Conclusion

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As the chapters in this book have all highlighted, the production of Romani literature during the interwar period in Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe was intrinsically connected to the Roma civic emancipation movement during the same period of time. While the specificities of each country context are embedded within the historical unfolding of the nation-states in which Roma have lived, some common threads and themes can be identified throughout. These common threads are identifiable both in terms of the patterns of developments in terms of producing Romani literature during the interwar period in the region and in terms of the narratives and messages that these writings convey. In that which follows, we will look at the general context of the development of Romani literature in the region during the interwar period, which created the 'scene' upon which it emerged and flourished, followed by a more concrete comparative analysis of the content and themes present throughout the chapters discussed in this book.

To begin with, the emergence, production and development of Romani literature in the countries of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe reveal crucial aspects of the entanglement of Roma emancipation with the shaping of mainstream national consciousness in the region (as well as, in some cases, of mainstream nationalism). Furthermore, rather than detached from the overarching history within which they were embedded, Roma elite, writers, activists and 'representatives' of the time emphasised a direct connection with the history of their respective countries, thus also highlighting in their written works the synchronous belonging of Roma/Gypsies to both their respective communities and their respective nation-states, which connectedly underlined the double belonging of Roma/Gypsies to two key dimensions: their 'ethnic' community and the macro-society in which they live and within which they are active agents (see Marushiakova and Popov 2017a:49).

It is also important to stress the ways in which the development of the Romani literature and the Roma movement more broadly was connected to the historical unfolding of the twentieth century. Broadly put, the twentieth century, the timeframe when Romani literature developed (though, as shown, in some places its emergence could be traced even earlier) and when the Roma emancipation movement began, was also the time of the emergence of new nation-states, building a national identity and belonging. This was the case across all the countries in Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe and certainly the case of the countries discussed in this book. Furthermore, despite discussions of their marginality and their distinctive social positioning compared to the majority population within their respective countries, Roma/Gypsies were not (nor have they ever been), outside of the mainstream processes of state formation. This is a crucial

aspect which needs to be underlined when trying to understand some of the key themes present within the development of Romani literature during the period under analysis. More specifically, as we can see from the texts presented in this book, a clear emphasis was placed by authors during this time on highlighting the necessity to see and promote Roma as equal citizens of their respective countries, as embedded within the national struggles and as connected to their nations. While they often did so by pinpointing to the historical struggles of their communities, they also did so by showcasing the embeddedness of Roma/Gypsies within their respective states. The themes and focus of Roma written works produced during this period in all the countries of the region point precisely to this.

In this line of thought, Miroslav Hroch's typology is a useful one in understanding these processes. As discussed in the introduction, Hroch pointed out three key stages or phases in the processes of national revival: 1) phase A, a phase within which a small group of elite or intellectuals begin to focus on the study of language, folklore, history, and thus identifying common threads in order to shape a national consciousness among their ethnic group.; 2) phase B, in which these ideas are put into action in order to also mobilise those outside the small circle of elite; and the final stage 3), phase C, of mass mobilisation, wherein all the elements necessary to the formation of a nation state are already achieved (Hroch 1985:25–27).

It is easy to see that the first two stages are clearly present in all chapters presented in this book and these are the stages of the Roma civic emancipation movement during the interwar period. The first phase is that which can be most evidently seen in the emergence of a group of Roma elite in all countries, whose members aim to embark on the study of their own language, history and folklore. Yet, most of the work of Roma activists, including that of the production of Romani literature, could be seen as fitting within the second phase of Hroch's scheme, where the attempts are made to activate the sense of consciousness among the community. It is in this stage that the production of Romani literature in the region flourished, wherein Roma writers begin to create works which aim to, at once, engage with their own community, building on the study of their literature, history, culture, folklore, etc., and seeking to mobilise Roma through emphasis placed on the concepts of 'awakening', 'emancipation' and 'unity'. In fact, the issues of 'awakening' and ethnic consciousness are the ones that permeate almost all texts presented in this book and, as we discuss below, are a common theme in Romani literature during this period.

At the same time, one can only fully understand these developments if one looks at the specific historical and national unfolding within which they are manifested in the early twentieth century: the fall of empires, the formation of new nation-states, the quest for national identity and the shaping of national consciousness (Alapuro 1988; Gellner 2006; Hobsbawm 1992; Korkut 2006; Livezeanu 1995). In fact, all these aspects are notable in all the cases and nationally specific examples of Romani literature discussed in this book. For instance, in the Ottoman Empire, the emergence of Romani literature and

Roma media, as well as the emergence of the Roma civic movement, was closely connected to two trends: the general transformation of the Ottoman society, in the case of the Muslim Roma, and the liberation struggles of the Orthodox Balkan people, in the case of Orthodox Gypsies. At the same time, in the USSR, we could see the interlinking of the production of Romani literature with state support was also central to the positions taken by Roma activists at the time in respect to issues of education and sedentarisation. In Yugoslavia, as well as in other countries in the region, we could witness that the forms of literature produced seem to have been strategically shaped with the aim highlighting that Gypsies are a people united by common culture and history, while also being equal to the other people of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In Hungary, the Gypsy Musicians' journals and the connection between emancipation and professional organisations showcase not only an expression of a Gypsy identity but also an expression of belonging to the Hungarian nation. Likewise, in Romania, Roma activists of the time actively pursued the aims of 'awakening' their community while nevertheless highlighting the loyalty that Roma have to King and Country and while also distinguishing themselves from other minorities in the country. In Bulgaria, the shaping of Romani literature revealed the complexities and entanglements of religious identity and community identity. In the specific case of North Western Bulgaria, this was with the influence of the Evangelical Mission. However, it also revealed the struggle to find new place in society, through the aims of Muslim religious organisations and their goals of uniting all Gypsies. And finally, in Finland, the works produced by Roma writers of the time were connected both to the post-Civil War context characterising the country – in the frames of Finnish nation-building, on the one hand, and of class struggles, on the other (the latter also being an important marker of the time and evident among Roma/Gypsy writers in other countries as well) – and to the role of the Finnish Gypsy Mission in providing a platform for Roma voices to express themselves.

There is also a different type of unity in this seeming diversity, and the development of Romani literature during the interwar period reveals some very important common aims and goals of its writers and producers. All of these emphasise the need to understand at once the particularity of Romani literature(s) in the region during the interwar period and, most importantly, the connecting lines that point towards the more general development of the Roma emancipation movement at the time. These common lines can, once again, most clearly be articulated in the framework of Miroslav Hroch's discussion of the formation of nations and national revivalism (Hobsbawm 1992:11–12; Hroch 1985:25–30). In that which follows, we will try to highlight some of these common pathways, identifiable (in one form or another) in almost all the cases discussed in this book. These can be most simply understood in two dimensions: 'form' and 'content'.

Firstly, if we look at the 'forms' (or structures) of the development of Romani literature in the region, an element which is figuring central within all the countries discussed throughout this book, is the importance of the press; more precisely, the medium of newspapers and journals. As all chapters have pointed out, Roma writers of the interwar

period saw newspapers and journals as key media through which their messages would be shared. This was clearly the case in terms of Roma-led journals, most evident in the case of Romania (with as many as six different Roma newspapers being published) or in the case of Hungary's Gypsy musicians' journals (but present also in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia). However, this was also the case in terms of articles and pieces written by Roma authors in Roma-centred newspapers during this time (Bulgaria, Finland) or publications by Roma writers in mainstream journals/newspapers (in all the countries).

The use of newspapers and journals as a medium to convey political demands or highlight allegiance to the national leadership of the time was not, however, a Roma-exclusive practice. In fact, newspapers and journals constituted a key pathway through which intellectuals of the time (Roma and non-Roma alike) presented their views on different matters. Such forms of media were also important markers of the time, specifically connected to the process of modernisation, both in the West and in the East, for minorities and majorities alike (Leone 2004:3, 5). Furthermore, newspapers had long been used as means to reach a broad audience and were the sources most widely read, not only within the region but also outside of it, oftentimes promoting, in diverse ways, ideas concerning national belonging and connected to the shaping of nationalism in their respective regions (for some general works, see Bingham and Conboy 2015; Hampton 2004; Harmsworth 1901; Leone 2004).

Thus, it is not surprising that Roma elite also chose these media as a means to promote their ideas, programs, plans and incentives as well as use them as a political or mobilising tool among. This is a common theme throughout all the chapters in this book, even when the shape it has taken may have been distinctive. In other words, the use of press is also connected to the ways in which the press was a key instrument in the macro society in which Roma lived and the ways in which the press was a means of shaping and emphasising national belonging, particularly in cases of the construction of new-nation states.

The general character of the newspapers in this era, which included publications of pieces from different literary genres, also contributed to the expression and development of national Romani literature(s) in all their diversity. In fact, it was also during this period that the main genres of Romani literature were formed and developed. These included, among other things, Roma poetry, publicistics, short stories, novellas, memoirs, artistic translations, etc. Thus, different texts belonging to these different genres (i.e. poems, songs, translation work, etc.) would often appear on the pages of Roma newspapers and constituted the key pieces of Romani literature.

Moreover, the development of Romani literature coincides with the development of literature in their respective countries. – see, for instance, the establishment of folklore collections; the interest in national grand narratives; the focus placed on national identity, etc., all manifested across the countries in the region. It is in this context that the Roma movement during this time built itself in the context of national institutions, organisations and unions. Romani literature also directly connects to this, specifically in cases in which the production of literature was interrelated with the development of a

Roma emancipation movement in that country. A clear example of this is, again, the case of Romania, where Roma organisations (and Roma leaders) promoted their visions of the future of Roma communities within the spaces of their newspapers but similar processes could be seen in all the countries discussed in this book. Roma writers and activists used the forms and means that connected to the development of mainstream literature: be it newspapers; books; translations of key texts; the collection of one's own folklore; the focus on the development of educational institutions, libraries, etc.

Also in terms of the common 'forms', the pathways to the production of literature in the country took, at times, specific (but connected) appearances, such as the case of Bulgaria and Finland, where Evangelical missions played an active role in the shaping of Romani literature in the country. Furthermore, in these two contexts the involvement of non-Roma within the process of Evangelisation of Roma revealed the ways in which the voices being promoted were shaped, which also lead to their expressing their own ethnic voice. Roma writers spoke within the pages of religious journals and manifested their particular ideas of their visions for the future of their communities. This undoubtedly shows an active engagement, where their visions for the future were being manifested in a particular narrative.

Likewise, cultural organisations constituted additional forms or pathways in which Romani literature developed. Such was the case in Hungary, for instance, whereby the Gypsy Musicians' work offered platform for Roma elite and literature, primarily through the publication of their journals. And, as the country with perhaps the largest production of Romani literary works, the USSR emphasises the intrinsic connection between the development of Romani literature, state support (and connections to state funds and policies), and the development of national literature more broadly. The unique case of the USSR clearly demonstrates that, given the appropriate or favourable general conditions, the literary creativity widely flourished within a very short period of time.

An interesting aspect within these discussions was also the role of Romani language or, better put, the ways in which the development of Romani literature was not always necessarily synonymous to its production exclusively in Romani language. In fact, while Romani language poems, books, monographs (published and unpublished), were present in some form in all countries discussed, most materials available from this period were published in the language of the authors' respective countries (with the exception of USSR). Yet, the fact that these pieces of writing were not in Romani language does not equate with the authors' (or, more generally, 'Roma/Gypsies') lack of interest in speaking their language or keeping their language in oral form. Rather, it is a reflection of the community/society juxtaposition discussed above, wherein Roma are both members of their own communities and members of the broader societies they inhabit. Moreover, since most activities embarked upon by the Roma organisations that set up the Roma movement in different countries included not only Roma but also members of the majority, the language of that particular country was adopted as a primary means to share and convey the messages of Roma elite. At the same time, the existence (in some countries,

such as the USSR) of policies concerning the standardisation of Romani language into a written one led to a situation in which the number of titles in Romani language during the interwar period of time was practically unmatched in any other historical era. This also makes the production and importance of studying the development of Romani literature crucial to the understanding of the broader development of the Roma movement.

Looking now at themes of the writings themselves (i.e. moving into the sphere of 'content'), a key preoccupation among Roma writers, intellectuals and elite of the time appears to have been that of the (re)presentation of their community's history, language and culture. In fact, as the first phase in Hroch's typology emphasises, the rising concern and interest in their community's history, language and culture, is a key moment in the coming together of elite for the purpose of shaping a national revival. In other words, Roma writers' interests in all these matters, across the diversity of national contexts presented in this book, reflect a clear manifestation of such incentives for national revival. At the same time, the interest in folklore and the culture of one's people, as can be most clearly evident in Romania's case of attempting to establish a Roma library collection titled *O Rom*, is not an exclusive Roma practice. The emergence of new nation-states (and thus of new forms of nationalism(s) in the area) were connected with the interest of collecting national folklore as a means of proving the unity of a people (Stark 2016). Roma/Gypsies, in the move towards their civic emancipation, were not on an exception to this. It is thus not surprising that one of the key means by which Roma writers and activists sought to establish and promote a sense of group consciousness during the interwar period was through the collection of Roma folklore or the promotion of the study of their own community history and culture.

Yet, and just as importantly, none of this meant a denial of the national belonging of Roma in any of the countries discussed in this book. Quite to the contrary, across the various examples introduced in this book, an overall expression of a connection and solidarity of Roma writers with the nation-state in which they lived was manifested in their writings. This could be seen in all countries: for example, in Romania, where loyalty to King and country was emphasised, in Hungary where solidarity with the Hungarian nation was argued, in Yugoslavia, where the claims laid out by activists was the recognition of Roma as equal citizens of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, in Finland, where Roma writers focused on education as pathway of further inclusion within Finnish society etc. In fact, what one can see from all the chapters in the book, and what is highlighted in numerous Roma publications of the time, is the emphasis placed, at the same time, on one's belonging to one's own community and solidarity with the majority society within which Roma were embedded and to which the authors of these texts showed a connection with. This was, in effect, a key aim of the emancipatory movement among Roma across the region.

Connecting the lines of both 'form' and 'content', it is interesting to note that in spite of the striking clarities in some of the messages conveyed within the texts discussed and the different forms of Roma literary production in all the countries presented here, there seem to have been no cross-border or international dimensions to Romani literature in

this period. While some materials (such as brief articles in Roma newspapers) did present information on Roma in other countries or the ways in which the Roma movement in the authors' own country was being presented in the international press, the focus of the texts themselves were almost always directed towards a national readership. That is to say, the focus of the Roma movements, and the ways in which they were reflected in the texts produced as part of it, were very much 'nation-centred' and were concerned primarily with the issues facing the Roma communities within the borders of the countries in which the authors lived. Given that nation-states in the region at the start of the twentieth century were, as mentioned above, in a process of building their own national identity, this is not at all surprising. As members of their respective nations, it was crucial for Roma authors to stress in the production of their mobilising works (and in the messages they conveyed in their writings) that these were directed towards a national audience, within the borders of their own nation. In this context also, it is not surprising that some of these messages could well convey narratives of mainstream state nationalism. This, however, went alongside their desire to emphasise the unity of the history, culture and language of Roma/Gypsies in their respective countries.

Under this broad background, it is important to highlight that the common discourse on Roma 'presentism', or Roma as people 'living for the moment' (Day, Evthymios and Stewart 1999:3), which has become a predominant narrative in discussions on Roma historicity – often through the argument that Roma lack an interest in their own history/future – is contrasted by the actual ways in which the sources and works presented in this book highlight that Roma have always been actively engaging with and interested in their past, in the shaping of their future, in their connection to a sense of community consciousness (i.e. an ethnic consciousness) and in the further development of means to do so, through the medium of literature (for a contemporary perspective in Roma's interest in both their community's past and future, see Roman 2019). Of course, most of the activists, writers and individuals presented on the pages of this book would be classified as part of the elite, which may not, in effect, represent the views of their community overall. However, the important thing to note is that, even in such cases, and as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, a clear preoccupation with the shaping of Roma national belonging, unity and mobilisation had already developed, wherein a preoccupation with the connection between their history and their future (or their visions for the future) was clearly manifested. This casts doubt on the tendency to see Roma/Gypsies as living outside of broader historical, national and social processes, as an 'atemporal' community (uninterested in their own history) or as people completely 'marginal' to the political and social contexts in which they live.

At the same time, this type of mobilisation for the development of a community consciousness during the interwar period occurred alongside a desire for Roma/Gypsies to be seen as integral and contributing parts of the societies they inhabited. In fact, as can be seen from all of the above, the goals and 'visions of the future' presented within the texts discussed throughout these chapters, emphasise the need that Roma become and be seen as equal citizens of their nation-states and as individuals directly contributing

to the development of the countries within which they lived. In other words, rather than completely detached (or 'outside') the majority population of the nation-states in which they lived, Roma writers sought to highlight the entanglement of Roma/Gypsies and the macro-society they inhabited, which grounded their arguments for civic emancipation within the developments of their respective nation-states. Through this, both the forms and the content of Romani literature development have been intrinsically linked with the development of the Roma civic emancipation movement of the time, as well as to the incentive of presenting Roma/Gypsies as contributing members of their societies.

Finally, within this context, the development of Romani literature during this period cannot be seen as a 'late' occurrence in comparison to the development of mainstream works of literature in the region (in fact, in some cases, national literatures of new national states emerged at the same time and in the same way as Romani literature) but as concomitant with the development of national literature throughout the whole region. Roma works of literature thus emerged and developed alongside other forms of literary production. Undoubtedly, the former's progress has been hindered by many elements and factors and a legitimate question might arise, concerning the more widespread development of other national kinds of literature. However, the answer to this is quite straightforward and has been hinted at several times throughout this conclusion: the emergence of Romani literature at the start of the twentieth century occurred concomitantly with the creation of new nation-states. The creation of new nation-states also meant an impetus to develop institutions (such as educational systems), as well as a particular orientation to the collection of national folklore, which would highlight the unity of the nation as a whole. While state support for the shaping and development of Romani literature may have existed in the USSR, even if for a short period, this was overall absent in most other cases. For this reason, also, the development of Romani literature was hindered by the lack of an infrastructure to support it. However, its existence is an important historical occurrence, which should and cannot be overlooked.

To conclude, Romani literature itself is undoubtedly the product of a more general process concerning the birth and development of modern nationalism throughout the region under discussion. As the introduction to this book has already pointed out, the development of Roma nationalism and Roma civic emancipation movements, as well as the shaping of Romani literature as part of it, follows precisely this pattern in the development of nationalism (and national consciousness) in the region of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe of the time. Within it, an initially small group of Roma/Gypsy elite (writers, artists, activists, different forms of 'representatives') emerged, seeking the 'awakening' of their own communities and spreading ideas of national consciousness among the Roma/Gypsies in the region. The emergence, production and development of Romani literature in the region during the interwar period, constituted a key means by which this elite sought to achieve this 'awakening'. And, through this, it constitutes a clear and important example of how the Roma emancipation movement cannot be detached from the broader historical context of the region in which it emerged.