



HISTORY of ROMANI Literature

with Multimedia on Romani kids publications

Sofiya Zahova

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**History of Romani literature
with Multimedia on Romani kids' publications**



Culture

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Introduction

It was only in the 20th century, when Roma, after centuries of oral tradition, have started to write literature and to publish. The Romani literature production has been growing enormously in the decades after 1980s and the Romani literature scene became truly international. Up until now in the countries all over Europe and Americas where Roma live have appeared a number of publications varying from materials to support the education of the Roma to original books by Roma authors with tales, poetry, autobiographies, and short stories. The definition Romani literature in this book refers to the written works published by authors who are Roma by origin and works that target Roma

reading audiences. These are books written in many different languages and dialects of the Romani language, published in different countries under various circumstances, but most of them reflecting the cultural roots of the Romani communities and containing elements from the Romani ethnoculture.

The aim of this publication is to provide a short historical overview of the Romani literature publications in European context, stressing on the developments in different regions and countries and the issues what have influenced these developments. Romani literature texts as most literature artefacts are not autonomous pieces. That is why this text tries to



draw tendencies in the development in the Romani literature, bearing in mind the context surrounding the literature productions and the key factors which impact them, instead of trying to comprehensively review or provide account of all works and authors, which is anyway impossible. I find the most appropriate the historical approach, because, as I try to reveal, the tendencies in Romani literature development are interrelated with the development in different historical periods and their political context. I propose periodization in the development of Romani literature into four periods. The first period starts with the immergence of written texts in Romani in the beginning of the 20th c. and the interwar period in which the major phenomena is the Soviet state-wide project for publications in Romani. The second period refers to the second half of

the XX c. with immergence of works by Roma authors in many European countries. A third period starts in 1980s, with raising the issue of Roma children's education and Romani culture by European institutions, the fall of the Iron Curtain and boom in the production of Romani literature in the decades after 1989. And the fourth period from the end of 1990s and after 2000 when we may speak about internationalization of the Romani literature scene and developments that go far beyond the borders of national country or a region.

The second part of the book discusses the variety of genres, topics and subjects that could be found in the Romani children literature and Romani literature for adults, but the literature studies classification of genres is not leading in our overview. The genre classification is not an appropriate tool also because in Romani literature



there are not really clear boundaries and in a piece of literary work often the genres are blurred – folklore story and authors narrative are merging, one book can be both autobiography, testimony and folklore, a picture book/short story can at the same time be autobiography, etc. And, at the end, every piece of written text in Romani can be applied in education and used as educational material for Romani kids' classes.

The development of Romani literature or of various authors and topics has been also in the scope of research and publications. So far the most comprehensive international study is the book “The Literature of the Roma” published originally in German, with consequent translations, by Rajko Djurić (Djurić 2002). Considerable research on famous Roma authors was produced by the University of

Graz within its Rombase project (romani.uni-graz.at/rombase/) and Roma history and culture factsheets project co-funded by CoE (Romani-Project Graz/Michael Wogg). Several issues of *Etudes Tsiganes* (9/1997; 36/2008; 37/2009) were devoted to Romani literature with proceedings from international scientific forums with articles devoted primarily to international developments. The number of research on Roma literature in Europe with the approach of comparative literature studies has been also growing recently among scholars (Eder-Jordan 1993, 2000; Trevisan 2008; Toninato 2013). The immergence of publications in Romani and by Roma authors was also discussed in historical texts focusing on the history of the Roma in various countries (Marushiakova/Popov 1997; Achim 2004; Acković 1994) or in



general (Crowe 1995; Kenrick 1998). A comprehensive review of publications useful for Romani children education was done by Peter Bakker and Hristo Kyuchukov in an electronically published bibliography (Bakker/Kyuchukov 2003).

The aim of the book is to make a short historical overview of the development of Romani literature with illustrative

materials to visualize the text and popularize the written literature of the Roma. It is accompanied by a CD with Multimedia presenting books and materials for Romani kids produced across Europe. It presents research work implemented by the author as part of Studii Romani team participating in campUSCulturae project.

Romani literature in Europe from its birth until 1980s

It was in the first half of the 20c. when Romani language started to be used in print, but the idea for necessity of such publications could be dated back decades earlier. Throughout the 19 c. in the region of South Eastern Europe started a process of endeavours for national emancipation, e.g. formation of nation states for ethnic communities living at that time on the territory of the Ottoman Empire and led by their elites. In the Balkans the endeavours for national emancipation in this period were typically related to struggles for independence of the (national) church and recognition of the (national) language through its

usage in church service and education. In this context, it is no wonder that at the end of the 1868, in the course of a general discourse for national emancipation, were publicly raised demands by Roma themselves to have church services and education in their own language. This year the Bulgarian newspaper *Makedonija* published in Istanbul “A letter to the editor” signed by an “Egyptian” (i.e. Gypsy). The author of the letter was Ilia Naumchev from Prilep who used arguments to plead for the right of the Gypsies as an ancient people to have religious worship in their own language and for the necessity of “making a



society and taking care of education” (Marushiakova / Popov 1997; Marushiakova / Popov 2000). Despite the fact that these demands were far from their realization, they are a sign that Roma / Gypsies communities’ development were much influenced by the general developments of the region in which they live.

First written texts in Romani

In mid XIX c. the Austrian Gypsologist Heinrich von Wlislocki published verses presented as poetry written by Gina Ranjičić, Serbian Roma woman. According to Wlislocki’s notes Gina Ranjičić was born in 1830 somewhere in Serbia. Being adopted by an Armenian family living in Belgrade she was able to read and write. Wlislocki published verses which were presented as written by Gina in a book entitled *Gil Rromane* (Romani

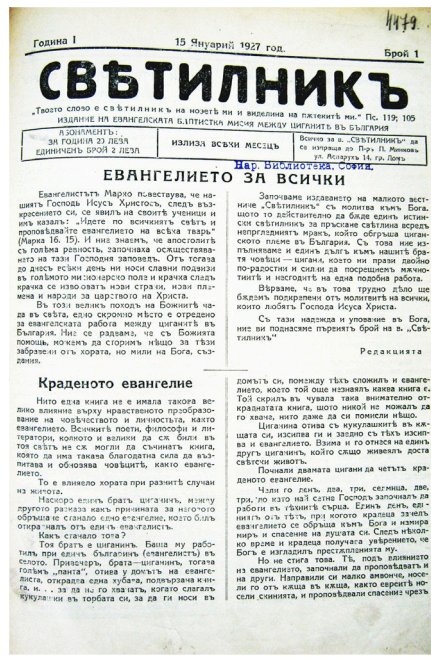
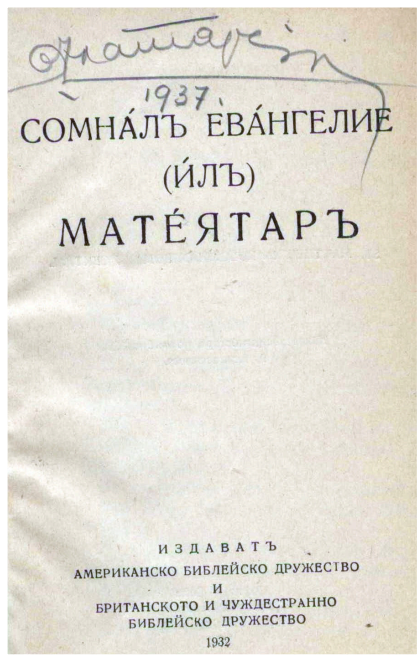
Songs), published in 1864 in Sweden and believed to be edited by Wlislocki, who also edited the text. Despite the fact that data about Ranjičić original works is quite uncertain and it is very probable that this is just a mystification, some Roma activists and researchers regard Ranjičić as the first Roma author.

While publishing in Romani is a later phenomenon when compared to the publishing traditions of other languages, in regard to the first written texts Romani publications repeat the common pattern of most European languages – translation of the Bible is one of the first texts that appeared in Romani with the support of the British Bible Society. The Gospel of Luke was translated by George Borrow in Romani and published in Spain in 1872 (Bible. Luke 1872), while Bernard Gilliat-Smith at that time a vice-consular of Great Britain in Varna,



also translated into Arlii Romani dialect the same Gospel for believers in Bulgaria in 1912 (Bible. Luke 1912). In 1920s the newly created “Evangelical baptize mission among the Gypsies

in Bulgaria” published *Romano alav* (Romani word), a supplement to the evangelical periodical *Svetlinik* (Slavkova 2007: 77). Romani religious literature is not original in content,





however its novelty is in the translation and publication in Romani language. As a matter of fact religious literature production continues and, in the decades after 1990s, when in the post-socialist realities can be observed revivals of the religiousness, there is a boom of Romani language religious publications, primarily of various protestant denominations¹.

If we go back to the point made a few paragraphs above about the interrelation between the Romani communities' development and the general context of the states/region in which they live, we have to mention also the immergence and publishing activities of the Gypsy organizations established in the Balkan countries in 1920s and 1930s. Such organizations

were established in Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia by grass-root movements among the Gypsies themselves who wanted to have citizens' rights for keeping their distinctiveness as specific communities (Marushiakova/Popov 2005). To promote and publicize their ideas among the mainstream society some of them published their own periodicals in the national language, but often the newspapers' names were in Romani to flag Romani identity. For example in Romania in the 1930s were published *O Rom* (Roma), *Glasul Romilor* (Voice of the Roma), *Neamul Tiganesc* (Gypsy People) and *Timpul* (Times) giving tribute to Gypsy organizations - in 1926 the first local Gypsy organization was founded,

¹ *Sumnalo Evandjelje Isusko Hristosko e Jovanostar* translated by Trifun Dimić. Belgrade: Biblijsko Društvo, 1989; *O Neevo Zaveti Amare Devlesko Isus Hristos* translated by Sulyo Metkov. Sofia: Union of the Church of the Seventh Day adventists, 1995; *Ianostyr Svento Mištophenyben* translated by Valdemar Kalinin. Dillenburg: Gute Botschaft Verlag, 1999.



while in 1933 was formed the General Association of Gypsies in Romania - and their leaders elevating demands for education, employment, and civil rights (Achim 2004). Similar processes are observed in Yugoslavia, where the established in 1935 the Association of Belgrade Gypsies for the Celebration of the Aunt Bibia that published *Romano Lil* (Roma Newspaper) (Acković 1995).

Romani publications in Soviet Union, 1920-1930s

While all that was done prior to 1920s is rather sporadic effort and there was no particular state policy to stimulate Romani publishing, in scholarship the real beginning of the Romani literature is related to the period 1925-1938, when in the Soviet Union was developed a large scale state-supported initiative for book publishing in Romani that in terms of number of titles, print run, genres and

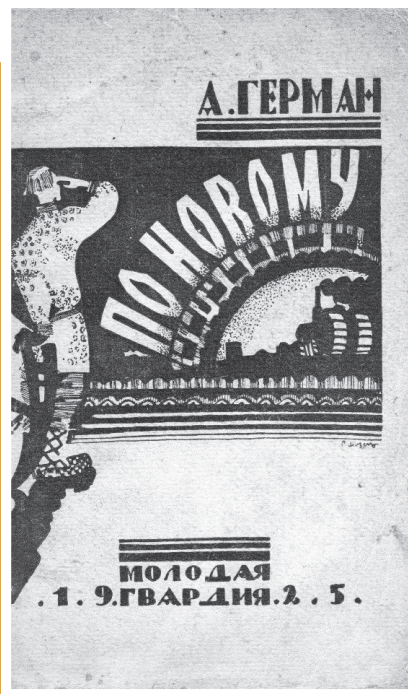
distribution is still with no parallels in the history of Romani publishing. This initiative was part of a greater political platform of the Soviet regime targeted at smaller ethnic communities (*narodnosti*), whose political and social integration was to be achieved by development of their language and culture. As a result, languages, Romani among them, in which nobody had never written before became literary, systems of spelling were formulated, original and translated books were published, textbooks were written. In 1925 in Moscow the All-Russian Gypsy Union was founded and in 1931 was founded Theatre "Romen" in Moscow (Marushiakova/Popov 2008b). Various Roma activists and educated persons were engaged in the process. Cyrillic script and the dialect of the *Ruska Roma* (or North Russian dialect) were the base for the language standard developed by the well-



known Roma activists Nikolai Pankov and Nina Dudarova. Publications were in the fields of social and political propaganda; popular science and fiction (of Roma authors and translations into Romani). Between 1931 and 1938, 292 various titles were published in Romani. Translations of classical works into Romani were made. Forty seven works by Roma authors (verses and prose) by Maxim Beslyudsko, Alexander Germano, Ivan Rom-Lebedev, Nikolay Pankova, Olga Pankov, etc. were published.

One of the most productive authors and activists of this period was Alexander Vjacheslavovich Germano, author, cultural activists, educator and translator, who was also a member of the Union of Proletarian Writers, “Kuznitsa” (Smithy) and founder of the Roma writer group Romengiro lav. The first Germano’s literary work written in Romani, the story *Ruvoro* (Wolf Cub),

appeared in 1926 in the first issue of the Roma magazine *Romany zorja* (Romani Dawn), edited by Germano himself (Kalinin/Rusakov). Germano’s





original titles are *They called him wolf and other stories* (Germano 1933a), *New Roma are coming* (Germano 1933b), *Red Fires. Poems.* (Germano 1934), *Ganka*



Chiamba and other Stories (Germano 1935), *Poems and Songs* (1937), *Stories in song/in verse* (1960). His *Novels and Short stories* (1962) was published in the prestigious edition of “Soviet writer” publishing house. A common topic of Germano’s poems is account of the nomadic past of the Roma which is described with love and nostalgia, but only as a counterpoint to the new life of Roma and all communities in the Soviet Union, since the past was related to insecurity, backwardness and poorness. As he writes in one of his short poems:

*I remember those long childhood
years
I remember the road, vans, wagons,
I remember shiningly clear spring,
I remember forests, the great pines,
I remember fields and meadows and
valleys,
I remember the taste and smell of
wormwood crumple,*



*I remember strumming an early
morning guitar,
I remember touting the gypsy songs,
I remember - not once they said: "Oh,
it is clear
Life is good ... Even, you are blessed!
... "*

*But I remember:
there was always a little bread for me
My mother served it with tears.*

(Satkevich 1974: 10; published in
Russian, translation in English by S.
Zahova)

Germano was also collector of Romani folklore and worked on an educational manual for teaching in Romani. He also translated Russian classical works into Romani as Alexander Pushkin's *The captain's daughter* and Maxim Gorky's *Makar Chudra*.

Bearing the spirit of the time lots of publications were targeted at political propaganda, among them Germano's *Džana neve Roma* (New

Roma are coming), published in 1933 by "Profizdat". It deals with the system of Gypsy collective farms and cooperatives. The book comprised of chapters that can be met in any propaganda publication of that time, as for example *Dre kralitska berša* (From the time of Czarism), *Nacyonal'no pučibe angil Oktjabrsko revoljucyja* (Question of ethnic groups before the October Revolution) and *Syr dživinde Roma dre phurane berša* (How Roma lived in old times). There is also content referring to the political slogans of that time: "[...] Kralitko Rossija sas bare staribnasa vaš tykne nacionalnostenge" (Czarist Russia was a prison for small ethnic groups.); "Vaš amenge – činda o Lenino – uchtylla akana adaja kulturno revoljucyja vaš odova, soby te javas pherdes socyjalističeskone stronasa." (For us – wrote Lenin – a new cultural revolution has now started so that we



may become a completely socialist land). The work also expresses the communist look at the Gypsy *kulaks* - rich Roma either from a group of horse traders or cauldron makers, who do not want to lose their position and become part of the collective farming system (Hübschmannová 2002).

Germano created in all literary genres, including plots for theatre dramatic works, among which the first play staged at Theatre “Romen” in 1930s called “Life on Wheels”.

Among the other Soviet Roma activists who wrote and published books were Nina Alexandrovna Dudarova, Nikolai Alexandrovich Pankovo, Olga Pankova, Mihailo Bezliudsko, Rom Lebedev, Evdokia Orlova, who worked on both authors’ texts and translations.

Olga Pankova co-authored with Germano the young literature work Seryoga Laguno (Germano/Pankova

1933), and published two poetry collections *Our days. Poems* (Pankova 1933) and *Poems* (Pankova 1937) in which dominates glorification of the new regime and new life for the Gypsies and all the people in the state:

Homeland - Mother

*Russia, Russia, you - my song!
Russia, Russia - the light of my eyes!
As a mother who has a big family,
You love us equally, none as
stepchildren.*

*As your own children, we love you ...
Warmed by warm maternal hands,
Gypsy daughters and sons
And their multi-lingual countrymen.*

*Russia, Russia – endless space!
Russia, Russia - one people!
I say a word – a choir of thousands
Will pick up and finish my song.*

*Disappeared the cursed shadow of the
past*



*On a new road the peoples have gone.
Over Russia is shining an endless day
Increases the maternal glory of the
Earth!*

(Satkevich 1974: 40, published in
Russian, translated from Russian by
S. Zahova)



**Всесоюзно
коммунистическо
большевикэнгири
партия ВКП(б).**

**Коммунистическо партия — англатуно бутаритко класо-
скиро отрадо.**

Дро Октябрё 1917 б. бутаритко класо дро союзо
чёрорэ крестьянствоса счюддыа капитистэнгири
власть, хаськирдэ лэнгири райканыбэ и утхода пэски-
ри власть.

Бутарья и крестьяне победидлэ пэски-
рэн тасаибиарьен пазодова, со лыджыя
лэн дро марибэ коммунистическо партия
большевикэн дро шэро дакирэ вожден-
ца Лениноса и Сталиноса.

Колибы на със зоралы закалёно дро марибэна Ле-
нинско коммунистическо партия бутаритко класо на мо-
гискирлас бы тэ лыджял пал пэстэ пиро революционно
дром бутитка масы, на могэскирлас бы тэ кэрэл о со-
циализмо.

Со жэ одова сы партия?

«А мари партия — ракирла Ленино, — сы
сознательнонэ англатуно союзо мариб-
нытконэнгири пало бутаритконэ кла-
со скиро освобождениё».

Конэстыр стходы сы коммунистическо партия? Конэс
обхэтанякирла ей? Дрэ коммунистическо партиякирэ

3





Nina Dudarova, in addition to her teaching activities and editorial work for children's literature and Romani newspapers, wrote volumes of poetry for children in Romani. Nikolai Alexandrovich Pankovo is the most important interpreter of classical Russian and foreign literature (Pushkin's *The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish*, *The Captain's Daughter*, and *Gypsies*, as well as *Carmen* by Prosper Merime), and co-author of the first Romano-Russian dictionary. The original works by N. Pankov includes only several poems and short stories included primarily in textbooks for children.

Mihailo Bezlyudsko, also a member of the group of Theatre "Romen" published in 1933 two works, the revolutionary poetry collections *New life. Poems* (Bezlyudsko 1933a) and the story *Horse* (Bezlyudsko 1933b), about the life of the poor gypsy thief who became influenced by harsh conditions

of existence, caught in a farm and became influenced by the forerunner of a new environment. Ivan Rom-Lebedev published in 1930 *Destiny. Short Story*, narrating about the fatal fate of Gypsies killed during an attempt to steal horses. Maria Polyakova published books for children as *How Masha went to learn* (Syr Masha gyja te syklel, 1930); *The angry cock* (Xoljamo bashno, 1930), *Roma tales* (Romane rakiribe 1931). Poems were also published by Evodkiya Orlova (1933), Vano Timofeevo (1936), Vano Hrustalyo. In terms of content the authors wrote mainly ideologically biased poetry, with the exclusion of Vano Hrustalyo (Hrustalyo 1936), one of the prominent actors of the Theatre "Romen" concertmaster and playwright. His poems are in high culture poetic form and are primarily love lyrics and poems praising the beauty of nature. Hrustalyo's works are considered among highest achievement

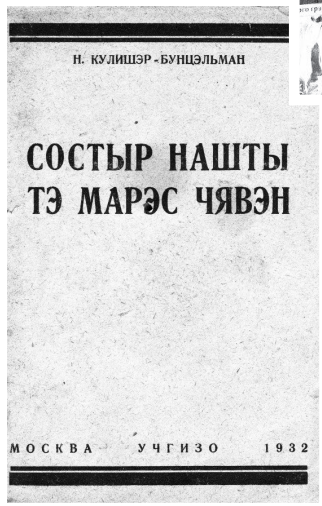


of Gypsy poetry of this period (Kalinin/Rusakov). The Roma poets published also their verses in two anthologies of Romani *Al'manaho Romane poeten*, 1931 and *Romano al'manaho*, 1934.

In early 1930s school books were also translated and published in considerable print run, as for example

Natural Science. For 4th grate of school (Estestvoznanie vash shtarto bersh sykljaibe) *Basic Mathematics. For 3rd and 4th grate of school* (Elementarno matematika. Vash 3 i 4 bersh sykljaube), *Geography. Textbook for primary school* (Geografija. Uchebnika vash nachal'no skolo).





The Romani literary landscape in 1920-30s in Soviet Union was comprised also of two journals – *Romani zorya* (Romani down 1927-1930) and *Nevo Drom* (1930-1933), in which literary works were published. In the very first edition of *Romani zorya* was published the story “Romano Bang” by Ivan Rom-Lebedev – narrating how the gypsy fortune teller fools using



improvised its rich Russian, becoming one of the first original prose works by Gypsy authors. Commixes with propaganda content and moral narratives were also published on the pages of the newspapers. Plots for plays were produced in Romani for Theatre “Romen” in Moscow.

In the late 1930s, however, Russian state policy towards the nationalities communities changed, so the state-funded platform for Romani publications ceased, and afterwards, similarly to other socialist countries, the production of Romani literature was result of sporadic efforts of Roma individual authors, publishing in their own Romani dialects or languages of the national republics where they live. Despite the fact that the publications were produced in a limited period of time of 13 years and their distribution and impact was limited only to a small circle of educated Roma in the bigger

cities, the Soviet Union state funding project for Romani publications from 1920-1930s remains with no analogies in the history of Romani publishing in terms of number of titles, print run and variety of genres.

Books for Romani kids were not published, primarily folklore and translations of Romani authors from earlier periods were published.

Such authors in Soviet Republics were: George Kantia from Moldova, in Latvia Karlis Rudjevich, Leksa Manush, also linguist and researcher, poems were published also by Vano Romano (Ivan Panchenko), Nikolay Satkevich, and others.

In the Soviet Union after 1938, when the state initiative for Romani publications ceased to exist, publishing in Romani was very insignificant and publishing houses and editorials often refused to publish in Romani. Nevertheless, the cultural life of the Roma was not



completely destroyed: publishing of text by Roma authors was possible, but they were published in Russian and publishing in Romani was purposely avoided. For example in 1970s Leksa Manush (pseudonym of Alexander Belugin) proposed for publication a poetry collection in Romani, but it was published only in Russian. Theatre “Romen” continued its performing with plays also exclusively in Russian. Example of the change in the politics of identity in regard to Romani language publishing is the author’s development of Nikolaj Satkevich, prominent figure of the post-war period in Romani literature, writer and member of the Writers Union. In his early years in 1930s Satkevich published several poems in Romany in *Almanaho romano* (1934) and contributed to the literary magazine Romani Dawn. After 1945 continued to write poems dedicated to the Gypsy



way life translated and published exclusively in Russian – *Strings. Verses and Poems* (1972), *Gypsy Beads. Poems. Ballads* (1977), *Gypsy Sun*



(1982). He was editor and translator of the first Romani poetry Gypsy poetry anthology issued after 1945 *Fires* (Satkevich 1974), in which were introduced and translated in Russian the major name of the poets from 1930s (Alexander Germano, Nikolaj Pankov, Olga Pankova, Mihail Bezlyudsko, Nina Dudarova) and postwar poets (Ilko Mazore, Ivan Romano, Karlis Rudevich, Nikolaj Satkevich). Similary to the other Roma authors, Satkevich was active educator and translator and he compiled a Russian-Romany dictionary and translated the Gospel of John in Northern Russia Gypsy dialect.

The books appeared due to the efforts of individual authors working in various places of the republics within the Soviet federation (e.g. no central organization was applied). Such

authors in USSR were: George Kantia from Moldova, who published the collection *Folkloros Romano* – tales, songs and poems in Ursari dialect of the Gypsies from Moldova (Kantja 1970). In Latvia Karlis Rudjevich published poems and the ethnographer and linguist Leksa Manush published two poetry collections *I Want a little horse* (1973) and *The Little Star* (1976). Working on research of both Romani and Indian language, he also translated into Romani the Indian epic *Ramayana* published in 1990 in Chandigarh, India. Along with the original authors' works, there were also publications of Romani folklore. Alexander Germano also published a collection influenced by Russian epic folklore called *Stories in poems* (Rosphenybena dre gilja, 1960).



Romani language and culture in the context of Yugoslav Roma policies

Similar to the Soviet state in 1920-1930s, in the Yugoslav socialist federation after 1960s were created conditions in which the Romani literature and culture production flourished. As part of the Yugoslav ethnic policies proclaiming a hierarchical structure of the communities in the federation classified into three main groups (nations, nationalities and ethnic groups) Roma were granted a status of ethnic group and enjoyed measures stimulating the development of Romani culture. Yugoslavian Roma literature production was broadly stimulated; it is the most impressive in the Socialist Eastern Bloc after 1945. Whereas in all other countries demonstrations of Romani identity were forbidden, in Yugoslavia, the

involvement of the Roma activists with the international Romani movement and the state support for development of Romani identity politics led to a series of publications related to cultural expression in Romani language. Slobodan Berberski, partisan and comrade of Tito, the first International Romani Union President (elected at the London Congress in 1971), was pioneer in both the Roma movement and Roma poetry in Yugoslavia, publishing a number of poetry collections. He has published more than 10 books, all in Serbo-Croatian with Romani words and phrases in the texts. His first poetry collection were published in 1950 under the titles *There will be a rainbow after the rain* and *Spring in the eyes* (Berberski 1950a; 1950s). It was part of the cultural landscape in Yugoslavia in which expressions in Romani were officially used in discourse and in



cultural production. As a result, by the 1970s, 'Roma' was the term officially used. The Roma activists established a network of organizations under the umbrella organization *Rom* and started to realize Romani language productions with support from the government (Acković 2001). They also participated in international Romani movement with support from the government. Romani was used in various forms of expression and it was the language of the main characters in the film 'I even met happy Gypsies' (original title *Skupljači perja*, "Lather gatherers", 1967), which made popular the song *Gelem Gelem*, that few years later, in 1971, became the Romani international anthem at the First World Gypsy Congress in London. As a result in 1970-80s literature production by Roma authors appeared in some of the major cities of the federation.

The established in 1971 in Skopje theatre *Phralipe* (Brotherhood) performed in Romani, dramas were also written and Shakespeare translations made for it. Topics of the works were very much related to Roma way of life and perceiving the world, and languages of publication were Romani and/or Serbo-Croatian. The singers Esma Redjepova and Šaban Bajramović created and produced songs in Romani, ethnographic works on Roma were published in all federative republics. In 1980 in Skopje was published a bilingual (Romani/Macedonian) grammar by the Macedonian Rom Šaip Jusup and the linguists Krume Kepeski. In 1986 the French linguist Marcel Cortiade, a strong supporter of development of Romani language standard, who later proposed the language codification accepted at the Fourth World Romani Congress in Poland (April 1990),



published the bilingual (Romani/Serbo-Croatian) *Romani phonetics and spelling*. The same year a congress dedicated to Romani language and culture was organized in Sarajevo.

In this stimulating atmosphere a number of authors in all Yugoslav republics started writing and publishing titles. It was the poetry genre that prevailed in their expression and only Alija Krasnići's productivity went beyond the poetry genre, including short stories, tales, dramas and novels. Rajko Đurić, who in 1969 published his first bi-lingual collection *A gypsy searches for a place under the sun*, was the first poet publishing in Romani (Đurić 1969). He continued publishing poetry in Romani and Serbo-Croatian in his later works *Without a house, without a grave* (Bikheresko bi limoresko - Bez Doma bez Groba, Đurić 1979), *Ancient word – a faraway world* (Purano svato - o

dur them/ Prastara re... Daleki Svet, Djurić 1980), *A and U* (A thaj U/A i U, Durić 1982).

Without a house or a grave
 0-0-0
goes my endless lament
 0-0-0
to my father-o
my graveless father
my homeless people
toys of the wind
dregs of the world
Where then
Where then from here?
 0-0-0
to my mother-o
gentle mother
where is there a stone
on which to raise me up
that I might call your name?
The sky is our cover
and wherever I fly
the ground is barren
without a heart.
Where then
Where then from here?
... a life of wandering
forwards, backwards



*along the roads
that time forgot.*

(Hancock, Ian at al. 1998: 143-145)

Being an activist and researcher of Romani culture worldwide Rajko Durić was also an author of a folklore collection of Romani riddles (1980) and of the photo-album *Gypsies of the World (Cigani Sveta)*. He is also among the first researchers of Romani literary scene on international scale and author of the first book devoted to the literature of Roma and Sinti (Djurić 2002). Being one of the internationally recognized Roma authors his poetry works were translated into several European languages (Djurić 1989; 1990; 1994) and he established the Roma PEN Center in Berlin in 1996. Another important Serbian Roma author is Jovan Nikolić who writes in Serbian, but publishes his works with Romani translation. His first poetry book *A*

guest from nowhere (Gost katinedenar/ Gost niotkida, Nikolić 1982) published in 1982 was awarded a mainstream literary prize in Serbia. Again in Serbia, Kadrija Šainović published his first poetry collection in Serbo-Croatian *Gypsy Intimacy* (Šainović 1975) and Seljajdin Selijasor published his first poetry book in Romani *Life among the Roma* (Dzividipe mashkar o Roma, Selijasor 1988). In Skopje, Macedonia, Iljaz Šaban, member of the Union of Macedonian Writers, published two poetry collections in Macedonian – *Remembering the Immortals* and *The roots of my predecessors* (1985), whereas the Romani manuscripts remain unpublished. The Skopije born Roma singer Muharem Serbezovski published also the poetry collection *Colorful diamonds* (Šareni dijamanti, Serbezovski 1983). In Kosovo, at that time an autonomous Yugoslav province within the Republic of Serbia, the



Romani cultural production was part of the media and artistic landscape, including radio emissions in Romani. A number of cultural manifestations were organized with poetry reading of Roma. While poetry production prevailed in the Romani literature in Yugoslavia, it was only Alija Krasnići's output that went beyond the poetry genre, including short stories, tales, dramas and novels. He writes in many different literary genres. Apart from prose and lyric poetry he also writes children's books and dramas, and additionally works as translator from Serbo-Croatian into Romani. His main concern, which he deals with in a literary form, is depicting the life of the Roma in all its facets. He deals with suffering, privation, poverty and need, but also with the longings, the happiness and the every-day pleasures of the Roma in his region. (Romani project/Wogg).

Alija Krasnići published in literary journals in Kosovo, and his first book of short stories appeared in Albanian. In 1980s Alija published in Priština two bilingual (Romani/Serbo-Croatian) collections of short stories *Tent's Fires* (Čergarendje Jaga - Čergarske Vatre, Krasnići 1981) and *Coming Back to Life* (Iripe ano Đuvdiqe. Povratak u Žhivot, Krasnići 1981), the Albanian language poetry book *Weary nights* (Krasnići 1988) and the epic poetry based on legends and folklore beliefs in Romani and Serbo-Croatian *Star Dreams* (Zvezdani Snovi/Čehrajine Sune, Krasnići 1989). Krasnići depicts typical picture characters and stories from the Romani communities full of warmth, real life stories and irony.

At the same period Bosnian born Roma living in Italy were also writing and publishing poetry and stories. Semso Advić, originally from Banja Luka, published his first poetry collection in Romani with Italian



translation by Sergio Francese in 1985 (Advić 1985). In 1987 Rasim Sejdić, a gifted since the age of 14 poet and narrator, published Romani/Italian poetry collection *Rasim poeta zingaro* (Sejdić 1987). Sejdić's stories, transcribed and collected by Giulio Soravia, consist mostly of tales, stones of the dead, ghosts and vampires

and fanciful tales were published in Romani with an Italian translation in the journal *Lacio Drom*. Despite the fact that these works along with other publications by Bosnian Roma were published in Italy, it should be noted that they are related to the fact that the authors originated from Yugoslavia, where they were stimulated to start their first literary activities.

In the spirit of the multi-lingual and multi-national federation, several ideological books were printed mainly devoted to the figure of the Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito either edited or translated by Roma activists of the time. Šaip Jusuf, a Romani activists and linguist from Macedonia, translated *We Are Tito's, Tito Is Ours*, an ideological book originally published in Slovenian and translated into the languages of all communities living in Yugoslavia, including Roma (Zdunić/Vavpotić/Pavcek 1978).



Sait Balić was editor of the essay's book *Po Tito* (About Tito) translated in Romani and devoted to the life and deeds of Tito printed few months after his death in May 1980. In it we can read an overview of the whole historical, economic and political development put in the ideological discourse of the time:

Andar o rat thaj praxo, tala vast e Titosko, barili Amari phuv. Nisave bavlala ništisarde te o Tito peraven. O Tito ando 1948. breš vačarda i e Staljinose: Na! Kava. "Na!", phendo amare bahtaće, ašundilo ando sasto them. E Jugoslavija atoska araxhadili ande but phari situacija. No, o Tito kamla te Amari phuv džala piro drom, te ćerel peske pire vastenca thaj godjasa bahtalipe. Te na avel tala avresi roća, te na amare manuša trajin sar aver kamel.

[...]

O amal Tito o phralipe thaj jekhipi e narodongo thaj narodnosongo ande Amari phuv sajekh phirda po ilo. Vov sajekh vaćedla: "Aračen o phralipe thaj o jekhipi sar tumari jakh!"

(Zdunić, Vavpotić, Pavcek 1978: 14)

Our country grew under the Tito's hand, over blood and dust. No kind of winds could destabilize Tito. In 1948 Tito told Stalin: No! This. "No!", he said for our luck, and it was heard in the whole country. In this way Yugoslavia



found itself in a very difficult situation. But, Tito wanted our country to go on its own way, to make with its own hands and mind its own destiny. Not to go under other's weels, and our people not to live as someone else want.

[...]

Always in the heart of our comrade Tito was the brother and unity of the peoples and nationalities in our country. He was always saying: "Keep the brotherhood and unity as your own eyes!"

(English translation by S. Zahova)

The other socialist states

For the historical approach of this book, when we analyse the developments of Romani literature in the socialist states in the second half of the XX c., it is appropriate to apply the classification of East European Roma policies proposed by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov. According to them these policies

can be classified in two types and they depend on the general nation-building policies of the state: the first type are ethno-national policies that aim to create a single (ethno)nation and design measures specifically targeted at other minorities including Roma (such policies are characteristic for Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Poland, Albania) and second type of post-imperial policies that refer not to a single nation, but to a hierarchical structure of ethnic/national communities. In the second type of policies Roma are concerned only as part of the mainstream ethnic/national policies of the states (such examples are the Yugoslav federation and the Soviet Union) (Marushiakova/Popov 2008a). Actually with the previous part about the developments of the Soviet socialist state in the years after the October revolution we have seen the example of the post-imperial policies towards ethnic/national



groups, and Roma were not targeted specifically, but as an ethnic group among many others, who did not have literary tradition in the past. The part that follows will make an overview of the policies in socialist states that developed within the ethnic-nation policies paradigm and in Yugoslav federation as another example of post-imperial model of national policies.

Whereas the development of the Romani literature in the Soviet Union remains limited in time and in the borders of the Soviet state, the first and most famous world's Roma poet is Bronisława Wajs, whose Roma name is Papusza (Doll). Papusza's poetry bi-lingual (Romani/Polish) collection *Songs of Papusza* was published in 1956, edited in terms of orthography and annotated by Jerzy Ficowski, a long term researcher of the Polish Gypsies and government advisor on Gypsy issues, who published the

most extensive study in Gypsies in the Polish territories. Jerzy Ficowski met Papusza at the end of 1940s and recognized her poetic talent. During her youth she learned on her own to read and write, so Ficowski encouraged her to write her verses phonetically in Romani, using the Polish alphabet. Ficowski then edited and translated them into Polish, without a single intervention in the content. Papusza's works often depicting pictures of the Roma traditional life and the relation between the Gypsies and the natural environment:

Poem

*I love the fire as my own heart.
Winds fierce and small/ Rocked the
Gypsy girl
And drove her far into the world.
The rains washed away my tears,
The sun—the golden Gypsy father –
Warmed my body*



*And wonderfully singed my heart . . .
... the Gypsy horse neighs,
Wakes strangers
But gladdens a Gypsy heart . . .
Oh how fine to live, in the night go to
the river,
Catch cool fish like cold water
In your hand . . .*

*In heaven the hen and chickens
And the Gypsy wagon.
They foretell the whole Gypsy future,
And the silver moon,
the father of the forefathers from
India,
Gives us light,/ Watches the children
in the tent,
Lights the Gypsy woman
That she may swaddle the baby well.
...
No one understands me,
Only the forest and river.
That of which I speak
Has all, all passed away,
Everything, everything has gone with it—
And those years of youth.*

(Ficowski 1989: 114-15)

The poetry collection appeared with facsimiles of Papusza's original first records of the verses. Exactly because of her association with Ficowski (a supporter of government policy for the sedentarization of the Roma in Poland), Papusza's own Roma community considered her poetic activities and presentation to Gadjo audience as government's tool in the destruction of the Gypsies' traditional way of life. She was finally expelled from her community not because of the use of writing itself, but the manipulation of Papusza's image to support the government's policy of compulsory sedentarization (Courthiade 1997: 40-41). Papusha's literary activities were constantly rejected and disapproved by her own community, because they contradicted the Roma traditional values. The published excerpts from Papusha biography reflect this conflict between modernity and traditional way



of life, which is also seen in her tragic destiny at the end of her life-path.

In 1962 Papusza became member of the Polish Writers' Union. Her poems were translated into German, English, French, Spanish, Swedish and Italian. She was also awarded Lubuska Culture Award (1958), Nadodrze Award (1978) and Gorzów Award (1978). The dramatic life-path of Papusza and her extraordinary talent were of interest for the artistic community in Poland and inspired several films and one opera performance. In 1974 Maja and Ryszard Wójcik made a documentary, *Papusza*, based on their own script and being consulted by Ficowski. In 1991 another documentary was made, *The Story of a Gypsy*, scripted and directed by Greg Kowalski with music by Jan Kanty Pawluśkiewicz, in which are showed documentary materials of Papusza herself, of Jerzy Ficowski, of her sister Janina Zielińska, of her

son Władysław Wajs and her doctor Maria Serafiniuk. In 1994 in the open air Kraków Theatre presented the symphonic poem *Papusza's Harp* (Papusza comes from a family of traditional harp players), performed in the Romani language, with a cast of opera stars. The last creation inspired by the life of Papusza is the movie of the same name produced in 2013 directed and scripted by Joanna Kos Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze, with a soundtrack from the *Papusza's Harp* performance by Pawluśkiewicz.

In Bulgaria, for a short period, following the earlier Soviet model towards nationalities, in 1940s and 1950s, there were series of specially tailored measures in which Romani language and culture were stimulated. A newspaper called *Romano Esi* (Romani voice), later renamed in the spirit of the communist ideology to *Nevo Drom* (New way), on which



were published texts and poems primarily with ideological content about Communist Party and State Leaders (national and on international scale related to “brotherhood” socialist countries). An important figure in these processes was Shakir Pashov, founder of several Gypsy organizations in Sofia, including All-Gypsy organization for struggle against fascism and racism and for cultural elevation of the Roma minority in Bulgaria in 1945, also an MP from the Bulgarian Communist Party list in 1940s, editor of *Romano Esi* and co-founder of the Musical-artistic theatre “Roma”. Example of such verses is the final of a poem by Aliya Ismailov, published in *Romano Esi* (number 10 from 30 April 1948 r):

*Do not be ashamed you, comrade,
today are bright, fateful days
that “Gypsy” they call you –
of spirit and faith do not fall
Turn around and look,*

*who is fighting for you and present
him salutes to Comrade M. Pashov.
He fight as a fighter for justice
and equality
to connect us with love, pride
with the Bulgarian people.*

*Dams and tunnels
fraternal, we will jointly build
inspired by the strength, pride,
by Comrade M. Pashov.*

*Long live Stalin, Tito, Dimitrov
and Comrade M. Pashov.*

(Published in Bulgarian, translation
in English by S. Zahova)

These policies were replaced since the 1960s by new measures guided by the principle that the culture of all non-Bulgarian ethnicities does not have a place in the official state policies, demonstration of Romani culture was forbidden. In 1955 the Roma poet Usin Kerim, professional writer and later member of the Union of Bulgarian



Writers (being the first union's member of Gypsy origin), published *Songs from the Camp* (later published in another edition from 1977) in Bulgarian and later continued to depict Romani traditions in his works. Whereas many poems depict plots or motives from the Romani way of life (either personally experiences by the author or just imagined/observed/narrated by him), for example poems as "Songs for Atta", "Babaxak", "I'm born", "A night in the maxalla", "I long for a horse", "I'm a Gypsy", others bear the signature of the time and have ideological content and are devoted to love for the Party, its leaders and the country (as for example "Homeland Rodina"). "Dimitrov" [communist party activist], "To the Party". Usin Kerim wrote exclusively in Bulgarian and remains the most famous Gypsy poet of his time. One of the poems from the collection *Songs from the*

tabor is named "I'm a Gypsy" and treats the topic of the progress that the Gypsies had made from the time of their nomadic years to living and integrating in society:

*I'm a Gypsy. My barefoot childhood
faded away with a camp under cool
nights.*

*But I do not wear a knife in my pocket
and do not stalk to steal your horse!*

*I'm a Gypsy. I ate of cachet,
I wrestled a bear in heat and snow
slush.*

*But I do not sing out of grief like by
grandpa –*

I got home and write a book!

*Once they took away my games
I wandered ragged - a live scrofula ...
But [look] how today in modern
clothing
my both kids are playing!*

*I swam in water, but not with tray
winged horse has more than once
lured me?*

I saw countries which until today



*my dad has not seen even in his
dreams!
Let lap an impetuous rain, the sky
to bang and to moan an evil storm.
my night is lighted not by firebrand,
but by electricity
and I grapple the world with antenna.*

(Kerim 1977: 135, published in
Bulgarian, translation in English by
S. Zahova)

Roma individuals, some of whom after 1989 became activists and book authors, published poems in Bulgarian in the journal *Nevo Drom* that continued to be published with the support of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party – Kamen Kamenov from Vratsa, Sali Ibrahim from Sofia, Asen Markov from Pleven, Dimitar Sotirov from Botevgrad, Georgi Parushev from Sliven, In 1970s Parushev proposed his poetry collection to one of the major publishing houses, but the collection

was not printed since it treated mainly characters from the dark-skinned minority in a time when in the official discourse it was forbidden to speak about and use the term ‘Gypsy’ (Kolev 2010: 67). The Bulgarian ethnic/national policies were related to creation of a Bulgarian ethnic nation and no other ethnicities were allowed to reveal identity other than Bulgarian. Therefore the creative expressions of all citizens were supposed to represent the Bulgarian national culture.

The model of ethno-national policies of identity were characteristic also for most of the countries in the Socialist block – Romania, Hungary, Albania. During the Communist period in Romania Gypsies, who were given jobs on state farms and in state factories, were supposed to become part of the Romanian nation. Pentecostal missionaries worked underground, and in 1979 St. John’s Gospel was



translated into Romani and printed in the Netherlands for smuggling into Romania (Kenrick 1998: 201).

In Hungary as well, the production of Roma authors was in Hungarian and they were part of the mainstream literary scene, which corresponded to the Hungarian state's concept of the nation as union of all citizens in the state and of Gypsies as part of the Hungarian nation. Gypsy authors were, thus, considered part of the Hungarian national literature and authors - Menyhért Lakatos, Károly Bari, József Choli Daróczi and Attila Balogh are part of the Hungarian literature canon and prior to 1989 publish only in Hungarian, with translations of their works from Hungarian to other languages in the Socialist block. However, portraying the life of Hungarian Roma was one of the major topics of the works of the Hungarian Roma authors.

The Hungarian Roma writers and intellectuals start to be active since the beginning of 1970s.

Károly Bari, an ethnologist by profession, published his poetry collection *Holtak arca föle* [Bari 1970]. Being a folklorist, painter and translator, Bari has thoroughly studied the oral tradition of the Roma.





He depicts the Romani culture in his poems. Few years later, Menyhért Lakatos published his novel *Smoky Pictures* (Lakatos 1975), which has earned an international reputation and was translated into many other languages after its success in Hungary. The book is autobiographical and narrates about the life of a Roma family over three generations, often describing typical scenes from the Roma community life.

Along with Bari, Attila Balogh and Oszkár Farkas are among the most recognizable Roma poets in Hungary (Farkas 1975; Balogh 1980). Balogh has published both poetry and prose. József Choli Daróczi, a famous Romani activist, who published poetry, was teacher and member of the National Gypsy Council. He was author of Romani dictionary and educational text book and edited the first anthology of Gypsy poetry in

Hungary *Black Coral* in 1981 (Choli Daróczi 1981). A folklore collection that was prepared in 1980s under his editing was published under the title *In the haggard face of God* (Choli Daróczi 1990) that comprised of both Hungarian and Romani texts.

In 1980s, during the so-called Kadar era were published two Romani newspapers *Rom Som* and *Romano Nevipe* that provided space for publishing of works by Hungarian Gypsies (Crowe 1991). Although the general ethnic-nation building policies assimilationist policy did not tolerate Roma attempts to develop an ethnic or nationalist identity, in the 1980s regime did permit cultural expressions and Roma were allowed to perform their songs and dances and several associations were set up by the state to finance and control Roma activities.

In this context throughout 1980s were published also several volumes



of Romani folklore, collected and commented by famous Gypsy culture and music researchers. The Gypsy traditional stories narrator Janos Berki has published *Tales of János Berki Told in Gypsy and Hungarian* (Berki 1985). Olga Nagy, produced several volumes of folktales narrated by Roma starting with the edition *The Ten [Fingers] of a Gypsy of the Alps: Tales Told by Gyula David* (Nagy 1985) and Gabor Grabocz and Katalin Kovalcsik also published the collection *Mihály Rostás: A Gypsy Story Teller* (Grabocz/Kovalcsik 1988). Songs in Romani with Hungarian translations were published as well (Szego 1977; 1980).

In Czechoslovakia in the late 1960s, as a result of the Prague Spring in the general course for political liberalization and creation of 'socialism with a human face' were also existing conditions for immergence of Romani literature. The Slovak Roma founded the Union

of Gypsy-Roma in 1969 with union's journal *Romano lil* (Romani Paper, 1969-1973), that became a place for publishing of pieces by Roma, mainly poetry and short stories. Despite the fact that the Union of Gypsies Roma was disbanded in 1973 its activities were related to the first attempts to linguistic codifications and writing in Romani and had a great effect on the development of publishing by Roma authors. Dezider Banga, who prior to 1990s published only in Slovak, printed his first poetry collection in Romani *Song above the wind* (Banga 1964).

The journal *Romano lil* was written in Czech, but it also was a tribune for publishing in Romani and by Roma authors. Andrej Pesta, a Roma activist and author himself, was editor of the Roma authors' column. The pioneering attempts were done by Tera Fabiánová, who wrote her first short stories in Romani, followed by Andrej Gina,



verses by František Demeter and Andrej Pesta, works by Ilona Lacková, Daniel Bartoloméj and Tera Fabiánová's son Vojta and others.

Tera Fabiánová is considered to be among the most important Roma authors, who deals with various themes related to the Romani culture identity: such as why Roma try to hide or deny their origins, and the friendship with animals, which, like people, are part of nature (Hübschmannová 1991). One of her first tales is *Le Romeskero suno* (Dream of a Gypsy): A Roma crane operator (the professional occupation of Tera as well) experiences clinical death after an accident and gets to heaven for a while. He expects Roma and Whites to be treated as equals, but is surprised to see one entrance for Gadže and a special entrance for Gypsies. The tale "A Gypsy Dream", in Czech translation, was broadcast on Czechoslovak radio in the mid 1960s.

At the end of the story the Gypsy returns to life and his beloved family. Andrej Gina was active in the Union of Gypsies-Roma until its dissolution. In the 1960s, following a friend's suggestion he recorded the tales narrated by his mother. His collection in Czech language was proposed to a publishing house that refused to print it, so Andrej published primarily in periodicals. Andrej Gina continued to collect fairy tales and other stories narrated by Roma, however making authorized works. His collection of tales in Romani was later published by the short stories collection *Wedding* (Bijav 1991). The publications were in the most cases published by the small 'Samizdat' house first ran by Milena Hübshmannova, a long time researcher of the Romani culture and language, who played an important role also as a motivator and promoter of writing and publishing in Romani.



‘Samizdat’ publishing house was later managed by Margina Rejznerová.

Along with Tera Fabiánová Elenka Lacková is one of the oldest Roma writers. Lacková was born into a musical family living in the East Slovak Romani settlement and was the first Romni graduated from the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University in Prague. Lacková worked among Roma as a regional cultural inspector, later also involved in the activities of the Union of Gypsies - Roma. She wrote several theatre plays, one of which, *Zuzik*, was emitted on the Czechoslovakia radio in 1985 and was awarded the prestigious Bohemia award. Later, after 1990s, she became internationally famous with her autobiographical book *I was born under a lucky star* to be mentioned later. The first (bi-lingual) collection of Romani poetry *Romane Gil’a* was published in Czechoslovakia in 1979. Other publications in both

Romani and Czech language were folklore collections as traditional tales collection under edited by Milena Hübschmannová, who was the most active and stimulating researcher in the Czech Republic.

In countries with ethno-national paradigm, Roma authors published only as part of the national literature canon in the official languages of the state, though many of them had chosen topic related to the Romani culture and way of life. Texts in Romani were published primarily as folklore. This principle is valid for most of the states and in Czechoslovakia as a result of the local political conditions Romani authors had the opportunity to publish in their mother tongue in the Romani periodicals. The policies in the post-imperial states which are not focused on the creation of a single nation are stimulating the development of various ethnic/national communities



within the states. That is why the national policies in the Yugoslav federation stimulate the development of the Romani literature and after the Soviet state funded project from 1920s-1930s we may claim that the developments in Yugoslavia are the second largest initiative in the development of Romani publishing as production and variety of genres, though lacking the scale (in terms of print runs, strategy and number of titles) and state funding known from the Soviet Union before the WWII.

Western European states

The social, political and cultural differences existing between the countries of Eastern and Western Europe are also revealed in the situation of the Roma communities, the policies towards them and respectively the development of

Romani literature. As it has been already stated in Romani Studies, historically Eastern European Roma had a higher level of social integration into society, counting their inclusion in various social fields - education, labour, etc. (Marushiakova/Popov ???). In regard to literature, while there were individual authors in some of Western European countries who wrote in the language of the nation-state, there was no publishing in Romani by 1980s. With the exclusion of Sweden, there were no particular policies to facilitate Romani literature production. In terms of production, the number of titles published in Western Europe is even smaller when compared to Eastern Europe. In terms of genres – novel is almost exclusively the genre of production by Western European Roma by 1980s, while poetry had been prevailing in the works of Roma in the socialist countries. Two periodicals,



Etudes Tsiganes published since 1955 in France and *Lacio Drom* published since 1965 in Italy became a space for publishing of folklore and authors' texts and by Roma from both Western and Eastern Europe (for example, Vanya de Gila Kochanowski and Leksa Manush were publishing oral stories in *Etudes Tsiganes*). The Italian journal *Lacio Drom* has published transcriptions of tales, fiction stories, testimonies and autobiographical narration collected on different occasions and among various groups.

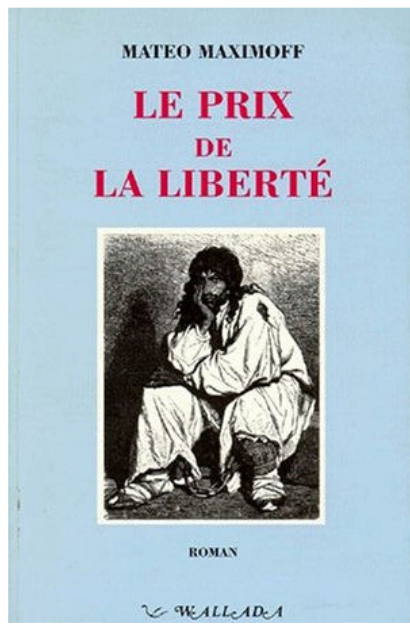
Mateo Maximoff is considered as one of the most important authors in Western Europe. Starting with his first novel *The fates* (Les Ursitory, 1946) he published 11 books in French translated so far into 15 languages, few stories in Kaldrash dialect in *Etudes Tsiganes*, and, being Evangelical pastor, translated the New Testament in Kalradash Romani. He embodied

Romani ethno-culture in all his works, revealing customs and believes characteristic for his Roma group – as *o bang* (the Devil), *o mulo* (the dead) and *o chohano* (the vampire), *pativ* (honor, respect) since as he stated in the foreword of one of his books (*La Septieme fille*), the word Gypsy is usually related to stereotypical images as freedom, song, half-bared dance that have nothing in common with the Roma laws. Among his novels are *The Prize of Liberty* (Le Prix de la liberté, 1955), *Savina* (1957), *The seventh daughter* (La septième fille, 1969), *Condamned to survive* (Condamné à survivre, 1984), *Vinguerka* (1984), *Mameliga's doll* (La poupée de Maméliga, 1986), *Say it with tears* (Dites-le avec des pleurs, 1990), *This world which is not mine* (Ce monde qui n'est pas le mien, 1992), *Roads without caravans* (Routes sans roulottes, 1993) and *The travelling people* (Les



gens du voyage, 1995), *The Angels of Destiny* (Les Anges du destin, photos de Claude et Marie-josé Carret, 1999). He wrote all of his works, apart from a few of his mostly unpublished stories, in French.

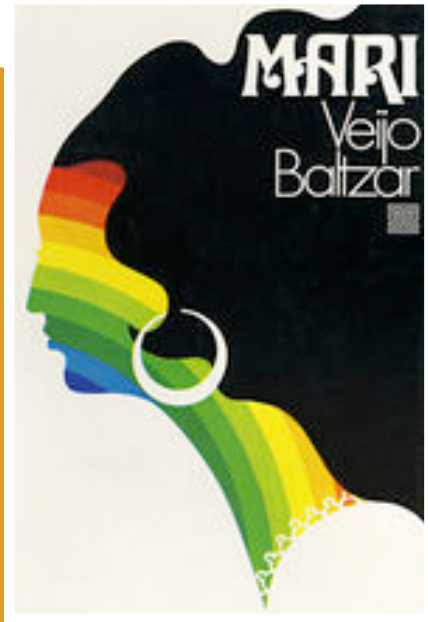
Another novelist whose work is analogous to the contribution of Bronislawa Wajs Papusza in poetry and Mateo Maximoff in novels is Veijo Baltzar, whose origin is from the Finnish Kale. He had become





an important figure in the Finnish literature since the publication of his first novel *The Burning road* (1968), after which followed seven others *Verikihlat* (1969), *Mari* (1970), *Black Sarah's crystal ball* (1978), *Serpent*

District Stone (1988), *Black bars* (1990), *Phuro* (2000), *In love and war* (2008). All his novels, dramas, articles are written in Finnish in one of the biggest Finnish publishing houses and their main characters are Roma.

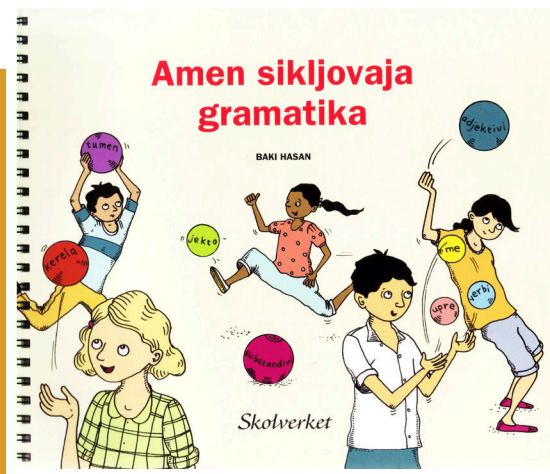
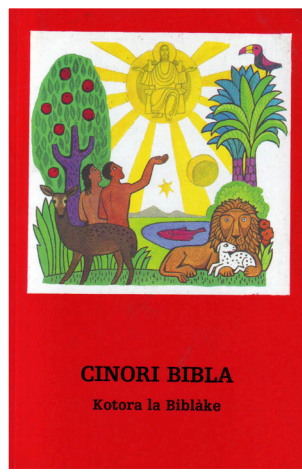


Covers of Veijo Baltzar's novels



Spain's Gypsies had also contributed to the Romani literature landscape in Western Europe - Jose Heredia Maya published drama works, poetry collections and two novels in Spanish, most known among which is the drama *Camelamos naquerer* (1976), and two novel published in 1980s. In Spain in 1982 was published the first Romani version of Children bible.

In Sweden in the early 1970s started initiative for educating the Roma children and the "Nordic Roma Council" was founded in 1973. Since then books have been published to support the Roma children education in their mother tongue and literature for children in Romani was written. The most remarkable author is Katarina (Rosa) Taikon (1932-1995),

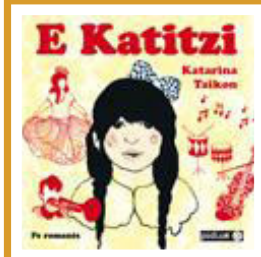
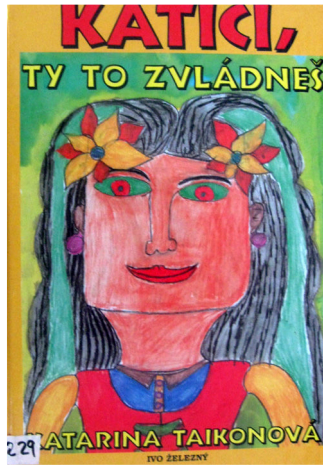
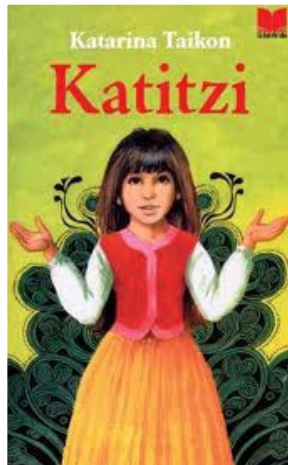




who in 1964 published *Gypsy Poems* in Swedish (Taikon 1964) and then the book *Wonderers* (Taikon 1970), and afterwards the *Katitzi*-series of popular children books, translated into many languages and several Romani dialects.

Władysław Jankowicz-Mikloš, has written a twelve-poem epic *O Tari thaj e Zèrfi* (Tari and Zerfi) about the

impossible love of two youngsters. Along with the original books by Katarina Taikon and Alyosha Taikon, there are translations of children's classics as Astrid Lingrend or books by contemporary author Gunilla Lundgren, one of the most prominent children authors in Sweden who devoted some of her time to working with Roma on their books. Her first





book devoted to Roma was *Maritza, one Gypsy Girl*, published in 1972 along with three Gypsy girls. In the other Scandinavian countries, some folkloristic publications appeared not in Romani, but in the majority languages (Skoghol/Lilleholt 1978).

Joseph Doerr dit Coucou, a musician and artist from the French Manouche, published in 1982 his autobiographical novel *Where are you going Manouche?*. It was published by Wallâda publishing house that later on played an important role as publisher of works by Roma authors. It is noticeable that the genre of memoir books is the most common and exclusively preferred by the Roma and Sinti in Germany and Italy. The memoir literature in the German speaking countries deals with the topic of the Romani Holocaust, which should be viewed in the historical context of immergence of the political, scientific and public

discourse on the Roma Holocaust after 1970s, including its importance in the international Romani movement. From 1970's onwards Roma activists have been constantly raising the issue of compensating the Gypsies as victims of WWII, using the history of Holocaust to strength the Roma identity and unity. Narratives about the Gypsies/Roma as "eternal victim" during their whole history is developed in the works of some Roma activists (Marushiakova/Popov 2005).

In Germany the autobiography publications by Sinti authors started with the book published in 1984 under the title *The Liberation of Latscho Tschawo. The Life of a Sinto living in Germany* (Tschawo 1984). A year later Philomena Franz, Sinti woman and Auschwitz survivor, published her autobiography *Between Love and Hate* (Zwischen Liebe und Hass), and later



continued publishing tales and poetry (Franz 1985).

The Austrian Lovara family of Stojka's, survivors of the Holocaust and the internment at Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, is the most productive and well known. Ceija Stojka published her first autobiographic book in 1988, *We Live in Seclusion* (Stojka 1988) as memories of a Romni concerning the Nazi persecution of the Austrian Romani people, later continued in 1992, with *Travellers on This World*. Filomena Franz and Ceija Stojka are often compared, since they are considered as the pioneering examples of Sinti and Roma women who opened up the memories narratives of Holocaust survivors among the two groups. Both women in their works also demonstrate a strong identity narrative about their group belonging – Franz to Sinti in Germany and Stojka to the Austrian Lovara.



Despite the several general parallels that could be drawn upon, one major difference is demonstration of identity through language – Franz writes only in German and never provides writing samples of Sinti language, while Stojka



has many Romani phrases, especially when narrating about her family. One possible interpretation of this fact is that there was official position of the Head of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, Romani Rose, in these years was that Sinti language should be kept within the community and no publications or phrases in it should be published, whereas this was not the case with Romani, especially in Austria, when in 1980s started processes for recognition of the language and cultural rights of the Roma within the country. It is also interesting to note that at that time Franz and Stojka were not aware of the existing of each other's works, despite the fact that both were published in German in two neighboring countries, which shows us that at this time the development of Romani literature still remains in the borders of the nation state in which the authors publish. In 1988, the same year

of publication of Stojka's book, another title is published in Germany, *Gypsy life: The life story of the Roma musician and lute player* by the Sinto Adolf Boko Winterstein (1988).

The first Sinto memoir book in Italy, *Tzigari* was published in 1975 as a result of the collaboration between a researcher who transcribed and indented the text and the narrator Giuseppe "Tzigari" Levakovich, a Sinti partisan participating in the movement against the fascist forces in "Osoppo" brigade. Another autobiography book by a Sinto Piedmontese Michele Iussi edited by Armando Brignolo, was published in 1980s, *Sinti, A World of Living* and explicitly speaks about the Sinti life style, explaining for the general reading audience and stressing on the particularities of the Sinti and their difference with the others, strengthening the outsiders stereotypes about them:



For us, Sinti, to party, it was not necessary to have a particular pattern, it was enough that someone wants to party and the remainder was made of [...] . Some Sinti were very proud of their art, their music, few could have a career in the show, because it was really artists. I remember a friend, when he playing, he was crying because of the emotion, and he played only us, he felt humiliated to play for others (gadjé) (Trevisan 2008: 94).

There are also authors who do not have Roma ethnic origin, but are regarded as part of the Romani literature scene, and according to the definition from EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies are Roma. Since 1960s in UK were published a number of autobiographies and autobiography novels of Travellers as these of Dominic Reeves who published in London (*Smoke in the Lanes*, 1958; *No Place Like Home* 1960), The Irish

Traveller Nan Joyce (*Traveller: An Autobiography*, ed. Anna Farmer, 1985), Silvester Gordon Boswell (*The Book of Boswell: Autobiography of a Gypsy*, ed. John Seymour. London: Gollancz, 1970), Betsy Whyte (whose first book *The Yellow on the Broom: The Early Days of a Traveller Woman* was published in Edinburgh in 1979). Apart from autobiography books in the UK was published a poetry anthology *Gavvered All Around* (Binns 1987) and folklore collections (Williamson 1989; Williamson/Williamson 1987).

The Swiss born Mariella Mehr from the groups of Yenishe, published her first novel in 1981 (*Steinzeit*) and since then she has produced 15 books. Her work is defined by her experience of displacement, brutality and alienation as a persecuted ethnic minority and victim of Pro Juventute's assimilation programme. In all Mehr's works the central theme has always

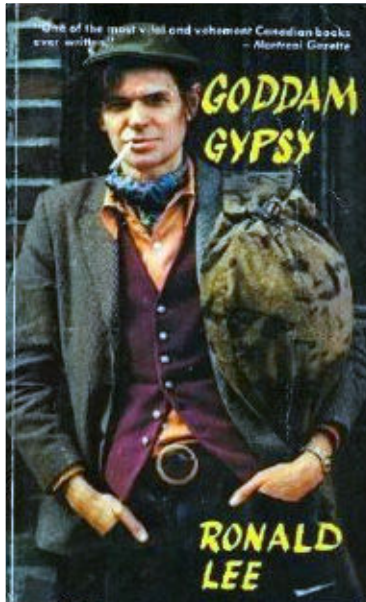


been concerned with the socially disadvantaged, women, children, Yenish, prisoners and the victims of psychiatric treatment (Finnan 2000: 148), which was probably the main reason for Mehr's insisting on

identification as Roma author and with the Roma as a group perceived as a socially disadvantaged minority. She was one of the main initiators for the later creation of the International Romani Writers Association.

As for the publishing outside Europe with influence in the Romani literature scene in the period prior to 1989 we have to mention Ronald Lee, Roma activists born in UK living in Canada who has published the novel *Doddamn Gypsy* (1971) that was widely known and translated into several European languages (among which Spanish, German, Italian, Czech, Russian and Serbian).

In regard to the overview of the Romani literature by 1980s we may point out that up to this moment we can speak about developments on a national scale that took place within the individual countries. The development of the Romani literature at that time is



very much dependent on the national context and was influenced by the type of policy towards minorities and political conditions in the countries themselves. Despite the political steps for internationalization in 1970s and

immurgence of the international Romani movement, there are no signs for internationalization of the literary scene - neither do the Roma authors nor reading audiences interact across borders. As it has already been mentioned as example, even though of the neighboring countries of publication, common topic of the Romani Holocaust and German language of the books, Filomena Franz and Ceija Stojka were not aware about each other's existence in 1980s. There are some steps undertaken for publishing activities across borders – the Latvian Roma Leksa Manush published in the Italian based *Lacio Drom* for example, as well as some authors/collectors published in *Etudes Tsiganes*. The prevailing language(s) of literary production was in the languages of the official majority language of the state and in Western Europe there were no publications



in Romani language, apart from single phrases within books by Roma authors or in publications of folklore with the respective translations (as in scientific journals). In Eastern Europe, where the level of social integration (in terms of participating in the educational system, labour, etc.) of the Roma groups had been considerably higher when compared with Western part of the continent, the number of Roma who were publishing literary pieces was also higher. In some of the countries, particularly those with ethnic-national state model the language of the publications was the country's majority language and the Roma authors were not explicitly and publicly presented as Roma (although there ethnic origin was generally well-known). These authors were considered as part of the national literature scene and the most prominent of them were members of the national union of

writers. However in the socialist states with post-imperial state-building (as Romani Soviet Union in 1920-30s, Yugoslavia after 1960s) and in Czechoslovakia in 1980s are existing political conditions stimulating/supporting production in Romani language and by authors presented and promoted as Roma. In terms of genres the prevailing genre in Eastern Europe is poetry, with examples also of tales and short stories, whereas in Western Europe we have the first fiction publications in the genres of novel and memoir/autobiography book.

Regardless of the genres varieties and language of publication in all works by Roma authors we can see depicting and describing the Roma way of life in a different from – in poems authors often refer to the Roma and their image as wonderers, or the relation between the Roma and the nature;



the tales and short stories by Roma authors are often treating the some traditional believes and narratives popular among the Roma community to which the author belongs, novels are narrating among the destiny of

Roma families/Roma characters and the autobiography books treat the author's destiny on the background of historical events, most important among which remains the Romani Holocaust in Germany and Austria.

Internationalization of the Romani literature after 1990s

In 1980s and 1990s The Council of Europe had a proactive position regarding the status of Roma and support of their language and culture, issuing various recommendation documents for Romani language, culture and education of the Gypsies children in Europe (Liégeois 1987; Liégeois 1994). Romani is one of the languages mentioned in the European Charter for Minority and Regional Languages of 1992 and many of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe in their transition to democracy were about to ratify the convention, which also appeared to be among the measures for democratic rule requested

by EU in the process of negotiation of the EU integration. After the regime changes in 1989 in Eastern Europe international actors had a considerable role to play with strategies and resources to support Romani language and culture development. The fourth (Warsaw) congress of the International Romani Union was important stage in the development of the international Roma movement. It took place in 1992, after the fall of the Iron curtain and in the context of the international discourse for democratization of the Eastern European countries, especially in regard to minority rights, had raised important issues



– as the emergence of the concept of the Roma as a *trans[border]-national minority* (Marushiakova/Popov 2005) and had adopted a decision proposed by the Romani linguist and activist Marcel Courthiade for usage of a standard Romani alphabet, which so far was applied only in Romania, where this is the officially recognized standard of publications in Romani language. The idea of standardization and publications in Romani was discussed as an important issue ever since the First World Gypsy Congress in London in 1971. At the Romani Union congresses has always been existing a commission/committee for the Romani language and publications/education in Romani. Both Romani International Union and international donors and programs (primarily with Open Society funding) had identified the Romani language as a symbolic resource that embodies Romani

identity and stressed on the importance of its preservation, documentation, development and free usage as means for communication for the cultural emancipation of the Roma. Activities for publishing in Romani and books by Roma were subsidized by foundations, international organizations, local and national government and non-governmental organizations (Matras 2005). As a result we can speak about a flourishing of the Roma literature with considerable production in Eastern Europe and increasing of the publications in Western Europe as well.

Cross-boder developments

Globalization and IT technologies made communication across borders easier. Many international events provided contacts between authors. Translations and distribution of publications took place across borders,



while donors' programmes support the Romani culture production. And most importantly, there was a strong influence of the Romani movement and the ideas about the history and symbols of the Romani nation or the Romani people as raised by activists of the Romani movement at national and international level.

The internationalization and globalization of the Romani movement has not only influenced the development of the Romani literature and children books in particular, there is actually a very direct personal link: writers of books were very often themselves participants in the Romani movement. Roma writers in most of the cases are the Roma *intelligentsija* – people who at the same time activists (in the field of human rights, education, language, etc.), collectors of folklore, educators, linguistics, scholars or artists in the general sense. Thus, in their literary

or any kind of Roma related work they express the idea about the Roma and in the absence of a standardized history they apply and promote ideas of the Romani movement about the Roma in general as would any national narrative do about the history of a nation. As examples we can point out the works of Hristo Kyuchukov from Bulgaria or Ljatif Demir from Macedonia, who are at the same time scholars, activists, educators, etc. and as such have created educational materials and books for Romani children. The activists who are writers, intellectuals, etc. actually work as narrators, affirming in autobiographical or history books for Roma children several of the most common narratives about the Romani people.

Despite the lack of statistics, a great number of publications appeared including collections of fairy-tales and folklore, poetry, memoir books,



vocabularies and grammars, teaching materials, various translations, and many of them targeted Roma children. While prior to 1990s Roma authors were published and known within the borders of the state where they lived, in the decades after 1989 we observe features of internationalization and globalization of the Roma literature, as well as common tendencies in Roma literature production. Among the first formal evidences are the foundations of international organizations to unite/benefit Roma authors. The Roma PEN Center, as member of a member of world writers' organization PEN, was established in Berlin in 1996 with President Rajko Djurić (then residing in Germany) and Secretary Johano Strasses. The centre was active for about a decade, during which it promoted Romani authors, published several issues of a newsletter *Stimme des Romani*, and in 2003 held an

international competition for literary work on the Holocaust. In 2002 in Helsinki, where was based the Roma novelist Veijo Baltzar, was established in the International Romani Writers Association. Among its founders were Roma authors from both Eastern and Western Europe. Its aim was to promote Romani literature and foster international collaboration between authors. It provided opportunity for the writers member to communicate directly during the meetings held in Helsinki, its web site was also informative in regard to author's biographies and writings. However, the organization was active by 2008.

Another sign of internationalization is if the organization of forums and awards open for Roma authors across the globe as the international *Amico Rom* literary award since 1994, that is managed by Santino Spinelli, who also runs a Roma culture festival *Amico*



Foundation of the International Romani Writers Association

Roma presenting different artistes activities including readings by Roma author who are guests of the festival. In Chandigarh, where is based the Indian Institute of *Romani* Studies and the half-yearly journal *Roma* has been published (both managed by

Rajendra Rishi, a linguist and activists in the Romani movement), is regularly organized a Romani literature, culture and language session within the framework of the International Writers Festival in Chandigarh – India.



To present the richness of Romani literature production and at the same time to symbolically present the unity of the Roma, were published collections presenting the works, primarily poetry pieces, of Roma authors from different countries. Poetry collections were published in Hungary, Italy, Sweden, Germany, and in the USA.

In the framework of international publication initiatives devoted to publications on Romani issues were set up series devoted to presenting and translation of Romani literature. In this way within the *Interface* collection that is developed in cooperation between the University of Hertfordshire Press and Centre de Recherches Tsiganes of the University of Rene Decart-Paris were published titles by Roma authors as the mentioned biography books of Ilona Lackova and Alyosha Taikon. In other cases of cross-border cooperation, were made individual

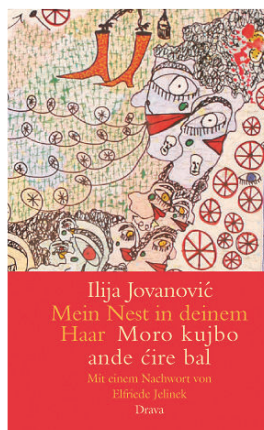
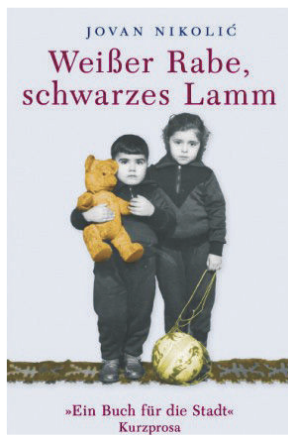
translations of Roma authors from one language to another. For example, extracts from Veijo Baltzar's works were published in Czech translation in Romano *Džaniben* journal (volume 1 for 2010). The first works of Ceija Stojka and Mateo Maximoff were also translated in Czech. Rajko Djurić poetry was translated and published in German and French and published in the respective countries. The theatre play *Kosovo mon amour* of Jovan Nikolić and Ruždija Russo Sejdović originally written in Serbian was also translated into French (Nikolić/Sejdović 2004). There are also some interesting examples of translations, such as the Arabic translation of Alija Kranić's book into Arabic.

As result of the migration flows of Roma from Eastern Europe to Western part of the continent in the years after 1989 (and in the case of Yugoslav Roma since 1970s), also many of the



Roma authors have migrated, settled and lived in another country that is different from their country of origin. They write and publish in the new country and in their work are seen the layers and signs of migrant's identity, which allow us to speak of Roma migrants' literature production. The works are typically written in Romani or the language of the country of origin and are translated into the language

of the host country in order to present also both the Roma and the migrant to the reading audiences of the state in which they are published. As such an author can be considered the published in German, Miso Nikolić (1997; 2000), Jovan Nikolić (2006); Ilija Jovanovic (2000), the Bosnian *Xoroxane* Roma in Italy (Bello/Cizmic 1992), that are part of the Yugoslav migration from 1970s and 1980s.





There are also Roma, whose migration was caused by the Yugoslav wars, primarily from Kosovo to Western European EU countries and are activists and writers, as Gjulner Abdulah in Netherlands who published a Romani/Dutch poetry collection (1995), and later a CD with poetry recordings.

Common Romani identity narratives

In the fourth period from the end of 1990s when we may speak about internationalization of the Romani literature scene there are common developments that are characteristic for the Romani publications. Among them is the immergence of common Romani identity narratives that are met in recent books for Romani children and correspond to the

so called grant narratives (if we use the term of the nationalism studies school) of the Romani movement. Three easily identified common narratives in the period of internationalization are: the one about the journey of Roma from India (the ancestors' exodus narrative), the one about the Romani Holocaust (the victim narrative) and the one about the nomadic way of life as the core, the essence and pillar of the Romani ethnoculture (the nomadic ethos narrative/the nomadic narrative). Here are given examples of Romani children books created in the period of internationalization, stressing on the common Roma/Gypsy identity narratives and their relation to the ideas of the Roma people as a nation in the discourse of the Romani international movement and Romani political activism.



Particular interest for us are the autobiographical books and history books created for Roma children, their narration is always general (about the Roma) and is very political, meaning that it has to do with the policy of representation (of the Roma). In the literature the term "Roma" is affirmed as a self-appellation, and usually groups self-appellations or usage of the term Gypsy are avoided to endorse the Romani unity.

As a showcase we will have a look at three books from different regions – *The Legend about Gan and Ćen* produced in Romani by Darhija in Macedonia (Demir 2009), *Romanies. Picture Story* published in four languages (Romani, Polish, Bulgarian, English) in Poland (Romowie-Roma-Romanies 2011) and the bi-lingual (Romani/Swedish) picture and audio book *Marie-Claude one Romani girl* in Sweden (Taikon-

Melker/Eriksson 2010), containing the three common narratives.

The first type can be called the exodus narrative. In every national/community narrative central role has the issue about the ancestors and the historical roots of the community. Despite the fact that on the level of legends and oral beliefs, and even in the personal narratives and public statements of Roma leaders, the idea about Egypt as the region of origin of the Gypsies still exist, in the literature pieces and history books is revealed the scientifically affirmed fact that Roma came from India. In the 70's the international Roma movement had very active relations with India and the Geneva 1978 IRU congress declared India as the mother-land of the Roma. Currently in all textbooks and popular history writings the migrations of Roma from India, and the route



towards Europe are discussed. The exodus from India has an important place not only because of the necessity for having narration about the origins and about the pre-pre-ancestors, but also because in a lack of a common state uniting currently the Roma, India's symbolic value as a state of origin where all Roma lived together, (from the point of the simple narration, not of the scientific punctuality, as there are discussions about were Roma one unity during their exodus, did they migrated at once, etc.), and which was thus "their country", their historical homeland allowing self-identification with a defined territory. The history picture book produced in 2011 in 4 languages in Poland narrates:

*"Romanies originally came from India. In the middle of the first millennium AD they left **their country of origin** and headed west escaping from wars.*

Roma ancestors travelled through Persia and Armenia into the Byzantine empire. They remained in this area for a longer period of time, which is evident by the huge number of borrowings from native languages of those regions".

(Romowie-Roma-Romanies 2011: 3)

In a recent autobiographical bi-lingual picture book (2010), the narration of the small Marie-Claude also includes the issue about the origin of the Roma and of recent Roma migrations into Sweden. In the second page the girl presents her room:

"I like my room. I myself ordered it to be Indian style. I like everything that comes from India. They say the Roma came from India to Sweden. May be because of this I like everything that comes from India "

(Taikon-Melker/Eiksson 2010: 2)



The simple first name narration makes the message about We, the Roma much stronger:

“We were one people/nation that has been travelling around. We come from India. I do not know why we had left India. This was many, many years ago. My grandmother’s grandfather came into Sweden from Russia more than a hundred years ago.”

Another instance of a narration comes from a Macedonian book published under the editing of Romani activist Ljatif Demir, as fairy tale in a picture book. This is an interesting interpretation of the legend about Gan and Chen, commonly met in the oral folklore of the Roma living in the territories of the former Ottoman Empire and explaining the origin of the Roma from an incest marriage between a brother Gan and sister Chen, from whose union, were born the *chengene*,

e.g. the Gypsies. The book however presents a shifted in a positive sense interpretation in which the Indian king’s daughter, Chen, is adopted by the Roma and marries the Romani head’s son. The book starts with:

“In the Indian kingdom, in one village, lived also the Roma. They were farmers. The Roma’s head was Sherin, who similarly to the King of India was good and wise ruler. The Roma respected him because he was righteous head.

They had lived peacefully and well until the richness of their kingdom has attracted conquerors from other lands. They wanted to conquer India and to rule the wealth possessed by the people who lived in this land.”

(Demir 2009: 2)

The second type is the victimization narrative. Probably the most common and representative narrative in autobiographical and historical



literature books is the one about the Romani Holocaust. The history of persecution plays a significant role in defining the symbolic boundaries of many communities in their historical narratives, and this is valid for Roma too, which is called in nationalism studies victimization narrative. Many Romani efforts were targeted to establish an official memory of their genocide, *Porrajmos*, a term that belongs the “invented” ones, and to arouse worldwide attention to their suffering. They stress on their tragedy, emphasizing European, and particularly German, moral obligation, which means among other things, compensation as well as support in their struggle for civil rights. From 1970’s onwards Roma activists have been constantly raising the issue of compensating the Gypsies as victims of W.W. II., using the history

of Holocaust to strength the Roma identity and unity, which become central component of Romani national identity. While narratives about the Gypsies/Roma as “eternal victim” during their whole history is developed in the works of some Roma activists in 1980s (Marushiakova/Popov 2005) and was topic of autobiographical books by Sinti and Roma in 1980s in the German speaking countries, it was in 1990s when this idea spread in Romani children literature.

Here is the narration in Marie-Claude’s autobiographical book:

*“My ant Ramona told me that **we the Roma have one sorrowful history.** She wanted to tell me more about this, so she took me with her in a museum to see the photos about the Roma and the posters about the Second World War. We dressed in our most beautiful clothes when we went there.*



There photos of people at my age. They were closed in the camps and they did not give them to eat. And because of this with the time many died. I was full of sorrow when I was thinking about them. I couldn't understand why they did that to the Roma. We are not bad people."

(Taikon-Melker/Eriksson 2010: 32-33)

The comprehensive historical version is found in the picture book from Poland, that provides some of the main historical facts and also introduces the term *Porajmos*, and invented from the elite term itself:

"World War II turned out to be the most tragic time of extermination. Many Romanies were sent to the Ghettos, were shot or deported to concentration camps. On 2nd August 1944 the Nazi destroyed the "Gypsy camp" killing 2897 Romani men, women and children at the Auschwitz/Birkenau camp. Romanies

called this period "Porajmos", literary, devouring annihilation. In the years 1935-1945 not less than two hundred fifty thousand Romanies were killed."

(Romowie-Roma-Romanies 2011:)

And thirdly, a positive narrative counterparty to the suffering of the victims is the romantic image and narration of the nomad traveler, the ethos of wandering as a Romani ethno-culture *per se*, even by Roma writers who belong to groups settled many decades ago. The legend about Gan and Chen ends with their exodus from India and the words:

"The village wizard cursed them [the Roma] to wonder in the whole world, not even once to sleep in one place, not even once to drink water from the same well and not even once to cross a river twice in a same year."

(Demir 2009: 24)



Practically every piece of work reveals the travelling Roma with horses who live in a joyful symbiosis with the nature.

Here can be added narratives about the Romani language, narratives about the Romani flag, about the 'typical' Romani occupations, etc. Actually these common narratives and ideas are found not only in children literature, but in all genres of Romani literature, and even in all art fields. The Romani children's books on historical or autobiographical topics are not only Roma self-referential, they are very much related with the policy of (re) presentation of Romani people through narratives marked by the Romani nation discourse of the international Romani movement. Thus, these books are presenting a generalizing collective values and identity narratives aiming to form Romani national identity in the absence of a standardized Romani

national history/history books to narrate the historical memory.

Research on Romani literature

When we speak about the existence of a growing production and increasing of the interest towards the Romani issues in the political, public and scientific discourse, we have to also mention the emergence of systematic and critical approach in the research on Romani literature. So far the most comprehensive international study is the book "The Literature of the Roma" published in German by Rajko Djurić. Other research overview was produced by the University of Graz in its Rombase project and Roma history and culture factsheets project co-funded by Council of Europe. A bibliography of Roma publications was compiled by Peter Bakker and Hristo



Kyuchukov to support educators (Bakker/Kyuchukov 2003).

The Roma museums in Brno and Belgrade organized exhibitions devoted to Roma literature. Several issues of *Etudes Tsiganes* (vol. 9 in 1997 and number 36 in 2008 and number 37 in 2009) were devoted to Romani literature with proceedings from international scientific forums.

Studii Romani has been organizing presentations devoted to Romani children's literature at the international book-fairs in Leipzig, Bologna and Frankfurt within the CumpUSculturae project funded by the Culture 1213 programme of the EC (<http://212.72.210.78/sr-www/studiromanien.html>), etc.

Genres and topics in contemporary Romani literature

Until now in all countries all over Europe where Roma live have appeared a number of publications for children varying from materials to support the education of the Roma to original books by Roma authors with tales, short stories, poetry and novels. These are primarily bi-lingual books written in Romani and the language of the majority in the country of publication, published under various circumstances, but most of them reflecting the Romani ethno culture. Nowadays, books for children have been among the most numerous publications written and published by and for Roma, because of the importance of the Romani

children education and strengthening Romani culture and identity through it. Romani children literature, original and in translation, is among first genres to be developed dating back as soon as the immergence of Romani literature as part of fully (though for only a decade) developed Romani literary landscape in 1920-30s. in the Soviet Union to serve the needs of the Romani population and its enlightening the spirit of the new regime.

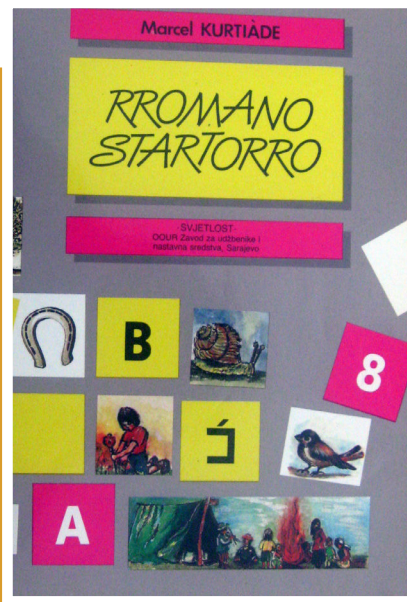
Instead of providing exhaustive list of the production and authors, which is anyway impossible, we would suggest a typology of the general genres and topics that prevail.



Educational materials

In all Eastern European countries, as well as in Austria, Sweden, Germany, Finland and UK are being produced **children books** and materials to

support Romani children's education, as for example *Sikljova Romani čhib* in Macedonia (Jusuf 1996) and *Amen Roman Siklojas* in Austria (Glaeser et al. 1998).





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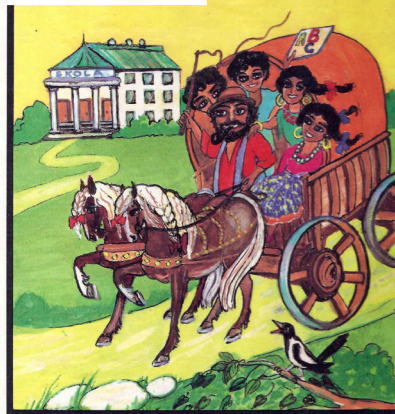
MORRI ANGLUNI
RROMANE ČHIBĂQI
EVROPUTNI LAVUSTIK

cigány, magyar,
angol, francia, spanyol,
német, ukrán, román,
horvát, szlovák, görög

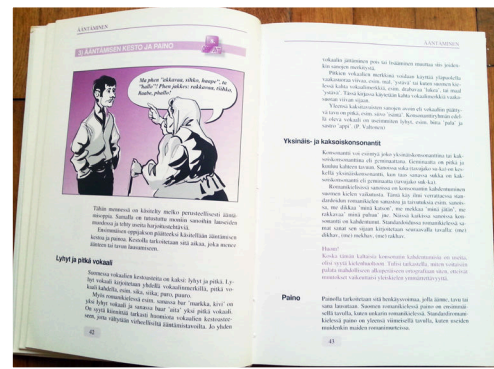
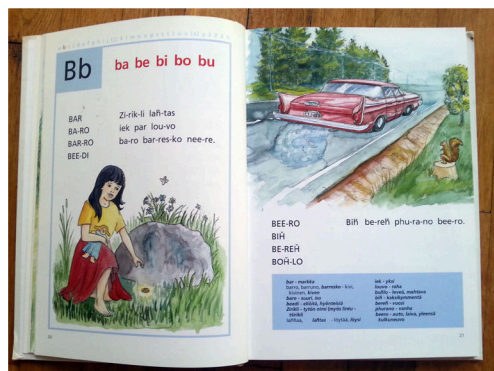
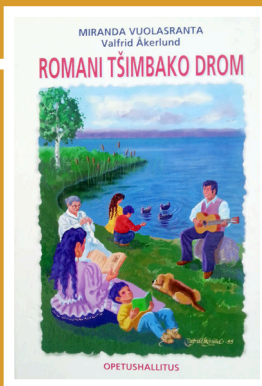
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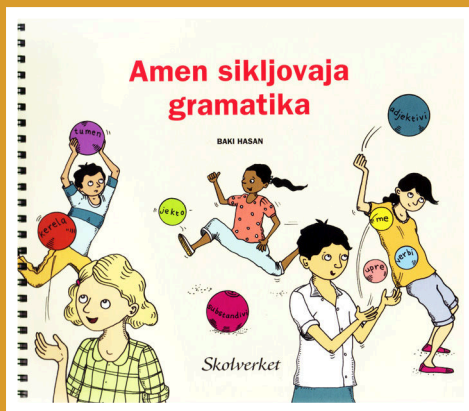


Finland has been paying attention to the education of Roma and developed a publishing programme for educational materials, with the most prominent author the Romni activist Miranda Vuolasranta.



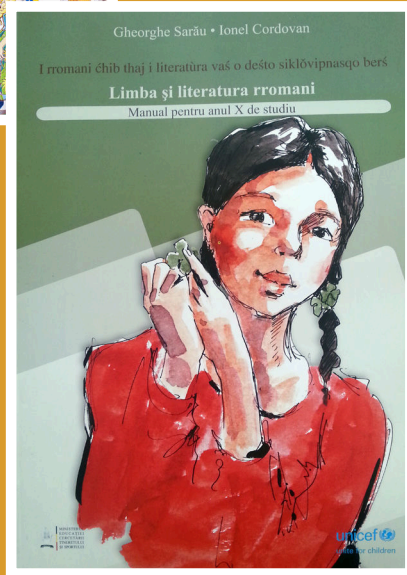
In present day Sweden, where are living Kaldaras Roma migrated to Sweden in the second half of the 20th c., but also Roma who migrated from Serbia and Macedonia as Yugoslav war refugees in 1990s, are published also educational materials adapted to the dialectical particularities of each Roma group. In this way there are textbooks with the same content and design, but published in different Romani language dialect.

This manner of publishing is not new – under the editorialship of Yaron Matras in Germany were published a set of educational materials in couple of Romani dialects (quote).





The most numerous textbooks production is in Romania, where the Romani language education is provided for all grades of elementary education and high school.





In the materials targeted at developing the reading and writing skills in Romani are incorporated poems and tales of Roma authors from different countries, as for example in the four parts of the Romani learning textbook *Amari Romani Lumja* by Hristo

Kyuchukov are presented Roma authors and folklore from all over Europe to demonstrate the Romani unity and to present to the children the richness of Romani culture and literature (Kjučukov 1997, 2000a, 2001b).

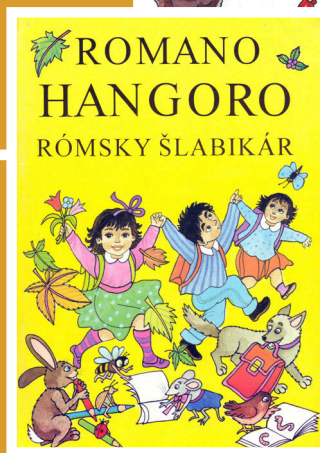
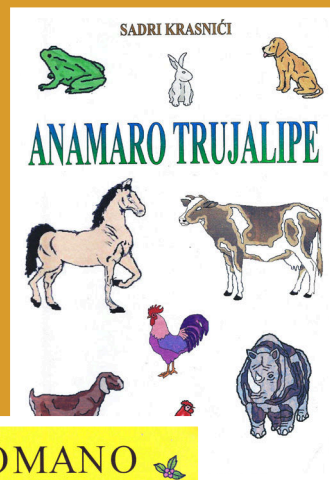


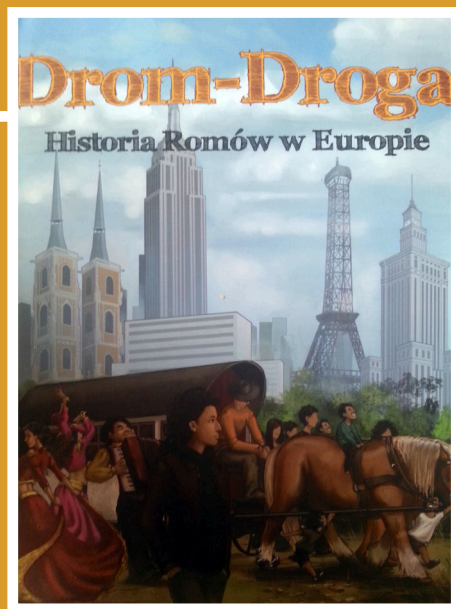
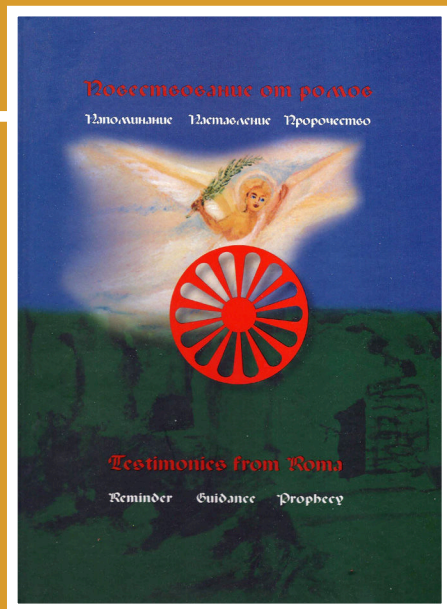


There are also lots of books with children's tales, bi-lingual or monolingual picture books and books with illustrations.

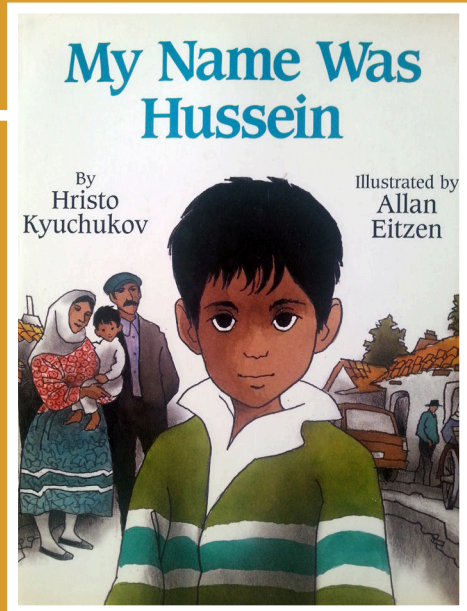


Dictionaries with rich illustrative materials are produced for the educational needs of Romani children in Eastern European countries.

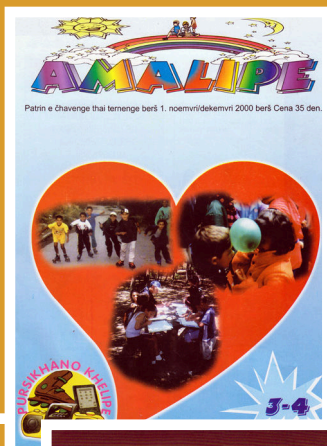




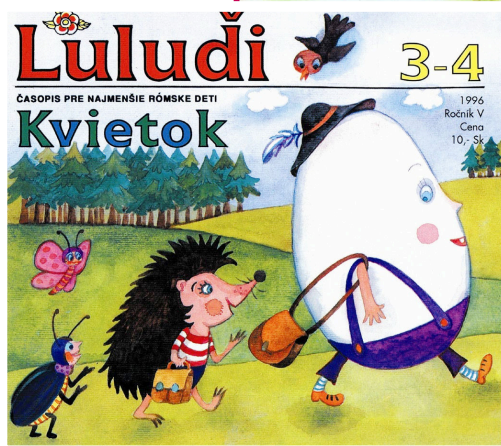
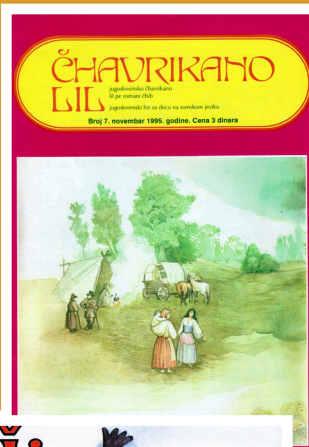
Illustrated history books are
a genre applied in the Romani children
education.



Recently have been published books for children, and also for adults narrating about the biography of a Roma personality or the Roma history from India to the Romani Holocaust (Hancock 2002; Taikon/Eriksson 2010). Other examples are of picture or commix story books narrating about a Romani personality.



Periodicals for children have been published as for example *Chhavorrikano Lil* (Serbia), *Luludi* (Slovakia) and *Miri nevi minimulti* (Austria).

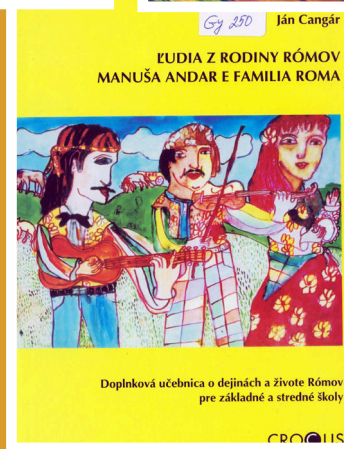
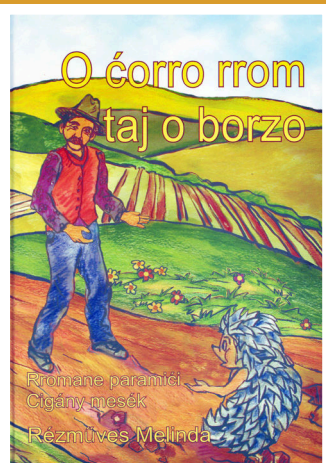
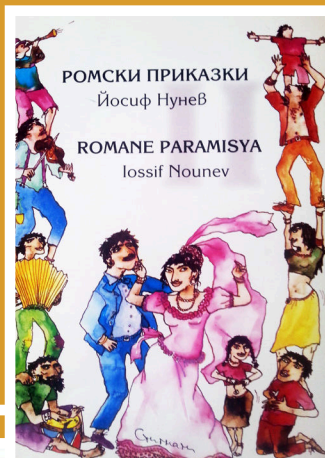




Traditional folklore, tales and stories

If we have to speak about genres varieties, **traditional folklore and oral stories**, folk (fairy)-tales or traditional believes' narratives would have a leading place. They are either published as folklore material by Roma or non-Roma researchers with annotations, comments and information about the narrator or are published by Roma authors, who may as authors also transform them. In Eastern European countries the model of folklore materials production repeats the well-known pattern for the ethno-national states in the region that was developed in XIX and beginning of XX c. after the Herderian model for national emancipation through collection and publishing of a wide range of folklore materials, dictionaries, narratives about customs, traditional songs representing the national spirit. Thus, in earlier historical periods of

time we have collections of Romani folklore that appeared parallel to appearance of folklore collections of the respective ethno-national states. Such is the example of Romani folklore tales collected and published by Barbu Constantinescu in 1878 in Romania, and more than a century later was republished by a Romanian publishing house (Constantinescu 2005). In Romania were also published new collections of Romani traditional tales under the editorial of Gheorghe Sarau, an educational expert and activist, who is the main figure in the development of Romani language curricula in all levels of education and Romani educational materials (Copoiu 1996). In all countries of Eastern Europe a considerable number of Romani tales collection were published with efforts of Romani education and language activists, to mention only few examples of Jossif Nunev from Bulgaria (Nunev 2003),



Doplnková učebnica o dejinách a živote Rómov
pre základné a stredné školy

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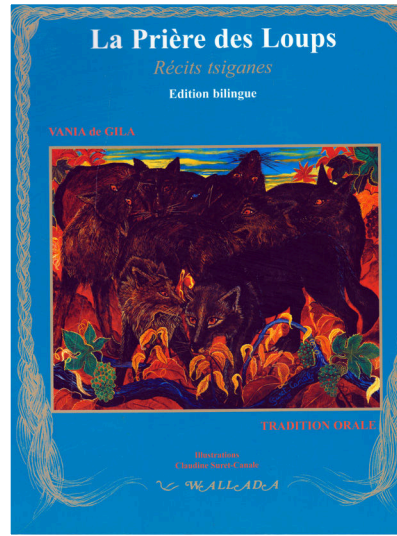


Ljatif Demir in Macedonia (Demir 1996), Károly Bari in Hungary (Bari 1996; 1999).

Publishing of folklore materials, however, is not characteristic only for the Eastern and Central European countries. Such collections, though in limited number, appeared also in all countries where Roma are living

(Gjerde/Kristiansen 1994; Williamson 1994).

Some of the established Romani Studies scientists, being collectors of Romani folklore throughout their research, have become authors/editors of series of volumes devoted to Romani folklore materials. Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov





have published five volumes of *Studii Romani* series with materials presenting the folklore, culture and language of the Roma communities in Eastern Europe (Marushiakova/Popov 1994-1997; Marushiakova/Popov/Igla 1998). The Romani Project research group at the University of Graz along with Drava publishing house published series of Romani folklore collected by Mozes Heinschink, a long term recorded of Romani folklore and languages materials in Europe. The volumes are classified mainly by Romani dialects' variety, e.g. collections of Lovara tales, of Gurbet tales, Erliji folklore materials, Kaldarash tales and narrative, etc. (Halwachs at al. 2000; Cech at al. 2001; Heinschink at al. 2006).

Folklore also influences all other genres in the field of Romani literature: many short stories published by Roma authors (as tales by Andrej Gina or Georgiji Tsvetkov for example) are

based on modification or just writing of a traditional narratives and believes. In all novels by Roma are presented and described some of the traditional believes in the Romani worldview – as the life of the death (*mulo*). Poetry has also been influenced in both terms of content and form. Some poetic works are reflecting the Romani tradition by its presentation in the poetry narrative – the poem *Bijav* (Wedding) by Mihail Georgiev (2009) narrating about the wedding day of a bride married not to the one chosen by her heart. Other poems are influenced by the folklore as ways of expressions – there are poems in the form of or with phrases from the traditional lament or mourning performed on the Balkans (as Rajko Djurić's *Without a Home, Without a Grave*).

The boundaries between folklore tales and **short stories** are not clear, since the Roma culture is very close to the oral



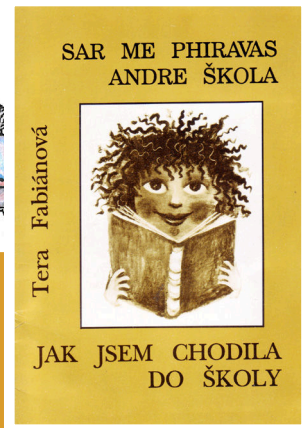
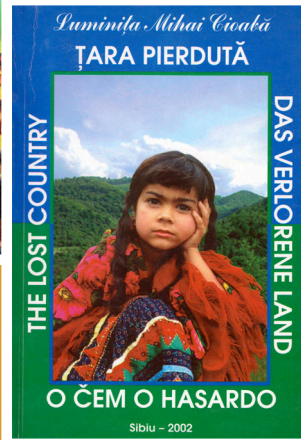
tradition and sometimes the authors publish as authorized short stories a traditional folklore, or take an element from the oral folklore that is authorized by the author, thus becoming a new story. Such collections were published

in almost all countries where Roma live. There are also examples of contemporary authors' stories that are not based on folklore as the ones by Slovak authors Tera Fabianova and Ilona Ferkova, or the Kosovo born Alija



Alija Krasnići

MA ROV DEJONE MUNRRRIJE





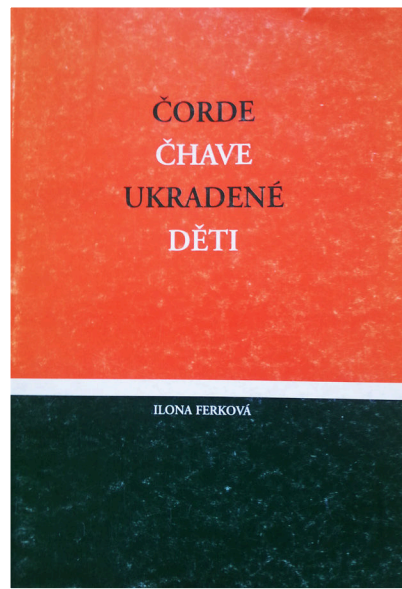
Krasniči, who is the most productive short stories author.

As we have seen in the previous parts, publication of author's short stories was characteristic for the Roma from Czechoslovakia and this tradition continued after the democratic changes and the dissolution of Czechoslovakia into two separate states – Slovakia and Czech Republic. After 1990 appeared as a separate collections Andrej Gina's *Bijav* (1991) and Tera Fabiánová's *Sar me phiravas andre School / How I went to school* (1992), both solely in Romani. Tera has completed three years of elementary school and she narrated about her experience in the autobiographical story.

In 1990s started writing and publishing new talented Roma authors from Slovakia as Ilona Ferková, Erika Olahová, Margita Reiznerová, who narrate about contemporary Romani life. Ilona Ferková's stories that were published in two short story books

Spoiled his life because of money (1992) and *Stolen Children* (Ferková 1996).

Erika Olahová who also began to publish in the 1990s writes in Czech and has published two collections of short stories - *I do not want to go among the dead* (2004) and *Matt Mirror*





(2007). Her works are mainly in the genre of short horror stories with the characteristic for the Roma authors of her generation humorous narrative through which are described the everyday personal troubles. Olahová is also referred to by some literary critics as one of the greatest talents of Czech women's literature (Sadílková 2009). Elena Lacková continued to write short stories published in periodicals. Margita Reiznerová, who is more known with her poetry works, has also written few short stories and fairy tales in Romani that were published in 1990s, the most famous among which is the fairy tale *Kali* dedicated to the patron saint of the Roma holy Kali (Šebková 2003).

Alija Krasnići has published several short stories collections exclusively in Romani language devoted to the destiny and life of the Roma communities, full of both humour and sadness (Krasnići 1995; Krasnići 2000)

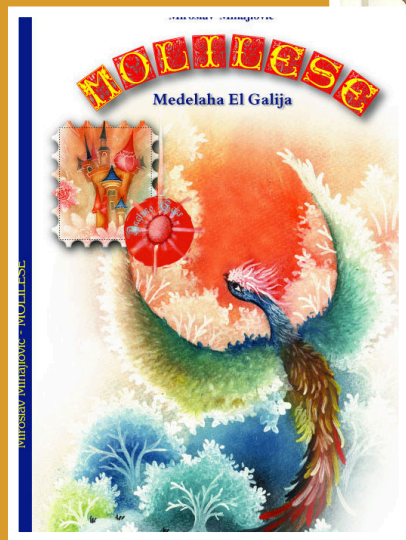
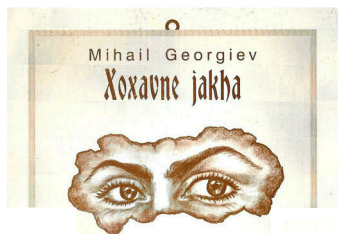
Poetry

Poetry continues to be a genre favoured by Roma authors and actually many of the Roma activists and artists are publishing poetry books, proving the statement of Santino Spinelli, musician, lecturer and himself a poet, in his foreword to a Roma poets' collection (Spinelli 1997: 9) that every Roma is a poet. In Eastern Europe we have increasing of number of poetry publications compared to previous period, and also increasing of the poetry production in Romani – Dezider Banga who was earlier publishing in Slovak is already writing in Romani, and other authors who had written in the national languages, are being translated into Romani, as for example the poetry works of Roma authors from Hungary (*Rom Som. Romane Poetongi Antologia/Anthology of Gypsy poets/Ciganyok Költök Versei*. 1995). Only in



Bulgaria for a period of 15 years after 1990 were published over 16 poetry books by contemporary Roma writers

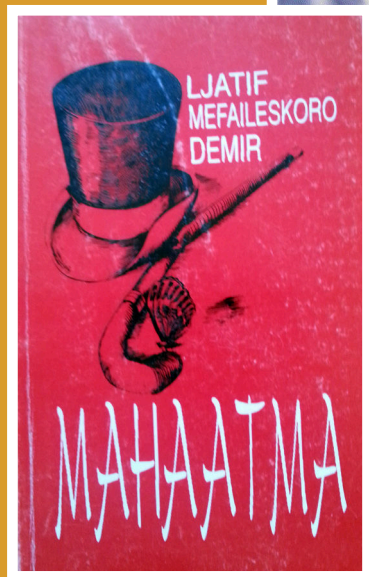
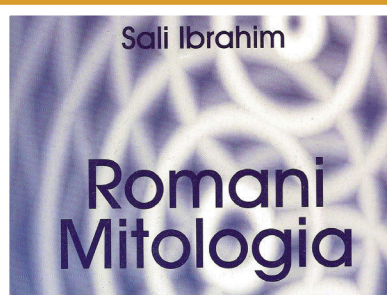
and a tri-lingual (Romani, Bulgarian, English) collection of Bulgarian's Roma poetry (Parushev 2002).



male noćne pesme
cikne rjatune dila



jovan nikolić





Among the Romanian pioneering Roma poetry (and short stories) author is Luminita Cioaba, from the famous Cioaba family, which is among the pretenders for the Roma King title in Romania. Luminita's first collection of poetry *The Rain Merchant* (1997) was published by her own organization *Nevo Drom*, which is a well-known model for publishing among the East European Roma – a non-governmental organization run by a Roma activist receives a grant from a donor to publish a book presenting Romani culture. Yugoslav Roma continued publishing in both their countries of origin (Krasnići 2000b) and in migration, as for example Jovan Nikolić in Germany, Ilija Jovanović in Austria, Šemso Advić in Italy (Advić 1993). In Western Europe there are some pioneering examples of poetry production written by local Roma - for example Italy and UK. In England are important the works of

Ray Smith, author of the collection *One Hand Clapping* (Smith 1995), and Charles Smith (1990), as well as Ely Frankham, Josie Townley, Nathan Lee, Hester Hedges.

Whereas in 1980s were published poetry works only by Roma with origin from Bosnia, after 1990s started the 'indigenous' literary production by Italian Roma that could be divided by origin into Roma from Abruzzi (Santino Spinelli and Luigi Cirelli), Sinti (Paula Schöpf, Vittorio Mayer Pasquale, Olimpio Caro and Puco), and Istrian Roma (Toninato 2013: 87-96), living in Northern Italy. Santino Spinelli is the most active in the field of Romani publishing. Spinelli is Romani cultural activist and musician, who since 1990 leads the established by him cultural association *Them Romanö*, and is the editor of the homonymous review, issued every three months. He published two bilingual (Romanes/

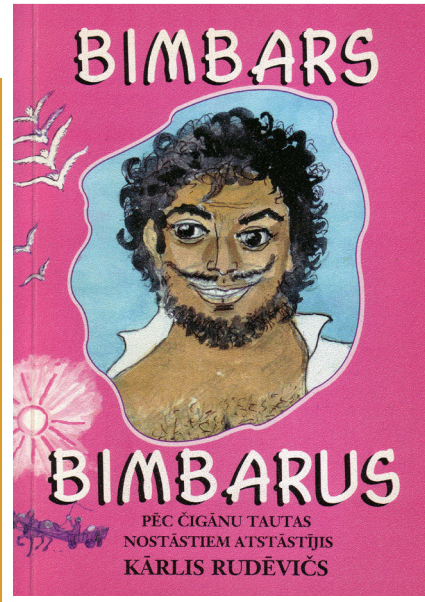


Italian) collections of poems, *Gili Romani* (Spinelli 1988) and *Romanipe/ Ziganitā* (Spinelli 1993). Luigi Cirelli (1994) published his poems *Without destination*. In 1991 Mansueto Levacovich, an Istrian Rom and human rights activist, published the collection *My Romani people* (Popolo mio dei Rom) in Italian. Among the female authors from Italy are the Romani Nada Braidic and Sinti woman Paula Schöpf.

An important part, however underdeveloped sub-division within the genre of Romani poetry is the poetry for children. Examples of such works are the poetry collections by Sejdo Jašarov (1996), Karlis Rudjevic and Ata Becheva (2004).

The existing of a considerable quantity of poetry production stimulated publication of anthologies of Roma poetry, usually in several languages (Romani, language of the country

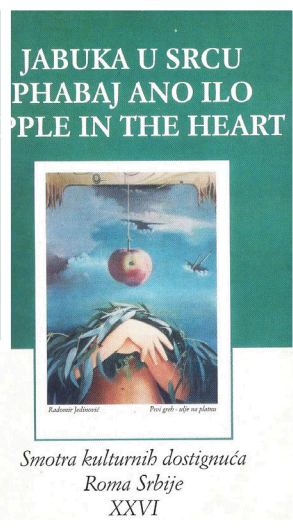
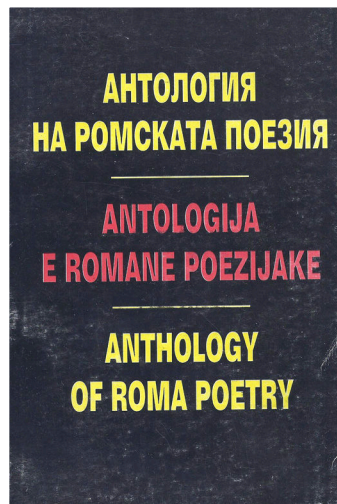
of publication and/or English). One kind of collections are these uniting poets within borders of nation-state or former federation: such were published in Hungary (Rostas-Farkas 1993), Italy (Spinelli 1993), Bulgaria (Parushev





2002). In Serbia were published several collections/anthologies presenting Roma from former Yugoslav lands (Krasnići/Saćip 1999; Šainović/Balić

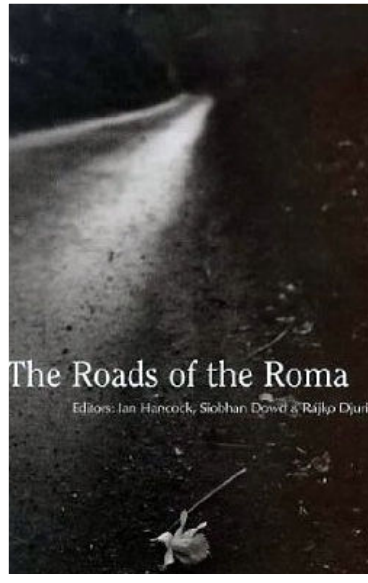
2001), the Museum of Roma culture in Brno published collection of Slovak and Czech Roma (Kramářová/Sadílková 2007).





Other Romani poetry collections were designed to present the cultural unity of all Roma by publishing anthologies of Roma in Europe. Such anthologies were published in Hungary (*Rom Som. Romane Poetongi Antologia/Anthology of Gypsy poets/*

Ciganyok Költök Versei. 1995) and Italy (Spinelli 1994-1997), or across the globe as the volume *The Roads of the Roma: A PEN anthology of Gypsy Writers*, published in English and edited by Rajko Djurić, Ian Hancock and Siobhan Down (1998).





(Auto) biographies

Many publications by Roma belong to the genre of autobiographies, biographies and memoirs devoted to life-path narration on the background of historical events. As it has been pointed out earlier, in the German speaking countries a common topic is the Romani Holocaust, which should be viewed in the historical context of immergence of the political, scientific and public discourse on the Roma Holocaust after 1970s, including its importance in the international Romani movement.

The Austrian Lovara family of Stojka's, survivors of the Holocaust and the internment at Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, is the most productive and well known. Ceija Stojka published her first autobiographic book in 1988, *We Live in Seclusion* as memories of a Romni concerning the Nazi persecution of the Austrian Romani people, later

continued in 1992, with *Travellers on This World* (Stojka 1992). Her brothers also published their autobiographies – Karl Stojka published *At home all over the World* (1994) and Mongo Stojka *Paper Kid* (2000). Stojka's narrations are valuable examples of Romani literature, not only as content, but also concerning their style with detailed descriptions reminding the oral tradition of the Lovara, as well as by their important contribution to the general public's knowledge of the Roma's and Sinti's culture and history. Also in Austria, the Burgenland Roma Stephan Horvath published his memoirs and narratives in three books *I was not in Auschwitz* (Ich war nicht in Auschwitz, 2003), *Cat litter* (*Katzenstreu*, 2007) and *Atsinganos* (2013). In his first two books Stephan narrated about his own experience and mental breakdown and sleep disorders since the violent death of his son after



the Roma settlement Oberwart was attacked with explosive materials and slogans “Roma get back to India!”. Horvath writes:

“I am an eternal Gypsy, born and brought up in the Roma settlement – condemned like the rest to endure the silence of decades. I have seen the shredded remains of the four victims. I was there to witness the atrocity. I looked into the broken eyes of my dead son and since then have heard

the voices of my ancestors from the beyond.”

Horvath’s third book, *Atsinganos. The Oberwarter Roma and their settlements* came out in 2013. It is dedicated to the Oberwart Roma and their settlements in historical perspective, Horvath’s own roots and fate. In 2013 the Austrian PEN Roma Literature Prize was awarded for the first time and the recipient was Stefan Horvath.

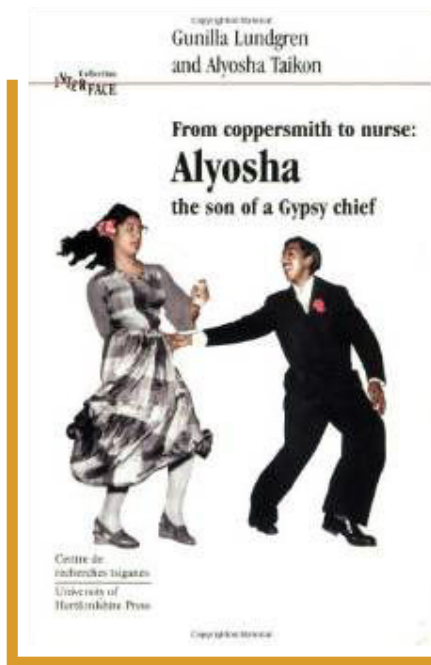
Stefan Horvath





Several autobiography books were published as a result of creative cooperation between Roma and a researcher, who encouraged the authors and helped them master their works. Along with the already mentioned *Katizi*, that was written by Katarina Taikon in collaboration with Gunilla Lundgren, Lundgren also encouraged other Swedish Roma to write their life stories. An interesting instance in this respect is the story of Alyosha Taykon *From Coppersmith to Nurse: Alyosha the son of a Gypsy chief* published initially in Swedish (1999) and translated into Romani (2002) and English (2003) in the common Interface collection of Centre de Recherches Tsiganes/University of Hertfordshire Press.

The story reveals how Alyosha was rejected by the family when he became a male nurse, because of the concept for purity. Another story narrated by



the Taikons and edited by Lundgren is published in a commix for both children and adults by Sofi Taikon, a Romani girl surviving the Holocaust. The book that is among the few



examples of commix in Romani is published in Kaldarash Romani and Swedish (Lundgren/Taikon 2005). In Sweden were also published biography books for both adults (Caldaras 2002) and children as the recently printed excellent Swedish/Romani story photo book accompanied by a CD with recordings of the narrative, *Marie-Claude – One Romani Girl* (Taikon Melker/Eriksson 2010).

Biography/memoir books that were narrated by Gypsy and edited by a non-Roma researcher/activist were also published in Italy in recent years. In 1999 was published the book in a form of diary of the Bosnian born David Halilovich's *Tema sulla mia vita* (*An account of my life*, Toninato 2013: 110). The story of another Rom with Yugoslav origin, Radko Dragutinović, was published in *The Kanjarija: History of the Rom Dasikhane in Italy* (Toninato 2013: 89) under the editing of Massimo

Converso, national secretary of Opera Nomadi, the Italian organization that is engaged in human rights activism and taking care of the Gypsies that the Italian state accommodates in *campi nomadi*.

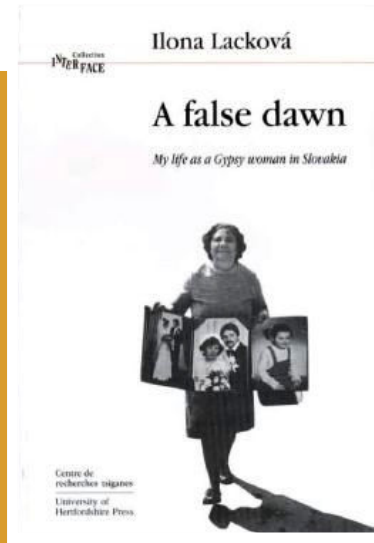
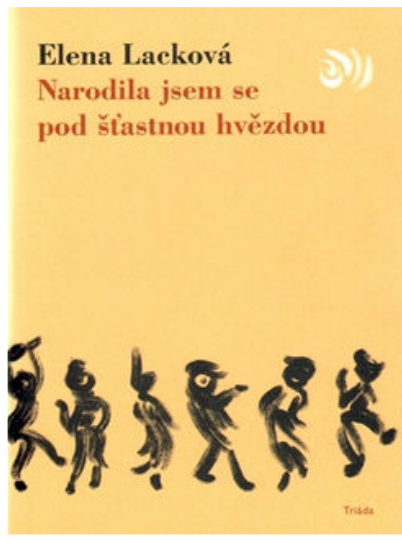
Sinti authors in Italy have also been producing autobiography stories as a result of their collaboration with editors, among them Annibale Niemen's *The House on Wheels* (Niemen 1995), Gnugo De Bar's *Road, the home of Sinti. One hundred years of history in the story of a mountebank sinto* (De Bar 1998), and Gualberto Niemen's *Autobiography of a puppeteer* (Nieman 2000) (Trevisan 2008: 45-70). Biographies of Gypsy Travellers were published in the UK among which as *The Horsieman: Memories of a Traveller, 1928–1958* by Duncan Williamson (1994), *Gypsy from the Forest* by David Lazell (1997.), and *Biography of Bramwell "Romany"*



Evens by Guy Loveridge (1995) (Kenrick 1998: ???). In Australia is published the autobiography of the Roma activists Yvonne Slee *Torn Away Forever* (2005).

Probably the most famous so far autobiography book in Eastern Europe is the Ilona Lacková's *I was*

born under a Lucky Star: my life as a Gypsy Woman in Slovakia originally published in Slovakian as a result of the author's collaboration with Milena Hübshmannova. The book has editions in many languages, including English in which the original title (*Narodila jsem se pod šťastnou*





hvězdou, e.g. I was born under a Lucky Star in English, Lacková 1997) is wrongly and even contrary translated as *A False Dawn*, which is not a simple error of the individual translator, but an indication about the commonly accepted discourse in Europe after 1989 to portray the former communist regimes as extremely repressive towards Gypsies.

In Romania has also been published such a book narrating about the life of Ilonka Neni, written after the story of the Roma woman from Transylvania (Konczei/Lakatus 2004).

In Eastern Europe Bulgarian Roma hold a leading place in regard to biographies and memoirs published in the recent years. Lilyana Kovatcheva, Romani women activist and Romani children education expert, is author of two biography books. Her first book *Rom Knows the Way* was published in three different language editions

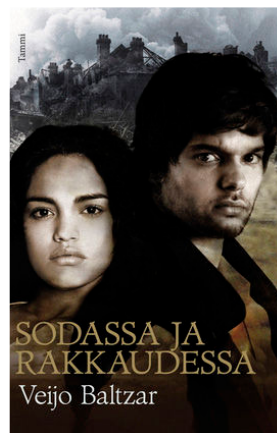
(Bulgarian, Romani and English) and is an account of the life of 12 Roma individuals from all over Europe with significant contribution to the development of the Romani culture (Kovatcheva 2000; 2001). The second bilingual (Romani/Bulgarian) book is a biographical narrative with archive materials about the life of Shakir Pashov, a famous Roma leader and MP in the Bulgarian Parliament in 1940s (Kavatcheva 2008). Two memoir books by Gospodin Kolev, a Bulgarian Rom, who held a position in the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, were also published providing an insider's valuable narratives about the work that was related to the Gypsy population and the context and (non)implementation of the Party's decisions in regard to the Gypsies - *A Gypsy in the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party* (Kolev 2003) and



The Bulgarian Communist Party and the Gypsies in the period 1944-1989 (Kolev 2010).

The Romani linguist and pedagogic expert Hristo Kyuchukov published his early childhood biography in the picture book *My Name was Hussein* (Kyuchukov 2004).

Whereas (auto) biographies and memoir books are comprehensively developed in terms of production and topics, the **novels** are still the barest genre and authors continue to publish in the majority languages of the countries where they live. The few examples to which we can refer are the already mentioned Veijo Baltzar from Finland, whose last novel *In Love and War* (2008) treats the already quite popular topic of the Romani Holocaust as a background of the love story between two young Roma. Ludovít Didi, called by the Slovakia critic's the first Romani novelist, wrote so far three books of novels and short stories - *Stories lighted by the wind* (Didi 2004), *The Gypsy woman's forecast* (Didi 2008) and *Black Roma and White love* (Didi 2011). The Bulgarian poet and journalist Georgy Parushev has published the novel *Carriers of Illusions* (Parushev 2006) about the destiny of a young Roma during the WWII.



Among the women authors we can mention the names of Esmeralda Romanez, Romani activist writing poetry and prose in French, author of the novel *Rainbow Paths* (Romanez 1998) and Louise Doughty, who published *Fires in the Dark* (2003) about the destiny of a Roma boy who escapes from a concentration camp and hides his identity.

Translations in Romani

The corpus of literature in Romani is also enlarged by various **translations**. Among them are children's classics translations as *Snowwhite and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Emil and the Bad Tooth*, and even translation of the Disney production *Shrek*, published in the Bulgarian periodical *Andral*.



Kana o Emil sas te cirdel la Linako dand

kathar
Astrid Lindgren
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Wasył Curvło

ALICE

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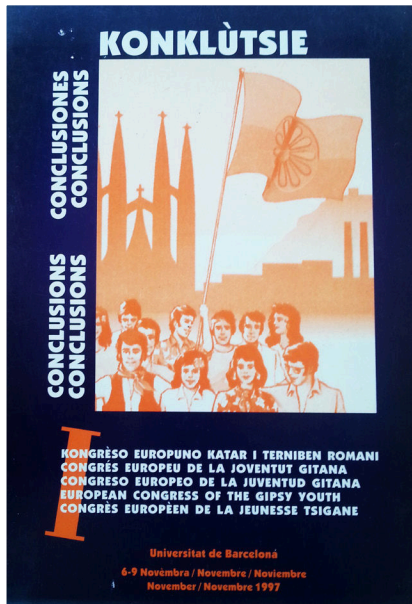
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The translations for elders are varying from translations of worlds classics, as for example Lorca's translations (Lorca 1996), translations of national poets (a collection of poems by the Bulgarian national hero and

revolutionary poet Hristo Botev was translated into Drundari Romani dialect), or translations of the epic corpus *Ramayana* (translated by Leksa Manush).



Federico García Lorca



Romane romancura
Romancero gitano
Cigány románcok



There are also examples of a translation of scientific (and popular) book is *Berša Bibahtale* (literary Unhappy years), Romani version of the *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies* by Gratton Puxton and Donald Kenrick translated by D. Kenrick himself, D. Kenrick's *Romengiro Drom. Indijaty ke Maškiratuno Derjav*, translation into Baltic Romani of *Road of the Roma. From India to the Mediterranean* done by Valdemar Kalinin (Kenrick 2001), *We are the Romany People: Ame Sam e Rromane Džene* by Ian Hancock (2002) and *I Romani Kultura* by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov (Marushiakova/Popov 2012).

Translations in various Romani dialects have been done of religious text – the Bible for example have various translations, primarily done by Roma activists, published in different countries as for example Serbia, Bulgaria, and Baltic states². Bible adaptation for children was firstly published in Spain in 1982, while some Romani translation appeared in Eastern Europe after 1990 as for example those done by József Choli Daróczi in Hungary and Zlatomir Jovanović³ in Serbia. Kuran was translated by Muharem Serbezovski (*Kur'ani* 2005) and other Islamic religious guiding books have been also translated (Serbez 2002; *So si o Islamo* 2004).

² Sumnalo Evandjelje Isusko Hristosko e Jovanostar translated by Trifun Dimić. Belgrade: Biblijsko Društvo, 1989; O Neevo Zaveti Amare Devlesko Isus Hristos translated by Suljo Metkov. Sofia: Union of the Church of the Seventh Day adventists, 1995; Ianostyr Svento Mištophenyben translated by Valdemar Kalinin. Dillenburg: Gute Botschaft Verlag, 1999.

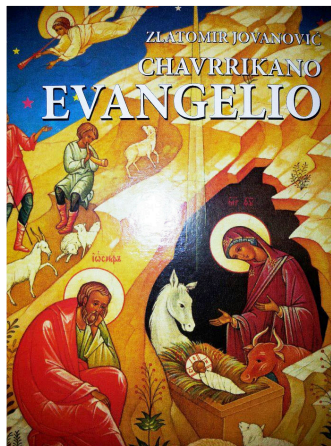
³ *Chavrrikano Evangelio* translated by Zlatomir Jovanović, Obrenovac, 2012; *Muri Anglunyi Bibla Kiponca* translated by József Choli Daróczi. 2010.



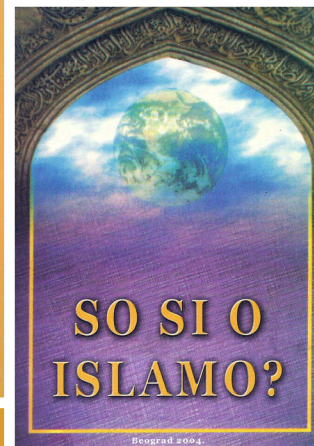
The New Testament was also translated by various evangelical missions that also published periodicals and other texts in translation to reach their Romani believers.

It is noteworthy that when we speak about Romani publications in Eastern Europe, the majority of the titles have been published by non-governmental cultural/educational/

human rights organizations or the authors themselves with the help of grants from donors supporting the development of the Romani culture and literature. In Western Europe, the publishing is done primarily by professional publishers, in most cases specialized in minority literature non-commercial publishing houses.



EVANGELIA
MATEJOSTYR
Baltyko Romani Chib



Conclusion

We could claim that with the increasing of the quantity in production of Romani literature and its development in the context of the development of the Romani discourse in Europe, the Romani literature could be already interpreted as a cohesive, though multi-faced, phenomenon. Romani literature titles, regardless of their national context which should not be underestimated, do have similarities that are not national and this is seen in the commonality of their topics. Some of the most important and repetitive motives and themes that are common for the Romani literature production are: 1) Identity revealing and self-referentiality in regards to the being a Roma/Gypsy (almost all

Roma poets have a poem called *I'm a Gypsy/Me sem Rom*) or belonging to a Gypsy group (the prose authors refer to the rules of their own group; 2) The idea of lack of place and belonging that is most explicitly stated in the poem of Rajko Djurić *Without a Home, Without a Grave*; 3) Reproducing the (Auto-)stereotypes that Roma are free nomads and travelers, as stated a poem by Charlie Smith – “Real Gypsies live in tents and waggon like in the story books”; 4) Relations Rom-Gadžhe; 5) Nature, relation and harmony between Gypsies and nature; 6) Mirror of customs and influence of folklore; 7) Historical narratives – in both poetry and other works appear narratives about the origin of Roma from India



and their trip to Europe, as well as the stories of Roma suffering in Auschwitz or Jasenovac. These typology of themes is not exhaustive, but generally draws the most common and repeated ones. As we may see the Roma authors are typically writing about the destiny of a Roma characters and are in this sense self-referential. The Romani literature works have various functions – they are historical testimonies, educational materials, provide description of folklore motives, etc. As any literature, Romani Authors works are not just

‘pure’ literature – they should be interpreted in regards to the politics of identity characteristic for the context in which the individual authors have publisher. Thus, we could agree with the statement that Romani literature is minority literature in the sense used by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, e.g. not the one produced in minority language (although this is sometimes the case), but the literature which is highly political and in which representations have a generalizing collective value(s) (Deleuze/Guattari 1986).

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