Romania

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4.1 Introduction

Alongside the USSR, Romania is, arguably, the country that brought forth some of the largest amounts of written sources concerning the processes of Roma emancipation during the interwar period. In fact, some of the most active Roma organisations were forged during the 1930s and the Roma movement itself was among the most productive, not only in terms of its activities, but of its published materials. In that sense, alongside with the development of the Roma movement itself, and the shaping of key Roma organisations, the interwar period in Romania saw a large production of Romani literature. As one can see from this chapter, the latter took myriad shapes, including Roma periodicals, items written by Roma authors in mainstream media, books on the topic of Roma and the intention to develop and set up a Roma Folklore collection, within a Roma Library. All of these showcase the vast activity that had undergone in the country concerning the production of Romani literature.

This chapter thus focuses on all these developments, aiming to bring forth the main outputs of these movements: namely, the literary products themselves, the Roma authors that contributed to the shaping of a Romani literature in the country and the main organisations that the authors and/or the literary works were connected with. At the same time, quite crucially, through looking more in-depth at some of the key themes characterising the production of literature during this time (and, especially, the articles written within Roma periodicals), this chapter will highlight the entanglements between the production of texts and the goals and aims of the Roma emancipation movement in the country, with all its complexities and contradictions. Before we do that, however, a brief contextualisation of the shaping of these developments is needed, specifically in connection to the historical, geographic and economic context of Romania after the First World War, the position of Roma during interwar Romania and the beginnings of the Roma movement in the country. These are all crucial in understanding not only the ways in which the production of Romani literature in the country took shape during this period of time but the ways in which key themes present within the Roma interwar newspapers (such as the issue of citizenship, belonging and the emphasis placed by Roma authors on not aspiring for the status of ‘minority’) were embedded within the historical context of the time and can only be understood within it.

To start off, Romania during the interwar period, or Greater Romania (*România Mare*, in Romanian), as is often described in the literature, was characterised by attempts to

create a common Romanian identity in the aftermath of the First World War and the unification of several Romanian territories. The idea behind most of the projects concerning the very term Greater Romania were thus to re-create a nation-state which would incorporate under its borders all the new territories acquired after the First World War. In brief, after the First World War, the Kingdom of Romania would incorporate several important regions, including Transylvania, Bukovina, Bessarabia and parts of Banat, Crişana, and Maramureş. Moreover, during this time, the Romanian state reached its most multi-ethnic population. This led to the shaping of the Romanian nation under the ideals of a unified language, religion and identity. At the same time, the nationalist desire for a homogeneous Romanian state often came in conflict with the existing realities of the time: namely, the unified territories comprised of several multi-ethnic and multicultural communities (for more on these dynamics during interwar Romania, see Bejan 2019; Bucur 2002; Clark 2015; Korkut 2006; Livezeanu 1995; Radu and Schmitt 2017).

In other words, the Kingdom of Romania thus saw the incorporation not only of a vast territory but of a vastly multi-ethnic population. For instance, according to the 1930 census, Romanians comprised 71.9 percent of the population, Hungarians 7.9 percent, Germans 4.1 percent, Jews 4.0 percent, and so on. Roma (or Gypsies, as they appeared in the census), represented approximately 1.5 percent of the total population (or 262,501). While census data of the time (or present-day) may not exactly represent the lived reality, the information available does showcase the vastly multi-ethnic composition of Romanian's population during the interwar period (Livezeanu 1995:129, 135).

In this regard, Transylvania is a particularly interesting case in point, and directly connected to how both the Roma movement and some of the key demands laid out by Roma leaders in the region would be represented in the writings of the time, and especially so in connection to the process of Romanianising Hungarian-speaking Roma (i.e. sending them to Romanian schools, teaching them to read and write in Romanian, etc.) which would become particularly important in the claims and writings of interwar Roma activists. For instance, in this province 75,342 Gypsies were registered in the same 1930s census, which represented 2.3 percent of the population, a significantly larger proportion compared to the rest of Romania (Achim 1998:145). While there is no space to go in-depth here, the status of Gypsies in Transylvania thus played an important part within the machinations of the overall demands of the central governments and their attempts or desires to create a unified Romanian identity. Romanianising Hungarianised Roma (or Hungarian-speaking Roma) thus also became an incentive of Roma organisations in collaboration with state institutions and the Orthodox Patriarchy. This, as we will see later in this chapter, also played a part in the ways in which the Roma newspapers reflected and represented the Roma not as a minority but as loyal servants of the Fatherland, and as equal citizens of the country.

The process of constructing a homogeneous Romanian identity within Greater Romania would thus become a battlefield on both ethnic and religious levels (Korkut

2006; Livezeanu 1995; Radu and Schmitt 2017): the status of the Orthodox Church continued to be upheld as central while the languages of education were promoted as Romanian (for more on the relationship Roma have had with the Orthodox church, see Matei 2010a). At the same time, the Gypsies' overall lower number (especially compared to that of the Jewish population of the time, as well as with the Hungarian one), in addition to the forms that the Roma movement would take (emphasising allegiance to the King and downplaying their role as a minority) would mean that they did not necessarily pose a threat to the overall aim of creating a unified Romanian identity (Matei 2010b:20–21). This also created the pathway for Roma organisations and newspapers (and the Roma movement itself) to develop quite freely and thrive during the interwar period (see also Matei 2020).

It is in this context that the interwar period in Romania was also the time when the seeds of Roma political and civic mobilisation were most clearly made manifest, and when several issues which would influence the shape of Roma emancipation in the country arose (cf. Achim 1998; Klímová-Alexander 2005; Marushiakova and Popov 2017a, 2017b; Matei 2010b). In fact, and as a clear signpost of these developments, several key Roma organisations were formed during this time, and they constituted the seeds of a movement that took upheaval during the whole of the interwar years. For this chapter, the importance of these organisations lies in the fact that they were also active and productive in shaping the field of Romani literature during the same period in Romania, primarily through the publications of Roma newspapers, many of which were directly or indirectly connected to one organisation or another. A brief mention of these key organisations is therefore needed before proceeding to discuss the newspapers themselves.

Among these, *Asociația Generală a Țiganilor din România* (The General Association of Gypsies in Romania, or AGȚR), *Uniunea Generală a Romilor din România* (General Union of Roma in Romania, or UGRR) and *Asociația Uniunea Generală a Romilor din România* (The Association General Union of Roma in Romania, or AUGRR) are perhaps the most influential and most widely known. As we shall see, these organisations also contributed to the development of several Roma publications, more or less influential in the process of mobilising individuals under the aegis of an ethnic banner: *Timpul* (The Time), *O Rom* (The Roma), both published in Craiova; *Foaia Poporului Romesc* (The Paper of the Roma People), published in Rupea; *Neamul Țigănesc* (The Gypsy People) – published in Făgăraș; *Glasul Romilor* (The Voice of the Roma) – published in Bucharest; *Țara Noastră* (Our Country), published in Bucharest. I will go back to these specific publications in a subsequent section but the influence of these organisations in the shaping of Roma journalism needs to be emphasised from the start.

The first organisation to be set up, though it would never gain official recognition (i.e. be officially registered as an organisation), was the Neo-Rustic Brotherhood (in Romanian, *Înfrățirea Neo-Rustică*), in 1926 in Făgăraș. Its influence, however, appears to have remained somewhat limited to the area of Transylvania (*Ardeal*, in Romanian), and

reached little outside these regional influences (Matei 2012). Its leader, Nafatanailă Lazăr, however, would go on to publish one of the six Roma newspapers, *Neamul Țigănesc*, in three issues (see below).

AGȚR, perhaps the most influential of these organisations (at least at its inception), was formed in April 1933 at the efforts of then archimandrite Calinic I. Popp Șerboianu (1873–1941), together with Gheorghe A. Lăzăreanu-Lăzurică (or George Lăzurică, also known as Lăzărescu-Lăzurică or Lăzărică, 1892 – ?), as general secretary (Matei 2010a:161). The purpose and scope of the organisation were printed in the organisation's manifesto, first distributed in 1933. These were said to be, at once, 'cultural', moral and social, tackling distinct elements of Roma social life. These ideas would be re-published in several articles within the newspaper *Glasul Romilor* and also repeated, almost in their entirety, in the manifesto of the Association General Union of Roma in Romania (see below).

Yet, soon after this organisation was set up, a new one emerged, led by Lăzureanu Lăzurică (the former head secretary of AGȚR) who, in September 1933, split from Șerboianu. This new union was to be called the General Union of Roma in Romania (UGRR), but Lăzurică was soon overthrown from its leadership, in 1934, by flower salesman Gheorghe Niculescu. The latter would become the new leader of the organisation, renamed as the Association of the General Union of Roma in Romania (AUGRR). Unlike AGȚR or UGRR, AUGRR would obtain juridical statute (hence official recognition) and would gradually attract to it many other organisations set up outside of the capital city.

In the same year, Lăzurică and Șerboianu would re-join forces in a renewed AGȚR, renamed as the General Association of Roma in Romania (*Asociația Generală a Romilor din România*). They would also begin publishing extensively in two newspapers, *Timpul* and *Țara Noastră*, which would act as a counterpoint to the AUGRR's own newspaper, *Glasul Romilor*.

Similar to the dynamics occurring within the capital city, smaller organisations began to appear in other regions of the country. As such, an Oltenia circle of AGȚR was formed in 1934. A reference to this organisation is made, for instance, in the article "From AGAȚ in Craiova", in the newspaper *Timpul*, issue no 11–12, September 25, 1933 (Timpul 1933a:1). While initially affiliated with AGȚR, the organisation would nevertheless develop its own regional focus and incentives, including the desire to form a Roma Library and the emphasis placed on the leadership of its self-appointed *voievod* of Roma (i.e. leader of the Roma), Marin Simion (who was also the leader of Oltenia's AGȚR).

As one can see even from this necessarily brief outline, the picture of the mobilisation, emancipatory movement and the shaping of Roma organisations during the interwar period was far from straight forward and has been potentially complicated by several distinctive factors. Among these, worth mentioning are the issue of legitimacy among its leaders and the struggle for leadership of the organisations, the distinction between the centre and the periphery (primarily Bucharest, Transylvania and Oltenia), the best means of mobilising Roma individuals and attract them to join different organisations and the desire and need to collaborate with state institutions and church authorities.

Most importantly, all these organisations were active and productive in shaping up the field of Roma journalism in Romania. This was done primarily through the setting up of their own Roma periodicals, in which key issues concerning the aims of the Roma emancipation movement in the country (including, for instance, the conflicts between some of the Roma leaders) were being printed and distributed. In that which follows, the focus will therefore be on this form of Romani literature in Romania during the interwar period. The aim will be to explore not only the main authors of these publications but the main themes, political incentives, regional distinctions and key personalities that shone through within this period.

4.2 Roma Periodicals: Regional Distinctions, Personalities and Political Affiliation

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the above context, Romania has had a record number of Roma-led and Roma-focused periodicals before the Second World War. For example, during the period 1934–1941, six Roma newspapers are known to have been published in Romania: *Glasul Romilor* (The Voice of the Roma); *Neamul Țigănesc* (The Gypsy People); *O Rom* (The Rom); *Timpul* (The Time); *Foaia Poporului Romesc* (Paper of the Roma People); *Țara Noastră* (Our Country). Mentions about a seventh newspaper exist: namely, *Gazeta Romilor* (The Roma Gazette), dated 1936, and presumably founded by Apostol Matei – the founder of the association *Deșteptarea Romilor și Romitelor din România* (The Reawakening of Roma and Romni in Romania) on the August 5, 1936. However, in our searches through archives in Romania, no such newspaper was found. Moreover, mentions of its content, including an article proving the attachment of Roma to the Romanian Patriarch, Miron Cristea, and to the Romanian Orthodox church can, in fact, be found in *Glasul Romilor* (Neacșu 1939:2). The mention of Apostol Matei is interesting and original and, indeed, not connected to *Glasul Romilor*. Nevertheless, the last newspaper has either gone missing, its traces lost or a confusion concerning the names of these media may have been created.

Glasul Romilor (Voice of the Roma, in Romanian) (1933–1940)

Subtitle: *Organ al Uniunii Generale a Romilor din Romania* (Organ of the General Union in Romania). In the first issue of the newspaper, it was stated that *Glasul Romilor* would appear weekly. However, in subsequent issues, this statement would be changed to “appears periodically, under the leadership of a Committee” (issue 2) or “appears on the 1st and the 15th of each month, under the leadership of a Committee” (issue 3) or, simply “appears twice a month”. In reality, given that between 1933 and 1940 only 15 issues were published, the newspaper’s release was less regular than intended. Its founder was Gheorghe Niculescu and general administrator was N. Niculescu. On the front-page of

the first issue, its editor was stated to be N. Lenghescu, but his name no longer appeared on the title page in subsequent ones (the only ones mentioned were those of its director and administrator). He nevertheless continued to feature as a contributor throughout the newspaper.

Glasul Romilor was also the major and, arguably, most influential newspaper, established in Bucharest, having published, in total, 15 issues, since 1933 (with an additional one in 1940). As mentioned in the subtitle, it was the official 'organ' of the Association General Union of Roma in Romania (or AUGRR), and was published in Bucharest, in a four-pages format. Most of the authors were those affiliated or connected to the Union. Some of the key themes in the newspaper were, in fact, those of establishing Gheorghe Niculescu as the indisputable leader of all Roma in Romania, and a lot of other articles focused on the quarrel between AUGRR and AGȚR. This, as we shall see, was not unscrutinised, as similar bids for the role would come from leaders of the Union's competing organisation, as well as from regional leaders of smaller organisations.

As for the main rubrics of the newspapers, these varied from issue to issue, and the newspaper itself did not have a standard format, apart from featuring a general information section and the editorial post (or short requests from readers). Nevertheless, the issues often comprised, on the first page, a general letter from the editor (signed as N. Lenghescu Clei, whose last name is sometimes spelled also as N. Lenghescu Cley, in the first issue) or from Gheorghe or N. Niculescu, usually in the form of a manifesto or key information that they wanted to put out. These were often calling for Roma to unite with the Union. In addition to this, the aims of the organisation were published and republished several times throughout the newspaper's existence, alongside the activities that the Union was preparing or planning (such as the Roma Congress, in 1933, or different meetings of the Union). Segments of information about the history of Roma in Romania were also sporadically included in the newspaper, but without a particularly recurrent position in its overall structure. In addition to this, information on the composition of the central committee (in Bucharest), on regional branches of the Union and their membership were distributed within the newspaper's content as well as rebuttals of the statements made by the leaders of their rival organisation, namely Gh. Lăzurică and Popp Șerboianu. While these did not have a specific place in the newspaper (i.e. a particular page), they were recurrently present. Finally, poems and songs calling for the unification of Roma in Romania under the aegis of the AUGRR were also featured within *Glasul Romilor*. These poems were written in Romanian. The newspaper was also published entirely in the Romanian language.

Timpul (The Time, in Romanian) (1932–1934)

Subtitle: *Ziarul țiganilor din România / Oficiosul romilor din România* (Newspaper of Gypsies/ Official publication of Roma in Romania), Owner: Aurel Th. Manolescu-Dolj. The newspaper was between two and four pages long. *Timpul* (Craiova, 1932–1934) was published in 70 issues, in Romanian language.

While, in effect, the owner and director of the newspaper was Aurel Th Manolescu-Dolj, Lăzurică (and, later, Șerboianu) would also have numerous articles published in it. Having a more regional focus, however, the newspaper declared Marian I Simion, from Craiova as “Voievod of Roma in Romania” (Timpul 1934:1). Furthermore, it had the role of promoting the pleas and focus of Roma in Oltenia.

What is particularly interesting about the newspaper *Timpul*, unlike the other Roma newspapers during the interwar period, is that it did not always have a ‘Roma’/ ‘Gypsy’ theme. In fact, up until issue 11–12, it was subtitled an “independent newspaper” and featured only regional news, often connected to cultural or political events in Oltenia. It was only in issue 11–12 that the ‘Gypsy’ theme emerged, in an article titled “From AGAȚ in Craiova” (Timpul 1933a:1–2), which sets up and introduces the aims of the AGȚR under the leadership of p Șerboianu, as well as introducing Marin I. Simion as the president of the Oltenia ‘circle’ of AGȚR.

From that moment on, the newspaper would feature more articles dedicated to the Gypsy theme and finally change its subtitle to “The newspaper of the Gypsies in Romania,” with issue 24–25, on January 24, 1934. Interesting also is that the subtitle of the newspaper would change several times, in connection with the joining of Lăzurică and the resurgence of the cooperation between the latter and Șerboianu, after their initial conflict. As such, with issue 41, on July 29, 1934, the subtitle of the newspaper would change again, to the “Newspaper of the Roma in Romania.” Lăzurică, as will be clear from some of the articles published later in his career, was one of the most fervent proponents of the terminological shift (from *țigan*, to *Roma*) in public and official discourse. As such, the shift in the subtitle of the newspaper may be due also to his affiliation.

In terms of its content and main rubrics/themes, this most clearly shifted from its move from a general newspaper, featuring regional information to a ‘Roma/Gypsy’ newspaper, where most articles were dedicated to the Roma theme. Other than this, unlike *Țara Noastră*, there did not seem to be a standard format for the newspaper itself. On its two pages, it recurrently featured diverse pieces of information concerning events of interest or focusing on Roma, the political climate in Romania, or regional news concerning Roma. Furthermore, unlike *Glasul Romilor* or *Țara Noastră*, the newspaper *Timpul* did not include information on Roma folklore or poems.

O Rom (The Rom, in Romani language) (1934)

Subtitle: *Organ de îndrumare culturală și revendicări sociale ale romilor din România* (Newspaper of the cultural guiding and social claims of Roma in Romania), Directors: N. St. Ionescu and Marin I. Simion, Craiova, Nr.01–02 (1934).

O Rom was another regional newspaper, also published in Craiova, but in only two issues. The first issue was two pages long, while the second issue was four pages long. Much like *Timpul*, it was affiliated with the Oltenia circle of the AGȚR. However, its leaders were N. St Ionescu and Marin Simion and in its second issue (October 22, 1934), it directly criticises the Union of Lăzurică, organised after the latter’s split from Șerboianu.

Furthermore, the title of the newspaper is connected to the initiative to establish a Roma library in Craiova, also titled O Rom, which will be discussed below.

In terms of its key rubrics, the newspaper featured, in its first issue, a title-page article on the purpose and intent of the newspaper, as well as information concerning the intent to organise the O Rom library. The first page of the second issue was also devoted to the work done by the cultural movement of the Roma in Romania. In addition to this, both issues featured articles concerning the organisation of the Roma movement in Romania, events of the movement in the region (such as the Congress in Sibiu), articles about the 'Voievod' Marin I. Simion, which praised the latter and the work he had been doing for the Roma in Oltenia. Finally, the newspaper also featured calls for the mobilisation of Roma, information about the Oltenia branch and, in the second issue, a Romani language translation of the Lord's Prayer, translated by C. S. Nicolăescu Plopșor, who was also the leader of the O Rom library.

Neamul Țigănesc (in Romanian)/The Gypsy People (1934–1935)

Subtitle: *Foaie de ridicare a Țiganilor (Romilor) și de informații* (Newspaper for the rising of the Gypsies (Roma) and for information), Director/Editor: Naftanailă Lazăr, Calbor/Făgăraș County, Nr. 01–03 (1934–1935).

Neamul Țigănesc was another regional newspaper, published in Romanian language, in 3 issues, under the leadership of Naftanailă Lazăr, and based in Făgăraș County. The newspaper had between two pages (first issue) and four pages (second and third issues). The first issue was published in February 1934, the second issue in September 1934 and the third issue in April 1935.

The main rubrics and themes in the newspaper were somewhat cohesive across its 3 issues, and more regionally focused than those of *Glasul Romilor*, *Țara Noastră* or *Timpul*. The front page was invariably a call/editorial letter written by Naftanailă Lazăr (sometimes simply signed as The Neo-Rustic Brotherhood), which were an address to the Roma readership and an elegy towards the editor of the newspaper (i.e. Naftanailă Lazăr himself). He was invariably presented as the 'apostle' of the Gypsies in Romania. The second pages featured information about the Roma organisations or the Roma events in the county (such as the one led by Marian I. Simion, in Oltenia). In addition to this, it would focus on different themes (such as the issue of naming) that the editor found necessary to address within the Roma movement they were leading. Finally, the third pages (apart from issue 1) featured general information and trivia about Roma in the country, alongside poems (written in Romanian) about the Roma movement, about Naftanailă Lazăr or about the Roma struggle. An interesting article, about the creation of an 'independent state' among tent-Gypsies was published in the second issue of the newspaper (Marinescu 1934:4). The fourth page of the final issue ends with another call to Roma 'brothers' to unite together for a common cause.

Overall, the newspaper's focus and approach, while similar to the central newspapers (in its calls for mobilisation, for instance), were also somewhat distinct to the

other newspapers as it emphasised the need to maintain and be proud of the term *țigan* (Gypsy), which also featured in the newspaper's title (Neamul Țigănesc 1934a, 1934b, 1934c). Furthermore, it focused primarily on the issues and needs characterising Gypsies in Transylvania, at times even criticising central organisations and their leaders for neglecting the particular situations as well as the social and political struggles of Roma from Transylvania.

Foaia Poporului Romesc (Newspaper of the Roma People, in Romanian) (1935)

Subtitle: *Organ cultural, social și economic al romilor* (Cultural, social and economic newspaper of the Roma people), Director: Gheorghe Frunzea, Rupea/Târnava-Mare County, Nr. 01 (1935). The newspaper was published in Romanian, in one issue. The first issue was 4 pages long. The newspaper was run by Gheorghe Frunzea and based in the locality of Rupea.

In terms of its content, on its front page, the newspaper features an editorial letter, from Gheorghe Frunzea, asking Roma to rise up and mobilise. Alongside this, the front page also features an article concerning the general Roma movement in Romania, which started in Bucharest, as well as an article about the cultural life in Rupea. The second page features an article advising and encouraging Roma to read and write, authored by Gheorghe Peșteanu, another article about the movement in Rupea (led by Gheorghe Frunzea, Nicolae Duca and Gheorghe Peșteanu) and the desire that the newspaper will continue the work of mobilising Roma in Romania. The second page also introduces the intention to publish a Romani language vocabulary, with translations into Romanian, German and Hungarian. This is a particularly interesting aspect of the newspaper, as it highlights once again the multi-ethnic character of the region in which it was published. From the first vocabulary entry (which only features words starting with the letter 'a'), it is clear that the intention was to develop the vocabulary in future issues. These, however, were never published. The next pages feature different articles, including one concerning the naming of the community and, on the last page, a lengthy article about M. Kogălniceanu and the abolition of Roma slavery in Romania.

While it was only published in one issue there were clear signs in the articles featured that the intention was to continue its publication with subsequent ones (such as the intended vocabulary, mentioned above). Much like the other newspapers of the time, its aim was to promote the notion of a Roma movement in Romania, while nevertheless having a clearly regional focus. There are no mentions of the other Roma newspapers within its pages, nor of the struggles for legitimacy characterising the Roma organisations mentioned above. Alongside the intended dictionary, and its clearly multi-ethnic content, one of its most interesting article discusses the issue of naming Roma/Gypsy communities in Romania, arguing that the term Gypsy should not be used as referring to a 'nationality' as it is seen to be a derogatory term pointing towards a particular lifestyle (see section below, on naming).

Țara Noastră (Our Country, in Romanian) (1938)

Subtitle: *Ediție săptămânală pentru Romii din România* (Special Weekly edition for Roma in Romania). This newspaper was also published in Bucharest, in 1938, in six issues. The newspaper was published in Romanian and each issue was between four and six pages long.

Țara Noastră was, de facto, a newspaper of the General Association of Roma in Romania, led by G. A. Lăzurică and Calinic I. Popp Șerboianu. Yet, the newspaper title is the same as that of *Țara Noastră*, the main newspaper of the National Christian Party (NCP), whose editor was the National Christian Party's leader, Octavian Goga, one of the leading parties in the country during that period. As we shall see, the connection between the Association and the NCP was strong, not only in the latter's support of the Roma movement led by Lăzurică and Șerboianu but most clearly evidenced in the articles signed by Lăzurică and Șerboianu praising the NCP and its leaders, while also inviting Roma to vote for them in the Romanian elections. It is interesting to note, however, that in issue 4, from August 1, 1937, both Lăzurică and Șerboianu make a small note at the bottom of page two, stating that their newspaper *Țara Noastră* had nothing to do with the official paper of the NCP, and that they were completely "free and fully responsible" of their actions. While this may have been the case, the Roma-focused *Țara Noastră* had several articles dedicated to praising the NCP and encouraging Roma to vote for the latter.

Unlike the other newspapers, *Țara Noastră* also had a more standard format in terms of its rubrics. The first page was often dedicated to a call from either Lăzurică or Șerboianu, clarifications of issues concening the organisation of Roma in Romania or appraisals of Octavian Goga and his party. The second page was titled *Pagina Literară* (Literary Page) and included themes such as Roma folklore (poems, sayings, proverbs, from Romania and abroad), stories, health advice to Roma, information on Gypsy films, information on Roma from other countries, Roma "thoughts" (*cugetări rome*), etc. Some of the Roma folklore was published in Romani language, rather than Romanian. The third page was titled *Pagina Religioasă* (Religious Page) and featured information on the missionary work being conducted by G. A. Lăzurică and Calinic I. Popp Șerboianu, as well as others, among Roma. It also featured religious texts on different themes and short prayers (these short prayers were also written in Romani language). The fourth page, titled *Fapte, gânduri, oameni* (Deeds, Thoughts, People), often comprised a mixture of themes, including discussions on the Jewish population in the country (and the detachment of Roma from the Jews), information about the AUGRR and its leaders (Gh. Niculescu and N. Niculescu), often in the form of a critique, the success of particular Roma individuals (i.e. musicians, etc.) and information about events and news from abroad (about Roma, but not only). The newspaper also had two general sections: one titled *Poșta redacției* (The Editorial House Post), which featured letters from readers, and one about general information. While the structuring of the newspaper according to these themes was not strictly followed throughout the six issues (i.e. the pages where they featured may have differed), the themes nevertheless followed a similar line.

In short, all these newspapers contributed vastly to shaping the Roma movement in the country while also showcasing the different trajectories and aims of each organisation. As such, both the content and the geographical location of the newspapers is important, as these reflect differences in terms of the visions for a Roma future among different key activists of the time. Furthermore, the geographical location of these newspapers emphasises the potentially distinctive role of the major Roma organisations when it comes to content of the literature produced. In other words, potential discrepancies can be observed in the distinction between the capital and regional locations, between ideas promoted by the key leaders of the Roma organisations and the affiliation of different newspapers to specific political parties.

For example, as will be evident from their content presentation below, the newspapers *Timpul* and *Țara Noastră* would be affiliated with the National Christian Party, a highly nationalistic and anti-Semitic party. This can be seen in the elegies written by G. A. Lăzureanu Lăzurică and others to Octavian Goga (the leader of the National Christian Party) and in the encouragement Roma leaders give to readers in voting for the National Christian Party. As such, the interlinking of political allegiances and the support of particular members of the Roma elite cannot be understated.

Likewise, the connection between the newspaper *Glăsul Romilor* and the Romanian Orthodox Church is worth highlighting. This can be seen in the myriad articles focusing on the role of Roma elite as “missionaries of the Orthodox Church” (see, for instance, Niculescu 1937:3), in the attempts made to Romanianise Hungarian Gypsies in the region of Transylvania (and, hence, attempts to convert them from the Greek Catholic Church, which was dominant among Hungarian-speaking Roma in Transylvania at the time, to the Orthodox Church, which was seen as the state church in the country) and the numerous elegies to the Romanian Patriarch within the pages of *Glăsul Romilor* (1934). Quite similarly, these approaches can be seen in other regional newspapers affiliated or connected somehow to the AUGRR: *Neamul Țigănesc* and *Foaia Poporului Romesc*, while *O Rom* and *Timpul* would more clearly be connected with the premises and goals of the AGȚR. That said, as already highlighted above, affiliations did also change, highlighting the fluctuating nature of affinities and allegiances.

In terms of the outreach, readership and distribution of the newspaper, little specific information can be found, other than the content of the newspapers themselves. It is indeed known that the regional newspapers were primarily directed towards a regional audience, as most of the articles focused on local events and political structures but they also addressed issues of concern connected to the general Roma movement in the country. Furthermore, the articles published in these regional newspapers (*Foaia Poporului Romesc*, *Neamul Țigănesc*, *O Rom*, *Timpul*) were often directly addressed to such a readership. However, that is not to say that the newspapers did not reach beyond those regions, nor is it to say that the readership was exclusively Roma/Gypsies. This is primarily the case with the newspaper *Țara Noastră* and *Timpul*.

In fact, *Timpul* had originally started as a general newspaper (titled *Independent Newspaper*) and, at its inception, had no articles on Roma/Gypsies at all. Therefore, it is feasible to argue that its intended audience was always also a Romanian one and continued to be so even after it changed focus. *Țara Noastră* featured several articles (especially in its sections, The Religious Page and The Literary Page) which focused on giving a broad overview of the Roma in Romania, including history, folklore, labelling and cultural characteristics. Though this was never explicitly stated, these articles seemed to be intended not only for Roma/Gypsies but also for a general audience. Such articles on Roma history, customs and folklore were present in all the Roma newspapers of the time (see, for instance, G.A.L. 1937; Lăzurică 1937; Marinescu 1934; Potra 1937; Tache 1940). Thus, alongside specific calls for Roma or directly addressed to a Roma readership (cf. Dănicel 1937; Dutan 1938; Lăzurică 1938; Lenghescu-Cley 1934), these more general articles seem to point to the intention that the newspapers be addressed to a Romanian (or, better said, non-Roma) audience as well.

Finally, as for the distribution of the newspapers, no information is available concerning the print run or the means by which the newspapers were distributed. Nevertheless, some of the newspapers (especially *Glasul Romilor*) reached quite far in terms of its geographical distribution. Several issues of *Glasul Romilor* and one issue of *Neamul Țigănesc* were found also in the Archive of the Gypsy Lore Society, in Liverpool (UK) with a letter attached to them showcasing that the newspapers had been in the possession of the Gypsy studies scholar, Robert Andrew Scott Macfie (1868–1935). Thus, the newspaper's subscriptions were not limited only to the Romanian space but found its way in the collection of international scholars interested in Gypsies more generally.

Having thus broadly discussed the newspapers above, the next sub-section introduces some of the central themes and topics found within these individual Roma newspapers during the interwar period. While these themes are far from being exhaustive, and many more issues did appear within the pages of Roma newspapers during the interwar period, their importance cannot be overstated. They reveal the complex entanglements of political affiliations, regional focus and struggle(s) for legitimate representation among its writers.

4.3 Themes in Roma Newspapers

The Struggle for Legitimacy and the Relationship between the Centre and the Periphery

While common issues can be seen in all Roma newspapers in Romania, distinctive experiences and manifestations of emancipatory actions among and by Roma leaders and organisations were reflected in the regional differences of some of them and, in particular, in the distinction between the centre (or the capital) and the provinces. Broadly put, many Roma gradually appeared to be unhappy about how the interests and needs of

Roma outside of the capital city area were being approached by central organisations. In particular, the situation of Roma in Transylvania often came to the centre as both a social and political issue and leaders in the capital sometimes collaborated with local authorities to register Roma in their organisations. Though there is no space to go in-depth into it here, the situation of Hungarianised Roma (namely, Hungarian-speaking Roma, often Greek-Catholics and with Hungarian self-consciousness) was particularly of interest both to Roma leaders and Roma organisations, and a means by which the latter two proved their loyalty to the Romanian nation: namely, in stating their engagement in a process of Romaniasation of Hungarianised Roma and, thus, the important help that Roma associations might offer to national authorities in their attempt at Romanianising Roma communities. Such a depiction can be found, for instance, in the article *Romii Ardeleni* (Transylvanian Roma), from *Glasul Romilor*, in which the author directly engages with the intervention of members of the Union in the process of Romanianising Hungarianised Roma (Stan 1938:4).

These distinctions were made especially visible in the articles of the two main Roma newspapers, *Glasul Romilor* and *Neamul Țigănesc*, but were also reflected in the pages of *Timpuț, O Rom* (both based in Craiova) and *Țara Noastră*. For instance, the Association General Union of Roma in Romania mentioned above, led by Gheorghe Niculescu, began publishing the journal *Glasul Romilor* in Bucharest, on the November 15, 1934. This newspaper became perhaps the most well-known Roma newspaper of the interwar period. As mentioned above, it had 15 issues, published from 1934 to 1940 (another issue would be published in 1941) and, similarly to AGȚR's initial manifesto, stated the Union's main aims as being the emancipation and re-awakening of all Roma in Romania, on a social, cultural, moral, economic and spiritual ground.

Among other things, both organisations' manifestos presented the intention to lay "the foundations for tomorrow", by arguing that Roma too deserved to be heard by the leaders of the country, as Roma too are faithful citizens of Greater Romania. Some of the prospects of the Union, as reflected in the newspaper, were to set up kindergartens for Roma children, encourage education, engage in a programme of settlement of "vagabonds and beggars," namely the so-called colonisation of nomadic Gypsies – referring, in fact, to the sedentarisation of nomadic groups (Tache 1940:2), create Roma consumption cooperatives, food canteens, set up funds for Roma in need, focus on the establishment of Roma libraries, etc. In other words, the organisation was stated to focus on all aspects of social life (economic, social, educational, etc.) in order to improve the fate of Roma people, and so that Roma too could stand as equal citizens of the country. All these aspects can be most clearly seen in a published version of the 'programme' as it appeared within the first issue of *Glasul Romilor* (Niculescu 1934:1):

[...] The goal pursued by us is solely that of coming to the aid of all poor Roma. We will set up kindergartens in all towns and municipalities, where the Roma will be able to send their children for free education[...] We will intervene with energy to eradicate vagabonds and

beggars, placing everyone in businesses and factories and any kind of service, thereby eliminating the ugly habit they have had so far – and instead working in a clean and honest manner [...] We will create libraries from where all Roma willing to improve their knowledge will be able to have access to higher knowledge. In one word, we will embrace everything so that the fate of our Roma people improves, so that we can sit beside our countrymen without being ashamed, because we are all sons of this God-blessed country and we have all done and continue to do our duty to the Throne, the Land, and the Orthodox Christian Church.

The Ed. (ibid.)

As can be seen from above, these foci point to the overall goals of the organisation itself, which aimed to target key social issues of the Roma community. At the same time, all other Roma newspapers (and, as such, Roma organisations more broadly) would mirror similar goals and adopt and adapt them to their own agendas.

Yet, much of the newspapers' content, alongside the elements pushing for the emancipation and mobilisation of Roma in the country, also features snippets of the struggle for legitimacy between Roma leaders at the time: Gh. Niculescu and Popp Șerboianu/Lăzureanu-Lăzurică. Beyond the focus on the social agenda of the newspaper's umbrella organisations, numerous articles within Roma newspapers (primarily noticeable in *Timpu*, *Tara Noastră* and *Glasul Romilor*) were thus devoted to a mutual attack on their respective leaders and proving the rightful and legitimate place of the Union as the only viable one to unite all Roma in Romania. A similar trend could also be seen in the regional newspapers, where *Neamul Țigănesc* is used as a platform to highlight the qualities of its director, Naftanailă Lazăr, while *O Rom* and *Timpu* emphasise those of Marian I Simion and N. Ionescu, etc. As can be seen from below, the relationship the Craiova circle has had with a key promoter of setting up a Roma library (titled *O Rom*, from Romani language, and translated as *The Roma*), namely historian and archaeologist C. S. Nicolăescu Plopșor, was more ambiguous when looking at the content of the newspaper *Timpu*. This moves away from praising the historian and archaeologist for his efforts in supporting the Roma cause and publicising his works (for instance, in issues 28–29 of the journal, and again in issue 39 and 40) to calling Plopșor a crook and a Gypsy (from issue 48 onwards). This again shows the somewhat complicated nature of collaboration between main figures at the time and the fact that the picture is anything but uniform, and allegiances may be fluctuating.

Interestingly, a key motive within *Glasul Romilor* has also been the loyalty and devotion expressed towards the Orthodox church. In fact, as will be developed more in a separate section of this chapter, the role of the Orthodox church was key in supporting one leader or another (or one organisation or another). In this way, it also contributed to the potential success or failure of these associations (Matei 2010a). For instance, in many of its activities, the Association of the General Union of Roma in Romania was aided in its efforts by key figures of the Orthodox church, including the Patriarch Miron Cristea, and was often still in close cooperation with capital city authorities (see, for instance, Niculescu 1937:3). Before this, the Patriarch Miron Cristea had also come to the aid of

Lăzureanu-Lăzurică, especially in the rupture that had been made between the latter and Șerboianu. As Șerboianu had been seen to be moving away from the traditions and teachings of the Orthodox Church, efforts were made to support those that rallied against him. In fact, there are several references dispersed throughout the issues of *Glasul Romilor* which present “ex-priest” Șerboianu as a traitor of the Orthodox faith and as aiming to profit from the cause of the Roma. See, for example, the article with the provocative title of “G.A. Lăzărescu, known as Lăzurică and ex-priest I Șerboianu, as they are. Two crooks who look to profit from Roma” (*Glasul Romilor* 1937:2–4).

Looking at *Neamul Țigănesc*, this was a self-titled ‘Gypsy’ newspaper, published in Făgăraș, and led by Naftanailă Lazăr, the president of the Neo-Rustic Brotherhood. The Neo-Rustic Brotherhood, while smaller than the Association of the General Union of Roma in Romania (or AUGRR, led by Niculescu), was, according to Lazăr himself, the first organisation to be set up in Romania, in 1926 in Făgăraș. While its influence appears to have remained somewhat limited to the area of Transylvania, and reached little outside these regional influences, the newspaper published by its founding leader reveals both contrasts and similarities with the approach of the centre, as well as a need for gaining legitimacy by organisations outside of the capital city.

Neamul Țigănesc was published in only three issues (February 1934, September 1934 and April 1935). As will be discussed in more depth below and compared to some of the other Roma newsletters at the time, it maintained the label of *țigan* in its very title and dedicated two articles to clarify the use of this label. In fact, this is perhaps one of the most striking distinctions and one upon which Lazăr remarks on several occasions.

Neamul Țigănesc also seems to have had a fluctuating and ambiguous relationship with both organisations in Bucharest, the Association of the General Union of Roma in Romania (led by Niculescu) and the General Association of Gypsies/Roma in Romania (led by C. I. Popp Șerboianu and, later, joined once more by G. Lăzureanu Lăzurică). In fact, in the second issue, on a front-page article, the newspaper takes issue with this struggle for leadership among the Bucharest Roma elite. It also emphasises the fact that Lăzurică, though having the merit of promoting and making known Romani literature, was nevertheless “found not to be a Rom,” therefore he could not make demands on such a leadership (*Neamul Țigănesc* 1934c:1). As a side note, a questioning of the ‘Roma status’ of various leaders was not, in fact, uncommon among other newspaper publications either. There seems to have been a back and forth motion of legitimacy claiming that was also founded, among other things, on the validity of the ‘Roma origin’ of its leaders.

Furthermore, this article highlights that the fight between the two leaders (Niculescu and Lăzurică) is not one of principles but of petty interests, namely who is to be the leader of the Roma (see, for instance, *Neamul Țigănesc* 1934c:1), which highlights the need to recognise the authority and leadership of those outside the capital city of Bucharest. Finally, using time in the field of activism as an honorific element, Naftanailă Lazăr emphasises, yet again, that the Neo-Rustic Brotherhood was the first recognised Roma organisation,

as early as 1926 and, therefore, one which “bows to nobody” (ibid.). The article ends with the statement: “Long-live our Voievod, Naftanailă Lazăr!” (ibid.), therefore reinforcing the same quest for legitimacy as that one depicted among the capital’s Roma ‘leaders’.

In the same issue of the newspaper, however, on page three, *Neamul Țigănesc* presents the minutes of a meeting of the General Union of Roma in Romania (from March 1934), in which the Neo-Rustic Brotherhood is recognised as being affiliated to the former and Naftanailă Lazăr granted the recognised title of *voievod* of Roma in Transylvania. Again, these interplays between affiliations to the centre and the relationship of Roma organisations from outside the capital city to the central organisations in Bucharest reiterates the complex and complicated nature of cooperation between centre and periphery and between different individuals aiming to gain momentum and legitimacy as leaders of Roma in Romania (regionally or centrally). Furthermore, at that time, Lăzurică (spelt G.A. Lăzărescu Lăzuricea) was still the president of the General Union of Roma in Romania, while the vice-presidents were Apostol Matei and Gh. Niculescu (spelt Niculicea), and general secretary and treasurer was Nicolae Niculescu (spelt Niculicea). As already discussed above, this would soon change, with Lăzurică being kicked out and Gh. Niculescu taking the title as president. There thus seemed to have been a continuous tension not only between the organisations in the capital city, but also between the latter and those outside it, and this was quite often reflected in the newspapers connected to various organisations (a similar argument can be made for the Oltenia ‘circle’, led by Marian Simion). One can also see in this case an interplay of desires to collaborate with the centre and the desire for autonomy in terms of leadership of Roma in Transylvania (visible primarily in the case of Naftanailă Lazăr). In fact, most regional newspapers in the interwar period affiliated themselves, at one point or another, with one of the two leaders, though it seems that, in the end, Niculescu may have gained the greater overall support. As such, a struggle for legitimacy could be seen both in terms of the relationship between individual Roma leaders at the time (i.e. the conflict between Niculescu brothers and the Lăzurică/Șerboianu union or the initial conflict between Lăzurică and Șerboianu) and in the ways in which regional Roma organisations (and their leaders) also attempted to shape their positions as guardians of the Roma movement in connection to the relationship with the capital city.

On Naming

Much like the process of mobilisation itself, the debates on the usage of the terms Roma vs. *țigan*/Gypsy, are not post-socialist manifestations. In reality, many of the present-day arguments (for one side or the other) can be found as early as the interwar period. As such, it was in the 1930s that the first glimpses of how labels carry with them derogatory or uplifting connotations can be seen. In other words, the use of *țigan* or ‘Roma’ became a topic of debate among Roma leaders during the interwar period, and the debate itself became one of diverging interests. These dynamics are most clearly reflected in the

publications of the time. Taking *Neamul Țigănesc* and *Glasul Romilor* as a comparative framework of engaging with the issue of labelling, one can see, from their very titles, contrasting viewpoints on the nature of and extent to which label categories may foster or impinge upon mobilisation processes.

Firstly, *Neamul Țigănesc*, tentatively translated as The Gypsy People, evidently points to the adoption of the name *țigan* as a potentially mobilising and emancipatory term (or, better said, does not see the use of *țigan* as negatively impacting upon the process of emancipation). Yet, though it would be easily seen as pleading for the use of *țigan* over Roma (by looking at the title alone), *Neamul Țigănesc* used both terms, Roma and *țigan*, often interchangeably within its pages. For instance, at times articles would refer to communities as 'Roma', and at other times as *țigani*, without a clear distinction made between them in terms of the positive or negative connotation. This is unlike in other publications in which the term *țigan* is seen equivalent with negative stereotypes, and not solely as referring to a particular ethnic group, evident most clearly in the article "Is the word Gypsy a word of mockery or a name for a nation?" in *Foaia Poporului Romesc* (Duca 1935:3).

Nevertheless, in one of its issues, *Neamul Țigănesc* also states that, unlike other Roma leaders, Naftanailă Lazăr is not ashamed of the word *țigan*, and does not see in it a potential threat to the social mobilisation of *țigani* in Romania. Below is a reproduction of one of the articles written along this line, which reflects upon both terms and suggests a potential benefit of using them interchangeably. Furthermore, it sees a threat of no longer being "recognised by outsiders" in the complete abandonment of the word *țigan* for that of Roma (*Neamul Țigănesc* 1934b:3; R. Lazăr 1935:2):

We are proud of the word **Gypsy**, which we place at the head of our newspaper.

The other leaders are now ashamed of being Gypsies and are looking to call themselves Roma.

Under this name, that of Gypsies, we are known all over Europe and that is how we want to be known.

We accept the word Rom, as we are called in the Gypsy language "tu sam rom", but we do not deny the word Gypsy either.

"Tu sam rom?" means "are you a Gypsy?" And "Sar te nam rom", it is true that I am a Gypsy! (*Neamul Țigănesc* 1934b:3)

The argument is again re-stated in the last issue of the newspaper. Not only does this article emphasise the tension between leaders but also, as such, emphasises the potential, argued by Naftanailă Lazăr, to maintain both the use of *țigan* and the use of Roma, unproblematically.

Glasul Romilor clearly adopts Roma as the preferred term and uses it throughout its publications. The term *țigan* is only used when reproducing literary extract; such as segments from George Potra's *Țigani* (The Gypsies), in the article "Artisticul si Pitorescul Țiganilor" (The artistic and picturesque of the Gypsies), published in 1937, in *Glasul*

Romilor (Potra 1937:2), in connection to nomadic Gypsies or when referring to what are seen as ‘negative’ traits of leaders of other Roma organisations. This attitude is reflected in the newsletter’s very first issue, in November 1934 (with an article called “Roma brothers!”) which is, de facto, the first manifesto of the Association General Union of the Roma in Romania. According to the article, the stated goal of the programme is to build the “foundations for tomorrow” and its main aim stated to be the “emancipation and re-awakening of all Roma in Romania, on a social, moral, economic and spiritual level” (Lenghescu-Cley 1934:1).

Furthermore, in an article published in June 1938, titled “What we ask for” the issue of terminology is made quite explicit in the demands laid out to public officials (Radu 1938). I quote only one segment of the article below where, among the other demands presented, the issue of labelling is clearly demarcated:

[...] c) in all official documents and teaching books, it should no longer be written ‘țigăni’, a name which does not belong to us and has a denigrating and mocking meaning, but ‘Roma’ – the true name –, coming from the Sanskrit language which we also speak. (Radu 1938:3)

A gradual shift in the use of Roma instead of *țigăni* throughout the 1930s is also noticeable in most of the other Roma publications of the interwar period. For example, in the newspaper *Timpul*, published in Craiova by Manolescu-Dolj, the subtitle of the newspaper gradually changes from, originally, “Independent weekly newspaper” to “The newspaper of Gypsies in Romania” (starting from Issue no 24–25, January 21, 1934), to “The official paper of Roma in Romania” (starting from issue no 41, July 29, 1934). The shift may have also been part of the shift in leadership of AGȚR, with the joining of Lăzurică leading to the change of the use of *țigăni* with that of Roma (see Matei 2012, for a lengthy discussion on the issue of labelling in interwar Romania).

The most overarching argument for this transition can be seen in an article titled “Why we call ourselves Roma and not Gypsies” authored by Lăzurică in the newspaper *Timpul* (Lăzurică 1937:1). According to the Roma leader, the word *țigăni* does not belong to Roma and is a pejorative name given to them by “Europeans,” meaning “unclean” or “dirty” (ibid.). Roma is said to mean ‘superior man’. The article continues with a statement that Roma know how to choose their own name and compares this situation to Romanians’ preference of being called “Romanians” instead of “Vlachs,” “Munteni,” “Moldavians” or “Bessarabians,” thus emphasising their descent from the Dacians and the Romans. Lăzurică thus grounds the use of the term Roma in both linguistic and historical terms and clearly pleads for a rejection of the use *țigăni*.

Finally, an interesting discussion of this debate can be found in the only issue of the newspaper *Foaia Poporului Romesc*, which raises the question of hygiene, attributes of laziness and how the meaning of *țigăni* is not necessarily connected to any ethnicity, but to a way of life:

It is known to all of us, who live in the countryside, that the name of Gypsy is given to all those who, whether out of laziness they do not keep their body clean, or because of lack of means they are walking in raggedly dress. This, regardless of the nation in which the person belongs.

In addition to these two cases where someone is given the name Gypsy, there is also a third case: when someone is deprived of a good upbringing and a good common sense, is dealing in lies and all sorts of things that bring them the scorn of all others; these people are still being called Gypsies.

So, we can see from these three examples, what is the meaning of the word 'gypsy', which is given to any man behaving under the above conditions, be it Romanian, Saxon, Hungarian, Rom, etc.[...]

The crisis in which the Roma were placed, and the lack of light and culture, led to a situation in which from within our own nation there were more of those who were dirty and ragged, and engaged in all sorts of lies and actions unworthy of man, and thus the word 'gypsy' was generalized to our entire nation, indeed, without any right. [...]

From the above, it is clear and precise that the word 'gypsy' is only a mockery, for the Gypsy nation does not exist! [...] (Duca 1935:3)

In the above article the author argues for the rejection of the name *țigan* based on the fact that it need not be associated with any particular 'nationality'. It also highlights and discusses issues of bodily cleanliness and hygiene, encouraging readers to adopt the rules and recommendations set out by the author. Thus, while similar in overall theme (namely, the issue of naming), the article is original in its approach and constitutes a somewhat unique example of its kind. As such, given that the newspaper in question was only published in one issue (though, from its content, there was a clear intention to publish subsequent numbers), it offers a particular and distinctive approach to much of the themes adopted by other Roma newspapers in interwar Romania and by other Roma writers of the time.

Through all of these examples, one can see that the issue of labelling of Roma/Gypsy communities during interwar Romania was also a matter of debate among Roma intellectuals of the time. These debates were taking shape and elaborated within the spaces of interwar Roma journalism, which paved the way for not only common threads of argumentation but for clear disagreements as well.

***"We Are Not Ashamed of Being Gypsies; More So Than This,
We Are Proud"***

Irrespective of the name they chose to use when referring to their communities, Roma writers during the interwar period emphasised the need and importance for Roma/Gypsies to be proud of their belonging to their community. This was reflected both in lengthy manifestos of the various organisations and in several poems and songs that underlined, at the same time, the full belonging of Roma to the Romanian nation, their devotion to King and country (see the section below, on this topic), and the sacrifices Roma have historically made to be full members of the Romanian nation.

One of the clearest examples of this is the “March of the Roma,” published in *Glasul Romilor*, in 1940, and authored by N Lenghescu Cley (Lenghescu-Cley 1940). Below is a transcription of the march, in its English translation:

The time for our emancipation has come
 And today, Roma are united
 Under the holy flag of salvation (bis)
 To which they will forever be bound! (bis)
 [...]

Under its shield all of our Roma,
 Bound by a sacred oath,
 Even before death they will not give up (bis)
 They will not give up until the grave (bis)

(Lenghescu-Cley 1940:3)

The above poem is both a call to unite under a common banner and a means to emphasise Roma people's devotion to their country of birth and toil. Such manifestations of pride in their Roma belonging, combined with an underlining of belonging to the Romanian nation was to be found in all Roma periodicals during the interwar period.

It was not, however, only poems that reflected such attitudes. Parts of the ‘calls’ or ‘manifestos’ of the organisations were published in these periodicals and, oftentimes, they included an emphasis placed both on the enhancement of one's Roma belonging and in proving the sacrifices Roma people have made for their country of birth. Below is another such example, as reflected in *Glasul Romilor*, in an article titled “What should a Roma do.” Among others, these things are:

1. Not conceal his origin of Roma and not be ashamed of his people.
 [...]
5. Be a dignified, loyal and good citizen of the country, respecting H.M. the King, the Royal Family, the Laws and the Authorities of this country' (*Glasul Romilor* 1938a:3).

As a synthesis of the requirements laid out for Roma within the article mentioned above, the following are also mentioned: to be proud of one's origin and not hide it; to join the Association and pay its fees; to take part in meetings; to be a “dignified, loyal and behaved” citizen of the country, respecting the King, the Royal Family, the laws and authorities of the country; to give their children to schools; respect their elders, brothers and sisters; go regularly to church; seize living in unmarried partnerships; respect the representatives of the Church and the School, etc. (*ibid.*).

Likewise, the theme of pride (though referred as ‘Gypsy’ pride) is also manifested in the newspaper *Neamul Țigănesc*, alongside a call for uniting Roma/Gypsies under one banner. For example, in the newspaper's first article, titled “To all Gypsies in Transylvania” (Lazăr 1934), Naftanailă Lazăr, lays out the need for Gypsies to rise and speak up concerning

their own fate and needs. According to him: “the first step we have to do in society is not to be ashamed of being *țigani*. Each and every one of us should speak up clearly the proud word *țigan* and emphasise that “we are not ashamed of being Gypsies; more so than this, we are proud” (Lazăr 1934:1; see also section above, on naming).

Taken merely as an illustrative example, and though there is a clear difference between the two newspaper’s approaches (particularly to the issue of labelling), these converge in terms of other key issues they address: namely, the promotion of education of Roma/Gypsy children, the emphasis placed on being ‘honest workers’ of the country and obeying the laws of the state, the settlement of nomadic groups, and the mutual support between wealthier and poorer Roma/Gypsies. As such, both *Glasul Romilor* and *Neamul Țigănesc* (as, in fact, all Roma newspapers during the interwar period), highlighted the need to develop the sense of pride among Roma/Gypsy communities, as a first step towards the process of unification and emancipation.

Proving Citizenship and National Belonging

Alongside emphasising the sacrifices Roma have made for their country, all Roma periodicals during the interwar period seem to point to the importance afforded to King and Country. Furthermore, as discussed in the introduction, their approach was to support the official national policies of the time, primarily those connected to the shaping of a unified Romanian identity and belonging within Greater Romania (cf. Bejan 2019; Korkut 2006; Livezeanu 1995). Below is a short segment of an article from *Glasul Romilor*’s first issue (November 1934), which constitutes one of many such examples. The article is titled “Roma brothers!” (see also Dutan 1938:3).

Roma brothers!

We have always done our duty - to the Land and the King. We have been and will remain royalists and faithful to the Throne, until death.

Of our brethren, no traitor of country has ever been found. We have always been good citizens.

So we deserve a better fate. We also deserve to be heard by those who lead the destinies of our dear country, and to lend their ears also to our rightful wishes. We deserve to be heard and helped. [...] (Lenghescu-Cley 1934:1)

Likewise, this sense of national belonging and the expression of Romanian patriotism, allegiance to the Crown and Country, emphasis placed on respecting national laws, encouragement to become involved in the further education of Roma people can all be seen in a later article, also in *Glasul Romilor* (issue no. 13), authored by V. Dutan and published on June 7, 1939, titled “Our programme and the work of the Association.” Among others, the article stated:

Our programme includes that the Association foster among its members the spirit of order, love for the Dynasty, respect for the laws and the authority of the Christian church, to offer guidance and support to lead a more dignified life, reliant on work; overcome illiteracy,

guiding Roma children to school; organise meetings and educational conferences; create or encourage works of social support, which would come to the aid of poor Roma and new mothers; intervene for the settlement of Roma; help get rid of cohabitation; guide its members by instilling in them a religious spirit, etc. (Dutan 1939:2)

These two excerpts highlight the intention of Roma leaders for Roma to be seen as full and contributing members of the Romanian state, and in full agreement with the policies of the Romanian state to create a unified Romanian identity, foster loyalty to the fatherland and create loyal subjects of the country (cf. Korkut 2006; Livezeanu 1995; Matei 2020). In addition to this, the focus on literacy and the settlement of nomadic groups were often emphasised within the newspaper's articles as, in fact, within all Roma periodicals during the interwar period (see, for instance, Tache 1940), which was also a policy of the Romanian state at the time (Achim 1998:152–53). Yet, the most poignant was the desire to present Roma as supporters of the current political regime, thus once again emphasising the loyalty that Roma were argued to have towards the aims and goals of the central government of shaping a homogeneous Romanian identity.

As such, in addition to emphasising the patriotic zeal of Roma in the country, and their devotion to both King and Country, many of the articles in *Glusul Romilor*, for example, highlight their commitment to present political leaderships and the constitutional changes of 1938. See, for instance, the articles “Roma and the Constitution” and “The new Constitution” in *Glusul Romilor* (1938b, 1938c), issued in June, 1938. Through this, a common feature of the Roma newspapers was also their connection with the broader project of constructing a unified nation in the aftermath of the First World War and proving allegiance to the country's leadership.

“Not a Minority”

As mentioned above, a common theme within the Roma newspapers was also a seeming desire of the leaders of Roma organisations to highlight the status of Roma as fully embedded members and citizens of the Romanian state, often through the argument of being fully assimilated within the Romanian element, as being loyal citizens to the state (see above) and as not posing a threat of sectarianism or minority politics. The desire to not be seen as a minority was manifested across most of the newspapers of the time. This is primarily in the context in which Roma leaders were trying to distance themselves from other minority groups (such as the Jews, the Bulgarians and the Hungarians) which could represent a threat to the overarching aims of creating a unified Romanian state. An illustrative example of this is an article from the second issue of *Neamul Țigănesc*, from September 8, 1934, titled “Who are we and what do we want” (Neamul Țigănesc 1934a:2).

The article broadly states the aims of the organisation. It also argues that its goal has been to organise together, much like the Jewish nation, the approximately “1 million Roma people living on Romanian lands” (ibid.). It should be emphasised that this number (one million) is not founded on demographic data (the official numbers being

approximately 262,000) but, rather, it is used rhetorically by the author to strengthen his argumentation. What is important here is that the article highlights that the organisation is not and will not be a political party, neither a minority group, emphasising in particular that there will be no political manoeuvre coming from their midst, nor will they act as electoral puppets.

This interplay and comparison made with the Jewish population in Romania, as well as with other minority groups (such as Hungarians or Bulgarians) was both poignant and recurrent, not only in *Neamul Țigănesc*, but in the other Roma newspapers as well. The desire to organise themselves in groups and associations was stated to be on the grounds of a constant struggle throughout history and was made discursively distinctive to that of Jewish organisations on several accounts: 1) they presented themselves as fully assimilated within what they called the Romanian 'element'; 2) they emphasised the Christian faith to which they adhered; 3) they highlighted the loyalty they offered to King and Country and 4) they promoted a discourse of equal citizenship for Roma as for majority Romanians on the grounds of common sacrifices made for their common land.

Thus, the avoidance and rejection of the term 'minority' was a form of affiliation to state policies and politics, rather than detachment from it, and a means to avoid the potential threat of being seen as problematic communities, as creating dissent or as posing any sort of challenge to the national order of the day. Below are, for example, some segments from an article signed by Gh. Niculescu, in *Glasul Romilor* (published in April 1941, in the newspaper's final issue), and titled "Racism and the Roma."

[...] they [Roma] do not present, we believe, any danger for the security and sovereignty of the Romanian people.

In duty towards the laws of the country they have always been side by side with their Romanian brothers, and there have also been cases when they have not been taken aback from protecting their land, proving their bravery and courage in the wars that the Romanian people have had with those that tried to take over our country's land. Roma have not been deserters, traitors, nor spies and wherever they have been placed they have done their job, and they have worked without complaint. (Niculescu 1941:3)

The excerpt above is both striking and illuminating, as it points to the clear desire of Roma leaders not to be perceived as potential separatist organisers and, in that sense, a threat to the political order, in times of a clearly volatile political climate. In this context, it is also interesting that, though all organisations presented themselves as being apolitical (in other words, politics were not said to be on their agenda and they would not be involved in electoral processes), most newspapers reflect a particular party-orientation of their organisations, or support for specific parties in the run up to national and local elections.

This, however, need not have always been the same party and allegiances appear to have changed over time. For example, the newspaper *Timpu* initially published several articles in support of the National Liberal Party (*Partidul Național Liberal*, or PNL, which

dominated the political life of the country until the Second World War and contributed to the shaping of the ideological and institutional development of Greater Romania), and against the National Peasant Party (*Partidul Național Țărănist*, or PNȚ) (Timpul 1933b:1; Nesti 1934:1). Later, it developed a more welcoming attitude and closer connection to the National Christian Party, particularly given its leader's (i.e. Octavian Goga's) support of the Association led by then by Șerboianu and Lăzurică. The front page of *Timpul*, issue number 67–68, from October 20, 1937, shows the photographs of the leaders of the National Christian Party and vows that Roma would only vote with the latter. Likewise, Lăzurică and Șerboianu were allying themselves with Octavian Goga and the National Christian Party. One can see this manifestation in the article titled “Romania for Romanians,” from *Țara Noastră* (Issue 3, July 25, 1937) in which the author C. Mirmilo both downplays the status of ‘minority’ of Roma and emphasises the ‘Romanian-ness’ of Roma in Romania (Mirmilo 1937). It also presents a statement of solidarity in which Roma are urged to vote with the National Christian Party.

Remember what I say to you as a prophet: He who is not with Octavian Goga and the Christian National Party, that Roma is the enemy of the Romanian country and nation; he is the black Jew and he will have no other fate than the fate of the Jew, eternally wandering and persecuted by the latter man! (Mirmilo 1937:1)

It is also worth mentioning that a clear anti-Jewish position is made throughout the articles of *Țara Noastră*. C. I. Popp Șerboianu and G.A. Lăzurică seem to focus on a detachment and distinction between Roma and the Jewish minority (see also Matei 2010b, 2020). One must, however, be careful to underline the fact that these manifestations of an apparent Romanian nationalism (i.e.: see the slogan “Romania for Romanians”), surprising as they may seem from a present-day perspective, need to be contextualised within the climate of the time, wherein being seen as a minority could pose a potential (and physical) threat in terms of support from the state and the church. As such, the ‘non-minority’ approach evident within Roma newspapers during the interwar period, as well as the desire to create a distinction between Roma and other ‘problematic’ minority groups, can only be understood in relation to the claims for equal citizenship laid out by Roma leaders. In other words, Roma leaders, in their writings, wanted most of all to emphasise that Roma were loyal and equal citizens of Romania, also by demonstrating that they supported the political and public discourse of the country which, in this case, had a strong anti-Jewish undertone. The struggle to build up the Roma movement thus could only take place under the circumstances of the general climate of the day.

Faith, Roma and the Orthodox Church

The Orthodox Church in Romania, especially during the interwar period, was obviously a firm supporter of the idea of shaping Greater Romania. After the unification of Romanian territories, in 1919, the Orthodox Church was seen by the political regime of the time as

a crucial symbol not only of Romanian unity but of Romanian identity and belonging (Leustean 2009:39) and thus became part of the process of strengthening and constructing this identity. For instance, the Patriarch Miron Cristea (in effect, the leader of the Orthodox Church at the time) oftentimes combined in his public discourse ideas of patriotic duty with the traditional moral values of the Orthodox Church and equated the practice of faith with the obedience of state authorities. In other words, as its public 'face', Miron Cristea emphasised the political role of the Orthodox Church in shaping and unifying the newly enlarged Romanian state (Leustean 2009:41). In this context, it is not surprising the Roma movement modelled itself and became closely connected to the important role played by the Orthodox Church in the shaping of Romanian identity.

An interesting aspect, particularly salient within the content of *Glăsuț Romilor*, is thus the close relationship Niculescu's AUGRR seems to have established with leaders of the Orthodox church. Many articles point to the 'missionary' purposes of the organisation, alongside the active involvement of Roma leaders in officialising marriages among live-in Roma couples, baptising children and encouraging them to go to (the Orthodox) Church. This relationship may have also contoured Lăzurică's initial connection to the Union and the initial split from Șerboianu (formerly an Orthodox priest who seemed to have moved away from the Orthodox church). In fact, so much so that Lăzurică's split from Șerboianu was even put down to the accusation laid towards Șerboianu of trying to convert Roma to the Greek-Catholic church (see Matei, 2010a).

That said, the Orthodox Church seems to have played its greatest role in the success of the Union led by Niculescu, and contributed to several events organised by the Union, alongside practices of marrying couples and baptising children. Thus, while the broad theme of 'Christianity' was predominant in all newspapers during the interwar period, encouraging its readers to follow through within the spirit of the Church, it seems that it was the Orthodox Church that aided Niculescu's union most and, potentially, also contributed to its larger success in most regions of the country.

This may have been a more complex issue within the region of Transylvania, where the authority of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church (or the Romanian Church United with Rome, Greek-Catholic, *Biserica Română Unită cu Roma, Greco-Catolică*) may have been greater and where many Hungarian Roma still belonged to the latter. Here, the push for conversion to the Orthodox Church could potentially have contributed to the somewhat tentional relationship of the Transylvanian organisation, the Neo-Rustic Brotherhood, with the Association General Union of Roma in Romania (AUGRR, led by Niculescu), as well as to Naftanailă Lazăr's seemingly closer affiliation to the General Association of Roma in Romania (led by Lăzureanu Lăzurică and Popp Șerboianu). The following quote, for example, comes from an article published in *Neamul Țigănesc* (Issue no 3, April 1935), titled "Priests and our movement" (*Preoții și mișcarea noastră*) (N. Lazăr 1935:3), which thus emphasises the close connection of Roma with both the Orthodox and the Greek Catholic Church but also, more importantly, to Christianity as a broader concept.

The movement for emancipation among Roma has started within the old Church and law, because Roma are, before anything else, Christians and it is within the bosom of the Church that they have always found the comfort for their soul, which has been mocked by all. (N. Lazăr 1935:3)

Yet, while the emphasis placed on Roma's devotion to Christianity was promoted in all Roma newspapers, thus distinguishing them from other minorities (such as the Jews), and while both *Neamul Țigănesc* and other Roma newspapers (such as *Țara Noastră*) seemed to welcome the connection of Roma to both major church institutions of the time, *Glasul Romilor* seemed to promote a stronger view of the role of the Orthodox church and Roma people's duty to abide by it. At the same time, and despite the seeming differences in nuances within these different newspapers, the authority of the Orthodox church was, overall, unchallenged. In other words, Roma leaders seemed to acknowledge the Orthodox Church's somewhat undisputed role in shaping the very meaning of Romanian identity and belonging. Emphasising Roma as loyal servants of the King and the fatherland thus also implied a loyal duty and obedience of the Church.

Female Roma Writers in the Roma Periodicals

An interesting aspect within the articles of Roma periodicals is the existence of some Roma women's voices. This comes closely connected with the fact that, for instance, the Union's General statute itself, under article 3, seemed to have a dedicated section for the Roma women.

Article 3. The Union can set up a section for women for the education and support of Roma women, which will be led separately. (Nastasă and Varga 2001:118)

Likewise, the entries and articles written by Roma women, often members of these organisations or the wives of the Roma male leaders, constitute important examples of Roma women's writings from the era. Below are, for instance, segments from the article written by Elena Dănicel in the newspaper *Țara Noastră*, in 1937:

My dearest sisters,

A woman from your own people writes to you, one of the few Roma women, who was able to learn school and become a teacher. In the struggle that our apostles Archimandrite Șerboianu and the literate G. Lăzurică started for the uplifting of the Roma people, I also join. For this reason, I write to you the following lines: Encourage your spouses to take part in the new, unique and beautiful movement that aims to advance Roma in the social life of the Romanian state. This is a historical moment. You, who share the tribulations and joys with your husbands, working alongside them in coping with the difficulties of life, are best able to encourage them to do good. Your children will rejoice for this in the future.

[...]

With good wishes,

ELENA DĂNICEL (Dănicel 1937:1)

The above article is an interesting example of how women's role in the Roma organisations of the time were being reflected in Roma periodicals. Here, what we can see is a call to solidarity among Roma but, most of all, a call to being faithful to the General Association of Roma in Romania, led by Șerboianu and Lăzurică. In other words, it is not just an emphasis placed on coming together as Roma women in support of the Roma movement but, rather, in support of this particular facet of the movement. As such, the author clearly states that "only Archimandrite Șerboianu and Lăzurică are able to show us the right way." (ibid.) Furthermore, it is interesting to note in the same article the reference made here to the Indian ancestry of Roma in Romania, closely connected to Lăzurică's other articles on the topic. And yet, the most important aspect in this article is the emphasis placed on women's role in support of the movement: as wives and as mothers, having the duty to encourage their husbands and sons to show solidarity to the two leaders of the Roma movement.

Another similar article, almost in the same genre, is the one published a year later in the newspaper *Timpul*, and authored by Marta Lăzurică, G. Lăzurică's wife. Below are selected segments from the translation of the aforementioned entry, which highlight some of the key themes dominating this discourse:

My dearest sisters,

It is the wife of Lăzurică writing to you, his life companion, in struggles and troubles, who has followed him with diligence and dedication in all his activity as fighter for the uplifting of our Roma.

[...]

I make an appeal to you, my Roma sisters, to urge your husbands, your sons and your daughters to support my husband, to prove that the Roma are not a people who lack solidarity, discipline and devotion. I will always come within your midst, whenever and wherever you are, to meet you, to listen to you and to embrace you. In my role as secretary of the female sections, next to the Central Committee in Bucharest, I will be the one who will resolve your letters, your complaints, responding without delay.

With sisterly love and joyful wishes!

Marta G. Lăzurică (Lăzurică 1938:2)

As one can clearly see, this article, similarly to the one authored by Dănicel, is written in the form of a letter to Roma women, whom the author pleads that they encourage their husbands, sons and daughters to support G.A. Lăzurică and to "show that Roma are not people that lacks solidarity, discipline and devotion" (ibid.).

It is worth noting that, among other things, Marta Lăzurică was not only G.A. Lăzurică's wife but also the secretary of the female section within the Central Committee (in Bucharest) of the General Association of Roma in Romania (UGRR, more specifically) and, thus, unsurprisingly, the focus is on highlighting the sacrifices that her husband, G.A. Lăzurică, had made for the cause of the Roma, while also encouraging women to play their part in their encouragements of others to join the movement.

At the same time, the article is interesting from a different point of view: it highlights the sacrifices that were expected of women in respect to both their families and the greater cause for Roma mobilisation: namely, to not only work within the movement itself, but continue to be good, hard-working and self-sacrificing women within their respective households. On top of this, the religious, Christian dimension is clearly emphasised in the longer article. While these are only two examples of the presence (and involvement) of Roma women within the Roma emancipation movement in interwar Romania, their publication within two Roma periodicals of the time highlight their role not only as passive recipients of the movement itself but as active contributors (in both writing and action) to the shaping of the latter.

4.4 The O Rom Library

Having thus far analysed the key forms of Roma publications in interwar Romania, namely Roma periodicals, this section will focus specifically on the collection and publication of Roma folklore, collected and presented by Roma in Romania during the interwar period. A key aspect within this project has been the incentive of collecting and institutionalising the literary heritage of the Roma, on the base of a common Roma identity. This ties in both with the attempts to foster literacy among the Roma in Romanian and with attempts to showcase the cultural richness of the community, including Roma organisations' goals of establishing a Roma university, a Roma cultural centre, a Roma athenaeum etc., oftentimes mentioned within their manifestos and programmes. Furthermore, these attempts to institutionalise Roma folklore and promote the cultural heritage of the Roma in the country were embedded within the broader process of the national emancipation of the community, as part of the Romanian nation, as well as the broader processes of literalisation. Through this, the various pieces of Roma folklore produced and shared during this period, which were published both in Roma newspapers and in special books and individual publications, became an intrinsic part of interwar Romani literature more broadly.

Within this context, a key focus will be placed on the development and shaping of the O Rom library at the initiative of C. S. Nicolăescu Plopșor. The latter is most clearly connected to the Association of Gypsies in Oltenia, led by Marin Simion, but the library itself was put into actual practice by Plopșor. The importance of the Craiova circle of the Roma movement in Romania should not be understated. The latter not only published the newspaper *Timpul* and *O Rom*, mentioned above but also envisioned setting up several cultural projects, including the development of the O Rom library for whom the administrator would be Marian Simion (a Roma and the president of the General Association of Gypsies in Oltenia) and the editor of the library would be C. S. Nicolăescu Plopșor. As such, it developed both synchronically with the central Roma organisations, while also shaping its own regional focus.

The initiative to establish a Roma library was connected to further other incentives of the key Roma organisations during the interwar period in Romania. While the idea was to publish a series of books connected to the topic, only two have been located so far: Gypsy Songs (*Ghilea romane/Cântece țigănești*) and Gypsy Stories (*Paramisea romane/Povești țigănești*), both edited by Plopșor (Nicolăescu-Plopșor 1934a, 1934b). They were both published in Craiova, in 1934, under the subtitle “Book for the Gypsy Language and Teaching, Issued by the ‘Association of Gypsies in Oltenia’” (*Carte pentru limba și învățătura țigănească scoasă de ‘Asociația Tiganilor din Oltenia’*). Both the songs and the stories had been collected from Ursari Gypsies in Gaubauceă-Dolj (a county in southern Romania, Oltenia), and written down by Plopșor himself (Nicolăescu-Plopșor 1934b:30, 1934a:32).

In addition to this, it is worth mentioning that several of the songs and stories in the two books also featured in other regional folklore publications. Again, C. S. Nicolăescu Plopșor is a key figure here. He published several poems/songs/folklore pieces in regional ethnology/history journals (such as *Suflet oltenesc*, Romanian soul and *Oltenia*, Oltenia). These publications contain both poems and songs that Plopșor would later include in the two books from the O Rom library, and more broad pieces from Romanian folklore, often from the region of Oltenia (Nicolăescu-Plopșor 1923, 1927). These materials are useful and necessary as they point to the broader impact and influence of scholars engaged in the Roma movement in Romania during the interwar period.

While the O Rom library never fully materialised, there had been calls spread in the newspaper *O Rom*, asking readers to send in both tangible and intangible materials related to the culture of the Roma. It is uncertain if or how many of such materials had in fact been sent to the O Rom library. However, friends and relatives of Plopșor recounted to me of the many boxes of letters and papers that the latter had collected in his private residence in Plenița. After the start of the Second World War, however, Plopșor’s attention had moved in other directions, being appointed as the Director of the Museum of Oltenia. While his interest in Roma may have been maintained throughout this period, there remain few other materials in the Plopșor fund at the National Archive concerning the O Rom library. That said, one additional poem on/about Roma was discovered in the Craiova section of the National Archives, which reveals once again the broad ranging focus of the Roma emancipation movement itself. The poem will be discussed in a separate section below.

4.5 Literature by Roma Authors in Non-Roma Periodicals and Journals

Connected with the argument made above, concerning the broader reach of scholars from within the Roma movement in Romania, one final important aspect of the newspaper publications written by Roma intellectuals is that they have reached beyond the Roma periodicals themselves. While this was by no means the norm, authors such as

G.A. Lăzureanu Lăzurică published pieces connected to Roma history/literature in some key mainstream Romanian publications, such as *Adevărul Literar și Artistic* (The Literary Truth, 1933, București), *Ziarul Universul* (The Universe Newspaper, 1933, 1937, București) and *Dimineața* (Morning, 1933, București). Incorporating these within the discussion on Romani literature is crucial in highlighting the reach of Roma authors beyond the Roma circle itself. It should also be noted that the types of articles published by Roma authors within mainstream publications appeared to generally focus on the history of the Roma community in the country or on the literary works that had to deal with Roma/Gypsies at the time. Their messages aimed to convey the contribution of Roma/Gypsies to the country while also introducing the general readership to key cultural characteristics of the Romanian Roma community. In that sense, as compared to the topics showcased within Roma newspapers, the articles written by Roma authors within mainstream Romanian newspapers were often general and, at times, exaggerating certain aspects to support their arguments (for instance, the number of Roma in Romania).

An interesting example, in more ways than one, is, Lăzurică's review of Șerboianu's book, *Les Tsiganes* [The Gypsies] (Popp Șerboianu 1930). Briefly put, Șerboianu had written a book on the history of Roma, their language and grammar, which was published in French by a Parisian publishing house. The book had made its way among the Romanian readership, but received little to no attention from scholarly reviewers, which Lăzurică also notes in his own review. Because of its importance, below are segments from Lăzurică's full-length article, published in *Adevărul Literar și Artistic*, in 1933.

As a Gypsy, I read this work about which the foreign press unanimously spoke apologetically. Apart from the newspaper "Dimineața", which in the issue of December 11, 1929 expressed interest in the work of Archimandrite Calinic Șerboianu, the Romanian press did not pay any attention to it.

[...]

His Holiness, Archimandrite Calinic I. Popp Șerboianu, a sympathiser of Gypsies, with a perfect knowledge of the Gypsy language, history and customs, believed that by approaching me he would get new sources of Gypsy riddles, poems and songs. I confess that I could not help him too much, because our Gypsy minority assimilated so much into the native population that it is about to lose its language and customs.

[...]

As a Gypsy, I am grateful to his holiness Archimandrite Calinic Șerboianu for his interest in the Gypsies of Europe and for the occasion he gave me to discuss with him for two hours in High Gypsy language.

It is a pity that the [Romanian] publishing houses to which he addressed did not agree to publish the "Les Tziganes" in Romanian, for I am sure the volume would sell and enrich the Romanian literature with a very interesting work.

G. A. Lăzurică (Lăzurică 1933b:8)

In fact, the above article is the second one published by G.A. Lăzurică in *Adevărul Literar și Artistic*. He had also published an article titled "From the life of the Gypsies." (Lăzurică 1933a), in which he introduces himself as a Gypsy. Interesting is that, here (and at this

point), he introduced himself as *țigan*, rather than Roma, which highlights that his views on labelling only changed subsequently, or that he was presenting himself as Gypsy within mainstream newspapers but Roma within Roma newspapers (Lăzurică 1933a:3).

Nevertheless, the article above constitutes an important piece of writing not only because it showcases the broader reach of Roma authors during the interwar period (as *Adevărul Literar și Artistic* was a popular mainstream cultural newspaper of the time) but it highlights how the two initiators of the Roma movement met. The piece also contains initial hints at the later conflict that would arise between Șerboianu and Lăzurică, primarily regarding the number of Gypsies stated to live in Romania at the time. As mentioned above, interesting is also the fact that, here, Lăzurică had not yet adopted the clear and unequivocal stance concerning the terminological shift in the naming of his community. In fact, he uses exclusively the term Gypsies. This showcases the timeline of shifts not only in terms of the relationship between Roma leaders during the interwar period but also of their own position concerning issues that would become pivotal in the public debate (and, sometimes, conflict) between them. Finally, the article highlights the fact that Șerboianu's book did not seem to have been received positively within the academic community in Romania (having only been published in French) and was not published or translated by any Romanian publishing house.

The article is thus important and illustrative in several ways: 1) the wider reach of Roma authors (beyond the Roma periodicals themselves) within the mainstream media; 2) the hints towards the beginnings of the relationship between two key leaders of the Roma movement in Romania; 3) the ways in which the publication of Șerboianu's book on Gypsies had received less interest in the country than it had done abroad. In fact, there was also a rather negative review published by the famous Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga, in *Revista Istorică* (The Historical Journal), which criticises Șerboianu's book for its focus on folklore and its neglect of historical sources (Iorga 1934:68–69).

4.6 Roma Poems as Manifestos

As mentioned above, when discussing the issue of Roma/Gypsies taking pride in their own belonging, Roma periodicals during the interwar period often featured poems/songs/marches written by Roma authors and highlighting a sense of Roma solidarity/unity. These are nevertheless a useful analytical and historical source since they present the visions of unity within a lyrical form, which aims to encourage Roma readers to join forces within the movement developed during the interwar period.

A clear example of this is the “March of the Roma”, presented above and published in *Glasul Romilor*, which can be seen as an interwar hymn of/for the Roma (Lenghescu-Cley 1940). However, in addition to this, calls to Roma unity were a theme among most of the other poems/songs presented within Roma periodicals. As an example of this, the poem below, written by V. Dutan and titled “To the Roma” is written as a call for action and a

manifestation of Roma love and sacrifice for their country. Through this, it illustrates the two main issues that Roma leaders during the interwar period often emphasised in their public discourse: 1) the loyalty Roma have to their nation-state; 2) the need for Roma to unite under a common brotherly banner

To the Roma

1. Roma brothers from our beloved Romania,
We have lived on this land for thousands of years,
And we have done our sublime duty
Defending our home from its enemies
[...]

4. In Great Romania, the beautiful one
Today we have all the rights
Being assimilated in masses
Among a people with whom we are brothers

5. Although we have all the same rights
We were not paid attention to
Being laughed at in the past
Mocked and disdained

6. And to make this state right
Our union has been established
Having a programme of growth
Emancipation and reputation
[...] (Dutan 1938:3)

Furthermore, the above poem, beyond focusing on Roma themes of unity and solidarity, emphasised the loyalty that Roma should have to Greater Romania, highlighting the fact that Roma have the same rights as other citizens of the country, wherein the concept of “assimilation”, as presented within the texts, was linked to positive connotations of embeddedness and full belonging to the nation, and metaphors of “brotherhood” went beyond the focus on Roma belonging (namely, Roma are brothers and sisters with fellow Romanians). At the same time, the poem is illustrative in another sense: in the ways in which it plays with the idea of equality under law in its contrast with actual realities. Thus, the author highlights the disdain that Roma continued to suffer within their country and the ways in which the message of emancipation could be a pathway to rid of the struggles facing members of this community. Through this, the poem is at once a plea for solidarity, an advertisement of the AUGRR and a means to showcase the embeddedness (i.e. assimilation) of Roma within Greater Romania. It thus acts not only as a form of literary production but as a political act in and of itself.

In addition to examples such as the one above, many of which were published in *Glasul Romilor*, some additional unpublished poems are worth mentioning. One of them was found in the C. S. Nicolăescu Ploșor fund of the National Archive in Craiova.

Its authorship is unknown, but its collector was most probably Plopșor himself, who had made annotations on the side of the document. Below is a full translation (from Romani language, translation courtesy of Viktor Shapoval) of the poem “Ghilabos ă Rom G<h>ilabos!” (Let’s sing Roma, let’s sing!):

Let’s sing Roma! Let’s sing!
 Let us sing
 The good word
 The word shown wise
 The word where the sun rises from
 Where the good comes from
 From the uprising of all
 From the living of people
 The uprising
 The living
 Of the poor
 The poorest of the poor
 The Roma of work

[...]

Let’s sing Roma! Let’s sing!
 Let us sing
 The great word
 The white word
 The word of Stalin
 As Stalin lifted the burden
 From our shoulders
 Took sobbing far
 From us
 And wiped off
 The tears from our eyes

[...]

Sing Roma! Do sing!
 About our suffering sing
 About our deprived
 Musicians

 About our stolen days
 About all stolen days
 From all people
 Of work at latitude
 At longitude
 Of the Earth
 Let’s sing Roma! Let’s sing!
 Let us sing.

(AN Dolj, F. C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor, dos. 146/48)

The above poem, though undated, is illustrative of the call for Roma to come together in song and unity. Written in Romani language, with unknown authorship (potentially even Plopşor himself), and making references to Stalin as the person to lift the burden of the Roma, the poem is also an important example of the ways in which the Roma issues and the Roma struggles were being connected to broader geopolitics of the time, wherein political leaders were seen as the ones who could address the sorrow and struggles of the Roma community. This is an important aspect of the Roma movement in Romania during the interwar period (and, as we can see, the Roma movement in other countries as well), wherein Roma leaders themselves needed and asked for the support of state institutions and state officials. In other words, none of them were working in a social-political vacuum and the social and political context of the day vastly influenced their work and directions. While not unique, the two poems presented above are illustrative of this embeddedness and contextualisation.

4.7 Conclusion

Romania's Roma movement during the interwar period was one of the most active in the countries of Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe. It led to the formation and development of several Roma organisations, the establishment of clear manifestos and demands on behalf of the Roma leaders of the time and the shaping of a Roma intellectual elite. At the same time, it led to the creation and development of Romani literature, in its myriad forms. Firstly, one can attest to the shaping of interwar Roma journalism in the country. While certainly not unique, as the case of Yugoslavia shows, this form of Roma journalism during the interwar period in Romania was perhaps the most active in the region. As such, six known Roma periodicals were published between 1934 and 1941, some of which had a substantial number of issues (for example, *Timpu*, with 70 issues, and *Glasul Romilor*, with 12).

Furthermore, while all distinctive in their own right, and while often showcasing the particular demands of the organisation they were affiliated with (and, connectively, emphasising the legitimacy of their leader), all these publications share in common a clear programme of social emancipation for the Roma in the country, including cultural projects (such as the establishment of a Roma "library," a Roma "university," a Roma "cultural house," etc.) and social projects (such as the organisation of Roma "cooperatives," Roma "canteens," mutual aid programmes, etc.). Moreover, despite declaring themselves 'apolitical' they all undoubtedly had political goals and agendas, wherein often the newspaper content would advocate one political party of another (such as the example of *Timpu* and *Țara Noastră* have clearly shown). Thus, the aim of introducing the Roma newspapers and the aim of analysing the broad themes present within the Roma periodicals of the interwar era was to emphasise all these dynamics and struggles occurring within the Roma movement of the time, as presented and detailed in specific

publications of this sort. Finally, the regional and central aims of Roma organisations become clearer when comparatively analysing the content of Roma periodicals.

In short, Roma periodicals from interwar Romania represent a specific and important type of Romani literature of the time. They showcase not only the views and demands of the Roma intellectual elite, the shape and complexities of the Roma emancipation movement, the specific regional struggles of the Roma communities, but emphasise the development of Roma journalism itself which, after the beginning of the Second World War, seems to have disappeared. As such, the Roma newspapers from the interwar period remain crucial historical, social and political sources, oftentimes highlighting the historical rooting of key debates within the sphere of Roma activism today (such as the issue of community labelling, 'pride' and the focus on education).

Secondly, this chapter has also sought to highlight the ways in which Roma authors (and authors affiliated with the Roma movement) have contributed to the development of other literary and disciplinary fields, beyond the exclusive 'Roma-theme'. For example, G.A. Lăzurică (who published in mainstream newspapers), C.I. Popp Șerboianu (who also published vastly on the theme of cremation) and Nicolăescu Plopșor (who would go on to become a leading historian in the country), all pinpoint to the reach, influence and contribution of these individuals to other fields and other readership, therefore highlighting also the entanglement of Romani literature as part of Romanian literature in the country. In this context, and especially given the focus Roma authors have placed on Roma as equal citizens of the country, loyal to the Crown and the state, the development of Romani literature highlights also their full alliance with the shaping of national identity within Greater Romania, and the rejection of the label of 'minority'. In other words, rather than opposing the national ideal, Roma authors (and, by extension, Romani literature) during this period underlined the contribution of Roma to Romanian literature.

Thirdly, this chapter has explored the attempts of one section of the Roma movement (more specifically, the Oltenia circle of AGȚR) to develop a Roma library, by collecting and publishing Roma folklore. While its outcome did not develop as planned, there remain several substantial sources pointing to this incentive, including two monographs on Roma songs and stories, as well as works published within regional folklore collections (*Suflet oltenesc*, *Oltenia*, etc.). These pieces of Roma folklore thus show the ways in which the Roma interwar period movement was not only politically but also culturally driven, aiming to create (or, better said, collect) a repertoire which would become representative of Roma folklore in the country. In other words, this was also a project for the institutionalisation of the oral and written heritage of the Roma, an additional symbol for reaching the status of a modernised community, with a rich cultural heritage and, thus, equal to all others. At the same time, the shaping of this project did not go against the emphasis placed on Romanian national belonging but with it. In other words, Roma intellectuals of the time underlined, through their writings, the entanglement of these two layers of belonging and identity among Roma: an ethnic and a civic one: namely, Roma as an integral part of the nation-state (i.e. citizens of Romania) and an ethnic

community (cf. Marushiakova and Popov 2017b:11–12, 2017a:50). Looked at in-depth, the messages conveyed within the forms of Romani literature discussed above clearly highlight an expression of both identities.

Finally, the discussion of particular themes present within the pieces of writing that we have from this period of time, such as Roma poems and hymns, which emphasise both a call for solidarity among Roma and the national belonging of this community, or the activity of Roma women within the Roma movement, further illuminate the multifaceted ways in which the demands, ideals and goals (as well as the vision for the future of the community) were put into writing by Roma authors. Therefore, all of the aforementioned materials, in different forms, constitute crucial, valuable and important source materials and examples of the ways in which the Roma interwar movement in Romania created the space and opportunities for different forms of Romani literature(s) to emerge and develop. Interwar Romania was the period when some of the most important works of this sort were put into existence: including the development of Roma journalism, in the shape of Roma-led and Roma-focused newspapers, of a Roma folklore collection and of Roma-themed poems and poetry. These activities were silenced with the start of the Second World War. While new fields of literary production and journalism have emerged in the decades after 1990, interwar Roma mobilisation seems to have been, and continues to remain, the most productive platform for the development of Romani literature in the country.