The Stereotype Caravan:
Assessment of stereotypes and ideology levels used to portray Gypsies in two European feature films

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(Abstract)

The dominant ideology in Eastern Europe has kept and still keeps Roma people at the lowest level of society through a long list of negative stereotypes and active discrimination. Up to the end of the twentieth century, cinematography tended to portray Gypsies as an exotic element in romantic settings, avoiding social and political issues like poverty, discrimination and marginalization. The fall of communism marked a change, as more films dared to speak against the dominant ideology. This thesis examines the socio-cultural stereotypes used to portray the Gypsies and the levels of ideology present in two movies: *Gadjo Dilo* (Tony Gatlif, 1997, France) and *Time of the Gypsies* (Emir Kusturica, 1989, Yugoslavia).

*"Films take the raw material of social history and of social discourses and process them
into products which are themselves historical events and social forces."*

Douglas Kellner (1999)

For my son, Andrei.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1. Definition and self-disclosure

Because the Gypsies are so diverse, it is unclear what the Gypsy identity is. Several criteria differentiate this ethnic group: lifestyle (nomadic or sedentary), tribal affiliation, occupation, language, religion and country of residence. In Eastern Europe, Gypsies have been sedentary for centuries, while in Western Europe they have maintained a nomadic lifestyle, mainly for economic reasons. In many countries, the tribal identity is primarily rooted in the traditional economic activity of a group (Barany, 2002). For example, in Romania and Bulgaria, one can find spoon makers (*Lingurari*), makers of wooden bowls (*Kopanari*), coal miners (*Caravlahi*), gold washers and makers of golden jewelry (*Aurari*), gold miners (*Baiesi*), musicians (*Lautari*), and others. One of the most numerous tribes in Eastern Europe is *Kaldarashi*, originally blacksmiths. Often several tribes live in the same area. Various economic opportunities led to an economic diversity as well. Today, there are rich Gypsies, middle class Gypsies and poor Gypsies. As several historians noted, it was mainly the rich and middle class Eastern European Gypsies who had the means and information to travel to Western Europe in the 1990s (Fraser, 1994; Barany, 2002).

Language is another criterion for differentiation. *Romanes*, the Gypsy language, is the main tool used by historians and linguists to establish the Gypsy origins since Gypsies have maintained a primarily oral culture. Although this language was deeply influenced by languages of different countries of residence, the main root apparently originated in northeastern India.[1] The Gypsies who live in Western Europe and speak a dialect of *Romanes* with strong German influences call themselves *Sinti*, while the Eastern European Gypsies call themselves *Roma*. It should also be noted that Gypsies in many

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[1] Many think of Gypsies in terms of physical characteristics similar to the Indian people—dark skin, dark hair, and brown eyes. While many Gypsies still show these characteristics, there is a significant number of European Gypsies with blond hair, blue eyes and light skin. Therefore, a differentiation based on physical appearance would not be relevant.

countries (e.g. Hungary) have adopted the language of their country of residence and no longer speak *Romanes*.

Gypsies are quite diverse from a religious perspective as well. In the relatively small area of the Balkans, one can find Roman Catholic Gypsies in Croatia, Muslim Gypsies in Bosnia and European Turkey, and Christian Orthodox Gypsies in Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria. Fraser (1995) clearly states the difficulty surrounding the definition of Gypsiness:

> Given these and many other possibilities of confusion, and the impracticality of hard and fast racial distinctions, it is only to be expected that counting Gypsies will turn out to be an exercise in frustration. National censuses often do not make the attempt. Where they do, there are difficulties in defining the target population, whether peripatetic or settled, and then in identifying it or persuading its members to declare themselves in accordance with expectations. (p. 299)

If not all the Gypsies are nomadic, poor, or live on their wits, as many stereotypes portray them, we may ask, what makes a true Gypsy? Gypsies themselves and historians (e.g. Hancock, 1987; Barany, 2002) say it is a person's ancestry (the bloodline) that makes a Gypsy a Gypsy. According to Slovak Gypsy author Ilona Lacková (2000), it matters less who a person is in Gypsy society than their kin. Some of the first questions asked when meeting someone new are "whose are you" and "who do you know." As Barany (2002) states, "they do not consider themselves members of a cohesive ethnic group but instead identify with the subgroup to which they belong." (p. 15). Chapter 2 of this thesis will provide more general information about Gypsy history and culture.

It is hard not to be political when one makes a film about Gypsies or when one interprets a film about them, so perhaps the first step that I should take at the beginning of this paper is a disclosure of my own stereotypes toward Gypsies. I grew up across the street

from a Gypsy community of Kaldarashi[2] coppersmiths, a group that somehow managed to maintain a private business in communist Romania where everything was owned by the state. They made metal tubes that were sought by construction companies to install in apartment buildings. My father told me they had a "Gypsy secret" of building those tubes by beating them with the hammers all day. We could hear that all right. Every morning they woke up the entire neighborhood with the noise. The village was structured hierarchically like a little kingdom and was somewhat separated from the non-Gypsy territory by a road and a river. I say *somewhat* because there were a few houses inhabited by middle-class Romanians in close proximity to the Gypsies. The town, with its communist buildings, expanded and ended up surrounding the Gypsy community, which initially was at the outskirts. The leader, the *bulibasha*, had the biggest villa close to the work area. My parents and neighbors told me to never go in the Gypsy village since dangers would come my way. Still, a few times I dared cross the village, and nothing happened except a few strange looks from Gypsy children. There were no conflicts between the Romanians and their Gypsy neighbors. To the contrary, I remember Gypsy women regularly chatting with non-Gypsy women from my building. Some resentment developed when the b*ulibasha* died supposedly from a brain infection after carelessly scratching himself deep in the ear with a copper wire. After the funeral, the Gypsy women explained angrily in their usual chatting that the Romanian nurse at the hospital was rude to the dying man and refused to help him because "he was a Gypsy."

From my balcony on the fourth floor, I could see the entire Gypsy village, and from my balcony I watched a few of their weddings and funerals. These were impressive shows involving hundreds of Gypsy guests promenading in the street, and hundreds of Romanians watching from their windows.

I remember my parents were happy to move from the "bad" neighborhood after ten years, looking forward to quiet mornings. That Gypsy "island" is still there in my hometown, and for me it is a model of adaptability, business savvy and hard work. The only negative

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[2] Kaldarashi is a numerous Gypsy tribe spread in Eastern Europe, Russia, and also in the United States.

impression I acquired was about the way they decorated their houses (*kitsch* in Romania is sometimes equivalent with *Gypsy,* which is another stereotype/prejudice in itself).

My negative stereotypes towards the Gypsies began later in Bucharest, the capital, after I heard news about thefts, burglaries, and crimes committed by Gypsies not just from the media, but from close friends as well. In the capital, the dominant stereotype among Romanians is that Gypsies prefer to live without working, but this stereotype is far from the truth. Some adjusted to the needs of the city and specialized in selling flowers, construction work, and entertainment for weddings or restaurants. Some illegal occupations attracted both Gypsies and non-Gypsies – stealing, fortune telling, black market currency exchange, and prostitution networks.

My mother-in-law, a teacher, believes in the Gypsy curse or "bad eye," and once I had to watch her being stripped of a large amount of money by an old Gypsy woman just because we had my son with us, and she feared the Gypsy woman might throw a curse on the baby.

A graduate course on Issues of Diversity and the Media provided me the opportunity to reassess my own stereotypes about Gypsy culture. I do not claim to be stereotype free, but the academic research that I have done has brought me closer to their culture than I was when living across the street from them. I am aware that my knowledge about Roma can help and jeopardize the purpose of this interpretation at the same time. I can only hope that it will help it more than jeopardize it.

Finally, I need to clarify a few elements of terminology that may be unfamiliar to the reader. After the fall of communism, the Gypsy activists protested against the wide use of the word *Gypsy* with pejorative connotations in the media. *Roma* has become the preferred term for a numerous group of Gypsies that live mostly in Central and Eastern Europe (Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Russia, Romania, Czech Republic, former Yugoslavia etc). The word *Rom* means *man* in the Romani language that has hindu-indic roots. *Romani* is the adjective of the noun *Roma*, as in *Romani traditions*. The reader

should not confound the adjective *Romani* with the adjective *Romanian*, which refers to Romania, the Eastern European country inhabited by Romanians who chose this name for their country in the 19th century to hint to their Latin ancestry. In this paper I use the words *Gypsies* and *Roma* interchangeably, with capital letters and full respect for this culture, simply because my American audience may be more familiar to the word *Gypsy*. Another word that the reader will encounter often in this paper is *gadje*. In the Romani language it means *non-Gypsy* and it is usually used to designate the outsiders.

1.2. Purpose

Although several studies have assessed the image of Gypsies in European print and broadcast media (Breary, 2001; Fawn, 2001; Erjavec, 2001), there has been very little written about the presence of Gypsies in movies. This thesis does not aim at an exhaustive and positivist analysis of all films made after 1989 featuring Gypsies, but it will take an interpretive approach as it focuses on two European movies. These movies were selected for two reasons: first, they feature Gypsies as main characters. Second, they show a rich social and/or political culture, while using stereotypes in radically different ways to portray their main characters.

The goal of this paper is two-fold: it will aim first to assess the stereotype use in these movies. Second, through the analysis of stereotype use, it will attempt an itnerpretation of both films from the perspective of ideological theory in film. Both feature films were made after the fall of the Iron Curtain. The films are *Time of the Gypsies* (Emir Kusturica, 1989) and *Gadjo Dilo* (Trans. *The Crazy Stranger*, Tony Gatlif, 1997).

I have approached this interpretive study with the assumption that stereotyping is a tool used in the film world and in mass media in general to provide a set of symbols that culturally diverse audiences could comprehend (Hayward, 1996). Through the use of conventions and stereotypes, films can be understood and appreciated not only by the audience of one country or community, but also by audiences in other countries. At the same time, stereotyping seems hardly avoidable, since the narrative process usually involves a process of selection, simplification and codification. As Douglas Kellner (1999) noted,

> Films take the raw material of social history and of social discourse and
> process them into products which are themselves historical events and
> social forces. Films can provide information about the 'psychology' of an
> era and its tensions, conflicts, fears, and fantasies, but it does so not as a
> simple representation or mirroring of an extra-cinematic social reality.
> Rather, films refract social discourses and content into specifically

cinematic forms which engage audiences in an active process of

constructing meaning. (p. 3)

Directing a movie is a constant decision-making process in terms of what to include and what to leave out. Also, film as a communication medium allows for various, creative ways of story telling, while being able to exert a cultural pressure on the audience as well. Film has become such a universal source of entertainment around the world that it is probably easier to point out which audiences have not been touched by it. My main assumption is that the use of stereotypes becomes an instrument in building and communicating a cinematic political message. As Louis Giannetti (2002) pointed out, "ideology is another system in film, albeit an often disguised language that often speaks in codes" (p. 417). This thesis will interpret the content and techniques of two European films featuring Gypsy characters from the perspective of ideological film theory in the attempt to answer the following questions: *What stereotypes have been used to portray Gypsies in two movies where the plot focuses on their social life? How does the use of stereotypes influence the ideological outcome of the film?*

1.3. Films about Gypsies before and after 1990

Before the 1970s, movies about Gypsies were quite a rarity in communist countries, which probably reflects the marginal position Gypsies occupied in society (Crowe, 1994). The few films portraying Roma preferred to employ professional non-Roma actors and were centered mostly on cultural aspects of Gypsy life, rather than their social, economic and political problems (e.g. *Gypsies Are Found Near Heaven*, 1975, Emil Loteanu, USSR). Communist cinematography was entirely state-owned and characterized by a self-stereotyping strategy, flattering the characteristics of the majority group and ultimately attempting to increase confidence in the political regime. The communist governments preferred to finance films dealing with self-complimenting historical events, contemporary socialist issues, or adaptations of national literature that met the approval of the censors. Crowe's (1994) findings support my personal observation that films about Gypsies rarely made the list of approved films in Romania. A generalization to all the Eastern European societies would be inappropriate, since movies about Gypsies had been made in the former Soviet Union (*Gypsies Are Found Near Heaven*, Emil Loteanu, 1975) and Yugoslavia (*I Have Even Met Happy Gypsies*, Alexandre Petrovic, 1967; *Guardian Angel*, Goran Paskaljevic, 1987). In Western Europe, especially in France, several films portrayed Gypsies before 1990: *La Belle et le Tzigane* (Jean Dreville, Marton Keleti, 1959), *Mon Pote et le Gitan* (Francois Gir, 1959), or *Le Gitane* (Jose Giovann, 1974).

After the fall of communism, the social, economic and political dynamics of Eastern European Roma changed, and with them their portrayal in movies as well. Although I am not in the position to provide quantitative information for a comparison, the two movies proposed for analysis are evidence for the claim that, qualitatively, we are witnessing a change in the way Gypsies are portrayed in the art of film. The difference consists in the extra-step that filmmakers take beyond general stereotypes and in the search of authenticity. I see four main reasons behind this: first, the number of Gypsies has increased significantly in the last 20 years, rendering them more "visible," especially in Slovakia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Hungary or Romania (Barany, 2002; Frasier, 1995). Second, the fall of communism in 1989 marked a major immigration movement of Gypsy groups generally from East to West and from South to North, thus increasing the

number of Roma in countries that had a small number of Roma, such as Western and North European countries (Barany, 2002). Third, there is an increasing political mobilization on the part of European Gypsy communities (Barany, 1998, 2002). Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, the media have been freed from the communist censorship and the Western and Eastern distribution networks have enlarged and intersected their territories bringing the Gypsy topic to audiences that were not familiar with it.[3]

Tony Gatlif was born in Algeria in 1948 of Algerian and Gypsy parents and later moved to France (his real name is Michel Dahmani). He began with acting, but soon decided he wanted to work behind the camera. Some of his films [*Swing* (2002), *Gadjo Dilo* (1997), *Latcho Drom* (1993), *Les Princes* (1983) portrayed the Roma as victims of the *gadje* discrimination (*gadje* is the Gypsy word for the non-Gypsies) and talented musicians. One can say that Gatlif's films of Gypsy inspiration have often shown a political agenda and have provided the Western World with a view inside the life of the Gypsies (Devi, 1997; Fuller, 1998).

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, feature films about this minority were made where the actors were *real* Gypsies, most often unprofessional actors, as in Emir Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsies* (1989), *Black Cat, White Cat* (1998) and Gatlif's *Latcho Drom* (1993) or *Gadjo Dilo* (1997). This is relevant not only from the realist perspective of film theory, but also in terms of cultural opening, as it ethnologically implies that Roma groups chose to accept the presence of a filming crew among them and participated directly in the making of the film. Most importantly, at the level of signifiers using real Roma suggests that the filmmakers prioritized authenticity in order to add credibility to their films.

Gatlif's films have often incorporated ideological protest against the marginality of the Gypsies, encouragement to become familiar with their culture, and insight into the destructive impact of ethnic conflicts; *Gadjo Dilo* (1997) is the perfect illustration of that

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[3] Thus, Tony Gatlif, and his French film-crew were able to shoot *Gadjo Dilo* in Romania, using real Gypsies as actors. During communist times, such a project would have met insurmountable difficulties from the censors.

perspective. Some critics (Devi, 1997; Fuller, 1998) talk about Gatlif in terms of a Gypsy auteur, since three of his films form a "Gypsy trilogy" *(Les Princes*, 1983; *Latcho Drom*, 1993, and *Gadjo Dilo*, 1997). In many of his films Tony Gatlif was simultaneously involved in several sectors of the film work: script writing, casting, directing, producing, or supervising the music.[4] His movies bear the mark of his attachment to the music of *tsigani* (in Eastern Europe), *gitanos* (in Spain), or *les manouches* (in France), as he sees it as the only "exchangeable language between the Gypsies and the non-Gypsies" (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, 1999).

Latcho Drom (1993) won the best documentary award in Cannes (1994). It presents a series of musical scenes from India, Egypt, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, France and Spain. The movie contains no dialogue, just music and colorful images, and is full of symbolism. In *Gadjo Dilo* (1997) the tone is two-sided and Roma are described as both good and bad, strikingly authentic and veridical. Tony Gatlif seems to aim at building bridges between the two cultures.

Emir Kusturica (born in Sarajevo, Bosnia in 1955) is better known by the American audience for *Underground* (1995) and *Arizona Dream* (1992). In Europe, he became famous in mid '80s with *Do You Remember Dolly Bell?* (a prizewinner at the Venice Film Festival, 1981) and *When Father Was Away On Business* (best-film at Cannes, 1985). Both *Time of the Gypsies* (1989) and *Black Cat, White Cat* (1998) have their plots built around Gypsy life in former Yugoslavia, under the economic and social pressure brought by the fall of the paternal communist structures and the difficulties of the new born market economy.

Time of the Gypsies (Emir Kusturica, 1989), the second movie in my analysis, is directed by a non-Gypsy who understands and loves the Gypsy culture (Horton, 2000), and is interested in elaborating on the psychological mechanisms of his characters for both artistic and ideological purposes. The tragic is mixed with the comic, the extraordinary with the ordinary, and the innocent with the diabolic. Kusturica drew his inspiration for

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[4] Source: Film database [Online]. Available at: www.imdb.com

Time of the Gypsies from a newspaper article about the inter-European trade in young Gypsy children. He shot the film in a Macedonian Gypsy community and set the action in the pre-Milosevic Yugoslavia. The film brought much critical acclaim, earning him the best director award at the 1989 Cannes Film Festival (Cannon, 1998; Corliss, 1990).

Although not a Gypsy himself, Kusturica has a special appreciation of outsiderness. As Andrew James Horton (2000) noted for *Central Europe Review*, his Gypsy films draw on his childhood lived in "a sprawling near-shanty-town of a suburb at the edge of multi-ethnic Sarajevo." According to the interview, Kusturica considered himself lucky to have grown up among the Roma who "started drinking earlier than us, they started sleeping with girls earlier than we did. So, every spiritual process that every man has to go through they had instantly and with no problems" (Horton, 2000).

Here we have two European directors, one with Gypsy ancestry who actively immersed himself and learned everything that he could about various Gypsy traditions and culture around the world, using them in four of his movies to portray the Gypsies. The other, a Bosnian director who grew up with Gypsy friends and whose applied knowledge of Gypsy traditions does not pretend to go further than his country's borders, but whose care and interest are well illustrated in *Time of the Gypsies* (1989).

1.4. Methodology

The theoretical pillars of this thesis are the socio-psychological theory of stereotypes and the ideological theory in film presented in chapter three. The unit of analysis will be the *stereotype*, defined as "a set of beliefs about the personal attributes of a social group" (Hamilton, 1981). First, this paper will analyze *what* stereotypes have been used in the two movies and secondly *how* they are shown on the screen (content and form).

The Roma linguist Ian Hancock (1987) identified a few negative stereotypes used in nineteenth and twentieth century American media, such as baby theft, stealing, carefree wandering, and I found they are common with some still active in Europe today—Gypsy men as sexual threat to non-Gypsy women, and lack of political and religious causes (Barany, 2002; Erjavec, 2001; Fawn 2001). Fraser (1995), Crowe (1991, 1994), Barany (2002), and Stewart (1997) studied Roma and made significant remarks on the stereotypes that the Gypsies have developed about the *gadje* (seen negatively as oppressive, domineering, source of trouble, easy victims of Gypsy cunning, or sometimes positively as trustworthy, but most significantly they are considered impure because they don't respect the Gypsy code of hygiene—*marimé*).

In the process of assessing the stereotypes, I will look at how both groups (minority and majority) are represented – in many details or simplified? How complex are the relationships between the two groups – adverse, neutral, or cooperative? What are the cultural elements used to stereotype the Gypsy group? I must acknowledge that I am the only interpreter of the two films, therefore the reader should expect a significant degree of subjectivity.

To assess the levels of ideology I will use the classifications provided by Prince (1997) and Giannetti (2002). They are presented in detail in the second section of chapter three of this thesis that discusses the ideological theory of film.

Of course, the narrative will be the main level of analysis, but as Jarvie (1970) reminds his readers, an ideological film critique should go beyond what only a script could tell by

itself without necessarily viewing the films. Therefore, I will also look at the cinematic procedures (the use of camera, light, editing and sound) that the film crew has employed to build a certain tone and make the ideological message readable.

The second chapter of this thesis will present the history of Gypsies in Central and Eastern Europe. It will include three subsections: one on the history of Gypsies in medieval times, the second one on modern times, and a third one on Gypsy values regarding marriage and family, justice, death, housing, travel, traditional occupations, based on the work of several historians and ethnographers.

The third chapter will elaborate on the theoretical framework underlying this thesis, mainly on two pillars of theory: the socio-psychological theory of stereotypes and the ideological theory in film. The historical chapter and the theoretical one will find their synthesis and application in the fourth chapter consisting in the interpretive analysis of the stereotypes and levels of ideology in *Gadjo Dilo* (Gatlif, 1997) and *Time of the Gypsies* (Kusturica, 1989).

Chapter 2

History of Gypsies in Central and Eastern Europe

In order to understand the historical path of the Roma in Eastern Europe, it is important to provide historical information regarding the region of the Balkans, especially since the two films under analysis present the stories of Roma in Romania and the former Yugoslavia. The Balkans are defined geographically as a peninsula surrounded by the Adriatic Sea on the west, the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Crete on the south, the Aegean Sea and Black Sea on the east. It includes the following countries: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia, Albania, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria and European Turkey. Despite its relatively small size, the area has been and still is characterized by ethnic and religious diversity. Three major religions dominate: Roman Catholic, Islam and Christian Orthodox. This diversity is the result of intense and numerous conflicts generated from the intersecting interests of Eastern and Western major powers. The Byzantine Empire dominated up to the 14th century, the Ottoman Empire from the 14th to the 19th century, the Habsbourg Empire and later its progeny, the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, crossed paths with the Ottomans who were pushing west intermittently from the 14th to 19th century. The 20th century was marked by the Soviet influence, all countries in the area (except Greece and Turkey) falling under communist regimes. This historical alternation of rulers from such different cultural zones rendered the area a very agitated one where political forces of East and West clashed repeatedly, enjoying only temporary and fragile periods of peace. To this day the Balkan Peninsula is dominated by nationalist attitudes stirred by religious and political arguments. The most recent ethnic conflict led to the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

2.1 Medieval history

Gypsies, or Roma, entered Europe sometime in the twelfth century from northwestern India through Asia Minor (Crowe, 1994; Barany, 2002). The exact date of their departure from India is not known, but several sources place it around 1000 AD. The same mystery surrounds the reasons of their migration, but it is believed that they left to escape slavery and mistreatment. Unfortunately, this is exactly what they had to face in medieval Europe.

The Middle Ages were a very tormented period in Europe, and Gypsies were caught right in the middle of the events. Crowe (1994) mentions documents dated in the 14th century attesting that while in some countries like Slovakia, Hungary, and Lithuania most Gypsies were free and made a living as skilled metal craftsmen, musicians and soldiers, in Moldavia and Wallachia, (in contemporary Romania), they were sold as slaves by the rich families.

Most of the war campaigns lead by Moldavian or Wallachian princes in neighbor countries (Bulgaria and Hungary) resulted in large numbers of Gypsies being captured. Crimean Tatars were also enslaved, and the Gypsy and Tatar families were given as a present to monasteries since it was part of the tradition for the rich to build or donate to monasteries to prove their Christianity and faith. In time, Gypsies became a significant work force for the Moldavian and Wallachian economies, especially in the transport business. They were at the bottom of the social pyramid, and marriages between non-Gypsy and Gypsies were outlawed in both Wallachia and Moldavia.

However, as the Ottoman Empire became a threat, even in the countries where Gypsies were free citizens, the attitude towards them began to change. They were seen as "spies and something of a Turkish fifth column" (Crowe, 1994, p. xi), which caused them to have their lifestyle and trade even more restricted. Barany (2002) also mentions that Gypsies welcomed the Turks with many hopes for a change in the quality of their lifestyle. Under Turkish control (16th and 17th century), the slave trade developed even more in both Romanian provinces, but this time a certain category of Romanian peasants

(*serbi*) joined the Gypsies in slavery, with the difference that Romanian *serbi* could not be sold and were tied to the land.

The 18th century found Romania still under Turkish domination, but with Greek rulers brought from the Athens' Fanar district. In Wallachia, one of the Fanariot rulers, Constantin Mavrocordat, was the first to emancipate Gypsies married to non-Gypsies, while in Moldavia, marriages between Gypsies and non-Gypsies were still outlawed. The complete emancipation of Gypsies came in the 19th century (1855), when the two provinces became united under the name of Romania and all *serbi* and Gypsy slaves were freed.

By comparison, the Gypsies who lived in the Hungarian Slovakia had a much better fate only till the 18th century, when the Habsburg domination brought very harsh policies toward nomadic Gypsies. The enlightened despotism of Maria Theresa and her son Joseph II brought a special policy toward the Roma which attempted to end Gypsy nomadic life in order to make them good Austrian citizens. This was often done by kidnapping the Gypsy children and placing them with Austrian families to get an Austrian education. The policy included even a change of vocabulary, as the word *cigány* (Hungarian word for Gypsy, usually derogatory) was officially forbidden and replaced with *new peasant* or *new citizens* (Crowe, 1991, p. 117). These efforts of forced assimilation quickly faded away after the death of Joseph II in 1790.

In Poland, dominated by Russia during the rule of Empress Catherine the Great in the 18th century, a king of the Gypsies was appointed in an attempt to control the increasing Gypsy population. In Russia, during the same time, Gypsy choirs and Gypsy folk music became very popular at the court of Catherine the Great. In Hungary, composer Franz Liszt was fascinated by their music and saw them as important contributors to the Hungarian national music. The talent of *Lautari* Gypsies (musicians) was recognized in most of these countries, and Gypsy musicians were a constant presence at celebrations. However, as Crowe (1994) observed, their contributions to the cultures of Eastern Europe

did not earn them any significant social respect, and Gypsies continued to be politically and economically marginalized.

In Albania, the Gypsies found a sense of equality with the Albanians, the Vlachs and the Arumanians under Ottoman domination (Kolsti, 1991). In 1870, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Albanian majority began to regard itself as a nation and in 1920 Albania finally became an independent country. The Muslim Gypsies experienced more discrimination than the Christian Gypsies, because they were seen as sympathizers of the defected Turkish empire. During Mussolini's domination in Albania in the 1920s, the settled Gypsies were tolerated and allowed to contribute to the economic life, while the nomadic Muslim Gypsies were feared and avoided.

In the Western European countries, Roma were initially seen as a curiosity because of their appearance and traditions, but soon acquired a negative reputation. According to Crowe (1994), they were thought to come from Egypt (the word *Gypsy* is rooted in the word *Egyptian*). Kenrick and Puxon (1972) believe that one of the reasons for the negative reception of Roma was the deep rooted conviction that blackness denotes inferiority and evil. In the territories that belong now to the Czech Republic, Germany, and Austria, Roma were forbidden to settle or even enter a village. From the 15th to the 18th century in Germany, Gypsy hunts were organized for the purpose of physical extermination.

Because of their status as slaves in Romania, and a perceived increased freedom under Ottoman domination and acceptable living conditions in territories like Albania, Slovakia and Hungary, Eastern Europe continues to have a largely settled Gypsy population in contrast to Western Europe, where the word 'Gypsy' has become synonymous with 'nomad.'

2.2 Modern history

The 19th and 20th centuries brought some changes in the plight of Gypsies, although not much changed in overall anti-Gypsy prejudices. A short period of emancipation occurred between the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the World War II. Roma intellectuals made efforts to create organizations and publish Gypsy works, but they faced all kinds of impediments, from inexperience to lack of financial support, from total indifference to prejudice coming from the majority. The most remarkable achievements occurred in Russia, where the new socialist state encouraged Roma publications and in 1931 helped open the Moscow Gypsy Theater Romen. According to Crowe (1994), although the Kremlin soon stopped most of its efforts, the Romen Theater brought a positive change to the Russian Gypsies. The Stalinist rule brought harsher times for Gypsies in all Eastern European countries under communism. Stalin considered the identity of minorities as part of the bourgeois ideology, so the Gypsies and other minorities were not able to receive education in their own language nor develop a national culture, despite the fact that some countries mentioned that right in their modernized constitutions. As a consequence, several censuses in Eastern European countries found Gypsies declaring themselves Hungarians or Czechoslovakians or Romanians.

In Romania, after the abolition of Gypsy slavery in the 1860s, many Gypsies fled to Hungary and other neighboring states for fear that their freedom was not going to last. After World War I, Romania acquired new territories (Transylvania, Banat and Bukovina), and its Gypsy population increased to over 100,000 Gypsies (0.6 percent of the population), according to Crowe (1991). A class of strong landlords dominated the Romanian agricultural economy and made the life of peasants one of the harshest in Eastern Europe. In 1888 and 1907 violent peasant outbreaks led to the improvement of the laws regarding land ownership. Since most of the Gypsies lived in rural areas, they were subject to traditional prejudices and discriminatory behavior from the Romanian peasants and other minorities. When peasants received land, some Gypsies were able to benefit from the acquisition of land, but "they often had little practical farming experience" (Crowe, 1991, p. 68). The economic depression in 1929 only increased the

anti-Gypsy sentiment. They were seen as less valuable than farm animals, lazy and dirty. At the same time, a romantic image expressed in the literature of the time centered on their music and nomadic life-style. A few Roma newspapers were able to appear and survive for a few years before World War II, attempting to develop a sense of identity for the Gypsies.

World War II brought a period of terrible tragedies and loss for Gypsies in most of the Eastern European countries. Between 1933 and 1945, the Nazi paranoia implemented racial laws, which lead to genocidal policies targeted towards transnational minorities like Jews and Gypsies. In Romania, General Ion Antonescu established a military dictatorship, favoring Germany. He deported approximately 25,000 Gypsies from Bucharest to Transnistria. Later, at his trial for war crimes, he defended his actions on the basis that "the public appealed to me to protect them because Gypsies were breaking into houses at night" (Crowe, 1994, p. 134). Many Gypsies died due to the lack of blankets and food. From Hungary alone more than 20,000 Roma were deported to Auschwitz to be exterminated. According to Barany (2002) and Kalvoda (1991), under the German occupation, almost all the German and Czech Gypsies were sent to extermination camps. More Roma were able to survive in the Slovak territories as well as in Albania and Bulgaria. In Romania, between 36,000 and 39,000 died during the Holocaust. In Serbia and Croatia, their fate was similar, as massive killings took place against the Roma. According to Huttenbach (1991), out of an estimated European Gypsy population of 885,000 before the war, between 200,000 and 500,000 were killed. Although it cannot be precisely estimated how many Gypsies died in the Holocaust, tens of thousands were killed just for being Gypsies (Barany, 2002).

After the war, Eastern Europe fell under Soviet domination. All the socialist regimes were facing the challenge of applying the generous utopian objectives of communism to all social categories. Efforts to improve literacy, health education and the employment rate among Gypsies proved difficult and inconsistent from one decade to another. From the 1950s to the 1970s socialist Eastern Europe underwent a massive process of urbanization that affected the Gypsies as well as the other minorities. In Romania, entire

villages were demolished and replaced by urban buildings, while people were forced to move from countryside to the cities. The massive collectivization initiated in the 1950s led to collective farming replacing private farming. In general, private property was almost reduced to zero. Everything belonged to everyone, and not much really belonged to anyone.

The increasing Gypsy population led to the Eastern European governments developing specific plans for Gypsies. In the Czech Republic, Romania, Serbia and Hungary the authorities unsuccessfully attempted to stop their nomadic lifestyle. In the early 1980s, statistics found many Gypsy adults illiterate or semi-illiterate, and many Roma children had to repeat grades or simply stopped going to school. The high unemployment among Gypsies was directly correlated with the crime rate.

In Romania, the numbers of Gypsies were high for crimes such as murder, theft, the dollar black market, and prostitution. The use of children for many of these crimes affected school attendance. The unemployment rate also translated into poor housing conditions with inadequate sanitation. Because of poor living conditions and lack of education, Roma had high rates of infant mortality, venereal diseases, typhoid fever, and tuberculosis. Efforts for the improvement of Gypsy unemployment and education proved even more problematic, partially due to the country's impoverishment. President Nicolae Ceausescu made the country's goal to pay back all the external debt forcing the population to an inhuman level of sacrifice, while his megalomaniac obsessions affected the whole population. After his fall, the country made efforts to adapt to the market economy. Sadly enough, authorities identified Gypsies as the heads of the "Baby Bazaar" in early 1990s, when children of poor Gypsy families were sold to foreign families willing to avoid the bureaucratic hassle in their search to adopt a baby (Crowe, 1994). This incident, plus the increasing number of handicapped Gypsy children begging on the streets, lead the Romanian majority to develop another prejudice about Roma people: that they don't care much for their children and would be ready to sell them or cripple them for financial purposes.

Eastern European countries aspiring to European integration also blamed Gypsies for late admission to the European Union because of the massive illegal immigration of Gypsies into western countries in the 1990s, because of their perceived criminality or simply because of their existence. As many Roma chose to migrate after the fall of the Iron Curtain to the West, searching for better opportunities and places to live,[5] a wave of vigorous anti-Roma feelings spread over almost all of Europe, re-introducing and re-inforcing the existing negative stereotypes and sometimes leading to violent clashes (Barany, 2002; Ringold, 2000). In 1992, after repeated riots by neo-Nazi organizations, Germany and Romania signed an accord that gave Romania $20 million dollars to reintegrate Romanian citizens being deported from Germany. It was estimated that the majority of those affected by the treaty were Gypsies (Barany, 2002).

The European Council has tried to gain some control over the situation and asked each country aspiring to European integration with a significant Roma population to develop state policies and programs that would solve "the Gypsy problem." These programs target pragmatic issues like lack of proper documentation and IDs, housing, health care, and education, but also social issues like social rights and ethnic discrimination by police and state institutions. Several years will pass before governments will be able to implement these policies, mainly because of lack of available funds.

Meanwhile, despite the efforts to improve the plight of Roma at the level of state and international institutions, the negative stereotypes from within the dominant ideology continue to operate, mainly because everyday experience continues to enforce them. Karmen Erjavec (2001), a Slovenian scholar, found five reasons for which Gypsies are the favorite scapegoat of Eastern European societies: first, the Roma are in a unique position as a minority due to the fact that they are scattered everywhere in the world and have no national state or international institution to speak on their behalf. The second reason in her opinion is that all Eastern European countries are former communist dictatorships, which makes people *a priori* less sensitive to democratic values and human

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[5] As Barany (2002) stated, it was the middle class Gypsies with enough means and information that constituted the bulk of the migratory population to the West after 1990. The most poor did not have the resources to go anywhere.

rights. Third, nationalism dominates the Eastern European societies and their media.[6] The fourth reason identified by Erjavec is the lack of social stability, which facilitates scapegoat attitudes towards the ones at the bottom of the social ladder. The Gypsies get blamed for everything, "from the worst economic problems to everyday petty crimes" (p. 723). Finally, the fifth reason is that it falls in line with some general political and economic principles valued by Eastern Europeans. Erjavec says,

> As Eastern European countries wish to enter the "civilized world" of
> Western Europe, which has identified them with *barbaric*, *no culture* and
> *not normal* since the 18th century, they must present a "new identity"
> similar to the Western European identity. In the Eastern European media,
> the "new identity" is achieved by using discriminatory discourse, used by
> the Western media to represent the people from the Eastern Europe, and
> adapting it to the Roma. (p. 723)

Undoubtly, democratic regimes have brought more freedom of speech for the Roma and the possibility to participate more actively in national politics, although economically life has become more difficult. There are now several political parties that represent Roma interests, several Roma publications, and national radio and TV stations broadcast programs in the Romani language in most of the Eastern European countries. For example, the Democratic Union of the Romanies in Romania (DURR) is one of the most prominent Gypsy organizations in the country. It serves the nomads and the black smiths (with headquarters in Sibiu, Transylvania), the settled Gypsies, the fiddlers (Lautari), and the Hungarian-speaking Roma. A section of Romani studies has opened at the University of Bucharest, a Romani - Romanian dictionary has been published, the Bible has been translated into the Romani language, and a Gypsy-language theater company was created at Timisoara.

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[6] At the last presidential elections in Romania in 2000, the current president Ion Iliescu (of left-center orientation) competed with Corneliu Vadim Tudor, a right extremist politician and his radical party, *Romania Mare* (The Great Romania).

Still, the prejudices are very strong against Gypsies in Romania, a country with a significant number of Gypsies (an estimated 5% of the population) (Barany, 2002). According to an *Ethnobarometer* survey taken in 2000, 38-40 percent of non-Roma would prohibit Roma from settling in their county; 23 percent of ethnic Romanians and 31 percent of ethnic Hungarians would refuse Gypsies in their city, town, or village.[7] Another 2000 poll found that 67 percent of the population of Romania feel resentment towards Roma. This number is higher than the ones relating to any other minority in Romania.[8] Negative stereotypes are reinforced and perpetuated by both public and private media. Roma are commonly depicted as "thieves," "beggars," "dealers," and "illiterates"—a "dirty" or "criminal race." One survey of the image of Roma in the media found that "the most frequently occurring category describing Roma has to do with 'the color of the skin', the second [is] 'crime'." [9]

A recent study found that between October and December 2000, twelve major newspapers published 68 articles with a negative bias against Roma; eighteen articles presented a positive picture.[10] On radio and television, the same study recorded 337 seconds of negative broadcasting against Roma in the period from 7 November to 8 December 2000, as against 233 seconds of neutral reporting and no positive portrayals

[7] Center for Research of Ethnic Relations, "Ethnobarometer May-June 2000" (quoted in Human Rights in Europe - Reports. *Monitoring the EU accession process - Minority protection in Romania.* [Online]. Available at: http://www.eumap.org/reports/content/10/642/html/200).

[8] Poll initiated and funded by the Open Society Foundation, cited in "Terms of reference of Phare project RO98.03.01 for the improvement of the situation of Roma in Romania", *Aven Amentza*, Nos. 12-13, 2000 (quoted in Human Rights in Europe - Reports. *Monitoring the EU accession process - Minority protection in Romania*. [Online]. Available at: http://www.eumap.org/reports/content/10/642/html/200).

[9] Study conducted by the Intercultural Institute in Timisoara funded by the Council of Europe and OSI. Issues: Coverage of the Roma in the Mass Media in Romania, Project on Ethnic Relations (cited on Human Rights in Europe - Reports. *Monitoring the EU accession process - Minority protection in Romania*. [Online]. Available at: http://www.eumap.org/reports/content/10/642/html/200).

[10] "Nationalist Message in the Mass Media", Report on Print and Electronic Media in Eastern European Countries, Media Monitoring Agency-Academia Catavencu, Roma Press Center, February 2001, p. 25 (quoted in Human Rights in Europe - Reports. *Monitoring the EU accession process - Minority protection in Romania*. [Online]. Available at: http://www.eumap.org/reports/content/10/642/html/200).

whatsoever.[11] Another report reached a similar conclusion, noting that Romanian media present Roma generally in the context of conflict, as the aggressors.[12]

Overall, historians Fraser (1995), Hancock (1991), and especially Barany (2002), who looked at the influence of various political regimes (imperialism, authoritarianism, socialism-communism, and democracy) on the life of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, found that all these regimes have kept Gypsies in a marginal position in society. Based on information collected from several historians, I have attempted to demonstrate how imperialist and authoritarian regimes attempted to control the population of Gypsies and promoted harsh policies against them, ranging from a five century long slavery in former Romanian principalities, to forced assimilation during the illuminated despotism of empress Maria Theresa and her son Joseph in 18th century Austria. In the 1940s, the fascist ideology attempted the physical elimination of Gypsies pure and simple, a reiteration of the policy against Gypsies existent in Germany in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Despite principles of equality that communism promoted, authorities in some eastern European countries chose to ignore the Roma; therefore their minority was not recognized as a separate, unique ethnicity along with other minorities. Communism brought instead a slight overall economic improvement in Gypsies' lifestyle, since everyone was guaranteed a job, access to free health care, and free and mandatory school for all children. Many Roma today regret the fall of communism for these very reasons (Barany, 2002; Crowe, 1994, 1995). It is worth mentioning at the same time that the socialist policies were often in conflict with the Gypsy traditional way of life, especially for migratory Gypsies. The democratic regimes after 1990 brought more freedom of speech and political organization but took away the economic security that communism

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[11] Roma Press Center, 2001, p. 28. Antena 1 was identified as the TV station carrying most of the negative bias out of the three stations monitored (cited on Human Rights in Europe - Reports. *Monitoring the EU accession process - Minority protection in Romania.* [Online]. Available at: http://www.eumap.org/reports/content/10/642/html/200).

[12] Media Monitoring Agency and Romani Criss, "Roma in the Printed Media", February-August 2000, p. 6 (cited on Human Rights in Europe - Reports. *Monitoring the EU accession process - Minority protection in Romania.* [Online]. Available at: http://www.eumap.org/reports/content/10/642/html/200).

had provided. The transition from a state economy to a market economy has caught many Eastern European societies unprepared, and the groups at the bottom – the Gypsies – have been among the most affected by poverty, lack of education, and unemployment (Fawn, 2001; Erjavec, 2001).

2.3. Gypsy way of life

In middle school (1985-1988) I had a Gypsy classmate, Constanta. She sat in the back of the classroom, shy and mute, as if to render herself invisible. The teachers didn't seem eager to pull her out of her silence, and she was not fluent in Romanian, therefore she got her grades mostly from tests and quizzes. She wore the same uniform as the rest of us, but everything else about her was different: her skin was darker and she always wore her hair separated in three long braids tied with red bands to protect her from misfortune. Overall, I doubt she learned a great deal or had a good experience in our class. At the end of the seventh grade we heard she would not be our classmate anymore, because she was married. That meant she had to cover her hair with a scarf as a sign of matrimonial status and she was ready to start a family. She was fourteen.

Reading the works of several anthropologists and historians who studied Gypsy communities, both in the US and Europe, I discovered customs and traditions that resonated with what I already knew and that deepened my understanding of Gypsy culture. Constanta's shyness and invisibility in class, while we interpreted it as lack of intelligence, might be explained by the existing language barrier or by her defensive reaction in front of the prejudices manifested by her teachers and classmates. Some older sources (McLaughlin, 1980; Gropper, 1975) state that Gypsies have managed to survive without literacy for centuries, therefore few Gypsy children go to school. As a result, they were not exposed to *gadje* ideas about the world and they avoided peer pressure from their classmates. Additionally, Gypsy children are forbidden to associate with non-gypsies, and in general Gypsy education is conducted mainly in the home, not at school. More recent sources (Barany, 2002; *Roma Rights*, 2002),[13] elaborate on the pressure with which a gypsy child has to cope in a *gadje* school - because of the language barrier, the prejudices from teachers and peers, and lack of money to invest in school materials.

Constanta was very sad on her wedding day, but she may have looked so for different reasons than I had initially thought. According to several anthropologists (Gropper, 1975,

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[13] *Roma Rights* is published by European Roma Rights Center, an international public interest law organization which monitors the human rights situation of Roma. Available at: //errc.org/rr_nr2_2002/editori.shtml

McLaughlin, 1980, and Stewart, 1997), not only is leaving the parents' house generally considered a dramatic change and a sad moment, but Gypsy brides are also supposed to look sad to prove their virtue (the sadder, the better). If they forget and become too joyful, their mother or a close relative pinches them to make them cry.

It is not the objective of this thesis to provide a very detailed description of the way of life of the Roma, but a brief presentation of some of the Gypsy traditions is worthwhile for understanding how the film portrayals of the Gypsies work and how they are different from the western cultures. All the information that will be presented regarding the various classifications of Roma tribes and *vitsas*, and traditions pertinent to marriage, economic life, hygiene code and education is gathered from authors who have spent time in a Roma community and learned their language, like Michael Stewart (1997), McLaughlin (1980), or Gropper (1975), or studied their history closely (Barany, 2002; Fraser, 1995). Although I have so far used a unified concept of Gypsies or Roma, there is no one single Gypsy way of life, as not all the Gypsies are the same. Not all the Gypsies are nomads and not all of them live on their wits, as some of the stereotypes portray them. As Barany (2002) states it, however, they do share certain historical experiences and cultural elements that could allow the use of a unified concept of Gypsies.

Tribes - One characteristic of the Gypsy population is that they have no homeland. This has actually contributed to the discrimination and persecution against them. Still, several cultural elements are common among Gypsy groups. As Barany (2002) puts it, perhaps "the most important factor of Gypsiness is the division of the world into *Roma* and *gadje*, a division that has contributed to the absence of a large-scale integration of Roma into mainstream societies" (p. 14). Roma consider *gadje* to be outsiders and unworthy of respect.

As Fraser (1995) points out, there are several differences that can be drawn among the Gypsy tribes. One criterion for a classification can be the geographical setting: the Gypsies in Western Europe call themselves *Sinti,* differentiating themselves from the *Roma* Gypsies in Eastern Europe. The Sinti are actually the Gypsies that have resided for

a long time in German speaking lands. World War II caused Sinti migrations to Volga and the Ural Mountains. The Sinti are now spread in several countries including Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Kazakhstan, France and Italy, and their spoken dialects have a strong German influence. In France they are called *manouches* (from the Romani word *manu* = [Gypsy] man). A third category different from *Sinti* and *Roma* "is formed by the *Calé* of Spain, the *Ciganos* of Portugal, the *gitans* of Southern France, together with cognate groups as far away as Latin America" (Fraser, 1995, p. 292).

A second criterion is considered to be the period of arrival in a certain area. A recent tribe in Western Europe is the *Xoraxané*, which arrived a century ago in opposition to the *Roms* who are a long established group (Fraser, 1995). McLaughlin (1980), who wrote about the Gypsy tribes in the United States, thinks that the *Xoraxa* tribe includes the Muslim Gypsies who arrived in the U.S. from Turkey and the Muslim regions of former Yugoslavia. It should be noted that most of the sources consulted agree that religion is not a significant criterion of classification, since most often the Gypsies have adopted the religion of the dominant group surrounding them. For example, in Croatia, there are Catholic Gypsies, in Bosnia Muslim Gypsies and in Serbia Christian Orthodox Gypsies. The Gypsies shown in *Time of the Gypsies* are Muslim, which could designate them as Xoraxa, and the language they speak is *Romanes*, almost identical with the one used in *Gadjo Dilo*, with the only difference consisting in the presence of Serbian and respectively Romanian influences.

Economic specialization, the third criterion of classification, has led to the emergence of distinct tribes as well. One of the most numerous and prestigious tribes is the Kaldarashi Gypsies, present in both Europe and the United States, most often associated with copper-smithing. The Gypsies portrayed in *Gadjo Dilo* are Kaldarashi Gypsies. In Romania several tribes coexist in the same areas: musicians (Lautari), spoon makers (Lingurari), gold washers (Aurari), gold miners (Baiesi), makers of wooden bowls (Copanari) and spindle makers (Rudari).

Family and vitsa – The most respected entity among Gypsies is the family, the group formed by grandparents, parents, children and grandchildren. The *vitsa* or the extended family comes in second—cousins, uncles, aunts, and nephews. A *vitsa* can be as large as several hundred people, or as small as a few families. One of the first things asked among Roma who meet for the first time refer to the *vitsa*—"what *vitsa* do you come from", or "who do you know" (Lackovà, 2000).

Marriage - Since the family receives the greatest amount of loyalty from Roma, it is understandable why marriage is of major importance in their culture as well. The preferred marriage among Roma is between second cousins of the same *vitsa* and then between cousins of different *vitsas* (McLaughlin, 1980). Although last in the order of preference, marriages between Roma and *gadje* have occurred more and more often lately (Cohn, 1973).

The traditional Romani society is male-dominated, but a woman's prestige increases with the number of children born in the family. Some Roma women are proud to have brought into the world twenty or thirty children and pregnancies at thirteen years of age are not uncommon. Marriages are usually arranged by the two heads of the families, often when the children are still very young. From the proposal to the final ceremony, the whole process is marked by highly ritualized talks, negotiations, parties and gifts exchange. If children are very young, the deal specifies the possibility for a change of mind. In more recent times, parents ask for the consent of their children, or if a young man expresses his desire to marry a certain girl, he will still need the approval of his father. Otherwise, the couple receives no or little material support from the family and is considered impure (*marimé*), because they failed to follow the tradition. The main purpose behind the arrangement of a marriage is the mutual benefit for the two families, either an increase in authority and prestige, or material gains. According to McLaughlin (1980), if the match is agreeable, the father of the groom sends an emissary to ask for the bridal price.

> That price depends on several factors: 1. the social status of the girl (the
> social prestige of her *familia* and *vitsa*); 2. her personal reputation (respect

for Gypsy traditions); 3. her age (between 12 and fourteen are the desirable years for marriage); 4. her virginity (virginity commands a higher price); 5. her intelligence (ability to make money); 6. the financial status of the families involved. (p. 27)

The amount of money that is paid by the groom's family is considered a gift (*daro*) of respect to the bride's family meant to compensate for the loss of their daughter. The bride's family considers the gift as a form of protection that will guarantee that their daughter is not mistreated. If the new in-laws mistreat the new wife, her father can call her back home and keep the *daro*. Actually the gain from the *daro* is not that significant, because the bride's family uses the money to cover many of the wedding expenses.

Once married, the bride will live with her husband's family and for the first year or until she gives birth to her first child she will have to obey everyone in the house. The mother-in-law will take upon herself to teach her the rules of the house, and the new wife has to obey her completely. Sometimes, this period proves to be too tough for many young wives who choose to return home. Her father will then try to find out whether his daughter has been mistreated or abused in any way, and if this is not the case, he may send her back. After the period of adjustment, the wife will be expected to make money and take care of the children and the house. As her status in the family becomes more solid, the woman becomes the keeper of the money. Usually she will keep the family savings in a cotton purse under her many aprons, or transformed in golden jewelry that she can wear and sell in times of hardship. Many Roma women carry entire fortunes on their fingers, necks or ears (McLaughlin, 1980).

Sharing - Since Roma communities are usually bonded by a strong sense of brotherhood and unity, sharing is almost an obligation. If a relative comes in need for money or food, it is considered unethical to refuse him/her as long as money or food is in the house. Stewart (1997) discusses how Hungarian Roma families resolve the conflict between the ethic of sharing and the need for saving and increasing one's fortune. He found that hiding the cash or depositing it in a *gadje* bank is an often-used solution. A Roma woman

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who raised pigs sought to sell the pigs periodically at the market and hide the cash to avoid the obligation of sharing the meat with the villagers. Besides cash, families also tried to invest the money into something that was difficult to share, like building a house.

The purity code *marimé* - Several things are considered *marimé* (dirty, polluted or impure): coming in contact with a *gadje*, with the lower part of the body and especially genitalia, a menstruating or a postpartum woman. The face will be washed with water from a different bowl than the legs, and a menstruating woman is not supposed to cook or sleep in the same bed with another member of the family. As Barany (2002) states, "Few things are considered more disastrous to an observant Rom than going to prison where protracted living with the *gadje* in close quarters is unavoidable" (p. 13).

Many of the consulted sources hypothesize that the *marimé* code was developed by nomadic Gypsies who had to come up with strict hygienic rules to avoid diseases. Because of its utility, many Gypsy tribes adopted the code, and in many communities it has been extended to any behavior that does not follow the Gypsy tradition (like kidnapping the bride, or disrespecting the decisions of the elders). However, it should be noted that today fewer Gypsies adhere to the old customs. Perhaps the *Vlach* Roma, widely spread in Eastern Europe, are among the few Gypsies who preserve the old ways of Gypsiness (Barany, 2002).

Justice – Since the *gadje* authorities have rarely been fair and nondiscriminatory towards Gypsies through the centuries, Gypsies have developed their own justice system. In a traditional Gypsy community, a person can seek justice in two places—the *divan* and the *kris*. The *divan* is a more informal mediation procedure that solves minor issues. The ultimate and supreme source of law and order is the *kris*, which solves criminal, moral, civil, and religious disputes through the participation of judges (usually males advanced in age). Unlike the *divano*, the decisions taken by the *kris* are final and binding.

Clothing – The colorful skirts and the multi-layered aprons that characterize the portrayal of Gypsies in *Gadjo Dilo* and many other films is the traditional costume of a Kaldarashi

woman. This is how most of the Roma women in Romania dress. They wear their hair in braids sometimes decorated with golden coins, and married women wear a scarf on their head. Roma women like to wear jewelry, and as I mentioned previously, this is also an efficient way to transport the family's fortune. In colder areas, like northern Russia, furs are an important component of a woman's wardrobe. In Muslim regions, women of all ages and status will cover their heads according to the Muslim rule, but young women are sometimes allowed to make exception from it. In *Time of the Gypsies* we see Azra, the main character dressed like a *gadje* girl, while Perhan's sister and grandmother wear scarves.

Roma men are dressed simply in shirts and pants to which the hat becomes an important addition. A Gypsy proverb says that a Gypsy may lose his pants, but as long as he has a hat on his head his pride remains untouched. Once the spring comes, Gypsy men will strip to the waist welcoming the warm weather and women take their stoves outside to facilitate chatting. Small children are allowed to run around naked in warm weather, and this is perhaps one reason why only in modern times Gypsy children have begun to deal with diaper rash.

Education – Traditionally, most of the education is done at home. In past years, going to a *gadje* school was rejected for several reasons: first, fear of contamination and impurity through the contact with *gadje* children; second, fear of discrimination and mistreatment; third, in the case of nomadic families, being on the road means constant moving; fourth, the belief that everything there is to learn can be learned at home, from the group. Generations of Gypsies have managed to survive and even accumulate fortunes without literacy, so many do not believe in the value of a formal education (McLaughlin, 1980). Centuries-long illiteracy is the main reason why Gypsy culture has remained primarily oral (Barany, 2002; Crowe, 1994). Today, state authorities in Europe try to invest in Gypsy schools, where Gypsy teachers can teach in the Romani language and maintain traditions.

Although this discussion does not pretend to present Gypsy traditions exhaustively, I hope it will help the reader understand some of the cultural elements shown in *Gadjo Dilo* (Gatlif, 1997) and *Time of the Gypsies* (Kusturica, 1989), or perhaps other movies about this group.

Chapter 3
Theoretical framework

3.1. A few theoretical findings regarding stereotypes

The study of stereotypes began in the 1920s with Walter Lippmann (1922), but major developments of stereotype theory occurred in the 1960s, perhaps influenced by the social transformations occurring all over the world at that time. Ashmore and Del Boca (1981) define a stereotype as "a set of beliefs about the personal attributes of a social group" (p. 16). There are three orientations within stereotype theory: sociocultural, psychodynamic, and cognitive.

According to the sociocultural orientation, which is most relevant for this paper, the main function of the stereotypes is to facilitate the manifestation of cultural values and to specify the nature of various social groups. In this functionalist view, stereotypes support norms about how these groups and individual group members are expected to behave and how they should be treated. The assumptions behind this orientation are dichotomous in nature: first, that society is characterized by consensus and "individual conduct is determined by institutionalized patterns" (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981, p. 23) and second, that society is formed by groups with different values and these groups compete with each other. The research done under this orientation focuses on level of agreement among a group of perceivers on the characteristics of a targeted social group. According to the same orientation, at the societal level, stereotypes also serve a value-expressive function (e.g., negative images about the dirty migratory Gypsy caravans reinforce the cultural values of the stable populations concerning stability, comfort and neatness). Katz & Braly (1933) were the first to do research in this direction, especially with their work on prejudices.[14]

The second orientation within stereotype theory, the psychodynamic approach, is based on Freud's psychoanalytic theory and explains social phenomena in terms of

psychological factors. Underlying this orientation are two major assumptions: first, human psychic and behavior are assumed to be intrapsychically determined. Second, the most important features of adult personality are believed to be determined by the manner in which the individual resolves the psychological conflicts that arise in the first years of life. According to Ashmore and Del Boca (1981), this theoretical orientation views human beings as "closed energy systems propelled by unconscious sexual and aggressive drives" (p. 27). Stereotypes are developed in the process of developing and strengthening one's identity, through defense mechanisms like displacement and projection (e.g. outgroup hostility, prejudices). In other words, people develop stereotypes as a response to their social fears in an attempt to select who can be a friend and who cannot.

The cognitive orientation, like the psychodynamic one, focuses on action at the individual level, rather than the social. The assumptions used in this orientation find their root in the definition of stereotype as a "normal" cognitive structure, falling under the imperfections and limitations of the human mind, as any other piece of information. Lippmann (1922) was the first one to point out that reality is too complex to be fully comprehended and responded to, which is why people tend to simplify and categorize. The act of categorization is fundamental to the cognitive approach of the stereotyping process. When we categorize, "we do not stereotype a person, we stereotype a person-as-a-member-of-a-group" (Taylor, 1981, p. 96). Gordon Allport (1954) agreed with Lippmann that stereotyping is the result of normal cognitive processes. He suggested that the primary basis for categorization is a perceived similarity-dissimilarity; for instance, objects are grouped on basis of similarity of function or appearance. Stereotypes, both benign and pernicious, evolve to describe categories of people, just as balls are characterized as round.

An important finding in the stereotype literature is that once people are categorized into ingroups or outgroups, ingroup favoritism and outgroup discrimination often result (Billig, 1976, Fiske, 1998). The three different perspectives of stereotype theory do not

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[14] Later, Gilbert (1951), Fishman (1956), Gardner, Rodensky & Kirby (1970), Bowker & Carrier (1976). Hamilton (1981), Kruglanski (1990), Bargh (1997) and many others made relevant contributions through their research.

exclude each other, but rather build on each other. For example, mothers in Romania have used the following expression for years to motivate their children to behave: "If you don't behave, I'll call a Gypsy to take you away in his sack." The meaning underlying the threat is that a child who does not obey the rules resembles the *others*, the Gypsies; therefore, through behavioral identification with them, the mother emphasizes the benefits of belonging to the non-Gypsy group. Socio-culturally, the child internalizes the legend of an ethnic people (the Roma) who specialize in taking away spoiled children (with their parents' agreement). Psychologically, the mother evokes a possible punishment coming from a third party, an *other*, which is meant to scare the child and enforce her image as the real protector. As a child I learned to run away anytime I would see a Gypsy man carrying a bag, and then to watch closely to see if anything was moving in the bag.

Automaticity Theory developed by Posner & Snyder (1975) and refined by Bargh (1989, 1997) is very important for the study of stereotypes. It postulates that stereotypes have all the ingredients of an automatic process. A stereotype, once it is formed, is automatically activated when the stimulus is present. In other words, people may not even have the intention to stereotype, but their mind does it for them. The good news is that the default process can be adjusted or corrected "in a second effortful processing stage – only if the person has the time, attentional capacity and interest in doing so" (Higgins & Kruglanski, 2000, p. 173). A proof that stereotypes can be changed upon individual contact and careful evaluation is the message expressed by many anthropologists who have studied the Romani culture. The documentary *The Gypsies of Svinia* (Paskievich, 1998) shows how Gypsies stopped stealing from the gardens of the Slovaks they went to church with, because they knew each other's names and sang together in the choir.

Despite some positive stereotypes (e.g. Gypsies have a natural talent for music), the stereotypes about Gypsies are overwhelmingly negative, but I think we can talk about nuances from one country to another, depending on the social contexts. In Slovakia for instance, the prejudices against Roma are close to the fascist view towards this minority. Census predictions indicate that Gypsies will outnumber the Slovaks by 2060 (Godwin,

2001; Paskievich, 1998). In an April 2001 *National Geographic* article about Gypsies, a Slovak shopkeeper is quoted: "They should put all the Gypsies in a paper boat and send them to Africa. They are like locusts. Fifty years ago there were only three families of them here. Now there are only 400 of us and 1,400 of them" (quoted in Godwin, 2001, p. 85). In the documentary *Gypsies of Svinia* (Paskievich, 1998), similar statements are made by the non-Gypsy Slovaks. Also, twenty-three percent of ethnic Romanians and thirty-one percent of ethnic Hungarians (found mostly in Transylvania) would refuse Roma in their city, town, or village.[15] Slovakia is particular not only because it has the highest number of Roma per capita, but also because of its social benefits policy that allows unemployed citizens to survive exclusively on the monthly payments provided by the state. In Romania, the situation is slightly different. The threadbare social benefits system has forced Gypsies into self-reliance. After losing their jobs in factories and farms, many have returned to their traditional occupations – brick making, horse trading, begging, metalworking, or wedding entertainment. Because Romania has provided a market for these old occupations, we can now talk about class diversification among Gypsies based on economic criteria. Some wealthy Roma in Romania have developed their own stereotypes about poor Roma: "We absolutely won't do business with any Roma we don't know, because they are dangerous. But with Romanians it's different. They don't try to cheat you like Roma do. We have no problem with Romanians – we hire them as chauffeurs and bodyguards" (quoted in Godwin, 2001, p. 94). If wealthy Gypsies promote the image of a "dangerous Gypsy" seeking to distance themselves from the "bad elements," the poor Gypsies hold up their poverty as a proof of honesty. "The people of Buzescu[16], they steal, but we are honest. The poor Gypsies are the honest ones. The rich do all the illegal business" (quoted in Godwin, 2001, p. 94). The reader should read the testimonies above with caution since they could have been influenced by the conditions of the interview (identification with the Western journalist).

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[15] Center for Research of Ethnic Relations. Ethnobarometer May-June 2000 (Quoted in Human Rights in Europe - Reports. *Monitoring the EU accession process: Minority protection in Romania.* [Online]. Available at: http://www.eumap.org/reports/content/10/642/html/200 - see reference list).

[16] A village in Romania where rich Gypsies have built their villas.

3.2. Ideological theory in film

According to Downing and Bazargan (1991), the word *ideology* didn't appear in English until 1796, when it was proposed by the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy, who wanted to establish a philosophical discipline that would provide the foundation for all the sciences; it signified "the science of ideas." In 1844-45, during his exile in Paris, Karl Marx read de Tracy's work on ideology and borrowed the term. Marx gave a rather pejorative meaning to the word, seeing it as a name for ideas and beliefs which are blind to the material conditions that produced them, in other words a "pure dream, empty and vain, constituted by the 'day's residues' from the only full and positive reality, that of the concrete history of concrete material individuals materially producing their existence" (Althusser, 1971, p. 151). Louis Althusser (1971) rejected Marx and Engels' use of ideology simply as a "false consciousness", as he believed that there is no conscious aspect to ideology. In his view, ideology represented "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (p. 153) and was as inescapable as the air we breathed. He emphasized its material existence in everything that we practice in our daily routine – going to church, to school, court procedures etc. In the Marxist view, ideologies are the product of the dominant group seeking to endorse the *status quo*. In Althusser's view, the dominated social classes embrace the dominant ideology because it gives them a sense of identity.

The common *Oxford College Dictionary* (2002), which is in itself a mirror of the dominant ideology, defines ideology as "a system of ideas and *ideals*, especially one that forms the basis of economic or political policy" (emphasis added). *Ideals* refer to the kind of projections in the future of a perceived perfect state of things that is not in place in the present. It may have existed in the past or could be implemented in the future, but ideals are always to be materialized in the future. Through this perspective, ideology can reach the realm of utopia (for instance some still talk about communism as a beautiful utopia). Ideology, then, can be said to have one leg in the future and one in the past (as each ideology often defines itself in opposition to the preceding one) and, most importantly, a power to mobilize social structures in the present. Freeden (2001) talks about conservatism, liberalism, fascism, and communism as the major ideologies of the

twentieth century. He reminds us that those who think that the age of ideologies is over after the fail of fascism and communism cannot be more wrong, because the end of ideologies would be equivalent to the end of politics.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that the ideological theory of film developed at the same time as stereotype theory in social psychology, both finding their blossoming moment in the 1960s and 1970s, concomitant with the civil rights movement in the US, the political awakening of countries previously under imperial domination, the cold war, the sexual revolution, and the feminist movement. Film as an art form could not escape such a politically intense context. Ideological theory in film has been used to analyze the ideological elements, contexts and effects of films in society, more precisely the political and socio-psychological implications of film representations. Its basic assumption originates with Plato's dialogues - that representation conceals a gap between art and life. According to Downing and Bazargan (1991), Plato talked about the image's inability to reproduce "all the qualities of that which it imitates" suggesting the political aspect of aesthetic imagery. The gap occurs "between the cultural sign-system exterior to the frame (which we know and inhabit as the world) and the stylistically framed interior of the various artistic media used to represent or to address that world" (p. 252).

Ideological theory acquired a prominent place among film theories during the 1960s almost at the same time as semiotic and feminist perspectives were developed. Discussions about ideological messages in films date from the beginning of film, with Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915) or Eisenstein's Marxist-oriented formalist movies (*Potemkin*, 1925; *October*, 1927), but, for the critics of that time, the political aspect was considered secondary to the search for the fundamental principles that made film an art. One could say ideological theory needed a proper ideological context to assemble all its elements and come into the light, and the major social and cultural changes occurring in the '60s provided it.

Walter Benjamin (1935) was among the first theorists to remind the world about the political potential of films. In his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical

Reproduction," he was more interested in showing how film changed the entire nature of art, rather than debating whether film is an art. For him, film was clearly an art and a powerful one. He said,

> In permitting the reproduction to meet the eyes of the beholder or listener
> in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. . . .
> Both processes are intimately connected with the contemporary mass
> movements. Their most powerful agent is the film. Its social significance .
> . . is inconceivable without its destructive, cathartic aspect, that is, the
> liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage. (Benjamin,
> 1935, p. 734)

Worried by the rise of fascist ideology in the 1930s, Benjamin emphasized the revolutionary nature of film generated by the fact that it can be mass-produced, reaching a large audience instead of just a small elite.

The problem of representation is central to ideological theory, as films may promote, entrench, or mask dominant ideologies embedded in certain rhetorical practices. In other words, almost willy-nilly each cultural product radiates ideology, and it is even more so in film for two reasons: first, inevitably each frame carries an ideological message as it conceals the gap between art and life. Second, films are the product of a group of people (not just an individual) who can consciously leave their ideological mark on the final product. Jarvie (1978) points out that "movies are sensitive to the national mood for simple reasons. They are not created by a single individual with a camera. They are created at all stages by a group" (p. 104). Equally important, they are created *for* a group (the audience) without which the meaning of film finds no place to land or to produce "fireworks." The world of film comes into existence only when it is seen by a group of people. If that audience is perceptively educated, it takes only a few suggestive strokes to suggest an atmosphere or a specific genre (e.g. western or samurai movies). This is where the use of conventions or stereotypes comes into play. Carried over from previously popular theater genres like melodrama and vaudeville, they began to be used in film to

help the audience understand the narrative. Economically speaking, a typified character was in no need of elaborated construction. As Jarvie (1970) so justly emphasized, "what is taken for granted and what is explored in detail is entirely a function of the culture or subculture they [the movies] stem from" (p. 145). Like writers, film creators have an audience (or several) in mind. Jarvie thinks that "the really successful creator knows or feels something that is shared by several publics" (p. 105).[17]

From the same audience-centered perspective, Benjamin sensed that transitional and unstable times are most sensitive to the representations of social realities. History showed that Benjamin's prediction made in 1935 about the social power of films could not be closer to the truth. At that time, the Russian school of montage under the leftist political guidance of Stalin was already concentrating its efforts on engaging masses in the communist ideals through film. In 1935 in Germany, Leni Riefenstahl made *Triumph of the Will,* the first propagandistic film for the fascist regime.

Douglas Kellner in *Hollywood and Society* (1999) explained how the social power of film operates:

> films take the raw material of social history and of social discourses and process them into products which are themselves historical events and social forces. Films, therefore, can provide information about the "psychology" of an era and its tensions, conflicts, fears, and fantasies, but it does so not as a simple representation or mirroring of an extra-cinematic social reality. Rather, films refract social discourses and content into specifically cinematic forms which engage audiences in an active process of constructing meaning. (p. 3)

In *Camera Politica* (Kellner, 1988), he states similarly:

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[17] Although Jarvie uses the word "creator" I do not think he intends to use it from an auteur perspective, thus contradicting his own previous statement about film being the result of a collective work. I assumed that "creator" here is used to illustrate the creative capabilities of the team as a whole.

the sort of representation which prevail in a culture is a crucial political

issue. Cultural representations not only give shape to psychological

dispositions, they also play a role in determining how social reality will be

constructed . . .. They determine whether capitalism will be conceived

(felt, experienced, lived) as a predatory jungle or as a utopia of freedom.

Control over the production of cultural representation is therefore crucial

to the maintenance of social power, but it is also essential to progressive

movements for social change. Film is a particularly important area of

cultural representation for carrying out such political struggles in the

contemporary era. (p. 13)

I selected this rather long quote by Kellner as it seems relevant for the relationship
between *stereotypes* (cultural representations), *ideology* and *film* as a bearer of ideology
and "psychology of an era".

The importance of using film for political purposes was quickly learned by the US War
Department during World War II when they hired Frank Capra, Anatol Litvak and
Anthony Veiller to make *Why We Fight*, a series of eight movies produced between 1942
and 1945. The films were created to explain the U.S. involvement in the war to the
service personnel who had paid little attention to world events.

Soon after the war, the communist regimes in Eastern Europe held a very tight control on
every movie production, and censorship was at its mightiest until the fall of the Iron
Curtain in 1990. The above examples contradict, at least in part, Althusser's statement
about the difficulty of being outside ideology. When one attempts to control or maximize
the ideological content of a film, one needs the capacity to distance oneself from ideology
and assess its effects and powers.

Drawing from Benjamin, Monaco (2000) agrees with the statement that whichever way
we look at it, film is a distinctively political phenomenon. He distinguishes between the
sociopolitical power of film given by its popularity as a cultural phenomenon, and its

psychopolitical effects provided along with the powerful and convincing representations. In his opinion,

> Every film exhibits a political nature on one or more of these three levels:
> 1. ontologically because the medium of film itself tends to deconstruct the
> traditional values of the culture; 2. mimetically, because any film either
> reflects reality or recreates it (and its politics); 3. inherently, because the
> intense communicative nature of film gives the relationship between film
> and observer a natural political dimension. (p. 263)

The ontological point touches on Benjamin's discussion on the special aura surrounding a traditional, unique cultural product (like the *Mona Lisa* painting, for example), which film alters because of its inherent nature as a multipliable, mass medium. The mimetic point relates to Kellner's comment about film refracting and reconstructing reality, while the third point draws on the cognitive and emotional aspects of reception, basically saying that the illusion of cinema that audiences are so avidly seeking has a political dimension attached to it.

After establishing the premises of ideological theory and how it operates, film theorists have tried to establish criteria that would categorize the ideological content of a film in a manner that could be used in any process of movie interpretation. They have established as point of reference the dominant ideology existent in society at the time when the film has been produced and from here films could basically promote or oppose that ideology, in various degrees of intensity. Comolli and Narboni (1969) emphasized the relationship between economics and ideology. "Because every film is part of the economic system it is also a part of the ideological system, for 'cinema' and 'art' are branches of ideology" (p. 754). Like Jarvie (1970) and Monaco (2000), Comolli and Narboni (1969) consider every film to be political, "in as much as it is determined by the ideology which produces it" (p. 754). In their view, the art of cinema is even more under the power of ideology, "because unlike other arts or ideological systems its very manufacture mobilizes powerful economic forces" (p. 754). Since making a movie is generally expensive and its

success depends ultimately on consumers who agree to pay for the ticket, film walks a very delicate path. Comolli and Narboni (1969) identified seven possible ideological degrees in films ranging from those productions "imbued through and through with the dominant ideology in pure form, that give no indication that their makers were even aware of the fact", to films "where the director is not satisfied with the idea of the 'camera seeing through appearances', but attacks the basic problem of depiction by giving an active role to the concrete stuff of his film" (p. 758). It seems that the authors put great emphasis on the ideological degree of both *signified* and *signifiers*. For them, a movie that wishes to contradict the dominant ideology does not accomplish its mission unless both levels of meaning construction challenge the traditional modes of depiction.

In a more approachable and simple manner, Prince (1997) classifies the presence of ideology in films as *direct* or *first-order* (with overt ideological messages), and *indirect* or *second-order* (with implicit, subtle social messages). A similar classification is offered by Giannetti (2002) where he discusses three levels of ideologies: *neutral* (e.g. escapist films and light entertainment movies where issues of right and wrong are treated superficially, with no analysis), *implicit* (conflicting value systems are represented, but they are not dwelled on) and *explicit* (as in patriotic films, or many documentaries).

Prince (1997) also elaborates on a second important component of ideological critique—the *point of view*. A film can be explicitly or implicitly ideological, but the point of view can establish the position towards that ideology. He discusses three possible positions: "the ideological *support*" - when the film supports and promotes the dominant ideology, "the ideological *critique*" - when the film offers a critical view of the established values, and "the ideological *incoherence*" - when the film offers "an ideological mix meant to produce an ambiguous product that would attract as many members of the targeted audiences as possible while offending as few as possible" (Prince, 1997, p. 359). It is through the socio-dynamic theory of stereotypes and the last three classifications (Comolli & Narboni, 1969; Prince, 1997; Giannetti, 2002) that I am going to interpret the two movies selected for my analysis.

As we have seen, ideologies as well as stereotypes rely on people's system of thoughts, involve their attitudes, values and beliefs, and acquire a normative value. Stereotypes target personal attributes of a group through a simplification process and they can often take the shortcut of an automatic process.

Many ideologies present a mythical core at the base of their attempt to build conceptual edifices and gain social impact. That mythological core is in some cases a mix of stereotypes (regarding attributes of social groups), ideas and ideals (regarding societal infrastructures) and mechanisms. The racial cleansing policy promoted by Adolf Hitler was ultimately based on a prejudiced perception of the non-Aryan groups, especially Jews and Gypsies, and it promoted the myth of racial purity. Communist ideology revolved around the myth of equality and a classless society. History has shown how these myths remained the unfulfilled part of these two ideologies.

In film, the purpose of stereotypes is "to clip into codes and conventions associated with belonging and exclusion" (Hayward, 1996, p. 349). According to several observers of the Romani issues (e.g. Rutherford, 1999; Skender, 1999), three kinds of stereotypes have been usually used in movies about Gypsies: positive stereotypes – Gypsies seen as musical geniuses; negative stereotypes – as thieves and wrongdoers; and more recently as victims of the *gadje* discrimination. Because the stereotypes about Gypsies are socio-cultural productions passing as norms, they need to be examined in relation to history and dominant ideology.

Chapter 4

Analysis of stereotypes and levels of ideology

4.1. Analysis of stereotypes and levels of ideology in *Gadjo Dilo* (Gatlif, 1997)

> It took me fifteen years to accomplish this film trilogy. The more I shot
> the Gypsies, the more I discovered I didn't know about them. I wanted to
> put myself in their shoes, so I kept living with them. I wanted to free
> myself of the nasty look of outsiders, who kept telling me stupid things
> about Gypsies. The only people who know about them are the police, who
> have been dealing with them since the Middle Ages, and rightly or
> wrongly accusing them of doing things (Gatlif quoted in Peary, 1998).[18]

This statement by Tony Gatlif recorded at a press conference at the Locarno Film Festival
could be considered his mission statement. The goal of his trilogy that began with *Les
Princes* (1983) and continued with *Latcho Drom* (1993) is to show Gypsies "as they
really are." What Gatlif attempted was to give Gypsies a voice, and perhaps he is right
when he says that the first right thing to do is to learn their culture directly from them.

Gadjo Dilo, the final film of the trilogy, presents the story of a young Parisian man
(Stéphane) arriving in a Romanian Gypsy village in search of a Gypsy female singer,
Nora Luca. He has an audiotape with her songs from his father, who was also fascinated
by her music. The village he enters on a gray winter evening is located in a flat and cold
plain.[19] The first person he encounters is Izidor, a Gypsy man whose son had just been
arrested by the Romanian police earlier that day. Izidor takes Stéphane to his modest
home and adopts him, presenting him to the village as the foreigner who wants to learn
the Romani language. First, Stéphane is rejected by the superstitious Gypsy villagers who

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[18] Peary, G. (1998. August). *Tony Gatlif.* [Interview]. Retrieved February 13, 2003 from
http://www.geraldpeary.com/interviews/ghi/gatlif.html

[19] Like in *The Bicycle Thief* (De Sica, 1948), the camera immerses itself in the life of the characters at time
T1 (Stéphane arrives in the Gypsy village during winter) and exits at time T2 (Stéphane dances over the
buried tapes in the spring).

think that a stranger in their community will bring misfortune, but then they slowly accept him. Thus Stéphane begins a process of integration and learning about Gypsy life, language and community that will change him fundamentally over the winter and spring that follow. The love story with Sabina brings Stéphane even closer to the Gypsies. The search for the voice of Nora Luca ceases the moment Stéphane listens to Sabina's song and realizes that although he did not meet Nora Luca in person, he found something equally rewarding in the spirit and energy of her songs. Stéphane begins to feel *for* the Gypsy people and *like* the Gypsy people, although he barely speaks their language.

The film tells the story from the point of view of Stéphane, a Westerner integrating relatively easily within the Gypsy community. Thus, the Western audience finds it easier to identify with Stéphane, as his reactions could be their reactions. As he becomes more and more adapted to the Gypsy life, the point of view later includes the Roma, and when the climax arrives—the ethnic conflict between Romanians and the Gypsies—the viewer sees it through the desperate eyes of the Roma and Stéphane. The plot takes a quick turn when Izidor's son is liberated from prison. From then on, Stéphane becomes merely a witness in the background, and the plot is taken over by the Gypsies in conflict with the Romanians, all followed by an omniscient camera. After the Gypsy village is burned to the ground and Izidor's son is burned alive, nothing is as it used to be. Stéphane's action in the end, when in a Roma-like ritual he destroys the tapes he had recorded for several months as carefully as an ethnographer, becomes a value statement directed at the Western audience. Stéphane realizes that he had acted like a tourist trying to capture the Gypsy song and culture on tape. The striking tragedy of the ethnic conflict shows him the superficiality of his Western attitude—looking for the exotic in a community that has much more to say to the world.

In the following paragraphs I will present a few scenes in more detail to identify cultural elements that Tony Gatlif used to build the narrative structure and the ideological message of his film.

The movie is filled with political messages. The first one is in the opening scene. As Stéphane is waiting for a ride on an empty frozen road, the audience hears a rap rhythm and a song performed by Rona Hartner, the Romanian actress playing Sabina, the central feminine character. The words are pronounced one by one in Roma, French, English, and German language with a precise rhythm. It says: "The people, the Gypsies, will disappear from the earth. The child, the nomad, will come back from the dessert. He will be reborn from the breath of the sea. Shoeless." Then we have a time jump - the next morning as he walks by himself on the icy road, Stéphane notices that one of his shoes is torn—the first sign of similitude with the "shoeless" Roma. Secondly, he did not drive to the village, he did not rent a car or a taxi, he did not fly by plane, as a Western tourist typically would.

The next shot shows Stéphane walking with determination; a military truck passes by in the opposite direction. A series of three cuts focused on the people in the truck establish the narrative importance of that scene for what is to follow. A group of Romanian policemen carry a prisoner, a young Rom shown in a close-up with his bleeding nose and swollen eye, most certainly resulting from the arrest. The young boy looks at Stéphane with sadness and resignation for a brief second. None of them knows it yet, but for the next six months, Stéphane will replace that young man in the house and heart of his father. A scene later, Stéphane meets Izidor, a Gypsy man in his fifties with a bottle of vodka in his hand, whose son, we learn, has just been arrested by the Romanian police earlier that day. He pushes Stéphane aside and knocks angrily at the door of the local pub shouting his pain in *Romanes* (Gypsy language): "May I rot if I don't curse you tonight. You sent my son to prison and you want me to lie down. For us Gypsies, there is no justice! My son didn't do anything to go to prison." We see here the appeal to the curse, which is the last resort of the desperate Roma when nothing else works. The viewer will never find out whether Izidor's son has indeed committed a felony, but the angry expression "For us Gypsies, there is no justice!" seems meant to stick with the viewer. Later, when a Romanian friend advises Izidor to take his other son to the hospital to treat his head wounds, Izidor answers with a similar phrase, this time said with discouragement and sadness rather than anger: "For us, Gypsies, there are no hospitals."

A humorous dialogue begins between Stéphane and Izidor, as they talk to each other in two different languages (French and Gypsy). Izidor insists that Stéphane should drink for his son's health, while Stéphane is interested in a place to sleep. Izidor would rather let himself buried in the snow than "see another *gadje*". Stéphane is himself a *gadje*, but the viewer already understands that he is special, and that Izidor actually means Romanian *gadje*, the ones that unjustly arrested his son.

In this five minute long scene, close-ups of the two fill the screen as they talk, push, pull each other, smile, whisper, shout, laugh—a whole range of verbal and non-verbal interactions meant to show their capacity to communicate at a deep human level despite language barriers. The scene ends with Izidor giving Stéphane a ride to his home in his cart. Hospitable, Izidor lets Stéphane sleep in his one-room house on the bed, while he goes to sleep in the barn. The next morning, the entire village gathers at Izidor's windows to see the "crazy stranger" (*dilo* in Romani language means *crazy* and also *foolish*). They look at his torn shoes and categorize him as a "bum." As Stéphane stands in the door's frame, the Roma surround him with suspicion. Stéphane smiles and walks away. One Gypsy goes into the house to check whether he had stolen something, and a woman asks ironically "What's there to steal? The fire in the chimney?" Thus the viewer finds out that this Gypsy community is quite poor, after already receiving similar clues – muddy roads, poor improvised tents and houses built with wood and mud bricks. Another woman warns that nobody should go in the house after the foreigner had slept there, as he might have left a curse behind. This is similar to the *marimé* code of Gypsy culture. According to this Gypsy code, if a non-Gypsy sleeps in a Gypsy bed, the sheets will have to be thoroughly washed and disinfected.

One of the next shots focuses on Sabina at the entrance of a tent watching the Gypsy confusion about the stranger, while holding a baby (not hers) in her arms and smoking. She is dressed as Roma women usually are in Romania – with long, colorful multi-layered aprons, her long dark hair covered by a scarf signifying her matrimonial status. She has a silver tooth, which in the Gypsy culture is considered jewelry, a sign of richness and coquetry. Her status in the village is special. We learn that after spending

some time in Belgium with her husband and making a living as a dancer, she left him and returned to her father's house alone. She is considered a "slut" because she has no husband and no children. In a way she is an outsider within her own community because she is not like everyone else.

Perhaps it is worth mentioning here that Rona Hartner won the best actress prize at Lucarno for the naturalness with which she interpreted Sabina. Rona Hartner, a Romanian actress of German ethnicity, and the French actor Romaine Duris (Stéphane) are the only professional actors used in the film. Izidor is a real Gypsy who had never acted before.

In an interview for the *Boston Phoenix*, Gatlif said: "When we shot, many of the crew were scared of catching lice and fleas. But Rona lived with the Gypsy women in their tent, held their babies. The more she did it, the more she was a true Gypsy" (Peary, 1998). Tony Gatlif's love for realism is obvious in this statement. He put all his knowledge about Gypsy traditions and culture in this film and he paid special attention to what he considered *true* Gypsiness. What makes a true Gypsy?—we may ask. As I mentioned in the introduction, Gypsies themselves and historians (e.g. Hancock, 1987; Barany, 2002) say it is a person's ancestry (the blood line) that makes a Gypsy a Gypsy. According to Slovak Gypsy author Ilona Lacková (2000), it matters less who a person is in Gypsy society than who their kin is and some of the first questions asked when meeting someone new are "whose are you" and "who do you know." When Western audiences watch Gatlif's movie, their mental question may be simply "what are you." Gatlif therefore made the identification relatively easy—we have a triangle of three cultures (Gypsy, Romanian and French) portrayed in a fragile equilibrium. For Western audiences the behavior is the primary criterion, not the kinship. As Slovenian sociologist Erjavec (2001) stated, the West has long considered Eastern Europe (including Gypsies) as "barbaric" and "not normal," and Gatlif is well aware of this prejudice. This is perhaps one reason why he pays so much attention to how veridical his characters are. Rona Hartner confessed in one of her interviews (Kaufman, 1998) that Gatlif "wanted non-professional actors as examples. He was looking at them and then to me and would say

'You're not a Gypsy yet' and I didn't understand what he wanted. He'd say, 'No, no, no, I don't want a character, I want you to be yourself because you have enough gypsy in you.'" The actress compared his demands with the strict training in Peter Brook's theater.

The idea that I would like to emphasize here is that the search process in which Gatlif engaged Hartner—to search for the Gypsy in her—comprises a selection and simplification that may have something in common with the formation of stereotypes. As Hartner confessed, it was a difficult, mentally painful process that required her to open up, to show her feelings while learning about the Gypsy life, language and dance.

Coming back to the narrative, a relevant scene where we see prejudices being reversed is when Stéphane walks out of the Gypsy village during his first morning there. He is being watched closely by children and men who suspect he is carrying stolen chickens in his bag. The Gypsy men call him "Thief! Assassin!"—the exact words used by the *gadje* to categorize Gypsies. The effect is humorous and also ironic. This upside down situation makes the viewer feel indirectly what a Roma feels in the *gadje* world, facing their suspicion and resentment.

Stéphane stops at the pub, the same pub where he had arrived the night before. Despite the light coming from outside, the place is gray, wet and unwelcoming. The Romanian farmers are dressed in the communist fashion, with large winter hats reminiscent of the Russian style and working coats. One Romanian wearing a Russian winter hat is shown visually measuring Stéphane with suspicion from head to toe. The next shot focuses on Stéphane's torn shoes, and then the camera goes back to the Romanian man turning his eyes away in contempt. Only when Stéphane holds a bill of US currency does he receive his coffee and then is ignored again. These few visual clues (to which architect Brigitte Brassart and costume designer Mihaela Ularu contributed significantly) build the portrait of a collective character formed by farmers with little education and holding xenophobic attitudes.

When Stéphane returns to the Roma village, he brings back gifts for Izidor and reminds him about Nora Luca, the singer he is looking for. Izidor lies to him both verbally and non-verbally, leading him to believe that he knows Nora Luca. The viewer perceives the humor of the dialogue between two people who do not speak each other's language and soon begins to enjoy the fact that he/she is the only one who understands what both sides are saying. This cognitive situation prepares the viewer to empathize with Sabina, the female character who shares a similar position, because she understands both French and *Romanes*.

Several Roma gather in Izidor's house to see Stéphane who introduces himself to everyone. Izidor is enthusiastic and energetic, toasts for Paris, children laugh, and it is obvious that the original fear and confusion has completely dissipated. They call Sabina, who speaks French, to translate for them. When she refuses, Izidor tries to force her, they fight and curse each other as if competing for the dirtiest mouth. The Gypsies begin to like Stéphane. They like him so much that women bring hot water and shaving tools, and Izidor takes his torn shoes away to replace them with better ones to make him presentable to the village. Interestingly, as Izidor cannot find the right shoes, he resorts to sneaking into a house and stealing a shiny pair of shoes from a sick young man lying in bed with a bleeding head. Before stealing the shoes, Izidor shows a brief moment of grief that we will come to understand only in the next scene, when Izidor and Stéphane embark on a wagon and go to the Romanian village. On the way, they stop to chat with a Romanian friend who kindly asks about his son's health. Izidor complains that his son was badly beaten (we don't know by whom) and is lying in bed with little hope of recovery. Now the audience can understand that Izidor has two sons, one arrested and one seriously injured at home in bed. When the Romanian friend tells him to take his son to the hospital, Izidor answers "Hospitals are not for us Roms!" That phrase expresses Izidor's suspicion about going into a *gadje* (non-Gypsy) hospital and the fear that more troubles could come in a place that might also discriminate against the Roma.

Gatlif did not portray Gypsies and Romanians one-sidedly or idealistically. Although the movie underlies an ethnic conflict between the two ethnic groups, not all Romanians are

bad and not all Gypsies are good. From the description above, Izidor himself proves to be a liar, a drunk and a thief, but we like him anyway, *because* of his verisimilitude. The relationship between the scene about stealing the shoes scene and an aspect of Gypsy culture is provided by an ethnographer, Michael Stewart (1997), who lived with a Gypsy community in Hungary for several months and noted that Gypsies share almost everything—food, tools, and clothes. If a Gypsy has more cans of food than he needs, he cannot say 'no' to a community member who asks for one. Sharing with neighbors is not something Westerners are familiar with and few know that this is the norm in many Gypsy communities. It proves that Gatlif is not afraid to use cultural elements that may be misinterpreted by a Western audience as a reinforcement of stereotypes (Gypsies as thieves). He knows that in the end he cannot go wrong, since the audience will end up caring for Izidor anyway.

In the geography of the film, the Romanian pub becomes the place where ethnic tensions can be expressed in the form of jokes, ironies or fights, because it is the only place where the two neighboring groups meet. When Izidor and Stéphane walk into the pub in the middle of the day, the tables are full of Romanian farmers. Izidor introduces Stéphane and the Romanian bartender is amazed that the young Westerner stays "with these Gypsies." Izidor invents a story according to which all of Stéphane's friends in Paris are Gypsy. When the bartender asks maliciously if there are many Gypsies in France, Izidor answers emphatically on behalf of his friend, saying that there are a lot of Gypsies in France—colonels, lawyers, doctors. In France Gypsies and French people live in harmony.

> In France, nobody calls the Gypsies thieves. No one points their finger at
> them in France! They travel where they want in their houses on wheels.
> They repair everything – radios, televisions… they make saucepans,
> wagons. Everyone loves them because on this Earth no one works as well
> as they do (*Gadjo Dilo,* Gatlif, 1997).

This is where all the Romanians at the tables begin to laugh ironically at Izidor's utopian peroration. One Romanian speaks out and shatters Izidor's fantasy: "You should go there, too. You and your whole family." Behind the clown-like act of Izidor, the viewer perceives the nostalgia of a dream world where Gypsies do not suffer from discrimination and enjoy a better life and most importantly receive *respect* from other groups.

On the way back to the village, the two are shot from the back as they try to teach each other their own languages. Izidor tells him how to say "children" in *Romanes*, and Stéphane teaches him how to say *Paris*, *Mon cher*, *My mother is a steward*, and then *Le Pen*, *Le Pen is a motherfucker* in French. Izidor imitates every word and the effect is comic. Le Pen is a French extreme right politician who promotes harsh policies against minorities living in France, Gypsies included. The political message uttered by Izidor who does not even know what he had just said could be seen as a form of the Gypsy curse, or mockery, the ultimate resort to the symbolic energy of words, this time prompted by Stéphane, a *gadje* who is ideologically on the Gypsy side. The statement also hints at the idea that Gypsies in France do not live as harmoniously as Izidor imagined, because Gypsies seem to have a Le Pen everywhere.

The spectator is drawn into the Gypsy culture at the same time as Stéphane. We learn from Stéphane's mistakes. When he wants to surprise Izidor by cleaning his house, Izidor gets mad and asks him if he has turned into a woman. We learn that Gypsy society is rigidly patriarchal.

Another culturally relevant scene is when Izidor and others prepare to perform for a wedding. The father of one of the female dancers accompanying the Gypsy band brings a document attesting the medical proof of her virginity and warns Izidor to bring her back in all her chastity. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, virginity is a very important criterion for establishing the bride price. If she did not come back as a virgin, her family would suffer financially by having to accept a lower bride price, and also socially, by having their prestige hurt. Thus, the chastity of the girl has an economic and social importance that explains the father's anxiety.

At the Gypsy wedding, we see Stéphane being fearful at a scene where the father of the bride defends the entrance to the house with an ax and threatens that nothing in the world will convince him to give her away. The groom presents a box of drinks, a bottle is opened, the father is appeased and the wedding goes on. Although this is not apparent in the movie, this tradition is also characteristic to Romanian weddings, but perhaps the display is not that aggressive. Particular to Gypsy weddings is the sadness of the bride, which also appears in this wedding. According to ethnographers McLaughlin (1980) and Stewart (1999), the sadder the bride, the more virtuous she proves to be, and if she forgets and enjoys herself too much, her mother or a relative would pinch her to make her cry.

What we see in *Gadjo Dilo* in terms of work input matches the information provided by ethnographers: we see women working harder than men—gathering wood from the forest, taking care of the children, cleaning houses, cooking and serving food, sewing shoes. With the exception of Izidor who plays violin at weddings, men are not shown working; we see them partying, organizing weddings, negotiating transactions, fixing little things around the house, or stealing electricity from the wires crossing their village.

There is a beautiful scene where Sabina and her sister are showering in the tent. At the end of the shower, they rub their upper bodies with steamed wild flowers to perfume their skin and hair. The flowers look as if they had just been picked from the field; there is a sense of connection with nature that the Western viewer knows it is not part of his modern life anymore. As Laszlo Jakab Orsos, a Hungarian film critic, put it, "*Gadjo Dilo*: the Crazy Man living in every white man who knows nothing about the smell of smoke, about the quivering hips of Gypsy girls, about howling suffering and biblical poverty" (*Roma Rights*, 1999).[20]

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[20] Orsos, L.J. (1999). In *Roma Rights*, *3* [Review of the motion picture *Gadjo Dilo*]. Retrieved February 13, 2003 from
http://216239.39.100/search?q=cache:t-tekVIDhOMC:www.errc.org/rr_nr3_1999/Noteb.pdf+Tony+gatlif&h

Several scenes portray the unity of the Gypsies and their capacities to share emotions. The mailman brings a letter from the son in prison and reads it to the Roma group gathered around him, since they could not read. The letter said, "There are a lot of Gypsies in this jail. The director lets us play our own music." All the Roma gathered around the postman are sad and cry. The group appears to have the dynamic of a domino game – if one falls, all are affected and the group's interests take over the personal ones. In another scene, Sabina and Stéphane are about to make love, but the news about Adriani's liberation and arrival makes Sabina leave her lover alone. Later, Adriani's tragedy becomes everyone's tragedy not just because their shelters and possessions were burnt to the ground, but because the entire community felt attacked.

It is interesting to note that unlike *Latcho Drom* (1993), where the music was explosive and abundant, in *Gadjo Dilo*, the music is rather scarce. The viewer who expects this movie to be a Gypsy music show will be disappointed. In a way, the disappointment is carried through by Stéphane, who keeps asking about Nora Luca and everyone is evasive about her. The viewer along with Stéphane needs to learn more about the Gypsies to be allowed access to their music. Gatlif personally supervised the music. With the exception of the "Gypsy rap" piece in the beginning of the film, a new genre in which Rona Hartner has specialized after the making of this movie, the rest of it consists of vocal and instrumental traditional music performed by Gypsies. Some ballads are sung in Romanian, while others are sung in *Romanes*.

Soon, Sabina becomes Stéphane's translator and intermediary when they begin traveling around and recording various Gypsy songs. When Sabina asks what is so special about Nora Luca, Stéphane explains that her music gives him thrills and has penetrated his heart and mind. Later, when he hears Sabina singing, he is emotionally and physically drawn to her, convinced that he has found the spirit and energy of Nora Luca. Stéphane is a romantic character engaged in the same search as his father. We find out that he traveled all over the world and died in Syria among the nomads. They both seem to be in search of a certain truth about themselves and to have goals that become obsessions— features that make Stéphane extra-ordinary from the start.

As I mentioned before, Gatlif does not idealize his Gypsy characters. Adriani, Izidor's son, is shown to be a young foolish Mafioso bursting with vanity and sad pride. He goes to the pub and buys drinks for everyone. As Romanians reject his gesture, a verbal altercation begins; Adriani throws a glass at one Romanian and accidentally kills him. The fact that he runs away triggers an entire sequence of revengeful actions. Romanians chase Adriani to the Gypsy village and set it on fire, burning Adriani in it. This is a scene where, for the first time, the camera abandons Stéphane for a significant amount of time, assuming an omniscient position. The viewer no longer sees the world through Stéphane's eyes, but through the "see-it-all" eye of the camera, which somewhat hurts the continuity of the film. The rhythm of the film increases significantly as well. The whole massacre scene takes 3 minutes of the last 10 minutes of the film. The vividness and speed of the events on the screen could make the viewer think of how fragile peace and happiness are in a society dominated by ethnic prejudices and permanent fear.

The village that the Romanians burn was a reconstruction designed by the architect working with Gatlif. Still the Roma that were present at the scene began shouting and protesting at the Romanian actors spreading the flames, as if it was a real event (Peary, 1998). Working with Roma proved to be an unusual experience for the actors and the crew. Rona Hartner remembers that

> There was this scene where everybody was screaming "the Frenchman is
> going to steal our children," Tony Gatlif had to stop them, because they
> really wanted to fight. He had to stop scenes all the time. . . . In one scene,
> my father in the movie was telling me that I shouldn't be with the
> Frenchman and he had to scream at me. Gatlif didn't put it into the movie,
> but the father really hit me. He hurt me. The women saved me. They were
> all very involved. (Kaufman, 1998)[21]

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[21] Kaufman, A. (1998). *Rona Hartner raps and writhes in "Gadjo Dilo"* [Interview]. Retrieved March 16, 2003 from http://www2.indiewire.com/people/int_Hartner_Rona_980806.html

The Roma played themselves truthfully and with little theatricality. It took a while for Izidor to realize he did not need to be drunk to play the role of a drunk (Peary, 1998). As Hartner reported, for the scene where he mourns and dances at his friend's tomb, Gatlif had asked him to think of someone close who died, and Izidor thought about his fourteenth child and then could not stop crying for two days.

During the massacre scene, Stéphane is in the forest with Sabina. If the viewer does not already feel moved, the reactions of Sabina at the sight of the burned village certainly induce sadness. In this scene, Stéphane cannot play more than a supportive role, as do the viewers, but he is definitely transformed. They find Izidor performing at a Romanian party and tell him the bad news. Stéphane looks at the partying Romanians, as if blaming them for what had happened, for paying for the Gypsy music without caring to understand Gypsy life. Stéphane's accusatory attitude is also targeted towards the Western tourist/viewer who is supposed to feel the guilt for enjoying the encounter and empathizing with the Gypsies but never really understanding them. His final act of burning the tapes he had so carefully recorded and labeled is a manifestation of a personal protest against journalists, ethnographers, and tourists who pretend to know the Gypsies if they record tapes and notes about them. His dance is similar to the one Izidor did at the tomb of his friend, a sign that Stéphane feels like a Gypsy. The last shot focuses on Sabina's face, as she smiles happily at the sight of Stéphane dancing on the tomb of his tapes, perhaps as a clue to us that at least in her eyes, the crazy stranger is not that stranger anymore.). As the camera entered the life of the characters at an apparently arbitrary moment, it exits the same way. We do not know what happens with Stéphane, whether he will stay with the Gypsies or leave. We only receive the message of a lesson learned.

In two of his interviews, Gatlif said: "I don't want to end like in the movies. In my film no one wins: neither Stéphane, the Gypsies, the Romanians, nor me" (Maigne, 1997). It is his manner of saying, "this story that we told you, it exists" (Vigo, 1998). Tony Gatlif is very careful to make his ideological position clear. It is no secret that he wants to become the advocate of the Gypsies:

I fight for the image of the Gypsy people who, ever since they arrived in

Europe, were blamed for all the vices and sins. I want to preserve its

memory, to show how it is, to love it . . . . But, most importantly, I don't

want to give lessons. I never say to the spectator: you don't know the

Gypsies, look how they really are. Never. What I like doing, and what I

have always done, is not taking the viewer by the hand, but invite him in a

house without cleaning it in advance. (Vigo, 1998)

The images seem to invite the viewer into the Gypsy world without attracting too much attention to the camera techniques. Eric Guichard was responsible for the documentary-like images, with long takes, realistic shots of the set and minimal movement. One of the few times when the camera drew attention to itself was when it tracked the two lovers running through the woods at high speed. The same angle, technique and speed are used in the next scene where Gypsy villagers run from the burned village, building a parallel effect.

Gatlif is careful in his use of framing to provide visual equality to Stéphane and his Gypsy friends. When Izidor and Stéphane are together they fill equal amounts of space on the screen. In certain shots in the village, Stéphane appears alone but safe amidst the great number of Roma, an outsider among outsiders, and almost every crowd shot contains children as a subtle hint to the pacifism and "large family" atmosphere of the Roma group. A second example of special camera use is in the group scenes, where Gatlif opted for several close-ups of the Gypsy children witnessing the scene or as direct participants in the action. It is probably another proof of Gatlif's love for the realism of human faces that brings the viewer close to the actors' faces, thus allowing the facial expressions to enrich the spoken message. The friendly smiles on Gypsy children's faces, the frowning and disgust expressed by Romanian villagers, the curiosity and desire on Sabina's face, are all signifiers (cinematic means) building up the signified (message).

The editing done by Monique Dartow seems to have as its only purpose to advance the narrative, creating a realistic impression of time and space. The cuts are intelligent and seem to come at the right time giving the film its own rhythm. The film is not rich in visual surprises since it follows the visual norms of a realist film (Prince, 1997). The visual style is naturalistic, employing continuity editing and a linear narrative structure where events follow each other on a cause and effect relationship. Its artistic merits consist in the intensity of its ideological message, the performances of Izidor and Sabina, the construction of the fictional part of the narrative (e.g. Stéphane's immersion in the Gypsy culture), and the cultural subtleties. It should be noted that *Gadjo Dilo* has a noncinematic referent in the real ethnic conflicts that occurred in Romania and Czech Republic after 1990 (Fawn, 2001; Barany, 2002).

In terms of stereotype use, I have observed several identifying stereotypes serving to identify members of a certain group, ranging from costumes to behaviors. Gypsies are identified through their costumes (especially the women's colorful skirts and scarves), their jewelry (the opulent golden rings on one Gypsy's hands, or the coins in the women's braids and necklaces) and their language (it is in the name of authenticity that the Gypsy characters speak their native language).

Romanian farmers are identified through their Russian hats, location (mostly at the pub) and language. One can say that the Romanian collective character defines itself solely through the opposition towards the Gypsy group. We see no glimpse into the daily life of a Romanian. The relationship between the two groups is tense from the beginning of the movie (Adriani's arrest) until the end (the accidental murder triggering the violent reaction of the Romanians). There are a couple of positive Romanian characters whose appearance is so short that it passes almost unnoticed—one is the friendly Romanian who asks about the health of Izidor's son, and the other is the mailman who benevolently reads the letter from Adriani to his father and the group of Roma. In some ways Romanians are much more stereotyped than Gypsies are in Gatlif's movie. They appear rude, aggressive, and xenophobic in comparison with the Gypsy group that is sensitive, circumspect but hospitable, and culturally rich.

Some of the negative stereotypes about Gypsies which the movie may remind the Western audiences about relate to education (illiteracy), stealing, lying and deceiving, violent behavior, sexual aggressiveness (apparent in the vulgar language used by Sabina, or when Izidor fails to get sexual satisfaction from the two foreign tourists and asks Sabina for "a little fuck"). The language use deserves separate attention, because the same vulgarity used in different contexts acquires different meanings. First, the vulgar language addressed to the non-Gypsies is a weapon of mockery and rejection (for example, in the opening scene where Stéphane meets the cart with the Gypsy women who mock him). Second, when addressed to other Gypsies it feels like tender mockery, done with friendship (when Sabina encourages Stéphane to insult Izidor as a salute). Finally, vulgarity becomes the language of seduction between the two lovers to such a degree that it leads Sabina to bite into a tree. The multiple use of vulgarity is a special feature of this movie, and Gatlif deserves credit for the originality of the script.

Once one gets to know more about the Gypsy culture, a lot of details in the movie acquire a different significance. For instance, in the scene where a young Gypsy woman dances on the table for a Romanian party, she shakes her hands in front of her pubis in a manner that could be interpreted as erotic dance at first view. But if one connects the information about the *marimé* code with the Gypsy belief that a woman is dirty from her waist down, a new interpretation appears possible—mockery and subtle insult through dance.

Tony Gatlif, himself half-Gypsy, used a strategy of disclosure rather than concealment and beautification (as he previously did in *Latcho Drom*), betting on the realism card. From his interviews, one can say he is very much aware that reality is partially defined by the dominant ideology of his *gadje* viewers.

Using the theoretical filter presented in the first part, I would say that according to the Comolli and Narboni's classification (1969), *Gadjo Dilo* falls under the category of "films which attack their ideological assimilation on two fronts. First, by direct political action, on the level of the 'signified,' that is, they deal with a directly political subject.

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'Deal with' is here intended in an active sense: they do not just discuss an issue, reiterate it, paraphrase it, but use it to attack the ideology" (p. 757). On the level of form, *Gadjo Dilo* breaks from the ideological filter of narrative traditions by not putting an emphasis on formal beauty and classical dramaturgy. Instead of using professional actors, the movie used real Gypsies speaking *Romanes*, the language of the Gypsy minority.

Gadjo Dilo uses the young Frenchman's adventure among the Gypsies and the old theme of the love affair that transgresses cultures to bring to life a perspective and an overall feeling that is *against* the dominant ideology. The movie goes beyond the general stereotypes about Gypsies (as talented musicians, poor, uneducated, careless people) and the *signified*, the final moral and feeling of the movie, is opposed to the dominant ideology—Roma people should be treated as equal human beings and not as scapegoats. The ideological effect is more beneficial for the Roma when they are humanized and presented with their own weaknesses, than when they are portrayed idealistically, as one-dimensional characters.

Following Prince's classification, *Gadjo Dilo* reflects a *first order* ideology. One could see only five minutes of the film, thirty minutes of it or the entire film and still conclude it is explicitly ideological. The film "perspires" ideological messages through all its pores. Using Giannetti's alternative classification, I found that the ideology is *explicit*, for the same reasons detailed above. Applying Prince's *point of view* criterion, I found that in *Gadjo Dilo* the "ideological critique*"* is present, since the film offers a radical critique of the dominant ideology from a leftwing perspective.

The Western viewers for whom the film was designed seemed to have liked the film. At the box office, *Gadjo Dilo* surpassed the results of the two previous films by Gatlif (*Latcho Drom*, 1993 and *Mondo*, 1994). At the Locarno film festival, three thousand people stood up and gave the director ten minutes of applause. According to *Ecran Noir*,[22] two hundred and fifty thousand spectators had seen the film one year after its

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[22] Boutique Ecran Noir (1998, April). *Gadjo Dilo* [Review of the motion picture *Gadjo Dilo*]. Retrieved February 13, 2003 from http://www.ecrannoir.fr/films/98/gadjo.htm

release. The film enjoyed the greatest success in Germany, where sixty thousand people viewed it in five weeks.

On the other hand, according to the reflections of the Parisian writer Erik Rutherford (1999) in *Roma Rights*, a magazine dedicated to Roma, some Roma audiences in New York were disturbed by the negative stereotypes used in the movie and accused Gatlif of superficiality and oversimplification. Other Gypsy contributors to the magazine wrote that the Gypsy culture is much more diverse than we see in *Gadjo Dilo*. They also thought that those who choose to make movies about Gypsies should portray atypical Gypsies as well—the Roma that the Western public rarely notices—the intellectuals, the ones that have broken the ethnic glass ceiling and the *gadje* do not even consider them Gypsy anymore. It is perhaps normal to encounter heated opinions when the ideological stake is so high.

This analysis allowed me to understand several things: first, it is difficult for any filmmaker to move beyond the realm of artful selection and suggestion, even if this means employing stereotypes. Second, whatever negative or positive stereotypes I was able to identify, I am very much aware that this is far from a chemical process where one separates the oxygen from hydrogen in a clear-cut operation. I have observed the use of stereotypes in the portrayal of the Gypsies, keeping in mind the aesthetic attributes of the film. Third, I learned that a film that would use only positive images or stereotypes about a highly discriminated minority such as the Gypsies would build a false image about them. Subtle camera techniques used in *Gadjo Dilo*, like close-ups, long shots and framing bring the Gypsies closer than we as *gadje* have ever been to a Gypsy. The attachment that grows between the Gypsy characters and the viewer hopefully can move the viewer's mind beyond the familiar negative stereotypes about Gypsies. Thus a chance of reviewing and perhaps altering one's stereotypes is born.

As for the director Tony Gatlif, he said, "*Gadjo Dilo* is a film of absolute honesty and truth. Whenever I present that film, I feel that same emotion with the audience. . . . The magic is that the public feel [sic] exactly what I wanted to communicate" (Peary, 1998).

4.2. Analysis of stereotypes and levels of ideology in *Time of the Gypsies* (Kusturica, 1989)

Emir Kusturica is one of the best known contemporary directors from former Yugoslavia. As I mentioned in the introduction, almost every film he made received awards at a major film festival in Europe. The aesthetic pleasure and surprise in his films is built by a careful dosage of naturalism and magic realism that critics say resembles the novels of the South-American writers Mario Vargas Llosa and Gabriel Garcia Marquez (e.g. Dieckmann, 1997; Kuzmanovich, 1993; Horton, 1992). His movies show Kusturica's keen eye for human behavior, as they relinquish laughter and emotion often at the same time. Thematically, Horton (1992) compared *Time of the Gypsies* with *Grapes of Wrath* (Ford, 1940). The common element is the struggle of an individual to maintain his dignity in a community overwhelmed by poverty.

In 1988 Kusturica came to the U.S. to teach a graduate film course at Columbia University, an occasion on which he also persuaded Columbia Pictures to back up his film, *Time of the Gypsies* (1989). While in the U.S. he started to work on *Arizona Dream* (1992*)*, the only film made with American actors, featuring Johnny Depp and Faye Dunaway. The war in Yugoslavia forced him to move his family to France. At the same time, one of his films (*Underground*) raised suspicions in his native Bosnia that he might be a Serb sympathizer, which led Kusturica to declare that he would stop making films altogether.

Time of the Gypsies had an interesting fate. After winning Kusturica the best director award at Cannes in 1989 and enjoying the financial support of Columbia Pictures, it was quickly discarded by Puttnam's successor at Columbia studios, Dawn Steel. Dieckmann (1997) quotes Steel saying: "What I didn't know [coming in] was that there were many movies in production that were esoteric, uncommercial, and in languages other than English. In fact, one was Serbo--Croatian, a language so obscure that it had to be subtitled in its native Yugoslavia!" (p. 44) Steel's statement is not entirely correct, because the language used in the movie is actually Romani language with Serbo-Croatian

influences. The viewers may recognize the word *dilo* (*crazy*, *foolish* in Romani language) that also appears in the title and script of *Gadjo Dilo*.

After a brief summary of the movie, I will follow the same method used in the analysis of *Gadjo Dilo*, focusing on certain scenes, and trying to identify cultural elements and stereotypes.

Time of the Gypsies is not about the relationships between a Gypsy minority and the *gadje* majority, but about the existing hierarchies and conflicts *within* the Gypsy minority. The *gadje* are barely included in short sequences as a doctor and a nurse in a hospital in Ljubliana, Italian police officers, or people in the squares of Italian cities. With a script written by Kusturica and Yugoslavia's leading screenwriter Goran Mihic that demolishes the myth of egalitarian, cohesive and harmonious Gypsy groups, the movie helps the viewer better understand the economic and social mechanisms at work in that part of Europe.

Perhan, the main character (played by Davor Dujmovic), is an orphan Gypsy teenager, an accordion player with telekinetic capacities and a candid soul. He lives with his grandmother (Ljubica Adzovic), his sister Danira (Elvira Sali) and his uncle Merdzan (Husnija Hasimovic). Their means of income is an occasional sale of limestone to villagers and his grandmother's healing capacities. Danira has a crippled leg by birth and deals with daily physical pain. Merdzan, grandma's son, is a womanizer and a compulsive gambler who keeps dreaming about going to Germany. The third important feminine character in Perhan's life is his sweetheart, Azra (Sinolicka Trpkova). Unfortunately, his repeated marriage proposals are invariably rejected by Azra's mother, who believes that his poverty makes him unsuitable.

The scene where the mafia boss Ahmed (Bora Todorovic) arrives in the village brings the first clue that dignity and self-reliance represent the psychological stake of the movie. Villagers, including Merdzan who is overwhelmed with gambling debts, surround his car complimenting Ahmed, kissing his hand, and asking for money, which he

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grandiloquently gives away. When Perhan's grandmother cures Ahmed's son, they strike a deal; Ahmed agrees to take Danira to a hospital in Ljubliana and pay all medical costs. Perhan decides to accompany his apprehensive sister and promises to never leave her alone. Soon, as the car driving them to Ljubliana picks up children sold by their families to become Ahmed's beggars and prostitutes, Perhan and Danira realize what Ahmed's business is. Forced to leave his sister alone in the hospital, Perhan accompanies Ahmed to Italy. Once they arrive in the windswept trailer camp outside Milan, Ahmed's band gets to "work" under the direct and abusive supervision of Ahmed and his two brothers. After repeated physical abuse and threats that Danira would not get the operation that she needs, Perhan becomes Ahmed's slave and specializes in breaking into houses. Ahmed leads his band with a combination of empty promises and iron fists. But the dynamic of the group is not perfect. Ahmed suffers a stroke that leaves him partially paralyzed. His two brothers desert him, taking most of the "slaves" with them. Perhan stays with Ahmed and becomes his right hand. Ahmed sends him back to Bosnia to buy more children and to get him another wife, and Perhan uses the opportunity to go back to his village only to find Azra pregnant, apparently by his uncle. Perhan refuses to be persuaded by Azra that the child is his. Despite this, Perhan decided to marry Azra but with the understanding that he will sell the "bastard" child in Italy. He also finds out that the house Ahmed had promised to build for him does not exist. Things get worse for Perhan in Italy, where Azra gives birth to a boy, only to die immediately after. In Ljubliana he finds out that his sister Danira never got the operation and had been kidnapped from the hospital by one of Ahmed's brothers and forced to beg in Rome. It will take him four years to find her, but instead of a happy family reunion, we witness Perhan's revenge. At Ahmed's wedding, Perhan puts his telekinetic powers to work and sends a fork into Ahmed's throat. The resolution of the conflict is tragic-comic, as in most of Kusturica's films. The angry bride shoots Perhan, not because he killed her husband-to-be, but because he ruined her wedding. The end of the film softens the dramatism of Perhan's death with a scene from his funeral. Following a Gypsy tradition, Grandma places two golden coins on Perhan's eyes to pay his way in the other world. Perhan Junior, Azra's son, steals the coins and runs away, while being watched by an approving Merdzan.

As I mentioned in the introduction, Kusturica got the idea for this film from a newspaper article discussing the scandalous sale and abuse of Yugoslavian Gypsy children. The narrative alone would be enough to set this film apart. The issue is recent and relevant not just for the former Yugoslavia, but for other countries as well (in Romania similar stories of child abuse and prostitution networks were reported in the early '90s). [23]

Almost all the actors used in the film are Roma with no previous acting experience. Some were even illiterate and had to learn the dialogue by audio. As for the Romani language, Kusturica learned it himself while working with the Gypsies and kept using it in his second film about Gypsies (*Black Cat, White Cat*, 1998) for its melodious tone. In a 1999 interview Kusturica said, "Language for them is not just regular communication where you exchange necessary information, it's singing, in a certain way" (Kaufman, 1999).

Using Romani actors speaking their own language brings the same sense of authenticity that we found in *Gadjo Dilo*. But the artistic qualities of the movie come from much more than just the acting or the narrative, which has a lot in common with Dickens' stories. Kusturica is well known for his attention to details and sometimes is criticized for neglecting the story for their sake. For Kusturica all the levels of the image, background, midground, and foreground, are equally important. He carefully chooses colorful locations with huge depth in which he can integrate movement and actors the way he wants. In this film, the cameraman Vilko Filac, whom Kusturica met at film school in Prague in the '70s, makes the details delightful and expressive, employing creative camera work that matches well the poetry and the magic of the script.

The very first scene of the film is a single, deep-focus tracking shot that begins with an angry bride in the foreground, upset that her husband is in an alcoholic coma only twelve hours after the wedding. It moves to the background with muddy roads, and it stops at a table in midground where Merdzan and one of Ahmed's brothers gamble. It follows Merdzan, who stands up in frustration and promises God he will believe in Him if He helps him win. It then follows a passing Gypsy villager dressed in formal attire and

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[23] See Barany (2002) or Crowe (1994).

dragging a sheep behind him, advancing from background to midground. Merdzan enters the frame again in midground, gambling and losing, and then we see again the angry bride and the wedding group moving in the foreground. Finally, it stops on a medium shot of the village fool, a man escaped from a mental hospital who looks straight into the camera and says: "They want to clip my wings. What's a spirit without wings? My soul is free. Free as a bird. . . . When God came down to earth, he couldn't deal with the Gypsies and took the next flight back. Not my fault." This is the only character that looks straight at the camera, and the viewer understands that the fool gave a key-phrase whose meaning will float over the entire narrative till the end, where it finds its final interpretation. Perhan's death is the end of an angelic and innocent soul who tried to deal with the Gypsies and lost. In his last moments, Perhan has the vision of a white turkey flying down from the sky. The circular closure is marked by the motif of the angry bride. Along with the frustrated bride, other visual motifs are employed in the film: the flying bridal veil, levitation of objects and people, walking carton boxes that serve as toys for Gypsy children or as hiding places for adults.

Another original and visually surprising scene occurs when Azra comes to buy limestone, and Perhan begins to explain to her the process of limestone making. In one single take, the two characters are shown sitting down in front of the one story-high, tower-shaped oven; then the camera slowly moves up the kiln while Perhan's voice acquires an echo, as if it would come from inside the oven. The same shot shows them on top of the kiln, only to slide down again, where we see the characters sitting exactly like in the beginning of the scene. Several magic scenes like this one that defy physical reality weave seamlessly in and out more realistic ones creating a hypnotic effect. Kusturica is not a fan of close-ups. He prefers deep-focus shots where he can manipulate multiple elements like in Italian neo-realist movies. The camera is used with creativity and imagination—we see low angle shots, high angle shots, tracking shots, used with more audacity than in *Gadjo Dilo*. These are some reasons why critics define his style as "magic realism" (Cannon, 1998; Dieckmann, 1997; Kuzmanovich, 1993; Horton, 1992).

These examples illustrate that *Time of the Gypsies* is very rich at the level of cinematic signifiers. While *Gadjo Dilo* is a realist movie where the camera seems to be just a recording eye, *Time of the Gypsies* is a formalist one. The camera has its own voice, actively contributing to the artistic effects of the film.

Another major difference between the two movies is that *Time of the Gypsies* places the stereotypes at the level of individual characters rather than groups. This result is possible due to the absence of an outside group and the solid and rich build-up of the characters.

Perhan is special any way you look at him. He is Grandma's favorite because he is sensitive and loving. He helps with the limestone production and shields his sister from the changing moods of his uncle Merdzan. He has a pet turkey, and he seems to have a capacity to communicate with the bird. The turkey will become one of the motifs of the film, with repeated apparitions in Perhan's dreams. Perhan's transformation is visible at the level of his physical appearance. At the beginning, while he is under Grandma's wing, he looks childish, wearing a colorful hat, sweats and thick-framed glasses with a patch on one lens to stimulate a lazy eye. In Italy, as he makes more and more compromises with his own dignity, he compensates with elegant attires and hairstyle. Towards the end he looks like a young mafia boss himself. Still, the spectator receives several clues that Perhan's kindness and sensitivity are not totally compromised. In one scene, where he breaks into a house to steal, he takes a moment to play his favorite song at a piano in the house. Later he saves a kitten from drowning.

His emotional reactions become more complicated with time as well. At the beginning of the film, he attempts suicide because Azra's mother rejects his first marriage proposal. In a later scene, when he comes back from Italy and finds Azra pregnant presumably by his uncle, he breaks glasses with his teeth and burns his skin with a cigarette. Killing himself is not an option anymore, although the pain is greater when he finds himself pulled in the emotional triangle formed by the three strong women in his life: Grandma, Azra and sister Danira.

Ahmed is the cunning evil-doer, a grandiloquent liar, who is ready to swear on his life, child or bread to get what he wants. We actually notice that this kind of swearing up and down is done by negative Gypsy characters in the film – Merdzan and Ahmed. Towards the end of the film when even Perhan swears "on my Gypsy heart" that he will reunite with his family, the viewer gets the feeling he will not.

Ahmed wears white suits and silk shirts and is driven around by his personal chauffeur in an American car. He loves his son dearly, but when he suspects the boy doesn't resemble him enough, he is ready to get rid of the boy and his mother, and get a new wife, all this while he is paralyzed and dependent on the woman's care. He can only trust evil people like himself, which is why he makes up with his brothers, despite their betrayal. In almost all the characters in the movie we see the brotherhood bond acting like a magnet. Even if they hurt each other, they stick together and they are willing to forgive and forget the wrongdoing. An example is Perhan's grandmother who forgives Merdzan everything, even his most destructive behaviors. There is an impressive scene on a rainy night when she refuses to give him money and he manages to lift the house off its foundations simply with the help of a rope and a truck. Although she knows he is a bad seed, she welcomes him next morning as if nothing happened. She is protective towards all the members of her little clan. In another scene, she defends Merdzan when an angry neighbor brings her pregnant daughter and claims that Merdzan should marry the girl. Grandma argues aggressively with the mother and insults the girl, asking if she enjoyed the sexual encounter with Merdzan.

Grandma is a woman who has a keen sense of survival. She teaches her grandchildren noble values and knows how to deal with all kinds of people. She does not seem to dwell much on events and their significance; unlike Perhan, she reacts fast and forgets quickly. In the end, her attitude towards life takes the form of a lesson, as we see how Perhan's stubborn attempt to recover his dignity costs him his life. It is the second time that Kusturica has employed Ljubica Adzovic to play the Gypsy grandmother. In *Black Cat, White Cat* (1998) she portrayed a Gypsy grandmother as well. The two roles are very similar. She brings much talent to the stereotypical portrait of the Gypsy Grandma.

She, her son Merdzan and Ahmed are the three characters who do not change. Everyone else suffers a transformation: Perhan loses his dignity and innocence; Azra loves, betrays and dies; Danira is kidnapped, forced to beg and survive among thieves, finally growing to be strong. The movie touches more psychological buttons than sociocultural ones. If in *Gadjo Dilo* the Frenchman acted as the intermediary between the Western viewer and the Gypsies, in *Time of the Gypsies* we have direct access to the psychic of the characters. The viewer perceives the poverty of the Gypsy community, but how the characters are affected by it is more heartbreaking than the poverty itself. The duplicity and the cunning manipulation of others are old stereotypes about Gypsies. But the Western viewer is used to Gypsies using the duplicity on *gadje*, not on other Gypsies, especially not on two innocent children like Perhan and Danira. The feeling that something is seriously wrong in a community that has become destructive toward itself is the main ideological message of the film.

The Gypsy group appears less traditional than the one portrayed in *Gadjo Dilo*. Gypsy villagers are dressed like rural *gadje*, and the white skin of some Gypsy characters makes the viewer think of a higher degree of ethnic mix with the *gadje*. Azra has white skin, a reason for which her mother increases the bride's price when Perhan proposes. The fact that an important Gypsy custom such as buying the bride from her parents is shown as a failure, devoid of the highly ritualized moments, is another suggestion that poverty and desperation affects not only the human relations but the very heart of the group's culture. The two lovers will be able to marry later, when Perhan has enough money, but their love is definitively compromised. After the marriage, Perhan tells Azra's father about his plan of selling the "bastard" in Italy. The father protests only for a brief moment, intimidated by Perhan's anger and financial power.

Besides external appearances, the female dominance in the family is another non-traditional characteristic shown in film. All the male characters in the movie are either easy victims of their own naiveté (Perhan), good-for-nothing gamblers and women chasers (Merdzan), or deceiving and manipulative evildoers (Ahmed). The real heroes are

the women: Grandma, Azra, and Danira. Their spirit seems stronger than the men's. The entire village seems to be run by women. Azra's father is totally subordinate to his loud wife, although it is obvious he has had enough. When Merdzan leaves a teenager pregnant, it is her mother who comes to Grandma to claim justice, not her father.

A dream-like scene from the beginning of the movie shows the celebration of St. George on the river. It is the only illustration of a tradition where the Gypsy group is portrayed as united and harmonious. Burning pieces of wood are sent down the water and the entire community is there swimming, washing in the river and celebrating the spring. This represents the last moment of happiness for the main characters in the film. It happens that director Tony Gatlif was asked in an interview if Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsies* had influenced him. He answered, "I follow my own road, shoot my own films. I love John Ford, for instance, and some of my frames remind me of Ford. But Kusturica is not one I love" (Peary, 1998). He dismissed as nonsense the St. George celebration scene in which the Gypsies light up the river "with candles". "That's way too expensive for gypsies. There are rich Gypsies but they'd spend their money on jewelry, or on gold teeth" (Peary, 1998). Upon closer examination, we can see that the river is lighted up with burning wood, not candles, and the objects do not suggest prosperity in any way. The background, the beautiful light and the camera movements make that scene look extraordinarily rich and filled with magic. One may say that Gatlif's statement shows his attachment to realism and to a stable concept of Gypsiness.

There are a number of negative stereotypes used regarding the Gypsies (kidnapping and exploiting children, deceitful behavior, begging and stealing), but they build a realistic balance with the obvious love Kusturica has for his protagonists. As Corliss (1990) said in his review published in *Time*, "All the stereotypes are vividly confirmed: the caravans and campfires, the magicians and midgets, the men with gold chains who sell babies and abduct children, the cursed weddings, the nights of drunken lunacy, the melancholic trance of accordions and violins." These elements, like in *Gadjo Dilo,* build the film's authenticity. Goran Bregovic, who composed the music of the film, is a musician well known for reviving the Balkanic folklore in trans-balkanic orchestrations. A small

Bulgarian choir and Gypsies from Romania, Bulgaria, and former Yugoslavia form his orchestra. Bregovic and Kusturica have worked together in other movie productions as well (e.g. *Arizona Dream*, 1992).

According to Prince's (1997) classification, I found that in *Time of the Gyspies* we deal with a second-order ideology, or as Giannetti (2002) calls it—an implicit ideology. The social messages are subtle, implicit, and often in conflict. Perhan would like to work honestly and hold on to the values taught by his Grandma, but he is persuaded by the cunning Ahmed that nothing he knows would be of help. The thought of marketing his telekinetic capacities or his limestone making experience does not even cross his mind. The ideological tension occurs not between two conflicting groups like in *Gadjo Dilo*, which presents a first level ideology, but within the dynamic psychic of the characters. The movie, addressed primarily to European audiences, supports the dominant ideology. The message sent is that enemies can belong to the same kinship. It is relatively easy to identify with Perhan and his experience. His hopes and good intentions end in crime and death, but this is not an exclusively Gypsy experience.

One example of a conflicting family scene is in the morning after Merdzan has lifted the walls of the house. Grandma with the two children come back home and, as if the destruction of their home was not enough, Perhan finds his pet turkey boiling in the pot. Upset, he attacks Merdzan, Grandma separates them, and Merdzan threatens him back full of hate: "Attack your uncle, you twirp? When I get hold of you, I'll break your spine. Then I'll cut your throat. For dessert I'll knock your teeth out and crush you like a rotten pumpkin!" The violence and meanness with which Perhan has to deal daily is considerable, but this is exactly what facilitates the viewer's identification with him.

Applying Prince's (1997) concept of ideological point of view, I found that *ideological support* is manifest in the film. *Time of the Gypsies* supports both the dominant ideology of the *gadje* media condemning the illegal and abusive activities of the Gypsies, and the ideology of the Gypsies—expressed in their culture, language, and family relationships. We should keep in mind that the film was released in 1989, after being produced by

Forum, a Yugoslav state-owned film production company. The period coincided with the fall of communism, followed by a strong wave of sympathy from the West. This is perhaps the context that helped Kusturica convince Columbia Pictures to distribute this film. *Time of the Gypsies* does not attack the dominant ideology, but it sends a message against the dehumanizing quality of most of the stereotypes about Gypsies. Because of this quality, the movie could be included in the category of "films which seem at first sight to belong firmly within the ideology and to be completely under its sway, but which turn out to be so only in an ambiguous manner" (Comolli and Narboni, 1969). The gap between this film and the dominant ideology resides in the positive feelings that the film can stimulate. Viewing this film provides a different type of experience than what many *gadje* live when they pass by Gypsy beggars on the streets. The affection and empathy that the viewer may feel for Perhan and his sister is radically different from the pitiful look and the few cents that Europeans throw to get rid of a Gypsy beggar.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

Gypsies are one of the minorities frequently portrayed in films. There is, however, a gap between their portrayal in films and the dominant ideology about Gypsies in most European countries. The dominant ideology has kept and still keeps Roma people at the lowest level of the society, through a long list of negative stereotypes and active discrimination. Up to the end of the twentieth century, the world cinematography tended to portray them as an exotic element in romantic approaches, avoiding social and political issues like poverty, discrimination and marginalization. The fall of communism marked a change, as more films dared to speak against the dominant ideology.

This thesis has examined two movies that made a step in that direction—*Gadjo Dilo*, (Gatlif, 1997) and *Time of the Gypsies* (Kusturica, 1989). The main common element of the two films is the search for authenticity. They featured Eastern European Gypsies from Romania and former Yugoslavia as main characters and employed real Gypsies to play their heroes. The filmmakers chose to use a very unfamiliar Romani language and made use of cultural and ideological elements specific to Gypsy environments. They were both small productions if we compare them with Hollywood standards, and both were well received by critics at film festivals and by audiences as well.

Although both films present a clear social and political agenda, the portrayal of Gypsies is different in each movie, according to the specific artistic goals that each director and film crew had set for their film. *Gadjo Dilo* portrays the Gypsies in conflict with the dominant ethnic Romanian villagers. Many of the stereotypes have an identifying function focusing on physical appearance of the Gypsies and Romanians. Gypsies are shown dressed as Kaldarashi Gypsies, while Romanians remind the viewer of xenophobic Bolsheviks. Some negative stereotypes are used (e.g. illiteracy, deception, vulgarity) apparently just to humanize the characters, and convey human positive features, like camaraderie, solidarity, pride and love.

The camera approach is generally unobtrusive, recording how the ethnic hatred makes the world collapse. Gatlif chose to use numerous close-ups of the Gypsy characters to convey basic human feelings—friendship, hatred, love, circumspection. For the viewer who never came close to a Gypsy, this technique attempts a process of familiarization.

In *Time of the Gypsies* the source of distress resides *within* the Gypsy community. The economic hardships of the overall society take a toll on the Gypsy traditions and ethics. Kusturica in *Time of the Gypsies* chose to concentrate the negative stereotypes in a few characters (e.g. Ahmed, Merdzan) that appear deceitful, violent, and careless towards their own kin, while the other characters show a simply human mixture of positive and negative features (Perhan, Azra, Grandma). In terms of cinematic means, *Time of the Gypsie*s is much richer and visually surprising, absorbing the viewer inside the dreams and magic of the Gypsy characters. Instead of close-ups, Kusturica used deep focus shots, carefully exploiting all the levels of the image—background, midground and foreground. Thus, the life of the Gypsy characters appeared rich in physical details and events.

Both films have a referent in reality since they portray real events. Stylistically, *Gadjo Dilo* fits the category of realism, because of its naturalistic visual style and linear narrative. *Time of the Gypsies* fits best into the category of magic realism because of its unusual shots that defy physical reality and fantastic narrative motifs.

The most difficult task was to establish the source of the stereotypes in the two films. As I stated in the introduction, stereotyping involves a process of selection and suggestion on the part of the film crew, and a process of interpretation on the part of the audience. Since Gatlif directed his actors to search for "the Gypsy in them," and both directors were involved in writing the scripts, I consider the filmmakers and their crews the partial author of the stereotyped portrayals used in this movie. The other "source" of the stereotypes, perhaps the most important, is me, the interpreter, and from here on, any other viewer of the films. Contrasting reactions can occur. On one hand, an important quality of these two films is that Gypsy viewers who experienced the events described in the films can identify with the characters. On the other hand, Rutherford (1999) suggests

that Gypsy viewers in the US proved to be sensitive and complained about the amount of negative stereotypes in *Gadjo Dilo*. As for the non-Gypsy viewers, the movie can offer an opportunity to learn more information about the Romani culture and social plight. Thus, the receptive viewer may become more sensitive to the needs of this minority. Less receptive and knowledgeable viewers may just find their stereotypes reinforced.

Although *Gadjo Dilo* and *Time of the Gypsies* do not portray Gypsies who broke the glass ceiling of social discrimination but typical Gypsies with classic stereotypes, both films attack the dominant ideology at the level of the signified and end up taking the side of the Gypsies against the destructive forces coming from inside or outside their group.

The Gypsies need all the exposure they can get on TV screens and cinema, because otherwise they risk remaining an invisible, marginalized group. As an Eastern European, I agree with the Romanian political analyst Vladimir Tismaneanu (1999) who said,

> The problem with post-Leninist societies is that there is very little in their past they can look back to a source of inspiration for tolerant behavior. …With the exception of Czechoslovakia, all these societies were prone to authoritarianism: in the name of their resistance to Bolshevism, Eastern European societies promoted emergency measures, xenophobia, and distrust of liberal institutions and values. (p. 110)

Movies like *Gadjo Dilo* and *Time of the Gypsies* contribute to the development of a more tolerant attitude within the dominant *gadje* groups. As Roma intellectuals have emphasized, movies about Roma intellectuals and achievers would benefit the image of this minority even more. The cinema can constitute a place where the conflicting ethnic groups could meet at the imaginary level and a process of stereotype change could be initiated. Movies have the power to create a cultural space where an elementary respect for dignity, solidarity and human rights can be learned and internalized by both Gypsies and *gadje*.

These two feature films succeed in presenting an ideological message similar to that presented by historians preoccupied with the Gypsy social plight—that the vicious cycle of marginality and discrimination can only be broken if the two social groups (*gadje* and Gypsies) work together to solve their problems rather than holding on to prejudices and the ensuing discrimination.

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Vita

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