “on the wings of ancient songs.” (See Video Example 23.02 ) To a background of new-age fusion music, the young *rusalky* called out to Kupalo to join the festivities. This fusion-style introduction framed the performance of the following group, Muravskiy Shliakh (The Murav Way), led by Halyna Lukianets of the Kharkivskiy Narodnyi Tsentri Narodnoi Tvorchosti (Kharkiv Center for Folk Traditions), as “traditional.” Muravskiy Shliakh markets itself as a “research and reproduction group.” Its members collect folklore during ethnographic expeditions to eastern and central Ukraine (Slobozhanshchina and Poltava oblasts) and recreate the village style of singing, *bilyi holos* or “white voice.” Thus, their singing is much closer to what would commonly have been heard at Ivana Kupala celebrations in the pre-Soviet era. On this occasion, however, Muravskiy Shliakh was forced to follow the festival setup as regards staging and technology and had to lip-sync to a prerecorded track, a feature that is common to many public events in the postsocialist space.

The Kharkiv oblast Kupala celebration differed from that in Kyiv on many levels. Most significant, it was multiethnic, featuring both ethnic Ukrainian and Russian performers from neighboring villages and towns. In the scene shown in Figure 23.5, the four women holding the *kupalske derevtse* (Kupalo tree) at the center of the picture are ethnic Russians from a nearby village and wear the *sarafanka*, a sleeveless folk dress worn by Russian women in the nineteenth century. This Russian presence dates back to the 1930s, when the ethnic Russian population in eastern Ukraine increased as a result of Stalin’s Russification policies introduced as a backlash to the Ukrainianization movement of the 1920s. In the post–World War II years, more Russians migrated into Ukraine as part

of Soviet repopulation and industrialization efforts. Despite ethnic tensions between Russians and Ukrainians in other parts of Ukraine, particularly in western Ukraine, the celebrations on the outskirts of Kharkiv appeared to be conscious expressions of ethnicity, but not nationalism, which seems to have been more the case at the Kyiv celebrations. (See Web Figure 23.05 )

ETHNOMUSICOLOGY AND THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF COLLECTED MUSICAL FOLKLORE

Postsocialist attempts to reclaim Ivana Kupala as a celebration of youth and courtship have gone through several stages of change since the early 1990s. Initial events were small-scale and were sponsored by enthusiasts. The transitional, strongly pro-Russian government in Ukraine was not interested in promoting ethnic Ukrainian folk traditions. There was also little cultural memory regarding how Ivana Kupala had been celebrated in pre-Soviet times. An improved economy, a fostering of ethnic Ukrainian pride, and the growing influence of world music markets have added cultural and financial value to village music genres such as those once associated with Ivana Kupala. The influx of recording technology and the growth of ethnomusicology as a discipline have also contributed to a wealth of publicly disseminated traditional music recordings, which in turn have helped foster widespread public interest in traditional music festivals and music-related cultural events such as Ivana Kupala.

The repertoires revived and performed during Ivana Kupala festivities, as well as being simultaneously taught to the festival-goers, are gathered and researched by scholars, performers, and enthusiasts from older, predominantly female interlocutors in rural settings who practiced pre-Soviet, Christian, and pagan-influenced forms of Ivana Kupala rituals in their youth. While descriptions in literature and ethnographic studies focus predominantly on pagan-influenced lore, Ivana Kupala was nevertheless at some point tied to the Feast of St. John the Baptist, and Christian elements crossed with pagan ones. The descriptions of Ivana Kupala festivities in the 1960s from central and eastern Ukraine published in Soviet ethnographic journals stress the nonreligious character of the village-based Ivana Kupala revivals. In the new millennium, the stress is on neither the Christian nor the pagan elements but rather on the fact that the repertoires are pre-Soviet and therefore perceived as authentic, untampered with by Soviet cultural policy. The ethnomusicologist Maria Sonevtsky describes this process as “rooted in Herderian nostalgia and Romanticism striving for the authentic ‘soul of the folk,’ transmuted through the confusing push-and-pull of Soviet formulae for socialist folklore, and now reinvented in the first tumultuous era of Ukrainian independence” (Sonevtsky 2010: 16). A search for lost Ukrainian musical traditions and an attempt to rescue relics that represent pre-Soviet ways of life guide the present-day revivals. People collect



FIGURE 23.5 Ethnic Ukrainian (far left and far right) and Russian performers (center) hold *kupalski derevtsia* (Kupalo trees) and prepare for Ivana Kupala festivities near a rural lake on the outskirts of Kharkiv, July 5, 2008. (Photo: A. Helbig)

artifacts (songs, instruments) as texts through which to reconstruct the past (Noll 1997). Adhering to an ideological commitment to uncover (pre-Soviet) truths, their practice of ethnographic antiquarianism and historical ethnography contributes to mediating practices through which the past informs the present (Bauman and Briggs 2003).

The passing on of musical traditions via female channels (evidenced also in the high number of female ethnographers and female students in newly established ethnomusicology programs in Ukraine) points to gendered generational networks of transmission. The recording of older peasant women by younger urban female scholars (Figure 23.6) disproportionately situates aurally associative performative aspects of Ukrainian ethnic revival in the rural traditional female realm: the nuclear family and the home. In this way, one may argue that Ivana Kupala revivals aim to instill family values within loosely defined frameworks of emerging ethnic consciousness. Music is tied to ethnic identity through the recording of Ukrainian-language songs from rural areas. The revival of pre-socialist forms of such repertoires helps elevate the Ukrainian language in the public sphere. Linguistic anthropologist Laada Bilaniuk points out that during the Soviet era, Ukrainian was publically held in low regard and was viewed in Soviet-Russian public discourse as a language appropriate mostly for folkloric venues and singing (Bilaniuk 2003: 51). Ivana Kupala revivals tie Ukrainian language usage in music to broader Ukrainianization movements in literature, culture, and society, as well as politics, as witnessed during the 2004 Orange Revolution. (See Web Figure 23.06 📺.)

Perhaps more significant than the ethnic and moral incentives to stage Ivana Kupala, however, is the wish among performers to earn money from their folk craft. In a brief

telephone conversation in July 2010, Taras Melnyk, the festival entrepreneur whose wife, Olha, leads the children's Dai Bozhe folk ensemble in Kyiv, indicated his disappointment that festival organizers do not pay folk music performers enough money to make their craft economically worthwhile. Such disappointments have also been voiced by ethnomusicologists such as Iryna Klymenko, who leads the performance group *Hurtopravtsi* at the Kyiv Conservatory of Music. Klymenko stresses the lack of copyright protection as a detriment in her work as an ethnomusicologist and claims that her folklore research issued on CD has been copied and performed for profit at Ivana Kupala celebrations by folk groups who do not undertake their own collecting in the villages.

This also brings into question the role of village women in the revival process. Klymenko recounts how, during a past Ivana Kupala festival, two groups who were invited to perform had inadvertently prepared an identical repertoire that had originally been collected, arranged, and released on CD by a group of ethnomusicologists. The older women from whom the repertoire had been recorded learned of this incident and demanded that next year they be invited because they were the original carriers of the pre-Soviet musical culture. Ironically, the repertoire they sing is that of young unmarried women and does not therefore sit well, in terms of age appropriateness, either with the older women themselves or with the academic-conservatory-based ensembles that appear on stage (Figure 23.7). (See Web Figure 23.07 )

These situations bring to mind Tamara Livingston's discussion of "core revivalists," people who are so strongly involved in revived traditions that they assume individual responsibility for passing them on to others. Livingston notes that these actors do not merely "rescue," they create "a new ethos, musical style, and aesthetic code in accordance with their revivalist ideology and personal preferences" (1999: 70). Actors in such revival circles may play particular attention to recreating the manner in which the repertoires used to be performed, but at the same time they may alter the traditions in ways that make them more appropriate for the stage. In the case of the Ivana Kupala festivals described here, the involvement of city councils, cultural institutions, and organized performance ensembles gives the events a loose structure that nevertheless offers participants opportunities to enjoy a day out with family and friends.

The nationalist and gendered experience of Ivana Kupala festivals garners support from the government and general public in ways that fuse discourses of wholesome spiritual revival, environmental awareness, and population growth. Central to the enactment are young women who wear traditional flower wreaths that reference images of women as "natural" and as saviors of national ideals. These symbols function in opposition to the new cultural, political, and economic processes that create anxiousness regarding the need to protect ethnic Ukrainian identity from global (i.e., Russian and Western) assimilation.

The involvement of scholars attests to the high level of mediation and cultural control within which Ivana Kupala festivals function. The repertoires in Ivana Kupala festivities are researched, collected, and arranged by ethnomusicologists, who then release them, often in a chronological arrangement of events, on CD; often they will also publish the songs that have been remembered by the largest number of informants. Performers such



FIGURE 23.6 Ethnomusicology students from the Kharkiv Conservatory of Music interview and record older female interlocutors in the village of Lyman, Kharkiv oblast, June 8, 2008. (Photo: A. Helbig)

as Dai Bozhe learn the repertoires from such CDs and interpret the music through staged scenes with music and dance. In turn, the performers teach the audience members the “proper” ways Ivana Kupala is celebrated. Through such intimate mediations, Ivana Kupala festivals offer opportunities to practice and embody new postsocialist attitudes toward love, family, and tradition. The emphasis on the practice, by audience members, of rituals such as jumping across the fires and setting wreaths afloat on the river reveals the performance-mediated ways that ethnically framed gender expectations are being reconstituted through music- and dance-based revivals in postsocialist Ukraine.

CONCLUSIONS

Revivals of Ivana Kupala are processes that gather meaning from social contexts in which a variety of factors foster interest in communal sharing and celebration. These revivals are reflective gatherings during which participants forge relationships to past identities and forms of expression while creating new understandings of ideologies that are relevant to their present experience. Revivals may be political, ethnic, cultural, spiritual, or social in nature. Their structure may change in line with broader economic processes, and their staging may differ from one manifestation to another on the basis of their context-defining nature. Revival events can draw participants in on many levels, offering a space in which to explore both personal and communal identities. They are deeply influential structures that also function as aural expressions of memory through



FIGURE 23.7 A *svynarka* (pig farmer) from the former collective farm in Lyman—also seen being interviewed and recorded in Figure 23.6—performing the songs of young maidens at the Ivana Kupala festival near Kharkiv, July 5, 2008. (Photo: A. Helbig)

which people engage with their own surroundings by lending consciousness to that which has come before and to that which is now.

The most important aspect of gatherings such as those described in this essay is the fluidity that they lend toward interpreting the past. Individual rituals may be recast to suit the needs at hand, while broader revivals may be tailored to accommodate values deemed most fundamental at a certain point in time. Previous knowledge of what is being revived is crucial to drawing a depth of understanding and to lending meaning to the revival itself. As such, there are as many ways to analyze revivals as there are ways to experience them.

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NOTES

1. In Ukrainian speech and song, “Ivan Kupalo” is referenced most often in its conjugated form “Ivana Kupala” or simply “Kupala.”

2. Yulia Tymoshenko was prime minister of Ukraine from January 24 to September 8, 2005, and again from December 18, 2007 to March 4, 2010. She was dismissed from the post by the Ukrainian Parliament, Verkhovna Rada, after losing the runoff vote in the 2010 Ukrainian presidential elections against Viktor Yanukovich. Yanukovich ran for president in 2004 against Viktor Yushchenko. His voting falsifications fueled the popular protests that came to be known as the Orange Revolution, led by Yushchenko, Tymoshenko, and others.
3. The poet Volodymyr Sosiura (1898–1965) fought in the Ukrainian People's Army. When the short-lived Ukrainian independent state was overrun by the Bolsheviks in 1921, he joined the Red Army. His literary output reflects his ideological loyalty to the Soviet Union and his patriotic feelings for Ukraine. In 1948, he was awarded the Stalin Prize, but in 1951 he came under attack for his 1944 poem "Liubit Ukrainy" (Love Ukraine), deemed too nationalistic after the war. Sosiura's portrait and the title of this poem are featured on the 2-Hryvnia coin, the currency of independent Ukraine.
4. This study excludes Ivan Kupalo events among Ukrainians in the North American diaspora, where the holiday functions as a celebration of courtship among people who share a Ukrainian ethnic background.
5. These costumes differ greatly from the types of ethnic Ukrainian costumes that were popularized by Soviet-era national folk dance ensembles such as the Pavlo Virky Ukrainian National Folk Dance Ensemble and Moiseyev Dance Company.
6. In addition to the four million who died from forced starvation, Ukraine's Famine-Genocide (Holodomor) of 1932–33 led to an estimated birth loss of six million people, placing the total number of victims at ten million.

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