

**Bibiána Hlebová**

University of Prešov, Faculty of Education, Prešov, Slovakia

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8366-8281>

bibiana.hlebova@unipo.sk

**Roma Identity (Romipen) in Romany Folktales (Paramisa) in Slovakia***Pregledni rad / review paper**Prilmljeno / received 12. 4. 2024. Prihvaćeno / accepted 19. 11. 2024.*

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The paper is a continuation of literary-historical research on Roma literature for children and youth in Slovakia, which shows the quantitative increase and generic variety of Romany literature, where the dominant literary genre is the Romany folktale (*paramisi*). The paper is of a literary-theoretical nature. The analysis of Romany folktales (*paramisa*) by Romany authors – D. Banga, E. Lacková, and J. Berky-Luborecký – highlights the specific features of Roma identity (*romipen*) in the authentically depicted fates of Roma literary protagonists, in their characteristic features, in images of their lifestyle, in their interpersonal relations, and in their spiritual world. The recognition of Roma identity in literature for children and youth can contribute to the manifestation of the self-identification and emancipation efforts of Roma as a minority population group, to an understanding of their way of life and value system in the majority society, and to the acceptance and tolerance of the otherness of members of the Roma ethnic group in Slovakia.

**Keywords:** Romany literature for children and youth, Romany authors' production, Romany folktales, Romany identity, otherness of Roma people in the literary arts.

The Slovak Republic is a democratic and pluralistic society of people with language and cultural differences, in which we are supposed to be adequately prepared for the coexistence of several nations, nationalities and ethnic groups. Cultural-societal and professional-artistic activities of the Romany minority group in Slovakia after 1989 demonstrate the specific self-identification of Romany people in varied literary genres, particularly aimed at children and young readers. Reflections of the culture, art, and literature of the Roma people recently gained a new dimension in Slovakia in the process of its social, cultural, and artistic integration into a plural society. From the non-Roma point of view, the Roma people are an unusual ethnic group, which has its own culture,

language, customs and traditions, norms of social behaviour and coexistence, and which, not only in the real world, but also in the literary world, preserves the archetypal characteristics of its Romany identity. In artistic portrayals, Romany characters take on the specificity and otherness of other literary protagonists, especially since they are Roma, i.e., of a different origin and social status. They represent a different way of life, and a specific axiological hierarchy. The aim of this paper is to highlight the artistic representation of Roma identity and lifestyle in Roma folktales (*paramisa*) in Slovakia.

In the context of current Slovak literature for children and youth, what comes to the fore is a specific type of literature by Romany authors, who attempt to assert their Romany identity peacefully. The Romany folklore is characterised by (Liba 1992: 6):

[...] overcoming the borders of ethnicity, borders of nation, of a state [...]. We are to be interested not only in myths, anecdotes about Roma people, about Gypsies, jokes, laments, wishes, folktales and legends, in memoirs, carols, magic, ballads and lucinars, but also in the presence of original poetry, prose and drama.

In this context, we use the term “Romany literature” (written either in Slovak or the Slovak-Romany language), which is understood as the original and intentionally poetic, prosaic, and dramatic production of Romany authors from world literature. The authors who have so far concerned themselves with the issue of Romany literature and literature about Roma in Slovakia in terms of literary history, theory and criticism are, for example: Peter Andruška (2000), Bibiána Hlebová (2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2015, 2020), Pavol Plutko, Bohuslava Vargová, Viliam Zeman (1992), Ondrej Sliacky (2009), and Tibor Žilka (2008).

Following the sources mentioned above, we base our study on the previously conducted literary-historical research on Roma literature for children and youth in Slovakia (Hlebová et al., 2011a, 2020, 2023). In the context of three defined historic milestones in the development of Slovak literature for children and youth according to Ondrej Sliacky (1997: 1–7), three distinct periods can be recognised: from the 1930s to the 1950s; from the 1960s until 1989; and from 1989 until the present day. Romany literature started developing in the second period, and gradually increased in the most recent times, with many more titles by Romany authors – representatives of the older and new generations, as well as Slovak and Slovak-Romany translations of the books by Romany authors from world literature. A similar increase has also been detected in the genre variety of Romany literature (folder books, collections of poems and songs, collections of Romany folklore, Romany folktale anthologies, collections of modern Romany folktales, short stories, novelettes, novels, non-fiction literary genres), while the *Romany folktale* has become the dominant literary genre (Hlebová 2011b, 2020), with which Romany authors have confirmed that “the wealth of Romany people is their unique world: a world of tales” (Andruška 2000: 166).

### **The analysis: corpus and areas of interest**

Fairy stories have always had a special, even a unique status in the everyday life of Roma people. In the past, a few times a week in many villages there would be a public

telling of fairy tales held in the biggest rooms. Those who told serious and humorous stories from Romany lives or fantastic tales about kings and different supernatural creatures were solely men (women were telling stories to their children at home). Peter Valo (1994: 75) does not consider these stories real tales when they were related to a concrete time, place, person, and event, nor legends, nor even ballads, though there was very often a bleak ballad atmosphere. Romany folktales are, according to Peter Valo, narrations for adults, which were, in different variations, shared by Romany tellers at weddings, Calico Balls, and funerals. They included their own fantasy, the exotic philosophy of adult Roma, their life experiences, and their desire for happiness.

Roma folklore, their traditions, their perception of the world and life philosophy are an integral part of typical Roma identity (*romipen*) that is handed down in the community from generation to generation. According to Milena Hübschmannová (1988), the term *romipen* has many meanings. Romipen does not represent just the Roma culture, tradition, mentality, but also compliance with some unwritten laws, such as generosity, support, and cohesion among Roma people. However, Roma people are not all the same. Indeed, one Roma proverb says “A hundred Roma, a hundred habits” (Stojka and Pivoň 2003: 6). Therefore, we should meet more often and understand, recognise, and hand on *romipen* to further generations. According to Mária Vágnerová (1999: 355), Roma identity might be identified on the basis of anthropological characteristics (which show the distinctness of Roma faces and dress and serve as an apparent confirmation of the total difference), but also on the basis of ethnic signs (own language, norms, values, culture, traditional way of life), which distinguish the members of the minority from other social groups, especially the majority nation. The specificity in this context is confirmed also in the words of Elena Lacková (1992b: 94–95):

Us, Roma people, we are particular. Inimitable. It is necessary to understand our inner selves, our hearts. We are different from the majority not only by the colour of our skin, anthropologically, but we differ by our inherited temperament and other characteristics that make us, Roma people, real Roma. Our Roma heart cannot be re-created.

The specific identity of Roma people is here identified through an interpretation of a corpus which consists of Romany folktales by the most important Romany authors in Slovakia – Dezider Banga (*Čierny vlas: Cigánske rozprávky* [Black Hair: Gypsy Folktales] 1969), Elena Lacková (*Rómske rozprávky = Romane paramisa* [Romany Folktales] 1992a), Ján Berky-Luborecký (*Sny o šťastí* [Dreams about Happiness] 1994). The corpus corresponds to the archetypal origin of the Roma people based on historic-ethnographic research by Eva Davidová (2004). For the identification of Romany identity, in accordance with Davidová (2004), we have defined the following thematic areas for analysis: (1) the external and internal characteristics of Romany characters; (2) images of the Romany lifestyle; (3) interpersonal relations of Roma protagonists; and (4) the spiritual world of Romany protagonists. E. Davidová was not Roma, but she was interested in historical-ethnographic research of Roma living in Roma settlements

in the former Czechoslovakia (also in Slovakia) from the 1950s to the present. During her lifetime, she has lived in many Roma settlements and authentically recorded their way of life and Roma folklore. Therefore, we consider the author's recorded classification of thematic areas in the specific way of life of the Roma in her historical-ethnographic research, which she published in 2004, as a sufficiently relevant source for the interpretation of the specific identity of the Roma (Roma characters) in Romany folktales (*paramisa*), whose authors were the most important Romany authors in Slovakia – D. Banga, E. Lacková, and J. Berky-L'uborecký.

### External and internal characteristics of Romany characters

Regarding the *external appearance* of Romany characters in Romany folktales (*paramisa*), we can perceive descriptions of the swarthy face, black eyes, long, loose and often curly black hair, and the symmetrical figure in the male and female characters as generally specific for representatives of Roma ethnicity. However, we have also found many characters with nontraditional external features, for example blue eyes. Other specific archetypal features of the Roma people can be seen in the following lines:

Žil jeden Cigán, volali ho Čierny vlas [There lived a Gypsy, they called him Black Hair] (Banga 1969: 39).

Thulo mal oči čierne ani smola [Thulo had black or unlucky eyes] (Lacková 1992: 14).

Hóliko bol slnkom a vetrom ošľahaný počerný chlapec [Hóliko was a black boy beaten by the sun and wind] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 58).

Čhonóra a Čhonóri mali pekné tváre, čierne vlasy a oči modré ako nevädze [Čhonóra and Čhonóri had pretty faces, black hair, and eyes as blue as strangers] (12).

In examining the *internal features and characteristics* of Romany characters in Romany folktales (*paramisa*), we found unusual variety in their natural gifts and behavioural characteristics. The Roma people are specific mainly due to their narrative arts, courage, caginess, sense of humour, fussiness, laziness, but also due to their talent for music, dance, and singing that we consider not only typical signs of Roma identity, but also specific components of the old Romany archetype. We believe that the protagonists of Romany folktales authentically represent the peculiar nature of Roma ethnicity, usually rated as an unbridled element which still pervades their way of life. For example:

Šanibáči okrem rozprávania ovládal aj všelijaké figle i menšie kúzla a zabával nimi ľudí [In addition to storytelling, Šanibáči also mastered all sorts of tricks and minor spells and entertained people with them] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 41).

Ruppuno sa nebál, mal odvahy dosť a ani sila mu nechýbala. Veď koľkokrát vyhral v rodine stávkku, že zdvihne koňa ako iný psa [Ruppuno was not afraid, he had enough courage, and he did not lack strength. After all, how many times has he won a bet in the family that he would raise a horse like any other dog] (Banga 1969: 30).

Ach jaj! Tri univerzity som skončil a Rómovi som sa dal prekabátiť! Prefikáný chasník, len čo je pravda! [Gah! I graduated from three universities and got over the Roma! A cunning butler, just the truth!] (Lacková 1992: 66).

Šanibáči hovorieval, že tie zuby, čo mu chýbajú, daroval krásaviciam [Šanibáči said he had given his missing teeth to beauties] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 41).

Filip! Lenivosť ťa zožiera. Nemuseli by sme si požičiavať, keby si prácu hľadal!... Si leňoch! [Filip! Laziness will devour you. We wouldn't have to borrow if you were looking for a job!... You're lazy!] (Lacková 1992: 38).

Ramina dodnes pri cigánskom ohni spieva krásne piesne [Ramina still sings beautiful songs by the gypsy fire] (Banga 1969: 10).

Buroviarko vzal husle do rúk a začal hrať, len tak, pre seba [Buroviarko took the violin in his hands and began to play, just for himself] (65).

Keď Khel tancovala, vznášala sa ako krdeľ víl [As Khel danced, she hovered like a flock of fairies] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 26).

In addition to the usual Romany characters (men, women, children), typical of the representatives of Roma ethnicity, we also found *specific Roma protagonists* – *chiefs (vajda)* and *witches*, who have a special and exceptional position in the Roma community, and, due to their unique skills and abilities, represent strong personalities that were predestined to lead and influence the Roma community. They gave to other members of the community a sense of safety, and, simultaneously, relieved individuals of their obligation to solve problems independently (Davidová 2004: 98, 132). For example:

Vajda učil Rómov, ako majú robiť poctivo, ak chcú žiť. V celej krajine zavládol pokoj. Nebolo viac tulákov a žobrakov [Vajda taught the Roma how to work honestly if they want to live. There was peace throughout the country. There were no more vagabonds and beggars] (Banga 1969: 86).

Vajda potrestal zlého Róma Hólíka, lebo nedodržiaval rodové zvyky a každému sa posmieval [Vajda punished the evil Roma Hólíko because he did not follow the family customs and mocked everyone] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 51).

Čarodejnica sa posadila na veľikánsky hrniec a po troške nasypala doň rôzne voňavé, pomrvené byliny. Druhou rukou krútila prútikom nad hrncom. Nastalo ticho ako v hrobe. Z hrnca začali vychádzať pramienky oparu. Veštkyňa zavrela oči a pozorne načúvala. Keď pramienky oparu zmizli, veštkyňa vstala a vyriekla veštbu... [The witch sat down on a giant pot and sprinkled a little fragrant, dead herb on it. With her other hand, she spun her wand over the pot. It was silent as the grave. Sources of haze began to emanate from the pot. The fortune teller closed her eyes and listened intently. When the sources of the haze disappeared, the soothsayer stood up and uttered the prophecy...] (6).

## Images of Romany lifestyle

In observing Roma identity in Romany folktales we focused on various areas of the *Romany characters' lives* (nomadism, housing style, and handcraft skills, different ways of life, artistic talent, home economics, food, and clothing) that are mutually connected and represent the image of Romany life (Davidová 2004: 71–73).

### **Nomadism**

The most frequent occurrence is the nomadic way of life of Romany protagonists, whose homes were cars (*vurdona*: space in a car or underneath), residential cars (caravans), tents (*šátre, cerhy*), makeshift shelters of branches, wooden planks, or tarpaulins. The car was pulled by a horse, the loyal helper of the Roma who was a friend and brother. It is known that craftsmen had one more caravan where they had their workshop with tools. For example:

Kedysi dávno, keď ešte kráľovstvá siahali od mora k moru a Cigáni voľne putovali z východu na západ [Once upon a time, when the kingdoms still stretched from sea to sea and the Gypsies travelled freely from east to west] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 18).

“Papu,” ako volal vo svojej reči starého otca, “už sa nebudeme mať zle, ale máme pred sebou dlhé cesty a veľa roboty. Budeme mať koňa aj voz, pôjdeme do sveta. ... Vezmi, čo máme, však sa už báť nemusíme. Keď nebudeme mať čo jesť, predáme kone a budeme mať druhé.” Išli, išli dlhými cestami [“Papu”, as his grandfather called in his speech, “we will no longer be bad, but we have long journeys and much work ahead of us. We will have a horse and a carriage; we will go into the world. ... Take what we have, but we no longer need to worry. When we have nothing to eat, we will sell the horses and will have other ones”. They went, they went along long roads] (Banga 1969: 85).

Cigáni chodili na vozoch z mesta do mesta, z dediny do dediny. Jedni ich mali radi, druhí neradi a tým tretím na nich nezáležalo. ... Bolo ich asi dvadsať. Žili medzi nimi starí, mladí, dievčatá a chlapci, a ani deti nechýbali. Mali tri vozy, šesť koní. Voz pre Cigánov bol všetko. Slúžil im na spanie aj na cestovanie. Len v lete si rozprestrelí šiatre na deň, dva, a zase išli ďalej. Bol to život na kolesách, ako tomu sami vravievali [The gypsies rode in carriages from town to town, from village to village. Some liked them, others disliked them and the third did not care. ... There were about twenty of them. Old, young, girls and boys lived among them, and children were also present. They had three wagons, six horses. The car for the Gypsies was everything. They used them to sleep in and travel. Only in the summer did they spread their robes for a day or two and went on again. It was life on wheels, as they called it] (28).

### **Housing style**

Romany characters typically lived in specific concentrated settlements, called “gypsy settlements”. On the one hand, the settlements were a form of social exclusion of Roma people from the community, but on the other, Roma people had lived their lives there. Usually, they were created on the spot where there were conditions suitable for life, i.e., social (only with the agreement and consent of an earl), natural (i.e., near or by the water, woods, mountain), and where it was possible to easily get food from the neighbourhood. For example:

Rómsku osadu kedysi dávno stvoril spravodlivý Deloro a ponechal životy jej obyvateľov napospas nevyspytateľnému osudu [The Roma settlement was once created by the righteous Deloro who left the lives of its inhabitants to the mercy of an unpredictable fate] (Lacková 1992: 44).

Aj keď žil sám, mimo rómskej osady, veru nevedol pustovnícky život [Although he lived alone, outside a Roma settlement, he did not believe in a hermit's life] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 41).

Domček starého Róma Puruma stál na brehu veľkej vody, pri domčeku stála veľká breza a pod ňou maličká búdka a v nej verný pes Džukel. Boli veľmi chudobní, živilí sa iba chytaním rýb [The house of the old Roma Purum stood on the bank of a large body of water, next to the house stood a large birch and under it a small hut and a faithful dog Džukel. They were very poor, feeding only on fish] (Banga 1969: 81).

### **Craft skills**

The most typical craft that Roma people nurtured for centuries was blacksmithing. At the beginning, the workshop of a Roma smith was portable, and consisted of an anvil, a short iron bar with its own anvil anchored in the ground. Later, Roma smiths started to build static smithies in a separated part of their dwellings, or in a separate wooden shed with a roof. Romany protagonists were also handy in other crafts, such as boilerwork – they created and sold small copper kettles, cauldrons, pans, or plates; bellfounding – they made bells of different sizes and shapes for cows, ship or goats; manger making – they created big and small mangers for pigs for abattoirs; they made small round pots with handles, spoons, spatulas, and other objects for agricultural use and for the household; wicker basket making – which included the production of baskets, whisks, and birches; work with wood and clay – Romany women helped housewives from the majority nation to cover the walls of houses and stoves with clay; men helped to build houses with clay filler put between wooden walls; textile crafts and weaving laces – Romany women and girls used small looms for making thin laces, while for making thicker laces Romany men used wooden looms; the production of brushes and swabs – from big bristles and horse hair with wooden plaques that were produced by non-Roma carpenters. Romany protagonists used to sell or exchange their products for food or clothes very often. For example:

Prístrešok, kde mal Khako svoju aprohu, ako tomu Cigáni hovorili. Malé mechy, kladivo, kliešte a nákovu. To bol celý jeho majetok. Týmto náradím živil seba a svoju rodinu. Celý deň od svitu do mrku koval esíky, nebožieze, retiazky, klnice, ba aj cifrované pánty na okenice bohatých a zámožných ľudí. Svoje deti už od malička zaučal remeslu. Často celé hodiny presedeli pri otcovi, sledovali každý jeho pohyb. Keď mal Bar päť rokov, ťahal mechy, mladší Bengoro pohadzoval uhlie na ohnisko. ... Nebude robiť len klnice a esíky, ale aj reťaze a kalichy, krásne kotly, ale nikdy sa nesmie hanbiť za to, že pochádza z chudobnej cigánskej rodiny [A shelter where Khako had his *aproha*, as the Gypsies called it: small mosses, a hammer, pliers and an anvil. That was all his property. He fed himself and his family with these tools. From day to day, he forged nails, drills, chains, wedges, and even numerous hinges for the shutters of rich and affluent people. He has been teaching his children the craft from a very early age. They often sat with their father for hours, watching his every move. When Bar was five, he was pulling mosses, and the younger Bengoro was throwing coal on the hearth. ... He will not only make nails and wedges, but also chains and goblets, beautiful cauldrons, but he must never be ashamed of coming from a poor gypsy family] (Banga 1969: 87).

Celý rok chodil so svojím koníkom po okolí vykupovať handry, kožky a perie. ... Látal a zváral, čo bolo treba [All year round he went with his horse around to buy rags, skins and feathers. ... He flew and welded what was needed] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 5).

V zime obyčajne vysedával vo vyhni. Tepal zvončeky pre dobytok [In winter, he usually sat by the fire. Beating bells for cattle] (5).

Cez zimu až do príchodu jari doma vyrezával varešky, lyžice, plietol košíky a vedel opravovať aj konské postroje [During the winter until the arrival of spring he stayed at home and carved wooden sticks, spoons, wove baskets and he was also able to repair horse harnesses] (5).

Róm Kirnač chodil do lesa, narezal prúty, plietol košíky a žena ich nosila po dedinách [Roma Kirnač went to the forest, cut rods, wove baskets and his wife carried them around villages] (Banga 1969: 133).

Čhonóri sa posadila k hrnčiarskemu kruhu a z jej rúk vychádzali krásne výrobky. Preslávila sa široko-ďaleko. Ľudia ju obdivovali. Nepamätali sa, žeby žena takto rozkrútila hrnčiarsky kruh. A tak si Čhonóri kúpila koníka, voz i šiatrovú plachtu. Po okolitých dedinách i mestách chodila so svojimi šálkami, džbánmi, hrncami, krčahmi, pohármi, amforami a vázami. Obchod sa jej daril [Čhonóri sat down next to the potter's wheel and beautiful products came out of her hands. She became famous far and wide. People admired her. They did not remember that the woman twisted the potter's wheel in this way. And so Čhonóri bought a pony, a cart and a tarpaulin. She walked around the surrounding villages and towns with her cups, jugs, pots, bowls, containers, amphorae and vases. She did her business well] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 8).

Rómske ženy z nití tkali krásne látky a farebné koberce [Roma women wove beautiful fabrics and colourful carpets from threads] (Lacková 1992: 70).

Rómka Pumajka vyrábala aj mošovské kefy [Pumajka, a Roma woman, also made Mošov brushes] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 5).

### *A different way of life (trading)*

Romany protagonists bought from the villagers old pieces of cloth, rags, feathers, and other items that they later sold or exchanged for vessels or other industrial materials. This activity was called horse trading/bargaining, the condition for which was a good knowledge of horses and communicative skills. In the past, Roma people also took different occasional and odd jobs to nourish their families. However, among the Roma people there were also those who did unlawful jobs – theft. For example:

Róm Čierny vlas sa živil hlavne tým, že kupoval a predával kone. Kúpil lacnejšie a drahšie predal. V jednej krajine kúpil za desať zlatých a v druhej stáli tridsať. Teda, či chcel alebo nechcel, musel chodiť po svete [The Black Hair Roma made a living mainly by buying and selling horses. He bought cheaper and sold more expensive. In one country he bought them for ten gold coins and in another they cost thirty. That is, whether he wanted to or not, he had to walk around the world] (Banga 1969: 39).

Róm Dylno celý rok chodil so svojím koníkom po okolí vykupovať handry, kožky a perie [Throughout the year, Roma Dylno and his pony went around the area to buy rags, skins and feathers] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 5).

Rómovia na jarmoku kradli. Tu ovocie, tam kus pečeného mäsa, tam zas krčah vína a aby nebol hriech na duši, tak sme ponúkli aj iných [The Roma stole at the fair. Here some fruit, there a piece of roast meat, there a pitcher of wine, and so that there is no sin on the soul] (43).

### ***Artistic talent***

Romany protagonists stood out as excellent musicians, singers, and dancers. Performing music was the source of their livelihood, and very often they played music in courtyards, at weddings, folkdances, soldiers' retreats, in a pub, or just for listening. For example:

Buroviarko sa živil tým, že mal husličky a na nich vyhrával po dedinách a mestách. Husle nosil len tak, bez kufríka, so zastrčeným sláčikom medzi strunami. Peňazí mal, pretože každý deň, čo na husliach zarobil, to aj v ten istý deň strovil [Buroviarko made a living by having violins and playing them in villages and towns. He carried the violin just like that, without a case, with a bow tucked between the strings. He had money because he earned it on the violin every day, and he spent it the same day] (Banga 1969: 64).

Jeho žena Sani bola speváčkou. Lolo hral na flaute, Sani na bubienku. Hrať a spievať chodili na bazár. ... Lolo a Sani pri práci obveselovali ľudí svojou hudbou za malú almužnu. Sani bola veľká speváčka. Chýr o nej šiel po celej krajine [His wife Sani was a singer. Lolo played the flute, Sani played the drum. They went to the bazaar to play and sing. ... Lolo and Sani cheered up people with their music for little contributions. Sani was a great singer. There has been talk of her all over the country] (Lacková 1992: 70).

Nejedna deva sa na tancovačke doňho zahľadela. A že bol skvelý tanečník, o tom niet ani pochyb [More than one girl looked at him on the dance floor. And that he was a great dancer, there is no doubt] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 58).

### ***Household economics and nutrition***

These are the most conservative elements of the Roma way of life that kept its previous form in those areas for a long time. Roma nutrition was unhealthy and irregular, where Roma women usually cooked only one meal, but often they did not cook at all. The nutrition in Roma families related to their life philosophy – to live from one day to the next, not to care about tomorrow, or even the future. For example:

Muž chodil do lesa drevo rúbať a žena po dedinách pýtať kúsok chleba pre hladné detičky. Len čo chlebič priniesla domov, už ho nebolo [The husband went to the woods to cut wood and the wife asked in the villages for a piece of bread for the hungry children. As soon as she brought the bread home, it was gone] (Banga 1969: 133).

V Melalovej chatrči sa ozýval smiech nasýtených detí. Aj Melalo sa usmieval, skoro zabudol na ženu, po slzách neostalo ani stopy. Celé dni iba mäso vyvával a piekol. Ale žiadne prasa nie je také veľké, aby sa raz nezjedlo. Do chatrče sa opäť nasťahoval hlad [The laughter of well-fed children echoed in Melalo's hut. Melalo smiled too, almost forgetting the woman, no tears left. All day he just boiled and roasted the meat. But no pig is big enough not to be eaten once. Hunger moved into the hut again] (Lacková 1992: 6).

Šejinka mu priniesla kôrku suchého chleba a v miske hlt polievky. ... Ostal v chatrči medzi deťmi. A hoci jedla nebolo nazvyš, ušlo sa i jemu [Šejinka brought him a slice of dry bread and a gulp of soup in a bowl. ... He stayed in the shack among the children. And although there was not enough food to spare, he got away with it, too] (50).

### ***Clothing***

Two extreme kinds of clothing were found in our corpus: the romantic style, represented by colourful exotic skirts displaying elements of the Hungarian nobility or Spanish elegance, in contrast with poor clothing of an indeterminate dark colour. Romany children did not have any typical children's clothing, but wore worn garments, and in summer they were naked and barefoot most of the time. For example:

Róm Železná ruka bol bosý, len v nohaviciach a bez košeľa a na krku mal uviazanú šatku [The Roma Iron Hand was barefoot, only in trousers and without a shirt and he had a scarf tied around his neck] (Banga 1969: 20).

Ruppuno čarami nadobudol pekné ošatenie, namiesto starých šiat mal na sebe šaty, aké nosia len princovia. Červené nohavice, zelený kabát, čižmy [Ruppuno wore nice clothes, instead of old rags he wore clothes that only princes wear. Red pants, a green coat, boots] (34).

Deti uhliara Angaruna nosili kabáty a košeľa stále od starších, často to boli len také franforce. A tie staršie nosili zasa po rodičoch [Coal Angarun's children still wore coats and shirts from the elderly, often just patched. And the older ones were worn again by their parents] (142).

### **Interpersonal relations of the Roma protagonists**

We also focused on the specific characteristics of Roma identity in the expressions of interpersonal relations of Romany protagonists in Romany folktales in typical life situations, i.e., within the closer Roma community (Romany family) and the wider Romany community (Roma nomadic or settled extended family) (Davidová 2004: 97–120):

#### ***Romany family (family group, extended family)***

The family was the basis of the Romany community, and Romany protagonists attributed the greatest value to it, which was defined by relatedness. For example:

Rómskeho muzikanta Bara po návrate do rodnej osady "radostne privítali rodičia, bratia, sestry a široké príbuzenstvo" [Romany musician Bara, after returning to his native settlement, "joyfully welcomed parents, brothers, sisters and a wide family"] (Lacková 1992: 59).

Roky sa míňali, ďalšie deti prichádzali na svet, starci umierali, mladí sa sobášili, susedia sa hašterili, opíjali sa, spievali, tancovali a lopotili tak, ako to len Rómovia vedeli [Years passed, other children were born, old people died, young people got married, neighbours quarrelled, got drunk, sang, danced and shovelled as only the Roma knew] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 6).

No aj tam sme veru našich súkmeňovcov stretli. Dobré rady sme si navzájom dali a sľúbili vzájomnú pomoc na doživotie [But even there we met the faith of our peers. We gave each other good advice and promised mutual help for life] (44).

### **Ancestral bonds**

There was a very strongly developed sense of ancestral solidarity of Roma people, which was stronger than the bond of family. This was expressed in certain obedience to the family and to the collective character of family celebrations or customs. Individuals who wanted to break the traditional fetters fought familiar beliefs with their personal opinion of their own life, and finally they became renegades. For example:

Rodové puto sa ozvalo aj v duši neporiadneho Róma Hólíka, ktorého vajda vylúčil z rómskej osady. Hólíko sa polepšil a spolu s gazdom sa vracia do rodnej osady. „Keď prichádzali k cigánskej osade, prvé ich víтали deti. Tie sa rozbehli, aby zvestovali novinu. Páni idú! Páni idú! Keď to Hólíko počul, slzy mu vypadli od žiaľu i dojatia. A spomienky sa mu v hlave rozsypali, ako keď sejú mak. Ako ma prijímú? Uveria mi, že žijem takmer čestne? Že si chcem odtiaľto pritulíť nevestu? ... Hólíko, volky, nevolky vstal, pomaly vystúpil z kočiara. Medzitým im v ústrety išiel najstarší vajda Thúlo. ... A Hólíko ostal stáť ako holý v trní. Nesmelo sa poobzeral a čakal. Ťažko mu bolo na duši. ... Všetci čo to o Hólíkovi spomenuli, ale keď vajdovia vypočuli richtára, radosťou im srdcia zaplesali, úsmevy na tvári objavili. Vajda Thúlo takto riekol: Keď je tak, ako vaša dôstojnosť hovorí, tak ho osobne privítam, a ak si vyberie svojmu srdcu súce dievča, bez prietahov im dám aj požehnanie” [The ancestral bond also echoed in the soul of the disorderly Roma Hólík, whom the Vajda expelled from the Roma settlement. Hólíko had improved and was returning to his native village together with the owner. “When they came to the gypsy settlement, they were first greeted by children. They ran to announce the news. Gentlemen are coming! Gentlemen are coming! When Hólíko heard this, his tears fell from grief and emotion. And the memories scattered in his head like sowing poppies. How will they accept me? Will they believe me that I live almost honestly? That I want to hug my bride from here? ... Holíko slowly got up, casually getting out of the carriage. In the meantime, the oldest Vajda Thúlo went to meet them. ... And Hólíko remained standing bare in the thorn bushes. He timidly looked around and waited. It was hard for him. I don’t know what Hólíko said, but when the magistrate heard the judge, their hearts danced with joy, smiles appeared on their faces. Vajda Thúlo said this: “If it is as your dignity says, I will personally welcome him, and if he chooses a girl who is close to his heart, I will also give them a blessing without delay”] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 60).

Po svadbe rómskej dievčiny Kali s princom Rodom rómska rodina odmietla ponuku kráľa bývať na zámku, “išli za svojím, za cigánskym ohňom, za zelenou trávou, za voľnosťou, ktorá bola silnejšia ako zašnúrované šaty. Ich potomkovia chodia dodnes po svete, možno, že sa už ani nepoznajú” [After the wedding of the Romany girl Kali with Prince Rhodes, the Romany family rejected the king’s offer to live in the castle, “they went for their own, for the gypsy fire, for the green grass, for the freedom that was stronger than laced clothes. Their descendants still walk around the world, and maybe they don’t even know each other anymore”] (Banga 1969: 120).

### **Internal laws of Romany people**

Internal laws were the basis of the social order, patriarchal regarding the extended family and ancestral groups, which were related to a man’s position in the Roma community, to the cohesion and cooperation of the Roma, mutual solidarity, respect of

elders; for centuries, it had all helped them to survive during the bad times. Their strict observance was monitored by their own juridical institutions – Romany courts. The highest punishment remained the declaration of being unclean – the punished Roma man lost his identity, honour, reputation, respect as a man, and, what was worse, he lost his *romipen*. Exceptional significance was ascribed to an oath, i.e. confirmation of the veracity of the words used (e.g., in front of the picture of a saint, or the altar in a church). For example:

Vajda potrestal rómskeho mládenca Hólíka vydedením z rómskej komunity za to, že jeho správanie nebolo v súlade s vnútornými rómskymi zákonmi: “Nedodržiaval rodové zvyky a každému sa posmieval. ... Márne bolo jeho prosíkanie. Zaslúžil si najprisnejší trest, aký panoval v rodoch. Vydedenie. Musel tábor opustiť.” Na rozlúčku mu povedal: “Už ta tu nikto nemá rád. Hľadaj si seberovných v cudzom svete. Tvoje srdce je nečisté. Si vyvrhel, aký sa doteraz v našich rodoch nenarodil, samozrejme, okrem teba” [Vajda punished the Romany young man Hólíko by expelling him from the Romany community for his behaviour which was not in accordance with internal Romany laws: “He did not observe family customs and mocked everyone. ... His begging was in vain. He deserved the most severe punishment in the families. Disintegration. He had to leave the camp”. He said goodbye to him: “Nobody likes you here anymore. Search for peers in a foreign world. Your heart is unclean. You have cast out what has not yet been born in our families, of course, except for you”] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 51).

### **Status of men**

The man was the most important person in all *Romipen*, because he was the only one responsible for his family, for better or for worse. This tradition and habit have been the unwritten rule for as long as Roma people have lived. A long time ago, their ancestors respected the rule that the Roma man was the most important part of a Roma community. For example:

Dvaja rómski primáši sa rozhodli vychovať zo svojich synov slávnych primášov, “primáš Feri ani nečakal, kedy chlapčeka po prvýkrát okúpu, a už mu vkladal sláčik do maličkých prstiek. Synovi dal meno Jag, aby jeho hudba ako oheň rozpaľovala ľudské srdcia. Ani primáš Baro nelenil. Syna pomenoval po sebe. Baro znamenalo – veľký. Husličky so sláčikom mu do kolísky strčil so želaním, aby jeho syna poznali na všetkých kráľovských dvoroch ako jediného neprekonateľného muzikanta” [Two Roma maestros decided to raise their sons to become famous ones. “Maestro Feri did not even wait for the boy to take a bath for the first time, and he was already putting a string to his little fingers. He named his son Jag, so that his music would burn human hearts like fire. Even Maestro Baro was not lazy. He named his son after himself. Baro meant – big. He put a stringed violin into the cradle with the wish that his son would be known at all the royal courts as the only unbeatable musician”] (Lacková 1992: 45). Keď Rómovi Garulovi ochorela žena Šuja, rozmýšľal o tom, že pôjde po žobraní, ale “podľa rómskeho zákona, chlapom je hanba pýtať!” [When Roma Garula's wife Šuja fell ill, he thought about going begging, but “according to Romani law, it is a shame for a man to do it!”] (61).

### **Status of women**

The status of women was very low, inferior, and disgraced. A woman was considered a less valuable being, mainly intended to love, bear and raise children, ensure food, and take care of the household. Traditionally, the man was the master of the woman, the head of the family, and everyone was supposed to obey him (patriarchy). For example:

Luľudi najprv musela nasýtiť svoje deti a muža. Rybu z potoka upiekla, “rozdelila deťom a mužovi, sama sa napila len vody” [People first had to feed their children and husband. She baked fish from the stream, “she divided it among the children and men, she drank only water herself”] (Banga 1969: 90).

Rómska žena pokorne rešpektovala rozhodnutie svojho muža odísť z osady a usadiť sa v inej krajine: “Chodili so svojím vozom z mesta do mesta, z dediny do dediny, z krajiny do krajiny. Deti boli ešte malé, takže matka bola stále pri nich” [A Romany woman humbly respected her husband’s decision to leave the settlement and settle in another country: “They drove their car from town to town, from village to village, from country to country. The children were still small, so the mother was still with them”] (39).

### **Sense of cohesion and cooperation**

Romany protagonists had a very well-developed sense of cohesion and cooperation. This manifested itself in their daily lives – the whole family provided help for Roma who had problems. For example:

Syn Trastuno mužnel a mocnel pri práci vo vyhni. Usilovne pomáhal otcovi. ... Sestrička Rupuny sedela na voze a predávala reťaze, motyky, cigánske kince, podkovy, kosáky, meče, lemeše, kliešte, závary a ozdobné mreže [The son of Trastuno was a man and mightier at work in the fire. He worked hard to help his father. ... Sister Rupuna sat in the car and sold chains, hoes, gypsy nails, horseshoes, scythes, swords, ploughshares, pliers, bars and decorative nets] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 35).

Rómska dievčina Rupuny zakaždým vyzerala pri ceste starenku, ktorú vždy niečím obdarovala a dlho, dlho jej kývala na rozlúčku [The Roma girl Rupuna always saw an old woman on the road, to whom she always gave something and waved goodbye to her for a long, long time] (35).

Moja basička bola vždy bohatá. Veľa dukátov som v nej mával a chudobným Cigánom ich rád dával [My double bass has always earned me money. I had many ducats from it and liked to give them to poor gypsies] (73).

### **Mutual solidarity**

The unwritten rule of mutual solidarity was among the most important ethical norms in Roma communities. It was associated with their poor position and general poverty. As they themselves did not have anything, they empathised with others and without hesitation shared their bread or house. It would bring shame if they did not help someone in need. For example:

Musíme pomáhať chudobným. Ty budeš voľný, musíš o tom každému rozprávať, len nesmieš povedať, od koho si to počul. Inak všetka moja a tvoja snaha bude zbytočná.

Spojíš všetkých tulákov, dáš im kone a vozy. Každý z nich vie robiť nejakú užitočnú prácu. Spoločne vám bude na zemi dobre. Len musíte byť svorní! [We must help the poor. You will be free, you have to tell everyone about it, you just can't tell who you heard it from. Otherwise, all my and your efforts will be useless. You will unite all the wanderers, give them horses and chariots. Each of them can do some useful work. You will be fine on earth together. You just have to be tight-lipped!] (Banga 1969: 84).

Za svoju prácu i tovar žiadala len skromnú odmenu. Aj z tej si ponechala len toľko, čo im stačilo k živobytiu. Čo zvyšilo, to ostatným v cigánskej osade rozdala. Nikde a nikdy pred ňou vrátka nezavreli. Nikdy nič neukradla [She demanded only a modest reward for her work and goods. Even from that, she kept only enough to make a living. What remained, she distributed to the others in the gypsy settlement. Nowhere and never did they close the gates in front of her. She never stole anything] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 5).

### ***Respect for elders***

Roma people showed respect for their elders. In the community, the elders had a specific position and many people came to ask for their advice in difficult life situations, because they had more life experiences and a smart outlook. For example:

Bol šedivý a chudý ako trieska. Pozdravila ho. Starec sa na ňu pozrel a hovorí: Hej, dievčatko, som žobrák, nemáš niečo, čo by si mi dala? Kchamuni sa naňho pozrie a hovorí: Starček, aj my sme veľmi chudobní, ale vieš čo, dám ti pätnásť zlatých, ešte mi presne toľko ostane. Otcovi poviem, že som za uhlie toľko dostala [He was grey and poor as a chip. She greeted him. The old man looked at her and said: Hey, girl, I'm a beggar, don't you have something to give me? Kchamuni looks at him and says: Old man, we are also very poor, but you know what, I'll give you fifteen gold pieces, that's exactly what I have left. I will tell my father that I got so much for coal] (Banga 1969: 147).

### ***Naming persons within family relations***

A specific feature of Romany identity in the interpersonal relations of the characters of Romany folktales is the very frequent naming of each other both within the family and outside the family with the ethnonym *Cigán*, *Róm*, *Cigánka* [Gypsy, Roma, Gypsy-female], but also with the name *Rom* in the meaning of man (from the Roma language *rom*=man, husband), *Romni* in the meaning of woman (from Romany *romni*=woman, wife). Roma people called each other also by the appellative "brother", "sister", also outside family relations, which confirms the image of how the Roma community functions. The names brother and sister are used by Roma people not only for their brothers or sisters, but also for their stepbrothers, stepsisters, and cousins even today. For example:

Ste aj nie ste brat a sestra. Ste bratom a sestrou všetkých poctivých Rómov. Vaším rodičom som požehnal preto, že žili najpoctivejšie, najpracovitejšie a bohabojne. Ste darom ich života [You are also not a brother and a sister. You are the brother and sister of all honest Roma. I have blessed your parents because they lived most honestly, hardworking and God-fearing. You are the gift of their life] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 10).

Moji kmotrovia, sestry a bratia, ktorí kočujú v strede sveta, sú mi viac ako táto dobrota [My godparents, sisters and brothers who roam in the middle of the world are more to me than this goodness] (Banga 1969: 42).

### ***Names and nicknames***

Romany protagonists, besides the names they bore as characters, also had nicknames that occurred in the Romany community in order to meet the need to differentiate individuals in a big family, extended family, or a locality when some names and surnames were very frequent. All the proper names of the Romany protagonists characterise their bearers and correspond to the onymic model *nomen omen* (from Latin, meaning name, sign, naming that characterises its bearer). For example:

Bolo to ešte nedávno, čo žil na svete jeden Cigán, volali ho Tchúlo Kan (Hrubé ucho). Vedel mnoho rozprávok, ktoré rozprával pri ohni [It was until only recently that a Gypsy lived in the world, called Tchúlo Kan (Rough Ear). He knew many folktales he told by the fire] (Banga 1969: 7).

V chlapcových rukách bola veľká sila ... Otec ho pomenoval Sastruno vast – Železná ruka [There was a great strength in the boy's hands ... His father named him Sastruno Vast – Iron Hand] (12).

Rómovia ju volali Dylyny. Vedeli totiž, prečo bola taká múdra. V každom dome sa povypytovala na to i na ono, na radosti i starosti, pozbierala klebety a dobre si všetko zapamätala. Na každý dom si namaľovala znak griflíkom. Urobila to tak, aby si to nikto nevšimol. A keby ho aj niekto uvidel, tak by jej cigánskemu písmu nerozumel [The Roma called her Dylyny. They knew why she was so wise. In each house, she asked about it, about joy and worry, picked up gossip and remembered everything well. She painted a sign on each house with s stylus. She did it so that no one would notice. And even if someone saw it, he wouldn't understand her Gypsy script] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 5).

### ***Joint sittings***

An integral part of the collective way of life of Roma people was their joint sittings by the fire or sitting on benches in front of their houses, which tightened the relations between them, especially the nomadic Roma, and built their group consciousness. For example:

Pred domčekom chudobnej rómskej rodiny bola lavička, na ktorej sedávali starí i mladí [In front of the house of a poor Roma family was a bench on which the old and the young sat] (Banga 1969: 52).

### **The spiritual world of Romany protagonists**

The spiritual realm of representatives of Roma ethnicity was very peculiar, based on visions, emotions, and feelings. The nomadic way of life, travelling from village to village, and mainly the absence of the sense of home have influenced the spiritual world of Roma people. Specific visions of values, belief in God, and various supernatural creations dominated. The spiritual world of Roma people is a reflection of their historical

development, low level of knowledge, but also objectionable life conditions on the edge of the majority society which also contributed to their simplified understanding of natural and social phenomena (Davidová 2004: 122–137).

### ***Folk religion and faith in God***

For Roma protagonists, religion consisted mainly of the elements of ancient beliefs and the relics of naturalistic atomistic opinions. The priority in the Roma spiritual world was God, in Romany *Del*, *Devel*, or *Dil*. They had a very friendly, almost familiar relation to God. They imagined him as a great and good Spirit, the greatest creature who created the world and led the fates of all people, so of the Roma as well. Roma protagonists worshiped God as the creator of life, as a protector against evil; when they did well, they showed God respect and glorified him. The Roma people have never had any doubt about the special abilities of their God, not even about his wisdom and justice. For example:

Kedysi dávno stvoril spravodlivý Deloro rómsku osadu [Once upon a time, the just Deloro created a Roma settlement] (Lacková 1992: 44).

Náš, guľo Dévla, ten stvoril iba poriadnych ľudí ako som ja. [...] Dévla je mojím stvoriteľom, ochrancom i chlebobdarcom [Ours, the secret God Devel, created only decent people like me. [...] Devel is my creator, protector and breadwinner] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 65).

Najväčší, najmúdrejší, najmilostivejší Bože! Vezmi si nášho brata. Nech sedí vedľa teba. Nasýť ho, daj mu večné miesto, tak ako my mu dávame v našich srdciach, v ktorých dovedy bude žiť, pokiaľ posledný Róm neumrie [The greatest, wisest, most merciful God! Take our brother. Let him sit next to you. Feed him, give him an eternal place, as we give him one in our hearts, in which he will live until the last Roma dies] (44).

Dévla ju požehnal krásou, rozumom a kumštom. Bola vyvolená. Iste jej niekto daroval tajomnú silu. Narodila sa, keď na nebi stála správna hviezda [Devla blessed her with beauty, reason and skill. She was chosen. Surely someone had given her a mysterious power. She was born when the right star stood in the sky] (27).

### ***Belief in supernatural powers***

An integral part of Romany folk religion in traditional communities was faith in the existence of various good and evil supernatural powers. Moreover, the Roma were afraid of devils, demons, and some animals because they believed that they could cause evil. For example:

Som duch rómskych primášov! [...] Pozri sa, Baro, tieto husle sú zázračné. V твоjich rukách budú šíriť slávu, ktorou ovládneš svet. Srdcia bohatých i chudobných naplnia ľudskými citmi a svet sa stane lepším. Tieto zázračné husle ti splnia tri želania. Predtým ich však musíš pritísnuť k srdcu! A duch rómskych primášov zmizol [I am the spirit of Roma maestros! [...] Look, Baro, these violins are miraculous. In your hands they will spread the glory that will rule the world. The hearts of the rich and the poor will be filled with human feelings and the world will become better. These miraculous violins

will fulfil your three wishes. But first you have to press them to your heart! And the spirit of the Roma maestros disappeared] (Lacková 1992: 56).

Či si dobré a či zlé, ustúp mi z cesty. Lebo vedz, že tento slák mi darovala bosorka. Keď ťa ním raz švihnem, tak zostanú z teba len franforce. [...] A ustúp! Ustúp, ty pekelné plemeno. Mám svätenou vodou pokropiť tvoje šlapaje, ktorými si zneuctil tie krvavé cigánske mozole, čo túto zem obrobili a poctivo sa z nej živili? [Whether you are good or bad, get out of my way. Because you know that this straw was given to me by a witch. Once I swipe you with it, you will become a Frenchman. [...] And back off! Back off, you hell breed. Should I sprinkle holy water on your footsteps to dishonour the bloody gypsy calluses that worked this land and ate honestly?] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 65).

Žili sme tu v meste spokojne a šťastne, kým nás neprepadol veľký had. Najprv nám ovce chytil a žral, potom statok, teraz, keď už mu nemáme čo za múry mesta nosiť, pustil sa do ľudí. Každý večer príde a niektorého z nás odnesie. A koho zoberie, ten sa už nikdy nevráti. [...] Nevieme, kto je z nás teraz na rade. Večer určite had príde [We lived here in the city contentedly and happily until we were attacked by a large snake. First, he caught and ate sheep for us, then the farm, now that we had nothing to carry behind the walls of the city, he set out for the people. He comes every night and takes one of us away. And whoever he takes, he will never return. [...] We don't know who's next. The snake is sure to come in the evening] (Banga 2969: 29).

### ***Magic and witchcraft***

An integral part of the spiritual world of the Roma people was magic and witchcraft. A well-known magic act was to make someone sick; it was performed by “witches” or elder Romany women. It meant that with this act evil, misfortune, sickness, or death was summoned against someone else. Romany women also acted as fortune tellers, where they used cards, mainly tarot cards, or they read the future directly from the palm. They did not follow any rules in fortune telling, but approached it only in a psychologically and instinctively improvised manner. For example:

Hodila triesky na oheň a do hrnca prisypala jedovaté byliny. Keď voda začala vriieť, odriekala tajomné zaklínania a slzy jej pritom žalostne tiekli po lícach. Čarovanie sa skončilo. Švli povedala: Iba pri mesačnom svite sa premeníš na človeka! Zo zakliatia ťa vyslobodí dievča s nevinným srdcom! Len čo to vyriekla, Čačo sa začal premieňať na hada [She tossed the chips into the fire and poured poisonous herbs into the pot. As the water began to boil, she recited mysterious incantations, tears streaming down her cheeks. The spell is over. Švli said: Only in the moonlight will you turn into a human! A girl with an innocent heart will free you from the curse! As soon as she said that Čačo began to turn into a snake] (Lacková 1992: 69).

### ***Spirits of the dead***

Roma people believed in spirits of the dead, in people of two spirits and hearts; according to their belief, the other spirit does not let the dead sleep, and it means that the dead come each night to visit those remaining. The vast majority of Roma people believe that a man after his death does not completely perish; they believe that Death

only comes into him, which is still demonstrated at Romany funerals. For three days and three nights the dead person is exposed in an open coffin in his house, and during those days adult members of his family and his friends meet there and sit by his coffin. While they are sitting, they share tales, stories from the life of the dead person, drink and play cards. For example:

Všetci starší muži i ženy z kolonie sa radili o pohrebe. A akože inak by mohli odprevadiť nebožtíka na večnú slávu, ak by pri ňom neprenocovali. [...] Povedali tak, ako kázal nepísaný zákon: Večer sa zídeme pri nebohom my chlapi. ... A potom každý z prítomných urobil všetko tak, ako kázal zvyk a úcta k mŕtvemu. Tri dni a tri noci museli jeho blízni sedieť pri zosnulom, spomínať na jeho činy, prihovárať sa mu a preukazovať úprimný žiaľ. Lebo jeho duch je prítomný dovtedy, pokiaľ zem neprikryje jeho telo na lúke večnej tichosti, ktorou je cintorín. Viradovanie – posedenie pri mŕtvom – nie je len smútočným žiaľom opantaným zvykom. Prítomní sa správajú tak, akoby bol mŕtvy stále živý a medzi nimi [All the older men and women from the colony consulted about the funeral. And how else could they escort a deceased to eternal glory if they did not spend the night with him. [...] They said as the unwritten law preached: In the evening we guys will meet near the dead body. [...] And then each of those present did everything that was expected by custom and respect for the dead. For three days and three nights, his neighbours had to sit with the deceased, remember his actions, intercede with him, and show sincere sorrow. For his spirit is present until the soil covers his body in the meadow of eternal silence, which is the cemetery. Viradization – sitting by the dead – is not just a sad grief custom. Those present behave as if the dead man were still alive and among them] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 41).

### ***Folk medicine***

Superstitious elements might also be found in the Romany practices of folk medicine, which contain rational elements based on empirical knowledge and natural skills, and magical elements and the irrational, which were based on belief in supernatural skill through various forms of incantation, conjuration and acts of magic by means of which the Roma people wanted to repel illness or the difficulties of pregnant women. Belief in bewitchery was extensive, and Roma people believed in various preventive tools. Folk medicine also used props – little figures that were very primitive, made of wax or bone and wrapped with human hair. The intention was to increase the impact of the healing or magic act on a client, i.e. to scare him. For example:

Je v nej kôra zo stromu, ktorý rastie v ďalekej krajine, kde človek ešte nikdy nohou nevstúpil. Keď tou kôrou potrieš choré miesto alebo akúkoľvek ranu, hneď sa zahojí. A keď z tej kôry zje chorý človek čo len kúsoček, hneď vyzdravie. Neboj sa, kôry budeš mať vždy dosť, keď budeš liečiť dobrých ľudí [It contains the bark of a tree that grows in a distant land, where man has never entered with his feet. When you smear the bark on the scab or any wound, it heals immediately. And when a sick person eats a little bit of that bark, he heals immediately. Don't be afraid, you will always have enough bark when you heal good people] (Banga 1969: 70).

### ***Life philosophy***

The Roma people have long been influenced by their lax attitude to duties and responsibilities, and in this way they did not have any worries. Their greatest wish was to live effortlessly, have their own house, family, and children. They followed the philosophy of living from one day to another, to live for the here and now. For example:

V údolí žili štyri cigánske rody, žili zo dňa na deň v radoostiach i starostiach [Four gypsy families lived in the valley, they lived from day to day in joys and worries] (Berky-Luborecký 1994: 51).

The interpreted features of Roma identity in Romany folktales in specific thematic areas correspond with the historical-ethnographic research of E. Davidová (2004), which testifies to the authenticity of the image and way of life of Roma in Slovakia in literary and non-literary reality. The significance of the identified Roma identity in the selected Roma literary genre lies in the fact that it provides knowledge of the way of life and value system of Roma in Slovakia, not only in the past but also in the present, in the way of life of Roma in marginalised Roma communities, through Roma literary texts, which can also be beneficial for the inclusive education of children and students of Roma origin.

### **Conclusions**

The analysis of Romany identity in Romany folktales has resulted in an identification of the most frequent motifs related to the archetypal origin of Roma people in our corpus. These were also recorded in other literary genres in the production of Romany authors for children and youth in Slovakia. Based on previous literary-historical research, the Romany folktale is the dominant genre of Romany literature for children and youth in Slovakia. It offers the child or young reader a comprehensive and interesting portrait of Roma people/Romany protagonists interpreted in several thematic contexts. These can be grouped in four main categories – external and internal characteristics, images of lifestyle, interpersonal relations, and the spiritual world. In the analysed tales, an authentic rendition has been identified of the simplified portrayal of Romany thinking, feeling, and lifestyle. The real identity of Roma is processed in the work of Roma authors in Romany folktales in a way that is not identifiable in other literary texts. This is probably related to the fact that Romany folktales (their life stories) were first told orally and were only later processed in literature.

Reviving and preserving the specific Romany identity in the genres of Romany literature for children and youth by Romany authors in Slovakia is considered a self-identification and emancipation effort of Romany people, which is valued positively not only from the literary point of view, but also from the educational one. Through an understanding of the specificities of Romany identity through literary art we might approach acceptance and tolerance of the otherness of Romany ethnic group members living in the same land.

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## Bibiána Hlebová

Sveučilište u Prešovu. Pedagoški fakultet, Prešov, Slovačka

## Romski identitet (*romipen*) u romskim narodnim pričama (*paramisa*) u Slovačkoj

Rad predstavlja nastavak književnopovijesnoga istraživanja romske književnosti za djecu i mlade u Slovačkoj, koje upućuje na kvantitativni porast i žanrovsku raznolikost romske književnosti, unutar koje prevladava književni žanr romske narodne priče (*paramisi*). Riječ je o radu književnoteorijskoga karaktera. Analiza romskih narodnih priča (*paramisa*) autora romskoga podrijetla – D. Bange, E. Lackove i J. Berky-Luboreckoga – ističe specifičnosti romskoga identiteta (*romipen*) kroz autentično prikazane sudbine romskih književnih protagonista, njihove karakteristike, prikaz životnoga stila, međuljudske odnose i duhovni svijet. Prepoznavanje romskoga identiteta u književnosti za djecu i mlade može pridonijeti izražavanju samoidentifikacije i emancipacijskih težnji Roma kao manjinske skupine, razumijevanju njihova načina života i vrijednosnoga sustava u okviru većinskoga društva, te prihvaćanju i toleranciji drugosti pripadnika romske etničke zajednice u Slovačkoj.

**Ključne riječi:** romska književnost za djecu i mladež, stvaralaštvo romskih autora, romske narodne priče, romski identitet, drugost Roma u književnosti