

The background is a soft, light purple watercolor wash. Overlaid on this are several botanical illustrations in a darker purple line-art style. On the left, a branch with several pointed leaves and a single five-petaled flower curves upwards. On the right, a similar branch with leaves and a flower curves downwards. A dark purple geometric frame, resembling a stylized hexagon with elongated sides, encloses the central text. Small, dark purple dots are scattered around the floral elements.

ROMA  
WOMEN  
POEMS

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WOMEN  
POEMS

*Romani  
Phen*



*Arate Caló*



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# MARGARITA RIGO “CEIJA” STOJKA

(KRAUBARTH, STYRIA, AUSTRIA,  
MAY 23, 1933 - VIENNA, AUSTRIA,  
JANUARY 28, 2013) WRITER,  
PAINTER, SINGER, SURVIVOR OF  
SAMUDARIPEN. SHE WAS THE  
FIFTH OF SIX CHILDREN.





At the end of World War II, after having suffered the horrors of the concentration camps of Auschwitz, Ravensbrück and Bergen-Belsen, she documented and published the songs, poems and stories of the Lovara about the Samudaripen.

She published her first autobiographical book in 1988, *Wir leben im Verborgenen. Erinnerungen einer-Rom Zigeunerin* bringing to light for the first time in Austria the Nazi persecution of the Romani population, which served as a stimulus for the creation of a Romani association and protest movement.

Ceija Stojka has been awarded numerous prizes and decorations, among others the Bruno Kreisky prize for the best Political Book of 1993. In 2009 the Ministry of Culture granted her the title of teacher. A square in Vienna has been dedicated to her memory.

Her mother, and sisters were freed by the British from Bergen-Belsen in 1945 and returned to Vienna. Ceija began school at the age of twelve in the second grade.

In 1992, she became the Austrian spokeswoman for the recognition of the Roma and Sinti genocide, along being a voice in the struggle against discrimination that the Roma continue to suffer throughout Europe.

Stojka wrote three autobiographies. The first, *We Live in Seclusion: The Memories of a Romni*, published in 1988. The second: *Travelers on This World* (1992) and *I Dream That I am Alive - Liberated From Bergen-Belsen* (*Träume ich, dass ich lebe*) (2005).

Two of Stojka's brothers, Karl and Mongo Stojka, also published autobiographies about their family's experiences of Austrian Roma persecution.

She died in Vienna in 2013 at the age of 79.

**Ceija Stojka:** "I do not want to live through another war" (From German)

"I do not want to live through another war"

By Ceija Stojka

Translated by A.Z. Foreman

*I do not want to go through another war,  
So there shouldn't be any more.  
I have survived too many chills,  
I have seen mothers weep.  
To those poor people, a war can bring  
But pain and suffering  
That others do not know about.  
They don't want to know a thing  
As they aren't really suffering.  
War is always nearer the enemy,  
Spreads sorrow on both sides.  
War is breaker of hearts  
And carnivore of flesh.  
War feasts on flesh that tastes so good  
Topped off with a dessert of blood.  
The Homeless number more and more  
Then are scattered across the world and aimless  
As their dead on the field  
Lie nameless.  
Therefore, dear God, let there be not  
Another war.  
For only then can we all happily  
Live evermore.*



# MARGITA REIZNEROVÁ

(1945)



She was born in Slovakia, but just after the war the whole family moved to Prague. In his literary activity, he composed mainly prose poems and fairy tales. He was inspired to write in Romani by a group of authors around the first Romani newspaper in Czechoslovakia, Romano l'il (Romani newspaper), which was founded in 1970. In particular, the texts of Tera Fabiánová, thanks to which the poetry section secured a firm place in the magazine, according to Reiznerová, showed that "it is possible to write Romani" and "what a beautiful language Romani is."

Margita Reiznerová herself only began writing after 1989, when she co-founded the Roma Authors' Association and contributed to the anthology Kale ruži both with several poems and the prose story Le Romengero gendalos (The Mirror of the Roma). In 1992, the fairy tale Kal'i was published. She also wrote a collection of bilingual Romani-Czech poems Suno (Dream) (Czech: Sny - (translated from Romani by Lada Viková), which was published in 2000. She was very involved in the functioning of the association founded, for several years.). In addition to this periodical, she also published her poems in the magazines Amaro Lav and Romano džaniben.

Margita Reiznerová was a nurse by profession, she worked as a nursing assistant for 11 years in Podolí, Prague. In addition to writing, she also devoted herself to music, she was a soloist in the Perumos gypsy folk ensemble. In the 1990s, she emigrated with her family to Belgium, where she settled permanently.

She lived in Belgium with her son Romane Fedak and continued to write her poems and fairy tales. He continued in the ensemble with his family headed by his brother Ladislav Rusenko.

# ALIGHT BY A FIRE

By Margita ReiznerovÃ¡;  
Translated by A.Z. Foreman

*In a little hut  
Find a place to sleep,  
Clasp your baby boy to your breast.  
Hungry eyes  
Are covered by the night.*





# LUMINITA MIHAI CIOABA

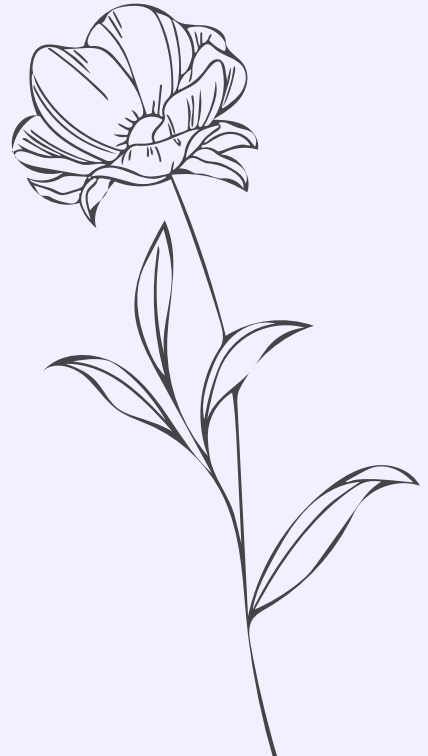
BORN OCTOBER  
1, 1957 IN GORJ,  
IS A ROMANIAN  
ROMANI WRITER.



Graduated in Philology at the People's School of Art and Direction of the Department of Actors, and later at the Faculty of Philology in Sibiu. In addition to her literary work, she holds the position of president of the Cultural-Social Foundation of the Roma Ion Cioaba. She is also one of the main publishers of Neo Drom and Divano Rromanó newspapers in Sibiu.

**EARTH'S ROOT** (From her book: POEMS OF YESTERDAY AND TODAY)

*I am sure I still love you  
and this is why  
earth's root has come again to life  
my steps  
now in the dawn  
run  
through the forest.  
And I don't know myself  
why  
all Spring's children  
wound themselves in my hair  
so that I awake now  
in this town 's streets  
where you're waiting for me.  
How strange these passers-by,  
stop now  
turn their heads  
and smile  
and point at me their finger.*



# TERA FABIANOVA

TERA FABIÁNOVÁ (NÉE KURINOVÁ) WAS BORN  
IN ŽIHÁREC (FORMERLY CZECHOSLOVAKIA,  
TODAY SLOVAKIA) ON 15 OCTOBER 1930.

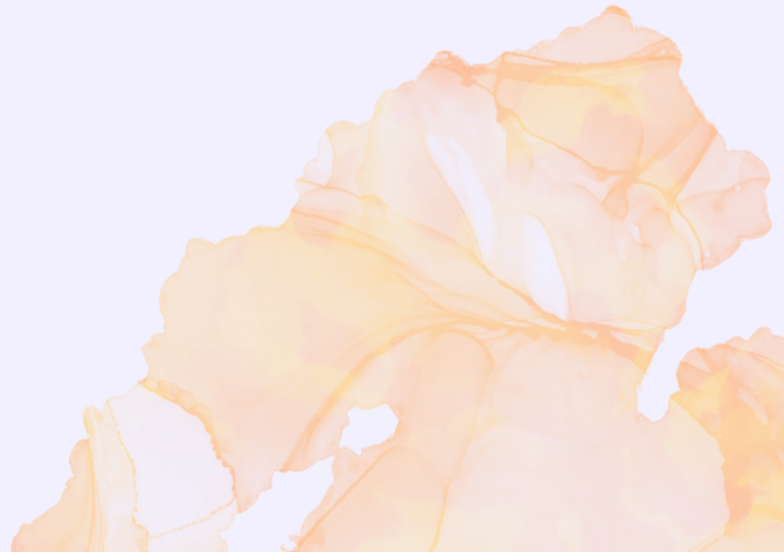


She grew up in southern Slovakia, a region with a Hungarian-speaking minority. She spoke Ungriko Romani as her mother-tongue and, since her marriage, the so-called Servika dialect, as well as Hungarian and Slovak. At the age of sixteen she left Slovakia with her parents and siblings to work first in Moravia and shortly thereafter in Prague. She died in Prague on 23 March 2007.

## ALL MY JOY

*All my joy  
All my joy comes  
Through my children's little hands.  
We go hungry  
Dare I hope for more?  
I have given God his due  
What can I owe the Devil?  
The clouds pass high above  
And I, like a twisted tree, am bound to the earth...  
Even a twisted tree gives shade.*

Translated by David Vaghan



## COME WITH ME

*Come with me, my sweet, to my mother's village  
Where after dark the Roma spin their tales  
Come with me, I'll never leave your side  
Or bring you pain or shame.  
When the Roma see me bring you  
The fiddler will strike up a tune.  
We are not poor, though we have nowhere to lay our  
heads.  
An old walnut tree stands in the yard - leaves green,*

*There I shall lay you down, when the silver night  
comes.  
I shall spread my finest shirt beneath you  
And if you happen to feel cold, I shall call the  
heavens to cover you.  
Sweet God will marry us  
We need no priest  
Come with me, stay with me  
We shall love one another  
As the black earth loves the black bread.*

Translated by David Vaghan.





# BRONISLAWA WAJS

ALSO KNOWN AS PAPUSZA  
("DOLL")



(Lublin, Poland, August 17, 1908- Inowrocław, February 8, 1987) poetess and singer. One of the most famous Romani poetesses ever known

Much of her work is dedicated to extolling the Romani life. She also passionately expressed the magnitude of the sufferings of our people during the Second World War, not only being a source of strength and hope for the Roma, but also in love for life and nature, which is why she was included in 1962 in the Polish Union of Writers. Her works have been translated into German, English, French, Swedish and Italian. Some of her poems have also been published in Spanish.

In 2013, a film based on her life entitled Papusza was premiered, directed by Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze.

In the summer of 1949, Jerzy Ficowski, heard Papusza performing her songs and, recognizing her talent, urged her to write them down as poems, so that he could publish them. The song "Tears of Blood" (translated below) along with several others, was published by Ficowski in the early 1950s in a book titled Pieśni Papus (Papusza's Songs). Unfortunately, Papusza's own people rejected her poetry.

Their poems are unique and enormously strong works of art in their authenticity, absolute honesty, sincerity and originality drawn from "nomadic life under the protection of nature".

Her work is one of the most powerful lyrics to emerge from the porraimos.

Papusza married Dionýz Wajs, a much older man from her stepfather relatives.

Her relatives did not wish her to partake in such "eccentric" activities as reading and writing. They made fun of her reading when she was a child and later they laughed at her writing. The position of the community in which Papusza lived was that she should not write. Whenever Papusza was caught reading she was beaten and her books were destroyed. But still she continued ... She suffered the rejection of her own people. Papusza suffered a mental breakdown and was committed to a psychiatric hospital.

## Tears of Blood

(How we suffered under the German soldiers in Volyň from 1943 to 1944)

*In the woods. No water, no fire — great hunger.*

*Where could the children sleep? No tent.*

*We could not light the fire at night.*

*By day, the smoke would alert the Germans.*

*How to live with children in the cold of winter?*

*All are barefoot...*

*When they wanted to murder us,  
first they forced us to hard labor.*

*A German came to see us.*

*— I have bad news for you.*

*They want to kill you tonight.*

*Don't tell anybody.*

*I too am a dark Gypsy,  
of your blood — a true one.  
God help you  
in the black forest...  
Having said these words,  
he embraced us all...*

*For two three days no food.  
All go to sleep hungry.  
Unable to sleep,  
they stare at the stars...  
God, how beautiful it is to live!  
The Germans will not let us...*

*Ah, you, my little star!  
At dawn you are large!  
Blind the Germans!  
Confuse them,  
lead them astray,  
so the Jewish and Gypsy child can live!*

*When big winter comes,  
what will the Gypsy woman with a small child do?  
Where will she find clothing?  
Everything is turning to rags.  
One wants to die.  
No one knows, only the sky,  
only the river hears our lament.  
Whose eyes saw us as enemies?  
Whose mouth cursed us?  
Do not hear them, God.  
Hear us!*



*A cold night came,  
The old Gypsy women sang  
A Gypsy fairy tale:  
Golden winter will come,  
snow, like little stars,  
will cover the earth, the hands.  
The black eyes will freeze,  
the hearts will die.*

*So much snow fell,  
it covered the road.  
One could only see the Milky Way in the sky.*

*On such night of frost  
a little daughter dies,  
and in four days  
mothers bury in the snow  
four little sons.  
Sun, without you,  
see how a little Gypsy is dying from cold  
in the big forest.*

*Once, at home, the moon stood in the window,  
didn't let me sleep. Someone looked inside.  
I asked — who is there?  
— Open the door, my dark Gypsy.  
I saw a beautiful young Jewish girl,  
shivering from cold,  
asking for food.  
You poor thing, my little one.  
I gave her bread, whatever I had, a shirt.  
We both forgot that not far away  
were the police.  
But they didn't come that night.*



*All the birds  
are praying for our children,  
so the evil people, vipers, will not kill them.  
Ah, fate!  
My unlucky luck!*

*Snow fell as thick as leaves,  
barred our way,  
such heavy snow, it buried the cartwheels.  
One had to trample a track,  
push the carts behind the horses.*

*How many miseries and hungers!  
How many sorrows and roads!  
How many sharp stones pierced our feet!  
How many bullets flew by our ears!*

*O my little star, O daybreak,  
how great you are!  
Blind the eyes of the German!  
Draw them along the wrong paths!  
Show them the wrong way,  
so that the Jewish and Gypsy  
children can live.*

*From the book, “ **Songs of the Roma**” A collection  
of verses by the gypsy poet Papusza*



A black and white portrait of Hedina Tahirović Sijerčić, a woman with long dark hair, looking slightly to the right. She is wearing a dark top with a patterned detail. The background is white with a faint purple floral graphic behind the text.

# HEDINA TAHIROVIĆ SIJERČIĆ

BORN ON NOVEMBER 11,  
1960. IN SARAJEVO,  
BOSNIA - HERZEGOVINA.  
SHE IS A JOURNALISM  
GRADUATE, A WRITER, A  
POET, AN EDUCATOR,  
AND THE FIRST BOSNIAN  
TELEVISION AND RADIO  
PRESENTER AND  
PRODUCER OF ROMANI  
ORIGIN.



While working in Sarajevo, she organized and hosted Romani TV and radio programs, and worked as an activist for the International Romani Union. Later, she lived in Toronto, Canada and worked as a teacher for the Toronto District School Board, eventually becoming the Editor-in-Chief of the first Canadian-Romani newsletter “Romano Lil” between 1998–2001.

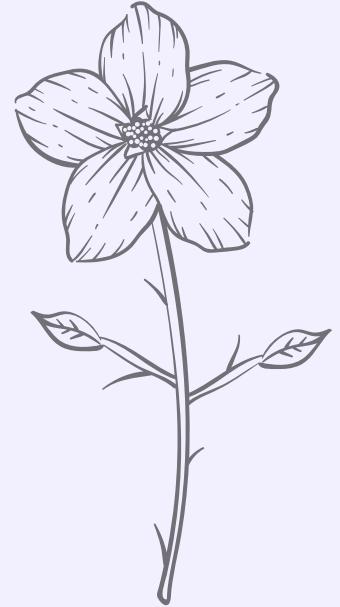
She won the “Best Promotion” prize with her book, “How God made the Roma” at the XXI. International Book Fair in Sarajevo. In 2010 she won the prize for best literary creation of 2010 with her poetry book “Ašun, haćar dukh” (Listen, feel pain), and a second international poetry prize, “The golden pen of Pappusa” of Tarnów, Poland.

She presently lives in Germany.

## Romani Milky Way

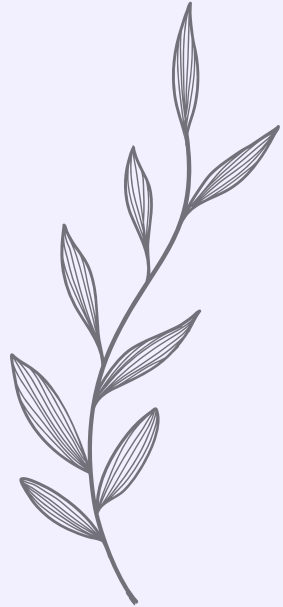
*God desired and urged  
That the Earth and Water marry.  
The Earth and Water sought from God  
A male child, a Sun, from their hearts.  
The Earth conceived five times  
And bore five daughters, five stars:  
The first star — Flower  
The second star — Faith  
The third star — Apple  
The fourth Star — Bird  
The fifth Star — Hope  
The Earth and Water cried  
For they wanted a male child, the Sun.  
God listened to them and said:  
"Then make a solemn vow!  
That every year you will slaughter a sheep,  
Put its crimson blood on the child's forehead  
And give him the name, Bread!"  
The Earth and Water wept with joy and declared:  
"It is our solemn vow!"*

— Hedina Sijerčić



## **A Deceased Good Rom**

*In the room lies  
A deceased, good Rom,  
Around him, Roma are sitting  
To speak to him one last time.  
Women and children have gone  
To Uncle's house.  
A deceased, good Rom  
Should sleep in peace.  
The window is slightly open  
And the door is closed.  
By the window, a glass.  
In the glass, cold water.  
At the window, a plate.  
In the plate, white flour.  
A deceased, good Rom  
Should eat one last time.  
A deceased, good Rom  
Should not go hungry  
Into the second world.  
Television and mirror are covered.  
A young man  
Prays and cries  
With the Roma all night.  
The sun is rising  
Morning is awakening.  
At the window a bird is chirping.  
In the glass is less water  
In the plate the trail of fingers.  
The deceased, good Rom ate  
One last time.*





*A funeral car comes  
And the deceased, good Rom is driven away  
All the Roma from the Quarter are outside,  
They pour water out from pails  
And pray together  
For the deceased, good Rom:  
"Go with water!  
Go with God!"*

— Hedina Sijerčić

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