Ukraine is, by and large, a bilingual country. The Russian and Ukrainian languages are both widely used, and most residents have at least a basic competency in both. As they are Slavic languages, Russian and Ukrainian share many words and grammatical forms; yet, they are distinct languages. Participants in my research chose to speak with me in Russian, Ukrainian, English, or even a mix of these, as was their preference. In this text, when words appear that are distinct to one language or the other, I mark them as such (e.g., Ukr: zhitia; Rus: zhizn’). When words appear that are homonyms and bear the same meaning in each language, I do not (e.g., nar-koman). Many common first names have distinct Russian and Ukrainian forms. Though the names used in this text are pseudonyms, I have given monikers to participants that match their language of choice (e.g., Sergey vs. Serhii) and the level of formality we adopted in our conversations (e.g., Dmitrii vs. Dima). Readers familiar with these signifiers will be able to catch their meanings throughout the text, but those who are not familiar will not be missing very much. Place names in Ukraine also have distinct Russian
and Ukrainian forms. In this text, I have chosen to use the Ukrainian form for all place names (e.g., Kyiv instead of Kiev), with the exception of the city of Odessa. The Ukrainian variant of Odessa contains only one “s”; however, the Russian form has become so standardized in English-language text that I chose to use this spelling variation instead. Odessa has, after all, earned the right to stand out a little bit.