Introduction

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Roma/Gypsies have generally been presented and represented, in both public opinion and academia, as being without a literary and writing tradition of their own. This misconception is based on the argument of Roma having an eminently 'oral' tradition and being reluctant to adopt writing practices (Toninato 2014:50–62), with a low level of literacy and education (Cahn et al. 1999; Óhidy and Forray 2019). While these generalisations have some elements of validity in individual cases, they nevertheless disregard and ignore the authorship and literary creativity of Roma dating back to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The current book is based on recent, in-depth historical research conducted throughout Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe (CSEEE) on various publishing and literary activities led by Roma individuals, activists and organisations, offering a significant contribution to shifting this narrative.

The book has a groundbreaking character from several perspectives related to the studies of Romani literature and media tradition in the fields of Romani Studies, Comparative Literature, Sociolinguistics, and Media Studies, as well as from the perspectives of the history of national literature(s). First and foremost, it points to the fact that Romani literature and media does not have a belated history but has developed with similarity and in parallel to the developments of writing and literature practices in the regions in question and on a scale consistent with the circumstances of the Roma community and the formation of the states within which the Roma community has lived. Second, the book contributes to a perspective that goes beyond the interpretation of Romani literature as an 'oral' literature dominated by folklore, storytelling and non-written literacy systems (Blandfort 2015:76–99; Karpati 1989; Toninato 2014:50–62). Third, stepping on earlier historical research describing literary and journalistic endeavours in respective countries (Achim 2004; Acković 2014: 251–332; Marushiakova and Popov 1997: 121–123; Русаков & Калинин 2006) or globally, including CSEEE countries (Djurić 2002; Zahova 2014), and along with recently discussed sources and materials (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a; Shapoval 2020), the book offers a comprehensive and comparative perspective on the activities and content of Roma print media and on Roma written narratives in journalism in CSEEE before the Second World War.

Romani literature histories are often limited to national borders and journalism and literature of Roma have been discussed in studies about Roma history in various countries (Marushiakova and Popov 1997: 121–123; Achim 2004; Acković 2014: 251–332; Crowe 2007) or globally (Djurić 2002; Toninato 2014; Zahova 2014, 2016). Several studies have focused on reviewing literature by Roma authors in a national or regional context(s), e.g. Soviet Union literature (Русаков & Калинин 2006; Shapoval 2020), Hungary (Beck 2004), Kosovo (Courthiade 1985), Czechoslovakia (Hübschmannová 1991, 2006; Sadílková

2009), Macedonia (Kurth 2008), Yugoslavia (Tahirović-Sijerčić 2016) among others, while literature texts' analyses are generally focused on a certain author or on several authors in a comparative perspective (cf. French 2015; Ryvolová 2014). A common discourse in these studies is the presentation of original Romani literature as a phenomenon that developed only after the 1960s. However, our multi-sited research on individual and library collections, archives and other primary sources proves the availability of Roma writings in earlier periods, with an impressive variety of writings in published and unpublished form. By adopting a multi-national and entangled history perspective (Werner and Zimmermann 2006), with case studies from the countries of CSEEE in which Romani literature and print media developed, our aim is to contribute to expanding the academic knowledge, and address mainstream misconceptions, about Romani literature production. We will do this by showing that Roma-led literature and publishing endeavours were developing synchronically to similar processes among all other communities, and that they repeat the pattern through which European vernacular languages became languages with a printing tradition and cultures with a literary heritage.

Definitions of and theoretical approaches to Romani literature have been extensively discussed in comparative literature scholarship (Blandfort 2015:76–100; Eder-Jodran 1993:13–20; Hertrampf and Blandfort 2011; Kovacs hazy 2009, 2011). Some of these theoretical debates have been centred on the question of what Romani literature is and what definition should be given to it. According to a rough summary of most of the definitions, Romani literature includes pieces written by Roma who write about Roma. Others would consider as Romani literature pieces written by Roma but with the exclusion of authors who do not explicitly identify themselves as 'Romani' authors – objecting to their inclusion in the category of Romani literature. The works of Roma authors not writing about Roma topics should, according to some, be excluded from the definition of Romani literature, thus leaving in the field only those who centre their work on Roma topics and discuss Roma characters (Hancock 1998:11).

Rarely have translations of world literature into the Romani language been considered part of the field of Romani literature (Zahova 2014:105–9; Шаповал 2020a), nor did books written by non-Roma authors in the Romani language, or for Roma audiences: for instance, for Roma children and young adults. In this way, some theories discussing Romani literature seem to fall into the trap of the orientalist approach in Romani Studies (Marushiakova and Popov 2017c) and apply to Roma writings criteria for definition that would not be applied to most of the other ethno-national community literatures. Thus, although a Polish-language novel such as *Quo Vadis*, discussing a topic that cannot, strictly speaking, be defined as related to Poland, is regarded as Polish literature, and although there are many authors of English literature classics who have written in the English language without necessarily writing about English or British topics, Roma authors not writing about Roma topics are to be left outside of the field of Romani literature, if such approach is followed. At the same time, in the discourse of these theories (considering only Roma-themed works by Roma authors to be part of Romani literature),

Romani literature is considered auto-descriptive, young and of self-referential character (Blandfort 2015; Kovacs hazzy 2011). This ‘exclusivity’ of Romani literature is just another projection of the exoticisation of Roma as a community and an example of essentialisation and orientalising (Marushiakova and Popov 2017c).

Issues arise also from the exclusion from Romani literature of works by authors of non-Roma origin written in Romani language and for Roma audiences, and, indeed, also on a Roma topic. During my participation in an international project mapping important names in Romani literature, I encountered great concerns about my overview of Roma children’s literature because it included the name and works of a Swedish writer. These concerns were related to the non-Roma background of the author as the main criterion with which to include or exclude their works in the field of Romani literature, ignoring the fact that the author has been widely recognised as a writer of Roma books, for which they have been awarded many prizes, and that for every single Roma person in Sweden, this author’s children books are regarded as Romani literature. Had this author’s pure-ethnicity criterion been applied to other ethno-national literatures, then many authors – including national literature canon classic writers of Jewish background – would have been excluded. With this book, we hope to overcome the Orientalism in Romani literature theories by approaching Romani literature and its history with methods applied to other literatures. We propose an approach that does not stress the exclusivity and particularity of Romani literature as a projection of the widely spread stereotype in academia and public discourse that Roma are completely different from other peoples. We approach the history of Romani literature as we would do if we were examining and discussing the literature and written heritage of any other community or nation in CSEEE.

The main methods applied by the authors of this monograph are based on historical approaches and look at the literature artefacts in their historical context. In this respect, the book contributes to the literary histories of CSEEE, and particularly to the interpretative frameworks which look at the interrelation between arts and literature, on the one hand and politics of identity and nationalism, on the other hand (Cornis-Pope and Neubauer 2010; Juvan 2019, Lampe and Mazower 2004; Sugar 1995; Wachtel 1998). Our approach, furthermore, reflects the historical realities and the empirical observations on what is considered Romani literature by Roma themselves and what literature they (would) identify as Romani. In this respect, it is also important to consider the body of Romani literature textbooks (Djurić and Koko 2018a, 2018b; Kjućukov 1997; Sarău 2005; Sarău and Cordovan 2011) and analyse what is considered Romani literature by those who are authors of these materials and who in fact can be considered contributors to the emerging Romani literature historiographies for educating Roma.

We define as Romani literature works authored by Roma and/or in the Romani language that target Roma audiences, among others. According to us, this short yet clear definition is the most accurate description for all historical periods of Romani literature. It embraces different kinds of literary works, both published and unpublished, in a variety of genres, including the genre of journalist/opinion writings in publicistic style,

or *publicistika* in many of the languages of the CSEEE region. According to the literary studies tradition throughout the region of CSEEE, polemical writing, especially as far as early print media is concerned, falls within the literary genre. This is particularly valid for the nineteenth- and twentieth-century media when writings in various genres – especially poetry, but also opinion pieces, carrying the messages for national emancipation, revival and independence, written by poets who later became the founders of national literary canons – were published in the pages of newspapers. Thus, in the CSEEE print media there was space in which emancipatory propaganda and literature intersected, and wherein many national literature canon authors were often first published. The development of Romani literature does not make an exclusion, and forms of journalistic writings were an important part of the early stages of Romani literature's history as well as of Romani nationalism.

We also include in this broad definition of Romani literature other writings that go beyond or border the fiction literary genre, such as religious and folklore publications, as well as translations of religious texts in Romani. Epistolary genres and memoir writings are a significant part of Romani literature. An important form for creation in the corpus of every literature is literary translations, and we look also at the Romani language translation of different genres and types of publications. Many of these have been already described and studied, especially in regard to religious translations (van den Heuvel 2020; Шаповал 2010). While considering them, the book examines more closely the original literary works in Romani (in published form and in manuscript) and Roma print media works, given that these have not been discussed in depth and in a cross-country perspective, nor have their narratives been analysed from the point of view of Roma activism. Our approach is grounded in the view that Romani literature is a multi-dimensional platform for communication, which aims to inspire and encourage confidence and pride in Roma self-identification.

Despite its inclusivity, the embraced definition does not consider any kind of Roma-related publications (books or periodicals) as part of Romani literature. In the historical period we look at, there are numerous publications about Gypsies, including works describing and exemplifying Romani language, history and culture by amateur or professional researchers of various backgrounds. Some authors embracing a historical approach (Acković 2014; Sandu and Grigore n.d.) would include many publications of this 'about Roma' kind into Romani literature, or into a wider definition of Roma publications, as they are mostly written for non-Roma reading audiences. For instance, *Țiganiada* (The Gypsy Epic, translated in English also as Gypsy Camp), set in fifteen century Wallachia and about Gypsies fighting alongside the army of Vlad III (also known as Vlad the Impaler or Vlad Dracula), written by the Romanian scholar and author Ion Budai-Deleanu (1760–1820) is presented in the public statements of some Roma scholars and activists (Sandu and Grigore n.d.:3) and in manuals for Roma children's education as Romani literature, and Budai-Deleanu as a Roma author, which provoked a public reaction on behalf of Romanian literary scholars. As we will see later in the text,

publications about Roma and documenting Romani language and culture have greatly influenced the Roma community in developing an interest in and motivation for Romani literature creation, but they are not part of the Romani literature scene.

The tendencies in Romani literature are closely interrelated with the developments of the historical periods in which they take place, an interrelation that has often been overlooked in studies of Romani literature, except for some studies adopting a historical approach (Djurić 2002; Eder-Jordan 2016; Trevisan 2008; Zahova 2016, 2020a). In some earlier works I have discussed a four-stage historical periodisation of Romani literature (Zahova 2016:82–83) and of Romani-language literature (Zahova 2020a:540–541). The first period, to which this book is devoted, started with the emergence of Romani literature in the nineteenth century and continued until the Second World War. Although the tendencies in Romani literature have been coherent throughout the whole period, the key historical events – like mid-nineteenth-century revolutions, the end of the empires, First World War and nation-state developments – have consequently influenced the main occurrences and features of Romani literature. In the nineteenth century, Romani-language works primarily comprised religious translations and folklore materials, with several instances of original Romani literature or Romani translations in the context of the nineteenth-century romantic nationalism movements in the respective regions, a tendency that continued at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century. The CSEEE region is historically the area where the Romani literature started to emerge, a process entangled with the Roma civic emancipation on the background of the process of national emancipation of the people of the region after the fall of the three empires dominating the region (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a). The countries included in the book are those in which noticeable Roma literary activities were taking place in this period. Similar tendencies might have been taking place in other countries of the region and beyond (as, for instance, religious publications in Romani language were published in various countries and letters by Roma requesting rights and equality for their community appeared in some Nordic countries), but so far we have not discovered original literature production in other countries of the region. Thus, chronologically, the book looks at the first period of Romani literature, i.e. since its beginning in the nineteenth century until the Second World War.

The interwar period saw important and dynamic nationwide developments of Romani literature and print media in some countries. While the major phenomenon described in academia is the Soviet state-wide initiative for publications in Romani language (Marushiakova and Popov 2017d; O’Keeffe 2013; Shapoval 2020; Русаков & Калинин 2016), and many facts about the publishing activities in other countries have been acknowledged in scholarship, this volume, for the first time, looks extensively at the periodical and literature publications of the first historical period of Romani literature. The second period refers to the period after the Second World War, with the emergence of works by Roma authors in many European countries. Throughout this period, the developments of Romani literature occurred primarily in the borders of the national states

and were to a great extent dependent on the respective governmental policies towards the Roma. A third period commenced in the 1980s and was characterised by raising the issue of Roma children's education and Roma culture by European institutions; the fall of the Iron Curtain then stimulated considerable production of Romani literature in the decades after 1989. This period has been related to the general rise of Roma issues in the discourse of international organisations, donors' programmes and EU institutions. The Roma movement has also played an important role in the Roma discourse and intensified contacts between Roma activists internationally. In the fourth period, since the end of the 1990s and after 2000 (i.e. continuing today), we may speak about processes of internationalisation, transnationalisation and globalisation of the Romani literature scene and developments that go far beyond the borders of a country or region (Zahova 2014:59–63). In their discussion on Romani literature, some authors thus explore the terms transnational and diaspora literature (cf. Toninato 2014:51–52; Blandfort 2015:26–34).

The historical approach is a leading one in our take on Romani literature as the literature developments cannot be fully contextualised without the historical environment in which they are taking place. We look at the literature pieces and the individuals and stakeholders involved in their production not as independent artefacts and agents, but as entangled in the historical context and in light of their individual agency, visions and strategies. To be able to understand these processes, we need to consider some basic features from the history of national movement and other historical processes in CSEE that have been discussed in Romani Studies scholarship but rarely applied to Romani literature, and particularly not to the early stages of Romani literature history. As Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov have pointed out in several of their foundational works on Roma history, culture and identity, Roma are not isolated and self-sufficient in terms of a social and cultural system, but constitute an intergroup ethnic community that has always existed in at least two main dimensions: as a community and as part of the wider society (Marushiakova and Popov 2005, 2016a). The community dimension refers to Roma as an ethnic formation that is clearly distinguished from its surrounding population, while the society dimension refers to Roma as an ethnically-based integral part of the respective nation states in which they live (a presence most often going back centuries) and in which they are citizens, along with all other co-citizens of different ethnicity. Marushiakova and Popov further consider the two dimensions 'ethnicity' and 'civic nationality,' and in the case of Roma they are intertwined, interrelated and inseparable (2016a:15). This juxtaposition is an important feature of our theoretical approach, as Roma literary activities can be contextualised and interpreted only by having in mind both dimensions in this juxtaposition. It is important to also note that these dimensions are not conflicting but co-existing in an entanglement, and in many cases the core messages of the literary narratives by Roma communicate an expression of both nationhood and Roma community identity, which does not mean assimilation or oppression of their Roma identity for the sake of the national one. It rather means that in the process of writing and publicising their works Roma authors-cum-activists had to negotiate their

own community place within the respective national framework. In this sense, defining certain Romani literature by a national layer, i.e. Finnish Romani literature, Hungarian Romani literature, Bulgarian Romani literature, etc., is not a theoretical limitation dictated by methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Schiller 2003), but is rather a requirement for the full understanding of the multifaceted character of Romani literature. In this respect, we see our interpretations as following the approach of historical studies looking at Romani literature(s) in their historical context and reflecting the developments in the region or in national countries of production (Djuric 2002; Shapoval 2020; Zahova 2014, 2016, 2020a; Závodská 2016), and in critical stance concerning claims that the essence of Romani literature is diasporic and transnational and should not be attributed to national belonging other than the Roma one. The transnational aspect is, however, an important one in contemporary Romani literature (Blandfort 2015:26–34; Toninato 2014:129–59; Zahova 2016:114–22). Transnational tendencies and developments can be seen only after the 1990s, i.e. in the fourth period of Romani literature. Until then Romani literature developments took place and had impact only within a certain nation-state. Even international developments were very rare or lacking before the 1990s. Instances of international developments in the second half of the twentieth century were publishing a Roma author from a certain country in a Roma media in another country (Roma authors were published on the pages of *Romano lil* in Czechoslovakia in 1973) or Roma authors work translated in the official language of another country where Roma lived, such as the translations of the Menyhért Lakatos's novel *Füstös képek* (literary Smoky Pictures, published in English in 2015 under the title *The Color of Smoke*), first published in 1975, from Hungarian into other languages, such as Bulgarian, Serbian, Romanian, etc. But such international developments were rather an exception than a rule. In this respect is interesting to note that in the 1980s both Philomena Franz and Ceija Stojka published their memoirs as Holocaust survivors (Zahova 2014:50–52). But for years they were not aware of the existence of each other's works, despite the fact that both were published in the same language (German) in two neighbouring countries, which shows us that at this time the development of Romani literature still remained within the borders of the nation state in which the authors published. Therefore, without ignoring the common and joint tendencies in the development of Romani literature, we do not find reasons to apply definitions and terms such as 'diasporic' or 'transnational' in an ahistorical manner to Romani literature. For Romani literature(s) had developed only within national borders until recently and no transnationalisation characteristics could be attributed to it until the 1990s. As a recent in-depth study on Roma organisations and activism before the Second World War shows, there are no data to support the claim that there were any Roma transnational or international initiatives in that period (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a:XXXIV).

Another important juxtaposition for the birth and interpretation of all literatures in CSEEE, including Romani literature, is the correlation between romantic nationalism and literary writing. The history of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century CSEEE is

most commonly associated with the so-called national revivals among various communities living at the time within the territories dominated by the three main empires of the regions – the Ottoman, the Austro-Hungarian and the Russian. In his influential work on the social preconditions of national revival in Europe, Miroslav Hroch argued that national revivals take place within a non-dominant ethnic group characterised by a lack of ruling classes, possessing no state and with a literary tradition in its own language (Hroch 1985:22–26). There are several stages in the national revival: 1) phase A, the “scholarly phase,” in which a small elite begins the study of language, culture and history, identifying their own ethnic group as the one that needs to be awakened, revived and made aware about their national consciousness; 2) phase B, or the “national agitation phase”, in which the scholars’ group of educated circles leads the processes but within which patriots outside the elite group are also mobilised; and 3) phase C, which is the “era of mass national movements” in which purposeful activities aimed at achieving all the attributes of a fully formed nation are developed (Hroch 1985:25–28).

The effects on Roma and their involvement in these nineteenth-century processes have been multidimensional also because of the society-community juxtaposition. On the one hand, much as any other ethnic community on the territory of a nation during the national revival period, Roma communities were also the objects of studies concerned with their language, culture and history. Many nineteenth-century studies in CSEEE thus included studies of Gypsy culture, folklore and language, forming the foundation of contemporary Romani Studies. Societies for the study of folklore and literature also devoted publications to Gypsies and their language. These nineteenth-century processes were interrelated to the context of studying people’s history and folklore in unison with the *Volksgeist* tradition established by Johann Gottfried von Herder (Wilson 2006).

On the other hand, in the same context, an interest to study and awaken their own people was raised among the more educated Roma themselves. The latter were thus the individuals to take part in the first phase (i.e. the scholarly phase), which began in the nineteenth century, but had its peak in the twentieth century. These educated Roma individuals contributed to studies of folklore and language in the framework of a particular national revival, but they had identified their own ethnic community as the one that needed to be awakened. These educated Roma, forming the elite phase, were often a part of, or supporters of, the national revival process of the people among which Roma were living at that time, which was not a contradiction, but an expression of the society-community belonging of the Roma community they wanted to awaken. Their background and individual circumstances might have been different, depending on the geographical and historical circumstances of the Roma groups and larger community in those respective areas. As we will see from the book, these individuals could be representatives of the clergy and/or educated within religious circles in the Ottoman Empire, given that the religious field was the one through which education was provided at the time and given the importance of religious identity for the national revivals in the region. In the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires, however, these were often

individuals from Gypsy groups with a higher level of social integration and education (such as musicians interacting with aristocracy). These educated Roma, according to the Herderian model for national emancipation, also started collecting and publishing folklore materials, dictionaries, narratives about customs, and traditional songs representing the national spirit. Language and folklore material collections were considered the core of a people's culture, and thus a main object of interest among the educated and the 'intellectual elite.' Thus, similar to all other elites in the region of CSEEE, these individual Roma intellectuals represented the scholarly phase mentioned above: they were folklore collectors, dictionary compilers, translators into the Roma vernacular and creators of original literature.

Therefore, the transformation of Romani literature from oral into written took place in the context of nineteenth-century romantic nationalism and has followed the pattern through which other European vernacular languages also developed printing traditions in the process of nation building, beginning in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Anderson 2006:70–71). The first Romani-language printed texts featured folklore materials collected and published by folklorists and biblical translations into dialects of Romani language, often preceded by dictionaries and word records. The publications in Romani language or the publications that document Roma narratives in written form in the region of CSEEE also follow this general pattern. Into this area, for instance, fall the works of the Gypsy musician and participant in the Hungarian revolution János Ipolysági Balogh / Jancsi Sági Balogh (1802–1876), who translated prayers into the Romani language, published in a booklet *Legelső cigány imádságok a melyly mind a két magyar hazában lévő cigány nemzet számára* (First Gypsy prayers for both nations in their Hungarian homeland) in 1850 (Balogh 1850; Orsós 2015), as well as created a word record which became the foundation of a grammar published in 1888. This is an example of the pattern though which religious and folklore publications laid the foundation of Romani literature and led to the later development of Romani literature. Moreover, right up to the present day, they have had an impact on the Roma communities' activists who produce Romani literature, as well as on the Roma communities, as being sources of pride and identity, given their representation of the Roma as a community equal to all others.

However, it was not only language and folklore records and religious translations that appeared in the nineteenth century. This was also a period in which Romani language fiction – original works by Roma – and Romani language translations of literary works in other languages were created with instances of preserved original literature in the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Szuhay 2000:37). Although, until recently, largely unknown beyond academic circles and several Roma activists, Ferenc Sztojka Nagyidai (1855–1929) should be considered the first writer of original Romani language literature piece. Sztojka is better known for his Hungarian-Romani language dictionary *Ő császári és magyar királyi fensége József főherceg magyar- és cigány-nyelv gyök-szótára – Románé áláva. Iskolai és utazási használatra* (Dictionary of the Word Stems of the Gypsy and Hungarian Languages by His Imperial Highness, the Archduke Joseph), published

originally in 1886 (Sztójka 1886, 2007). The dictionary, however, is more significant for its literary supplement, which included Romani-language translations of religious texts and national Hungarian poets, and original works by Sztójka himself. The publication should be seen as a platform on which all important features of nineteenth-century Romani literary endeavours intersect: language representation in a dictionary; religious texts (Romani language versions of prayers, the Apostles' Creed and the Ten Commandments); Romani-language translations of Hungarian revolutionary poets (Márton Etédi Sós and Sándor Petőfi); original poetic works in Romani language followed by translation ("Royal Greeting," "To Crown Prince Rudolf" among others); a folklore part (with records of songs, blessings, sayings); and two dramas by Sztójka on historical subjects. The drama *Czigány lakodalom* (Gypsy Wedding) takes place in the Middle Ages, in a Gypsy Fortress on Hungarian land during the time of King Charles Robert (or Károly Róbert in Hungarian), who is considered one of the most important figures in Hungarian history. The second drama by Sztójka, *A cigányok vándorlása* (The Wanderings of the Gypsies), is a literary narration about the origin of the Roma people in the time of Attila the Hun. The literary legacy of Sztójka is representative for both the nineteenth-century national revival movement among the Gypsies and for Romani literature in general – its key messages are related to the origin and historical path of the Gypsy people in the background of the historical narratives and figures of the surrounding environment. It is reminiscent of the genre of history narratives, popular among early revival-period writers in CSEEE (Sugar 1995; Todorova 2005) and representative of the scholarly phase of the modern national movement: namely, a poet and literary creator who creates historical narratives and collects folklore to become pillars and emblems of a national consciousness. Despite the fact that these Romani literary activities had never made it to the large mobilisation phase, they took part synchronically within all other modern nations' movements.

Another feature of Romani literature, developed since the early period of its existence, is the interrelation with the literary traditions and social processes of the national society. For instance, József Boldizsár (1825–1878), another Roma participant in the Hungarian revolution, has translated Sándor Petőfi's poems into the Romani language and published them in the recently launched multilingual *Comparative Literary Journal* (Petőfi 1878:29–30; Szabó 2016) on the pages of which were published also Roma folklore and Romani language materials (Szabó 2017). Romani language translations of national poets and leading intellectuals of the abolition movement in Wallachia and Moldavia in the mid-nineteenth century were published in periodicals and leaflets, for instance, by Matei Millo (1814–1894) and Nicolae Istrati (1818–1861). Istrati's poem "The Song of the Gypsies on the Day of their Emancipation" had two editions, in 1844 and 1856 (Achim 2016). Other national and world literature classics, such as Pushkin's *Gypsies*, were also among the early Romani language translations of the interwar period (Пушкин 1937). This tendency has continued steadily throughout the entire period of Romani literature and to this day

has not lost its popularity among Romani activists, with records of recitations of Romani language translations of national literary classics continuing to be put on social media.

Therefore, undoubtedly, we can consider the mid-nineteenth century as the beginning of modern original Romani literature writing, which developed synchronically to all other early modern literatures in CSEEE. Sztojka has been rightfully named the first original writer in the Romani language by some (Courthiade 2017:485–486; Szuhay 2000:37) and the predecessor of Romani literature by others (Marushiakova and Popov 2020; Orsos 2015). Some studies also consider the nineteenth century as the time of Romani literature's birth, naming the first writer of original Romani literature in this era as Gina Ranjičić (Acković 2014:132; Djurić 2002:27). Ranjičić was a figure whom Heinrich von Wlislocki, a nineteenth-century philologist and collector of linguistic and folklore materials among Transylvanian Gypsies, allegedly met in her later years, when she had already authored 250 poems, some of which were published in Romani language and in German by Wlislocki (Wlislocki 1892:181–183). There is a lot of uncertainty and doubt about the authenticity of Gina Ranjičić as a personality and as the actual author of the poems attributed to her by Wlislocki (Marushiakova and Popov 2020; Zahova 2014). Undoubted, however, is the fact that references to her are nowadays forming narratives about the first Romani language literary writings. No matter whether she was a real or invented personality and author of these poems, Gina Ranjičić is today considered by many as the world's first Roma poetess. Her poems in Romani language have been reprinted from the works of Wlislocki and published in Roma poetry collections (Taikon 1964) and anthologies (Acković 2012), and even in mainstream literary periodicals, as 'Gypsy poems' (Birtingur 1966). Roma activists' writings refer to Ranjičić as the first Roma poetess, and, despite the lack of any documentation of her as a historical figure, the Roma Museum in Belgrade has commissioned for its collection a portrait of Ranjičić that is accompanied by the explanation "this is Gina Ranjičić, the first Roma poetess, in the way we imagine her appearance."

According to some Romani literature history interpretations, the first Roma writers emerged even earlier in the nineteenth century. Some Romanian Roma scholars and even some non-Roma academics (Bunea and Lascu 2006) consider that the first writer of Roma origin was Anton Pann. Anton Pann (17908–1854) was the penname of Antonie Pantelimonovici Petrov, acclaimed musicologist, folklorist, Romanian language poet and composer, including of the music of the current Romanian national anthem. Unlike Gina Ranjičić, the existence of Anton Pann is not questionable but his family's ancestry is uncertain, which gives ground for various interpretations depending on the ethno-national standpoint of the historiographer writing about him. Anton was born in the town of Sliven in the Ottoman Empire and later migrated with his widowed mother and siblings to Wallachia. His father was a cauldron maker, *căldărar* in Romanian, a fact that according to Roma researchers and activists means that he belonged to the Roma group with the same name (Sandu and Grigore n.d.) and thus Anton Pann was a Roma writer.

He is presented as the first Romanian Roma writer in literature textbooks (Sarău 2006:56; Sarău and Cordovan 2011:78) and other publications related to Roma personalities and his works were translated in Romani language and published as educational material in Romania (Pann 2005). In the Romanian historiography, on the other hand, Pann is presented as either “bulgarised Romanian” or a “bulgarised Gypsy,” or, according to the famous historian Nicolae Iorga, as Aromanian or Vlach (Munteanu 2016:123). It is interesting to note how, in the process of constructing or ‘curating’ national literature canon, the literature historiographers (Roma or Romanian) use a primordial approach according to which the alleged ethnic origin would make the author count as belonging to one national literature or another. The other interesting phenomenon is the recent ‘discovery’ of the Roma origin of Anton Pann and presenting him as Roma author although debates about his Gypsy origin were present in the early and mid-nineteenth century (Munteanu 2016:123–124).

The beginning of the twentieth century saw the downfall of empires and the establishment of new nation states, bringing nations to the phase of full independence and recognition after the First World War. Many of the nineteenth-century tendencies in Romani literature production, in the light of romantic nationalism, continued and multiplied in the next century (and some continue until today); but the new political, social and cultural realities, along with the general developments of the time, brought new tendencies to Roma activism as well as Roma writing as an extension of this activism. Nation identity-building tendencies, new ideologies, new civil rights regimes, new political parties and legislations became the new environment and, naturally, this has influenced the forms of literary expressions and has been reflected in the content communicated by Roma writers.

Two major phenomena of the interwar period need to be highlighted as an embodiment of the epoch and as something that also affected Romani literary production – Roma civic organisations and Roma print media. During this period, as part of the national states and their legislative regimes for self-organisation, many Roma organisations of a civic, religious or ideological nature were established in some countries of CSEEE, reflecting impressive nationwide Roma movements (in Romania) or vivid local individual movements (in Belgrade and other locations in Yugoslavia). Recent archival and multidisciplinary research has demonstrated only the “tip of the iceberg” by publishing selected historical sources related to the activities of Roma civic organisations of the time (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a:XX). The commonality among all of them, however, was the aim to form an ethnic-specific union of Roma citizens for achieving their emancipation. The personalities initiating and leading these organisations were the spokespersons/representatives of the Roma movement of the time, and in extension of their civic activism, they were often also the first authors of original Romani literature. This marks the beginning of the widespread tendency, observed since the nineteenth century, of an intersection of Roma activism and writing (i.e. overlapping between the figure of Roma activist and writer, see for details Zahova 2017). In this period, in almost all countries of

the CSEEE, groups and circles of individuals came into being that constituted a kind of Roma intelligentsia, which formed visions for the enlightening of all the Roma in their respective countries, by different means. Along with setting up organisations, a common way for them to express, communicate and disseminate their visions for enlightening and their endeavours for self-organisation was through writing. Thus, as we will see in all the texts discussed throughout this book, the Roma activists-writers' works were the embodiment of their visions for the enhancement of their own community and a symbol of their emancipatory efforts.

We see the literary and print media activities of the Roma individuals and organisations as part of a larger emancipatory movement. The term emancipation has different connotations depending on the historical background and theoretic interpretation. It has been used, for instance, in the context of such nineteenth-century events as the serfdom and slavery abolition movements, and political movements among various groups in Europe, as well as for many processes throughout the twentieth century, such as the women rights' movement, voting rights equality, national independence movements in European and in post-colonial contexts throughout the world (Vermeulen 1996). The term emancipation, in our understanding, describes the process of the Roma achieving equal status as a community and as individual citizens with rights in all fields of life within society (political, religious, educational, economic, civil law, etc.) in the context of the entangled histories of the Roma movement and Roma publishing by the Second World War. Emancipation is thus a process that includes various efforts for achieving rights and equality. From the point of view of the history of Romani literature and publishing, we, on the one hand, interpret writing and publishing as an embodiment of the process of emancipation. On the other hand, we are interested in the internal dynamics within the field of writing and publishing – namely, how the issue of emancipation is discussed, what the angles, viewpoints, discussions and perspectives are on the matter of how to achieve equality for the Roma. As with every platform and discourses on the process of emancipation, there are nuances, differences and contrasts as well as commonalities, similarities and resonances. We are interested in comparing those discourses across individuals, organisations, countries and periods.

Periodical press has traditionally played an important role in supporting national movements and, in this regard, Roma publications once again repeat a common European pattern. In some cases, individuals expressing their visions of Roma/Gypsy community development and advancement presented texts they had authored in periodicals published by the national emancipation movement of the surrounding national society (see the publication in the *Macedonia* newspaper in the first chapter) or in periodicals of political circles (in the case of Finland). Usually, however, Roma were striving to set up their own print media and did so as early as the dawn of the twentieth century. In the context of CSEEE, periodicals and journalism played an important role in the early stages of the growth of national literature and as supporters to the national emancipation struggle. A common feature of the interwar period in Europe was the expansion

of print media and newspaper systems (Newman and Houlbrook 2013). The public and social field of modern nation states became gradually mediated by journals and newspapers reaching citizens across the nations. It is not surprising that print media was the most common channel and platform for communicating the messages of Roma activists across the nation-state. A cross-country commonality in Romani language publishing of the time was that newspapers became platforms for sharing visions and programmes of leaders and organisations. Journalistic writing was a common and widespread form of literary expression used to reach the public. It was undoubtedly the most effective publishing form in terms of productions, distribution through the nationwide networks and potential readership. As we will see, Roma print media of the time was not defined by reporting journalism, but by writings in all styles and genre forms, among which were manifestos, opinion pieces, memoirs, poems, etc. Roma print media was thus a micro-model of Romani literature of the time and a propaganda platform for the periodicals' publishers, usually Roma organisations.

The fact that polemical writing was the dominant form of publishing in most of the countries does not mean that there were no other forms of literature. Rather, it was the most feasible and cost-effective way of publishing to reach the public. As our archival research shows, there were also other literary works in different genres, which remained unpublished due to a lack of means or opportunities for publishing. The case of the large-scale USSR publishing initiative in which Romani literature in all genres was created shows that in a favourable and supportive environment literary works did appear and thrive.

Another issue that comes up in relation to literacy and reading habits is the 'oral culture' of Roma. As previously mentioned, Roma written heritage has been viewed as a belated phenomenon and Romani literature as a young one. It has also been defined as dominated by folklore, storytelling and orality in general, until the 1960s, when original authors' works started to be published. This discourse is based on the evolutionary perspective of literary histories that view orality and storytelling as predecessors of written literature, and folklore and orality as belonging to a 'traditional' time, while literature and writing are viewed as belonging to the 'modern' period. Thus, the oxymoronic term 'oral literature' or 'oraliture' (Blandfort 2015:76–99) has been coined (used also for literatures of ethnic communities) for the alleged limited written heritage that can be defined as Roma original/modern/authored literature.

However, the existence and vitality of orality, storytelling and folklore do not oppress and exclude modern literature authorship, and nor does the existence of modern literary genres mean the loss of oral tradition. As the book will showcase, original Romani literature in various modern literature genres was being created as early as the mid-nineteenth century; thus, not belatedly but in parallel to the developments of writing and literature practices in the respective region (and on a scale consistent with the circumstances of the Roma community and state formation in the areas within which the Roma were living). There is no linear evolution in the history of Roma culture – nor,

indeed, in any other culture – when folklore creativity stops completely to give way to modern literature authorship. On the contrary, the relationship between literature and folklore has been multidirectional, multifaceted, diverse and dynamic. Similar to other literature traditions, folklore elements have become inspirational for Romani literature creations, and many authors have applied folklore elements and employed oral narratives in their authored works, with their own interpretations, shift and ornamentation. Simultaneously, motifs, narratives, characters and texts originally created in written form have been further circulated in oral narrative and popular culture to the extent of being perceived as centuries-old folklore treasures existing in the anonymity of the collective. Therefore, our approach is in line with the call for going beyond simplified dichotomies of oral and written literature (Eder-Jorden 2016).

The volume collection discusses the development of Romani literature in countries in which such publications appeared during the first period of the history of Romani literature, that is, from the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century until the Second World War. As we have argued, although divided by the First World War, in regard to tendencies in the development of Romani literature and features of Roma publications, the period should be seen as a whole. This period has also been the least studied with regard to Romani literature and print media. Geographically, these developments took place in the region of CSEEE. As argued in both Nationalism Studies (Alapuro 1979) and Romani Studies (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a), Finland, which had been annexed by Russia in 1809 and became independent in 1918, belongs to the same region historically and culturally and followed the same patterns of national formation, guided by Herder's philosophy (Stark 2016).

Each chapter is devoted to a country in which Roma literary activities occurred until the Second World War. Beyond the common features, characteristic of the whole region, there are country-related specificities in the political and social development of the national society and the Roma community that have been reflected in the Romani literature and print media features and developments, as demonstrated in the chapters. Furthermore, we illustrate that even within a country, the occurrences were not homogeneous and straightforward, but multidimensional and heterogeneous, reflecting the diversity of voices and visions for the development of the Roma community. The consistent common feature was that Romani literature and periodicals were the medium for communicating in written form the visions and voices of Roma activists of the time.

As the literature phenomena in this historical period were taking place in the borders of the political entities in which the authors and producers resided and were directed to the Roma (and other) communities in the concrete nation-state and in some cases (Hungary) to a certain group, the chapters are organised on a country to country basis and their arrangement follows geographical, political and historical criteria. The first chapter "Ottoman Empire", co-written by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, looks at the beginnings of Romani literature and media in the Balkans and their interrelations with the general developments in the specific context in the different regions of the

multinational Empire. The chapter looks at the pioneering examples of writings among both Roma Christians and Roma Muslims, demonstrating that while there is particularity of the forms and directions of the literature production process, the essence of the Roma emancipation movement is nevertheless the same and is related to the aim of the Roma individuals to achieve equal status for their community. The second chapter “Bulgaria” written by Aleksandar Marinov looks at the already independent nation-state and how Bulgarian Roma sought ways to establish, define and institutionalise their community through writing and publishing. The Evangelical publications of Roma Baptist churchgoers and of the Roma Muslims from Sofia may be different in their content, visions and interests, but are similar in their expression of the struggles of Roma for social justice and demonstration of active civic consciousness. The third chapter looks at another multi-national state, Yugoslavia, where the shortly existing newspaper *Romano lil* became a platform for conveying the visions about the Roma emancipation in literature form. The author, Sofiya Zahova, argues that it was exactly in this period when narratives of the Roma as a people united by a common culture and historical memory emerged and when all genres of literature writing, including novel, have developed. The fourth chapter, “Romania,” looks at the country with one of the most vivid civic emancipatory movement, mirrored by a not less vibrant literary scene, including Roma periodicals, items written by Roma authors in mainstream media, books on the topic of Roma and the project for the creation of a Roma Folklore collection, within a Roma Library. Raluca Bianca Roman discusses all these developments and brings forth the main outputs of these movements: the literary products themselves, the Roma authors, the main organisations, themes and narratives, in the context of the entanglements between the production of texts and the goals and aims of the Roma emancipation movement in the country. In the fifth chapter, “Hungary,” Tamás Hajnóczky presents four periodicals of the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians published before and after the treaty of Trianon. These publications, that in terms of quantity form an impressive body of issues and pages, were platforms for communicating the interests of the wealthiest and most integrated into majority society group of Hungarian Gypsies. Their specialisation determined to a great extent the content of the journals that were focused on the issues of Gypsy musical society, their cultural and social affairs, seeking to strengthen and improve the social standing and economic opportunities. The chapter demonstrates also how journals were aiming to reinforce the Hungarian Gypsy musicians’ particular identity and, furthermore, in the new historical realities of Hungary as a nation-state, expressed their belonging to the Hungarian nation and Hungarian culture. The impressive and, thus far, unmatched in terms of its number of titles and literature varieties, Soviet Romani publishing project is discussed in chapter six, “USSR,” authored by Viktor Shapoval. In the background of the Soviet Gypsy policies of the interwar period, the chapter looks into important quantitative aspects, among which the number of titles per years, genres distribution, number of produced pages, number of original and translated titles, etc., along with previously undiscussed features and agents of the so-called publishing chain – main

authors, translators, editors, publishers, censors and decision takers, and finally readers. In the seventh and last chapter, “Finland,” Risto Blomster and Raluca Bianca Roman present a groundbreaking overview of the literary works of Roma from Finland. In the context of the history and emancipatory movement of Roma in the country, the chapter introduces the pre-cursors to literary pieces authored by Roma, while also highlighting the role of specific organisations, authors and figures in the development of forms of Romani literature. Finally, in the Conclusion of this monograph Raluca Bianca Roman looks at the common threads both in terms of the formal patterns of developments and in terms of the structural process of writing and producing during the first historical period of Romani literature.

All the chapters demonstrate novelty, originality and distinctiveness. The chapter on Hungarian Gypsy musicians’ periodicals presents and discusses in English, for the first time, these recently discovered archival sources – an impressive number of issues of periodicals that have been virtually unknown before recent academic research and publications by Tamás Hajnáczy (2019, 2020a, 2020b). The other country studies, although discussing works, titles and writers mostly already known, reveal hitherto undescribed facts and figures from the history of Romani literature: the first discussion of the *Laço* newspaper, previously unknown Roma authors from Finland, manuscripts by Svetozar Simić in the Yugoslav chapter, original religious works in the Bulgarian chapter. Even when discussing already known literary and media titles, the contributions offer stimulating in-depth analysis of the form and content of Romani literature narratives by providing translations of the literature and media texts, along with discussion and analysis. The USSR chapter offers an exclusive statistical overview of the genres of Romani literature, along with new insights from the important process of editing, production, distribution and preservation. Thus, on the one hand, we build upon the contribution of previously published materials, by detailed discussion and presentation from the point of view of literature, emancipation and nationalism; on the other hand, we reveal facts from the history of Romani literature practically unfamiliar to the research community. Finally, the concluding analysis offers a cross-country discussion on commonalities as well as on the contrasts and differences in the developments against the background of national policies and the Roma movement in each respective country.

Another line of interpretation on the alleged belatedness and particularity of Romani literature has been founded on the claim that late Roma writing has to do with the resistance of Roma to education, literacy and inclusion in the state institutions. In this discourse, the late writing tradition is explained by the “Roma’s diverse approach to writing,” which essentially is exemplified by various non-written forms of communication as “non-alphabetic graphic codes” (Toninato 2014:55–62). Our research demonstrates that, in terms of the particularity of Roma writing, it is not the signs allegedly used by nomadic groups but the diversity in content and writing forms that remain largely under-researched. Demystification and normalisation of Romani literature goes through further interdisciplinary and multisided research on actual writings. The challenges do not

originate in the lack of written heritage but in the fact that these writings are scattered in various localities and very often not in institutional archives or collections. They have also been written in various languages, which poses another difficulty regarding access to all the materials by any individual researcher. Even when written in the Romani language, some texts might be incomprehensible, as not all Romani literature researchers speak the Romani language or all dialects of the Romani language. Another issue is how much of these writings have been preserved at all after more than a century.

The volume, therefore, offers novel perspectives in our understanding of Roma history and Roma writing, wherein Roma themselves become active participants and agents. The overarching goal is to incorporate the works of Roma writers into the broader sphere of literary production while, at the same time, shifting the narrative of marginality and exclusion to one that emphasises Roma authorship, Roma agency and Roma voices within the history of both the Roma community and the respective state/region. By doing so, we hope that the book will further the principal goal of including the history of Romani literature and media in the overarching historiography and literary landscape of Europe, thereby going away with the continuous marginalisation of Roma history within European history more generally. Finally, grounded in the analysis of primary sources, our aim is to showcase the active, engaged and important role that Roma authors have played in the shaping of new ideas of Roma emancipation and Roma mobilisation, as well as in contributing to the individual national histories and literatures.

* * *

Several points might be worth discussing regarding the terms used. As already clarified, we refer to Romani literature as a historically emerged phenomenon and in the broader sense of literary works produced by Roma and/or in Romani language and directed towards Roma audiences, among others. In this regard, Romani literature can also be defined as the corpus of Roma writings and our interpretation is in line with the term “Romani writing” used by Paola Toninato (2014) and “Romani letters” by Karolína Ryvolová (2014). Considering the diversity of language traditions and circumstances in the creation of Romani literature, some authors argue for the plurality of the term and thus speak about Romani literatures in order to reflect the diversity of the phenomenon (Blandfort 2015; Kovacsazy 2011). While we agree that the internal diversity of Romani literature is undisputable and we acknowledge that in the historical period in question all developments were taking place within a certain political entity and no cross-border or international developments were observed in the literary field, we still think that all Romani literature pieces, regardless of the period and location of creation, share features that go beyond the borders of one country or region. Regardless of the independent developments and various forms in which literature was produced, the content and message of the literary narratives of all Roma authors of the time were in one direction. These circumstances allow us to speak of Romani literature as

a heterogeneous and multifaceted yet still collective phenomenon. The term Romani literature in this respect can be considered a construct as much as all other ethnic and national communities' literatures are (i.e. English literature, American literature, Hungarian literature, Saami literature, Latin literature, etc.).

The Romani language adjective 'Romani' has widely been used in defining literature by the Roma and Romani literature has already been established as a term which we also use. The transcription of the words and sentences in the Romani language are maintained as in the original. In the English language texts also the self-appeal of the community is used, most often the term 'Roma', which is by now the one most commonly used within the public sphere. As in the other publications of RomaInterbellum project (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a) the same term is also used as an adjective. The only exceptions to this principle are the combination of terms 'Romani literature', 'Romani language' and 'Romani Studies' because they have already made a lasting entry in the academic language.

The terms 'Gypsies' and the adjective 'Gypsy' are used in the cases when we translate sources in the languages of the countries discussed which are usually translated as 'Gypsies' and 'Gypsy', i.e. 'цигани' and 'цигански' (in Bulgarian and Serbian), 'țigani' and 'țigănesc' (in Romanian), 'Cigányok' and 'cigány' (in Hungarian), 'цыгане' and 'цыганский' (in Russian), 'mustalaiset' and 'mustalainen' (in Finnish). Over time, and especially after the First World War, when the old empires collapsed and new ethnic-nation-states emerged in the region, some of these names were official terms and became political denominations of the Roma communities in their respective countries (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a). As it has already been discussed, the term 'Gypsy' in English is used globally to signify a nomadic life-style and does not refer to a concrete ethnic community (Hancock 2010:95–96) and thus it does not adequately translate the terms used from concrete ethnic communities in the languages of CSEEE (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a:XXXII). In present times in UK context the term is used as part of the officially established "Gypsy, Roma, Travellers" community (Clark and Greenfields 2006). Being aware of these nuances and shortcomings, the authors nevertheless use 'Gypsy' as both a noun and an adjective when translating into English the terms listed above in original sources as titles of works, literary text or names of institutions. In most of the cases we have also provided the originals in the texts which would help the reader to see the context of the term's usage.

The quotes and titles of publications are displayed in the language and alphabet of the original, with their specific orthography. In this period, as well as in other periods of Romani literature, the writing system for the Romani language was often based on the existing orthographic and alphabets of the country of publishing, with which the authors were well acquainted. Thus, in the Roma publications in interwar Yugoslavia Cyrillic and Latin are used as both alphabets were introduced as official in the interwar period.

The publication follows the American Sociological Association (ASA) Style Guide and by extension the Chicago Manual of Style. Thus, Italics are preserved also in cases

whenever used in original texts (for example, when we provide titles of publications and organisations in the original languages and their orthographies), but note that *Italics* also indicate words and phrases that are in the Romani language or in another language when inserted into a text that is in another language.

The list of references is divided into three parts: bibliography of literature which is separated in two parts depending on the orthography of the languages, thus we have Latin and non-Latin script languages; list of popular journals and media; list of archival sources. The last two parts are divided according to countries for the sake of clarity and research purposes.

For maintaining a form of language equality, all archival and media sources, and bibliographic data, including references to the text, are displayed in the language and alphabet of the original. As the chapters draw on main tendencies or focus on certain type of publications that were the most productive literature field (for instance Hungarian Gypsy associations' journals discussed in the respective chapter), in some cases not all Roma publications from the period are presented in the texts. We have however provided a comprehensive list of the publications known to us and collected as results of our research in two Appendices: Appendix I Romani literature works and Appendix II Roma popular journals and newspapers.

The book reflects the state of research on the interwar literature production in CSEEE Europe as of 2020. Since our experience showed that earlier unknown materials are still available, although dispersed or in badly preserved and endangered-of-extinction state, we do hope that the book will inspire and stimulate further research on the topic that would reveal more literature sources from the first period of Romani literature.