

Summary

The objective of this thesis is to do a comparative analysis of four Romany life-stories in prose from different parts of the world and identify features which may justly be called characteristic of Romany writing. The comparison of Victor Vishnevsky's *Memories of a Gypsy*, Mikey Walsh's *Gypsy Boy* and *Gypsy Boy on the Run*, Andrej Giňa's *Pařiv. Ještě víme, co je úcta* and Irena Eliášová's *Naše osada* yields valuable insights into how Romany writers construct their identity and to what extent their current work relates to the existing literary genres.

Because of Romany studies' multidisciplinary nature, the extensive introduction lays the theoretical foundations for the analysis. I proceed from the characteristics of Romany studies in general in part 1.2 to the way it was practised during my undergraduate years in Prague as opposed to the Western tradition (part 1.3). Using a case study of the schism Romany studies are currently facing in the Czech Republic, in part 1.4 I attempt to illustrate the more general epistemological challenges the field has been grappling with between essentialist/primordialist and radical constructivist views.

As there is a definite scarcity of theoretical literature conceptualising Romany writing, in part 1.5 of the introduction the existing body of work is assessed and found methodologically lacking. In the analytical chapters 2, 3 and 4, several theoretical frameworks are tried and tested, e.g. postcolonial theory, African-American literary theory, Walter Ong's notion of oral and chirographic/typographic cultures and Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus*, *misrecognition* and the genesis of the literary field. In the conclusion in part 5, they are found inspirational and partially useful, but never unreservedly and I suggest that a completely new theory of Romany literature may have to be devised in the future.

Each chapter is divided into two parts, one pertaining to identity construction and the other one to the extent to which the texts under scrutiny communicate with the existing literary field. My research into the underdeveloped field of Romany literary studies shows that a comprehensive comparison of Romany life-stories in different languages (English, Slovak, Czech and Romani) has not been done before, making my thesis a pioneering venture. By bringing the Czech Romany production into the picture, I have sought to gain it the international attention which I believe it deserves. By using methods and approaches from both the "Eastern" and the "Western" tradition of Romany studies, I seek to reconcile the two and combine them to a productive end.