



Education des enfants roms en Europe
Education of Roma children in Europe



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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ROMA ON THE SCREEN
THE ROMA ON EUROPE'S CINEMA SCREENS - IMAGES OF FREEDOM

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Introduction

The Roma people is part of Europe's history, particularly its cultural history. This may seem self-evident, but we would argue that some self-evident facts are worth reiterating. It was not so long ago, after all, that the Nazis made their barbarous attempt to exterminate this people, and, even now, some still dream of a "pure" Europe unburdened by these minorities. Of course, we can be thankful that the most violent forms of persecution and oppression have been more or less entirely eliminated from today's Europe owing in large part to the influence of the European institutions. However, measures are still taken which exclude or marginalise the Roma in more or less subtle ways. Stirred up by irresponsible populist movements, old hatreds can still give rise to outbreaks of violence. More insidiously, ever more rapid changes to European societies have fostered ignorance and indifference about travellers among most European peoples. High levels of urbanisation and the social and spatial segregation of modern urban areas have tended to destroy the fabric of local communities. In Western Europe, children who lived in the countryside once used to see convoys of travellers passing through and "Gypsy" fairs being set up on the village square, but how many children today can have any real contact with these communities, many of which have now been settled and become victims of social and economic exclusion? Furthermore, the academic community and university researchers have long shown little interest in the history and culture of these varied and diverse communities. For example, it is only in very recent years that any high-quality academic studies have been published on the fate of the Roma during the Second World War.

They are known as Tsigani, Gypsies, Manuś, Roma or Jenisch. Their traditions and lifestyles are so different from our own that they have long inspired fear and still suffer strong prejudice. All this, coupled with recent outbreaks of xenophobia, make it even more difficult for them to coexist with other Europeans in these early years of the twenty-first century.

In the cultural sphere, which is our main focus of interest here, the Roma have clearly distinct characteristics, which are linked as much to their specific lifestyle as to the constraints and persecution imposed on them by outside forces. For instance, with no historically consistent written tradition, they have long been absent from the field of literary expression. Their nomadic lifestyle, whether freely chosen or, as was sometimes the case, forced on them, made it difficult for them to cultivate their creativity in the plastic arts or architecture.

But in one form of the arts, that of live spectacle, they have always shone and continue to shine. Equestrian routines, animal training, feats of strength and agility, dance and mime: where would the circus be without the Gypsies of the Bouglione family?

Above all, it is their music that is most irreplaceable. Their wanderings have brought them into contact with all the peoples of Europe, from whom they have borrowed much and to whom they have given much. Like bees gathering pollen from plants, they have impregnated European music with multiple influences and brought to it the vigour of their own virtuosity. A few scattered memories will illustrate this. It was from Gypsies that Stradivarius is said to have learnt the art of violin making. It was Gypsies who gave Spain the best of flamenco, and some celebrated dancers. Throughout the Slavic world, Gypsy musicians have brought popular rhythms and themes to a state of incandescence. In Central Europe, their melodies and rhythms have fused with those of the Jewish communities. In Belgium, they gave birth to jazz's greatest guitarist, Django Reinhardt.

Today, the international successes of some of their musicians help us to appreciate this cultural wealth. While the mass media and the picture and sound industries have sometimes tended to overexploit an easily marketable "folkloric" vein, other more authentic and original forms of music have come to light. One example is the Gypsy band which has featured in the films of Tony Gatlif and whose music is based on Romanian popular tradition, in which traditional dances, Gypsy melodies and love songs all play their part. The Manouches of eastern France have popularised their "swing" music.

But the Roma also have a strong link to European cultural history through the fascination they have always exerted over the greatest painters and poets. From Lorraine's Jacques Callot, following a band of Gypsies whom he was to immortalise in his celebrated engravings, to Picasso's acrobats, not to mention Murillo or Caravaggio, European artists have found an inexhaustible source of inspiration in this novel and colourful world. From Pushkin to Apollinaire and from Verdi's "Trovatore" to Bizet's "Carmen", numerous poets and musicians have evoked the "children of Bohemia" and paid tribute to the symbols of freedom,

the unconstrained passions, the magic and the enchantments that they see expressed in a totally non-conformist lifestyle and value system.

Following this rapid overview, we must now dispel any doubts as to the subject of this study. First, it will be a work of cultural history; then, within this powerful but highly evolving historiographical current, it will pursue the modest aim of addressing one of the most topical aspects, namely that of representations. Put briefly, its aim will be to investigate the ways and means by which European film-makers have evoked or portrayed the life of the Roma people and embodied it in fictional characters.

Looking back to its early days, we see that cinema was originally a highly participatory process. The first cinema shows were a form of fairground entertainment. They took place in large sheds where those projecting the images were accompanied by story tellers, musicians and jugglers, all of whom sought to enchant their audience through the art of illusion.

Once it had become the property of the middle classes, however, the film industry moved into immense picture palaces. As the product of dream factories, the cinema rapidly developed a capacity to portray the world according to prevailing ideological models, which were all the more influential wherever they were not openly declared. By a complex process, the collective notions created in this way were partly a reflection of stereotypes already disseminated by society - as a film production team can never entirely escape the influence of its own time - but, on the other hand, they helped to transform mentalities through the power of their narrative and the quality of their expression.

What are the educational benefits of this type of work? Clearly, the aim is not to use films to document the lives of the Roma, as this would merely result in lending more credence to questionable portrayals. Our admittedly ambitious goal is to encourage a collective analysis, conducted by the pupils under their teachers' supervision, of a whole array of images viewed on large or small screens. The aim will be to deconstruct the processes of representation, question the bases on which they are founded and compare them as far as possible with the reality. This type of approach will form part of a broader education in audiovisual language and the critical interpretation of films or television programmes.

This study makes no claims to exhaustiveness. It is simply a sample, selected with considerable difficulty and subject to significant constraints, in which the following criteria had to be taken into account:

1. The widest possible variety of European film producing countries;
2. Diversity of genres and styles;
3. Without going back too far, a genuine chronological variety as a way of establishing what is permanent and what has changed;
4. Lastly, accessibility, since it was absolutely essential that these films could be made available on DVD.

European films are not very interested in the theme of minorities. However, full-length films including portrayals of Roma communities are not uncommon, but they often reflect the prejudices that the society holds about their way of life, portraying them as fortune-tellers, magicians, public entertainers, thieves, swindlers, seducers, exponents of certain trades and, in all cases, social outcasts. Alternatively, they teach us much more about the fantasies of their directors than about the reality of these communities' lives. As a final refuge of archaic values, strong passions and freedom of spirit, filled with music and poetry, the world of Gypsies becomes the last avatar of a paradise that we have lost.

More exceptionally, directors who are more inspired or, because of their personal or artistic backgrounds, closer to the Roma people, can offer less conventional, more complex and richer portrayals. Should we then have selected only a few films whose chief aim was to describe the life of Roma in a quasi-documentary style, to depict their problems and to give an accurate account of their culture? We decided to avoid this approach for two reasons:

- Firstly, it would have meant restricting ourselves to a highly limited palette of works in terms of time and place;
- Secondly, and more importantly, any analysis of collective representations must take account of quantitative parameters and seek to describe those images which are most widely disseminated in films intended for the "general public". As we have said, these films adopt and convey the most widespread stereotypes, but they often also attempt to alter and reformat them, taking them in more subtle, more consensual or sometimes more "humanist" directions. They also reveal changes in mentalities through history and variations in Europe according to the society concerned.

On the basis of these initial ideas, we propose a division into four main parts:

- 1. Big-screen portrayals - from the Romanesque to the fantastic. A general study on a small number of themes.
- 2. Preoccupation with the sordid aspects of Roma life or real empathy? The uncertain paths of recognition.
- 3. An exuberant, baroque vision - the films of Emir Kusturica.
- 4. A view from the inside? - the successes and contradictions of the films of Tony Gatlif.

1. Big-screen portrayals - from the Romanesque to the fantastic. A general study on a small number of themes

Diehard clichés... from the Lumière Brothers' first film strips at the end of the 19th century, on which the amazed viewers saw frenzied "Gypsy girls" dancing, up to these first years of the 21st century, the representations of the Roma peoples in European film repertoires were at once fairly plentiful and in most cases stereotyped.

For many years, in the enormous output of images by all European film industries, it may be asked whether any genuinely ethnographic or social eye has been cast on the complexity and plurality of communities, which film has sought to describe in depth their real existence and true relations with the societies in which they live, and which audience these rare works actually reached. Conversely, entertainment films aimed at the general public contain many and recurrent clichés about Roma, bearing witness to a constant swing of opinion from curiosity and fascination to mistrust and repulsion.

Let it be pointed out, however, that directors belonging to this mainstream cinema generally show some sympathy for the "Roma" figures introduced into their scripts and, on the surface at least, display less hostility or contempt towards them than the populations whose amusement is their job. Several reasons for this are to be discerned:

- Firstly, apart from a few command products under the most authoritarian regimes, cinema, as mass entertainment, seldom offers open incitement to hatred: xenophobic allusions may be frequent, but have more of a sarcastic or ironic intent, making fun of "foreigners" by rehashing some of the stereotypes already embedded in people's consciousness. Cinema then becomes the veiled mirror of settled prejudices, of unfounded collective convictions, of a complacent sense of superiority - in all good conscience, moreover.

- Secondly, it is certain that for a long time Roma peoples, part of a familiar landscape by their age-old establishment in European societies, have not been primary targets: the "indigenous" peoples of Africa or Asia, in the periods of triumphant colonisation, or other European peoples, antagonists through long-standing nationalistic animosity, are more often picked on and caricatured by the more polemical European film-makers. Thus, in some 1930s films in France there is readier condemnation of "métèques" (wogs), "Levantines and other Orientals", "rastaquouères" (flash foreigners), and anti-semitic allusions proliferate.

- On another plane, it ought not to be forgotten that the world of cinema partly overlaps with that of the other arts, the performing arts especially: players, musicians, circus artists. Thus, more than in other spheres, contacts may grow up at a professional then a friendly level with artists originating from the various Roma communities. There are many examples of their creative abilities being used in films, above all where musicians and circus folk are concerned. Roma culture is perceived as a conservatory of picturesque, colourful folklore. So it is that numerous films from Central Europe incorporate into slow-moving scripts some "Gypsy" cabaret scenes, and a plot purportedly unfolding in Spain highlights "Gypsy" dances.

- Nor should one overlook the sincere interest that the more humanistic film-makers can take in the Roma world, even if this interest is likewise burdened with representations more akin to fantasy than reality. Accordingly, frequent evocation of the negative clichés about Roma will be noticed, albeit in contexts where they are qualified or challenged, and used more as narrative devices supporting an uninhibited screenplay.

In this rapid approach, which makes no other claim than to help realise the weight of clichés and how they are put to use via images, each teacher and pupil can find examples of methods. We offer them a wayward journey through two thematic strands illustrated in films:

1. The beautiful rebels of French historical films:
 - "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" by Jean Delannoy (1956)
 - "Cartouche" by Philippe de Broca (1962)
2. Tales of love and death. From Russia to Spain:
 - "Queen of the Gypsies" by Emil Loteanu (1976)
 - "Carmen" by Francesco Rosi (1984)

1.1. The beautiful rebels of French historical films

1.1.1. "THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME" by Jean Delannoy (France / Italy, 1956)

This film, a huge popular success when it was released, shows the enduring nature of this romantic story, written by Victor Hugo in 1831, which is rooted in the collective imagination. The story has also been told by the US film studios in many, more or less successful, productions, including the cartoon versions of recent years.

1.1.1.1. About the film

Director

Jean Delannoy (born in 1908) is a reputable French film-maker, who had his hour of glory in the 1940s and 1950s before being targeted by the young directors of the New Wave movement, such as François Truffaut, who taxed him with being an archetype of heavy academic formalism. He was indeed one of the representatives of the old French school, which considered that the storyline took precedence over directorial effects, preferred filming at great cost in the studio to the lighter option of shooting in the open air and focused on big co-productions, often with European partners, involving popular, well-known stars. Paradoxically, from the standpoint of our study, his cinematographic work is of interest because it is that of a good film-maker, albeit no genius, in tune with the mainstream habits of a still very vast audience at a time when films remained the key form of mass entertainment, before the growth in television.

Jean Delannoy worked his way up through the profession, beginning his career as an editor for the Paramount studios in France. Following a few short films, his first full-length work was "Paris-Deauville" (1934). Just before the Second World War he was well known enough to bring out his first major film "Gambling Hell" ("Macao, l'enfer du jeu"), which starred Erich von Stroheim. During the German occupation, Jean Delannoy continued to make films, scoring a real triumph with "Love Eternal" ("L'éternel retour") (1943), a poetic adaptation of the myth of Tristan and Isolde based on a scenario by Jean Cocteau, starring Jean Marais and Madeleine Sogone. This film would lastingly mark a generation.

After the war he scored other successes, for instance with a film adaptation of André Gide's novel "La symphonie pastorale" (1946), which won awards at Cannes. During the same period he worked on other ambitious films, such as "The Chips are Down" ("Les jeux sont faits") (1947), based on an original scenario by Jean-Paul Sartre.

In the 1950s, between two adaptations of the adventures of Inspector Maigret, he directed a series of lavish historical epics, of which "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" constitutes one of the finest examples. Scorned by the New Wave movement, his work fell out of fashion, and it must be said that his later films, made in the 1960s, are of scant interest. His film-making career was virtually over by the beginning of the 1970s. He went on to chair the Board of Directors of IDHEC (the French national film school) while continuing to make some historical dramas for French television.

Production context

During the second half of the 1950s, when France was only just beginning to feel the first positive effects of European economic recovery, but tensions were growing due to the calamitous withdrawal from the colonies and the unstable political situation, cinemas continued to be a key source of popular "Saturday evening" entertainment. Two aspects of "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" are worthy of note:

- The use of a scenario drawing on the classic romantic tradition, at a time when Victor Hugo was essential reading at school and historical links - although the 15th century portrayed in the film is entirely imaginary - helped shore up public confidence in France's permanence as a great power. The film was also a celebration of the prestige of a capital city proud of its past: mediaeval Paris already offered a range of striking monuments.

- The size of the film's budget, since it had a brilliant international cast (the great Anthony Quinn, who had won an Oscar in 1952, in the role of Quasimodo, and the voluptuous Italian actress Gina Lollobrigida) and, above all, was shot for the wide screen (CinemaScope) and in colour. These costly, complex techniques were at the time still reserved for the huge epics recounting national myths or tales of great well-known figures, intended for a mass audience. The film also utilised impressive resources. Enormous mediaeval sets, necessitating huge investments, were built in the Boulogne studios, and thousands of extras were recruited for the crowd scenes.

The public's reaction

During the 1950s this good example of the high-quality French films of the time, intended as mass public entertainment, attempted, more or less successfully, both to imitate the Hollywood models and to compete with them on French and European cinema screens.

The film was released just before Christmas 1956 and was a huge success both in France and elsewhere in Europe. However, the critics were very not satisfied with the film. It was frequently re-shown on television in subsequent years, and DVD sales are still high today.

1.1.1.2. Analysis of the film

Plot

The scenario was intended as a relatively faithful adaptation of Victor Hugo's novel of 1831.

In 1482, with Louis XI on the throne, the city of Paris is alive with entertainments: the poet Gringoire is staging one of his mystery plays; Quasimodo, the deaf, deformed bell-ringer of Notre Dame cathedral is elected "Pope" of the feast of fools; Esmeralda, a beautiful Gypsy girl, dances and performs magic tricks with her goat on the cathedral square.

After nightfall Gringoire loses his way and finds himself in the "Court of Miracles", the thieves' and rogues' quarter and home to society's outcasts, where he is at risk of being killed. To save his life, in keeping with the Gypsy tradition, Esmeralda agrees to marry him.

Claude Frollo, the archdeacon of the cathedral, is obsessed with the beautiful Gypsy girl. He orders Quasimodo to abduct her, but the handsome Captain Phoebus de Chateaupers saves her. Quasimodo is arrested by the Captain's men. Esmeralda falls in love with her charming rescuer.

Poor Quasimodo is sentenced to be put in the stocks, and Esmeralda, moved by his suffering, brings him water to drink. He will forever be grateful to her.

Still devoured by lust, Frollo follows Esmeralda to a romantic rendezvous with Phoebus, whom he stabs and leaves for dead. The young woman is accused of his murder and found guilty by the court.

When the Gypsy girl is led onto the cathedral square to make an *amende honorable* before being executed, Quasimodo carries her off and hides her in the towers of the cathedral, an inviolable sanctuary. The rogues from the Court of Miracles attempt to rescue her and assault the cathedral: Quasimodo repels their attack and they are in the end dispersed. Esmeralda escapes Frollo's clutches only to be recaptured by the authorities. She is dragged away to the gallows to be hanged.

Quasimodo, having understood the role played by the archdeacon, hurls him off one of the cathedral towers. The scene changes to the mass burial ground of Montfaucon, where Esmeralda's body was thrown; here, Quasimodo lets himself die, holding Esmeralda's remains in his arms.

Gringoire continues his career and becomes a playwright; Captain Phoebus, who was only injured, marries a lady of his own rank.

Choices and viewpoint

This "Hunchback of Notre Dame" differs from the previous Hollywood versions in that it is fairly true to Hugo's novel. Unlike the 1923 version, with Lon Chaney, and Dieterle's "Quasimodo" (1939), the character of Frollo is indeed a man of the Church, a dour, pious cleric carried away by wrongheaded ideas about sin and desire. Delannoy is known to have done battle with the producers to ensure that this key feature of the novel was preserved. This was because the production companies feared a hostile reaction from Catholic circles and wished to conceal the character's religious identity. Reflecting the ideological debates then taking place in France, this anti-clerical dimension (but not anti-religious as can be seen from the leading role given to Notre Dame cathedral) is apparent from the dialogues, written by the charming anarchist poet Jacques Prévert. Another nice little touch of anti-clericalism was that the role of Cardinal of Paris was given to Boris Vian, himself not particularly devout.

Some proposals for analysis: representations of the film

In the context of this study we shall naturally confine ourselves to discussing the extraordinary character of the "Gypsy girl", played by Gina Lollobrigida, who can be regarded

as entirely representative of an image well established in the Western European collective imagination.

a. Esmeralda, a "daughter of Egypt"...

Her membership of the Gypsy community is apparent from a few simple clues in the dialogue: she is referred to by the authorities as a "daughter of Egypt" and she herself underlines her identity, speaking of "We Gypsies", and saying "That is our way" to show she accepts the situation.

The other "Gypsies" are scarcely present. They blend into the indistinct mass of beggars and rogues belonging to the great brotherhood of the "Court of Miracles". Brief mention is made of the fact that one of their leaders calls himself the "Duke of Egypt, King of Bohemia". Some rapid shots of the musician who accompanies Esmeralda's dancing on an "oriental" instrument, half lute half guitar, show a stylised dark-skinned character wearing an earring and a scarf over his hair.

Mixing with down-and-outs from all kinds of backgrounds, Esmeralda and her friends seem to live by expedients. However, the storyline uses humour and folklore to defuse the criminal or violent aspects of their behaviour. The atmosphere of the Court of Miracles is picaresque and good-natured, never really threatening. It is a place where everything will turn out well in the end. The choice of scenery lends credence in passing to the idea of a precarious existence in the open air, with people setting up camp and lighting fires in the very centre of the city.

Drawing on the novel by Victor Hugo, the plot takes place in the late 15th century. It is worth noting that the latest historical research has confirmed the presence of Roma communities, then referred to as "Bohemians" or "Saracens", in the kingdom of France from the mid-15th century on (reference can be made to the brochures published by the Council of Europe for the Project Education of Roma Children in Europe, "2.0.Arrival in Europe" and "2.4. Western Europe").

b. ...embodying physical and mental freedom

- Between provocative sensuality and innocence

Esmeralda's glossy black hair contrasts with the headgear of the other female characters, whose hair is concealed by working-class bonnets or aristocratic hennins. Her hair, which flows free as she dances, is synonymous with freedom and sensuality.

On many occasions she is barefoot, reinforcing the fact that she symbolises both freedom and scorn for a certain normative form of civilisation. Glimpses of her bare legs add to her eroticism.

As already mentioned, the film was shot in 1956 using Technicolor, an expensive process but one which results in particularly brilliant colours, often close to saturation. A specific exercise could consist in analysing the different hues of Esmeralda's clothing: from the sumptuous red dress she wears in the first scenes, which emphasises how lithe and graceful she is, to the golden yellow dress she wears for her romantic rendezvous and the white robe of the end of the film, a sign of martyrdom. Esmeralda dies "clad in candid purity and snowy gown", to cite a famous verse by Victor Hugo.

- Her love of music and dance: a "girl who is wild about noise, music and dance"

Questions should naturally be asked about the amusing "syncretism" shown by Esmeralda's dancing on the cathedral square: Does it seem to be inspired by Roma musical themes? In any case, it is possible to perceive the influence of a debased form of flamenco for tourists - arching of the back, playing of the castanets and drumming of the feet - alongside traces of an oriental-type "belly-dancing", frequently found in films with a colonial theme, involving languorous undulations and clearly lascivious gestures.

However, the songs, which are in Italian, and Gina Lollobrigida's own identity also bring to mind a typical Mediterranean extrovert, with ready laughter and wit, sometimes quite closely resembling Goldoni's depictions of working-class women.

- Happiness and freedom: "For we Gypsies, happiness is in a way our business"

More often than not the Gypsy girl is shown as subverting the established order (in a gentle way - Prévert did not have hardcore revolutionary tendencies).

For instance, the opening scene shows that a carnival is in progress: "Today everything is permitted" launches one of the female participants to Frolo, who, with his severely reprobating air, is an unattractive incarnation of a suffocating, hypocritical moral order.

The spontaneous, free entertainment that Esmeralda offers the merry passers-by contrasts totally with the sad conventions of the religious mystery play the unfortunate poet Gringoire is attempting to stage despite the onlookers' derisive comments.

A key feature of carnival is the wearing of disguises and the reversal of social roles. Quasimodo is elected "Pope of the fools" and carried around with great pomp.

Through her radiant beauty and her brave insolence, Esmeralda brings down social barriers, showing no respect for differences of rank: she dares to fall in love with Phoebus, a gentleman, and she stands up to the Church authorities.

c. ...at the same time, a victim of society's cruelty: Her exuberance and enjoyment of life are incompatible with society's conformist attitudes and the established social order

- Her spontaneous compassion for those suffering misfortune, displayed on a number of occasions, contrasts with the general attitude

At all events, Esmeralda's actions are portrayed in a dynamic way. The director does not linger over her feelings, but emphasises the speed with which she acts when she flouts authority by giving Quasimodo some water to drink. She confronts the crowd's hostility and mocking laughter with calm - a way of laying claim to and assuming her action - before winning them over with her courage.

- Few men can live up to her ideals of freedom and passion, and their individual behaviours are even quite despicable

Gringoire, the spineless, cowardly poet, does not dare compromise himself by helping her, whereas she earlier disinterestedly came to his rescue.

Phoebus, the noble captain, proud of his status, regards the beautiful Gypsy girl as a pleasant distraction. He allows her to be found guilty and sentenced, quickly forgetting her when he contracts a marriage on a par with his rank and ambitions.

Frolo, the clergyman, is torn between tortured concupiscence and hatred. Unlike the homeless girl, who loves music and freedom and is both sensual and innocent, the knowledgeable, hypocritical archdeacon is obsessed by his desire for power, and his moral sense has been undermined by religion. He is a very strong, perhaps grotesque, portrayal of self-denial and the desire for social control.

Who is the only person completely devoted to her, who loves her without fail? Quasimodo... himself rejected by others because of his deformity. Thought should be given to the symbolism of this pairing of two forms of exclusion.

- The free Gypsy girl is found guilty at a political trial

The ecclesiastic court which sentences her to be hanged for murder and "consorting with the devil" symbolises all forms of authoritarian repression, guardians of the social and moral order.

The film also shows the very strong divide between the social classes: the Gypsies and rogues form a loose fraternity in the face of the brutality of the crown authorities and the clergy.

1.1.2. "CARTOUCHE" by Philippe de Broca (France / Italy, 1962)

1.1.2.1. About the film

Director

Philippe de Broca (1933-2004) made his first film in 1959, when French cinema was just starting to undergo the spectacular renewal summed up in the term "Nouvelle Vague"

(New Wave movement): he was close to two of its leading figures, Claude Chabrol and François Truffaut, with whom he worked as assistant. Grandson of a painter and son of a photographer, he also had a solid academic background, having studied at the *École technique de photo et de cinéma* at Vaugirard.

His first feature films were light, free-wheeling comedies, which benefited from his fruitful collaboration with Daniel Boulanger (scriptwriter) and Georges Delerue (composer). The success of “Cartouche” in 1962 launched him on a career as director of popular, boisterous films of adventure, whose carefree humour still left room for some (discreet) emotion. Leading man throughout was Jean-Paul Belmondo, whose physical presence, relaxed charm and cheerful impudence did much to give these high-grade entertainments their box-office appeal. Two of the actor/director duo’s biggest hits were undoubtedly “L’homme de Rio” (1963) and “Les tribulations d’un Chinois en Chine” (1965) - breathless, action-packed films, mingling the fantastic and exotic.

In the seventies and eighties, de Broca made a whole series of genre films - light-hearted comedies and tongue-in-cheek tales of cops and robbers, starring the then big names in French cinema, such as Annie Girardot and Philippe Noiret.

In 1988, he tackled the French Revolution in the epic “Chouans!” Making numerous films for TV in the 1990s, he stayed away from the cinema until 1997, when he made a triumphant return with a new version of “Le Bossu” - another box-office hit, which showed that his touch with swashbuckling tales was still a sure one.

In 2004, he made a final, book-based film, “Vipère au poing”.

Production context: breathing new life into a genre

The fifties and sixties saw the rise in France of a previously neglected film-type - the crowd-pleasing swashbuckler. Taking an inventive view of the past, and drawing on classroom memories shared by most film-goers (linked with the “novelistic” vision of the nation’s history still current in schools), these films pitted bold musketeers against dastardly villains, and dashing robbers against plodding policemen, in wild escapades featuring seductive adventurers, fresh peasant girls and lascivious courtesans. In this picaresque version of the *Ancien Régime*, with its simpering maidens and scowling villains, robbing the rich to give to the poor was the hero’s plain duty - and the prelude to many a hearty drinking session with his staunch and cheery companions. A few films have left a lasting impression on those who were adolescents (not yet known as “baby-boomers”) at that time: “Les trois mousquetaires”, “Le Bossu”, “Le Capitain” and, of course, one of the prototypes - Christian Jacque’s “Fanfan la tulipe” of 1951.

These mass-audience movies - styled “French Westerns” by some critics, but probably owing more to the anarchic antics of Guignol (Punch) in “Guignol, gleefully lambasting his policeman foes” - found a female equivalent in the “Angélique, Marquise des Anges” series, before fading out in the 1970s, in the wake of the great culture-shock of May-June 1968.

“Cartouche” is undoubtedly the best, most interesting and most original example of this genre, which soon gave way to the routine repetition of predictable virtuoso stunts and effects. In its dramatically baroque conclusion, dynamic characterisation (with remarkable performances from Jean-Paul Belmondo and Claudia Cardinale) and, above all, its mocking rejection of social and official hierarchies, it reflects the rise of new attitudes in France of the 5th Republic. It also showed that “author’s cinema” at its most austere could still connect with high-class popular entertainment.

1.1.2.2. Analysis of the film

Plot

In early eighteenth-century France, Louis Bourguignon, known as “Cartouche”, belongs to a gang of robbers, “Les Coquillards”. He rebels against Malichot, its cruel and violent leader, and joins the army to escape him. Not cut out for the military life, he soon deserts with two comrades - and the regimental cash-box. Arrested, he escapes. In a tavern, he comes to the rescue of a ravishing Gypsy, Venus, who becomes his faithful companion in adventure.

Cartouche’s gang scores a series of ever more spectacular successes. Police Lieutenant Ferrusac is furious, but his wife Isabelle has fallen wildly in love with the handsome bandit. Meeting her in secret, Cartouche is betrayed by Malichot, and is only saved

when his men arrive, led by the fiery Venus. Shielding her faithless lover's body with her own, she receives a mortal wound in the battle which ensues.

The conclusion is striking and romantic. Bearing the dead Venus in his arms, Cartouche bursts on the scene at a ball which Ferrusac is giving for the local nobility. With jewellery torn from the great ladies present, he lovingly adorns the Gypsy's body and places it in a carriage, which he rolls into a lake that night.

As the golden carriage sinks in the dark waters, Georges Delerue's orchestral score revives the Venus and Cartouche theme, but in a minor key, with a slow-march, almost funereal rhythm. As if to evoke their past happiness and, in so doing, give Cartouche's memories of Venus an added intensity.

Choices and viewpoint

"Cartouche" has all the ingredients of an outstanding popular film, worthy of Alexandre Dumas: a love story, tumultuous adventure, treachery and derring-do, a dramatic ending, etc. Adventurous yet human, the story gets off to a humorous, gently anarchic start, as it mocks a whole series of accepted values - but turns tragic in its closing sequences. Belmondo's outstanding performance makes the celebrated bandit a real - and appealing - person. The cast also includes Claudia Cardinale, the great Marcel Dalio and Jean Rochefort.

The film is symptomatic of an optimistic period, in which the figure of the "beautiful Gypsy" can be used to study a whole range of stereotypes, none of them ill-intentioned. This is one of the many versions of the beautiful Gypsy in love - the hero's spirited partner - which occur in various popular films of the time. Gina Lollobrigida's fortune-teller in "Fanfan la tulipe" will suffice as example in the French cinema.

Some proposals for analysis: the "Gypsy" Venus (the goddess of love - what a symbol!)

Unlike Esmeralda, whose central role in *Notre Dame de Paris* we have considered, Venus seems more of a background figure by comparison with the eponymous hero. And yet, the extraordinary tribute which the closing sequence pays her should alert us: the film can be fully understood only with reference to her.

Getting away from the approaches traditionally adopted to characters that stand for several things at once, we propose looking at the way in which her image changes as the film progresses, focusing on three moments in the story. This approach works well in schools, where different groups can examine different sequences.

a. 1st avatar: the irresistible rebel

We shall be looking here at a very special stage in presentation of the character - her first entrance, at a point when the film is already well under way.

We need to insist on the effect the director is aiming at, when his screenplay delays the first appearance of an internationally known actress (Claudia Cardinale had already scored some notable successes in Italy before her triumph in Visconti's "Leopard" of 1963), co-starring and sharing top billing with the French cinema's latest "darling", Jean-Paul Belmondo. The choice of this beautiful Italian, with her captivating smile and sultry looks, already typifies the kind of treatment which has created a lasting, semi-mythical image and imprinted it on the public mind.

When she first appears in the tavern where Cartouche is drinking with his companions, Venus is in trouble - and pinioned by two policemen. Looking closely at these first shots, one notices:

- Stereotypes of Gypsy dress: while the other characters wear clothes which give a more-or-less accurately eighteenth-century impression, Claudia Cardinale is dressed in a more timeless style: a magnificent long dress (the hem, admittedly, is frayed) in very bright colours (scarlet and gold, which may indeed have Spanish connotations), a red scarf carelessly knotted in her hair, and huge, sparkling necklaces. Remembering that most ordinary women in the 18th century still wore drab, sombre colours, one can appreciate the contrast: the Gypsy brings the warmth and colour of passion into a world which is cramped and oppressive.

- This sometimes provocative sensuality is further underlined by the performance of the actress, whose expression is flirtatiously conniving and murderous by turns.

- Between two representatives of the law, played - in accordance with timeworn French tradition - as two shambling dolts, the Gypsy can make an ironic show of the chains they have used to secure her. It is clear that the power which can subdue her is not the law, but love, reflected in the eyes of the handsome bandit who comes to her rescue.

b. 2nd avatar: the headstrong romantic heroine

Love stories are an essential ingredient of the great popular adventure films. We shall focus here on the novel aspects of the love relationships portrayed in this film:

- The Gypsy is never subjugated. She is in love, passionate, but always free.
- Far more than just a partner, she proves a true ally: imaginative and daring, she addresses her lover as an equal.
- There is a sharp contrast with the aristocratic Ferrusacs: the police lieutenant has no respect for his wife, and his arrogant boorishness is the cause of her infidelity. Venus, on the other hand, suffers - but respects Cartouche's freedom, just as she expects him to respect hers.
- Finally, it is because she can judge things for herself, disobeys orders and genuinely dominates men that she can save Cartouche from the trap into which he has fallen.

c. 3rd avatar: the perfect victim?

As we have said, the closing sequences of *Cartouche* are both unexpected and powerful. They should be looked at closely in the classroom:

- Cartouche's appearance in the ballroom, carrying the dead Venus in his arms: How does this scene combine and contrast two familiar images - the bridegroom carrying his young bride across the threshold of their new home, and a kind of romantic and baroque "Pietà"?

- What associations are raised by Cartouche's accusing stance when he shows the killers the body of their lifeless victim? (Without trying to force the parallels, similar images of silent accusation occur in some of the greatest film classics, e.g. *Potemkin*, when the mother faces the soldiers and shows them the body of her wounded child).

- The lifeless body is still languorously yielding: what is the symbolism of the magnificent dress - simple, but radiantly scarlet - which Venus wears as her only winding-sheet?

- What does the sinking of the golden coach - a ceremony both pagan and baroque - signify? Is it a reference to some ancient rite, and also an expression of contempt for the riches of this world, which are consigned to the depths?

1.2. Tales of love and death. From Russia to Spain

1.2.1. "QUEEN OF THE GYPSIES" aka "GYPSIES ARE FOUND NEAR HEAVEN" by Emil Loteanu (USSR, 1976)

1.2.1.1. About the film

Director

Emil Loteanu was born in 1936 in Clocuşna, in the northernmost part of Romania, a border region constantly fought over by the neighbouring powers. Known as "Bessarabia" in the old atlases, on 28 June 1940 it became the Socialist Republic of Moldova, a component entity of the USSR.

When part of his family fled south of the new northern border of Romania, Emil Loteanu acquired a new culture, whereas his Latin mother tongue was now being written in the Cyrillic alphabet. At the age of seventeen he was recruited by the National Theatre Company in Chişinău, or rather Kishinev, the capital of the new Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova.

Having moved to Moscow in 1954, he continued his higher education there, first studying the dramatic arts at the Art Theatre studio before joining the directorial department of VGİK, the State Institute of Cinematography. In 1960 he directed one of his first films "There was a young boy", based on the Romanian writer Ion Greangă's "Childhood memories".

After graduating he returned to Moldova, where he began work at the "La Moldava" studios, alternating between documentaries and fiction films. His first works revealed him as a talented film-maker, without any anti-establishment tendencies. Some film historians consider, for instance, that his "Wait for us at Dawn" of 1963 is an illustration of Russia's, and

subsequently the Soviet Union's, geopolitical concept of Bessarabia/Moldova as a region reconquered from the Turk invaders in the Napoleonic era.

In the early 1970s he joined the prestigious Mosfilm studios, Moscow's "Cinecittà" founded by Stalin, which enabled him to harness their huge human and technical resources to serve his talents.

It was there, with these large-scale resources, that he made his greatest films, which were to make him known throughout the USSR and subsequently all over the world. It is interesting to note that one of his initial successes, "Lautari" ("Fiddlers"), broached the theme of Gypsies. The title was taken from the name of the traditional wandering musicians of his home country. This film, depicting the bands of Gypsies who formerly roamed around Central Europe, from Galicia to Ukraine via Moldova, often received with mistrust by the Church and repression by the authorities, was undoubtedly a first step in his rediscovery and rehabilitation of this culture, before his 1976 masterpiece "Queen of the Gypsies".

The scenario of this last film drew very loosely on a short story by Maxim Gorky. Emil Loteanu, who himself wrote most of the screenplays for his films, then continued to explore the field of literary adaptation with brio. His subsequent films include "A Hunting Accident" based on a tale by Anton Chekov.

The film-maker then returned to Moldova, where he was intensely active for about ten years before and after the break-up of the USSR, which led to Moldova's independence. He made films for television, taught drama, set up a theatre, presented a television programme and founded a publication on cinema.

Emil Loteanu died in April 2003 in a Moscow hospital. It is in Moscow that he is buried to the great regret of many of his fellow countrymen in Chişinău and Bucharest, since, although he was an officially recognised director of the Soviet era, he nonetheless secured recognition for the cultural particularities of his home region, which had been treated so badly through the ages.

Production context

"Queen of the Gypsies" was produced in 1976. For the USSR it was an unhappy period, now commonly referred to as the time of the "stagnation", when Brezhnev kept the country under firm control. In 1975 the Helsinki Accords seemed to consolidate the USSR's strong influence in the concert of European nations. Although very different views can be taken of the value of these accords, they marked a significant step in the country's history: the USSR could no longer allow itself completely to ignore international opinion and political or media pressures. This period was therefore marked by the emergence of a strong dissident movement, which the authorities constantly sought to combat. Here we shall not go into details of the trials and forced exiles of intellectuals or artists, first and foremost Solzhenitsyn in 1973, the singer Alexander Galich in 1974 and the historian Andreï Amalrik in 1976.

In this brief summary there can be no question of considering Emil Loteanu's gradually changing political attitude and, in particular, the relations he may have sustained with dissident film-makers, such as the great Tarkovsky. However, his film can be analysed from three standpoints:

- Firstly, its foundations in a Moldovan national culture, heavily influenced by Gypsy contributions: film historians have drawn attention to the ambiguous logic of Soviet cultural policy, which on one hand sought to russify all the regions, but also allowed the various republics to develop their own cultures. In the 1960s and 1970s high-quality film industries emerged in Georgia, Armenia and Central Asia. The foundation of the Moldovan studios was another sign of this trend. As for Emil Loteanu, his to-and-fro between great Russian literary works and rediscovery of the traditions of his home region can be regarded as very revealing of his inner contradictions.

- Compared with the then standard products of Soviet cinema, the daring aspects of the scenario are striking: far from singing the praises of "positive heroes", the film celebrates the life of a seductive, rebellious horse thief, who has something in common with both an honourable bandit and Robin Hood. The Gypsy lifestyle, as depicted in the film, is first and foremost a hymn to freedom, a marginal existence on the fringes of established society, ranging beyond borders despite the close supervision and repression exercised by various authorities. It is also worth noting that the character of the "Polish boyar" is not a caricature of a rich exploiter, but that he is initially portrayed as a joyous participant in the Gypsy feasts before being torn apart by passion, a fate from which his wealth cannot save him.

- How was this film received by audiences in the USSR and the people's democracies at the time? Here too, without any certainty, one can but wonder whether for many of them this flood of colour and music, this hymn to passion and freedom, would not constitute an unhelped-for opening of their normalised world, a breath of fresh air in a stifling atmosphere. In any case, the film was a popular success.

The public's reaction

Indeed, the first thing to note about this film is that it was a huge success with the general public. It is estimated that 65 million people saw the film in Soviet cinemas over the months and years following its release.

It won prestigious awards at a number of international festivals, including the Golden Conch at the San Sebastián Film Festival in 1976, the Prize for Best Actress (Svetlana Toma) at the Panama Festival in 1977, the Prize for Best Director at the Belgrade International Film Festival in Yugoslavia and the Prize for Best Film at the Prague International Film Festival in Czechoslovakia.

The critics' reaction was more nuanced, since reviews of the film differed sharply. Some were enthusiastic about this lyrical opera's aesthetic and musical qualities, while others denounced the use of simplistic stereotypes, magnified by the director's talent (seen as a further reason for criticism in some reviews).

It should be noted that the film has had a remarkable career, since it is still shown from time to time by a number of television channels. The best proof of its unquestionable success lies in its continued availability on videocassette, and later DVD, published by Russian distributors, whether state-owned or the new private companies. It can still quite easily be found for sale on the Internet. It is also often referred to enthusiastically in discussion forums on Roma culture.

Another sign of success is that the music and songs from the soundtrack are reprised by contemporary musicians. For example, it is a pleasure to listen to the version proposed by the group "Urs Karpatz", a music free of borders.

1.2.1.2. Analysis of the film

Plot

The plot is loosely inspired by Maxim Gorky's Bessarabian tales, in particular the short story "Makar Chudra". It begins in the Carpathian Mountains, on the edges of the great Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, at the very moment when the Russian garrison of a small border town is celebrating the New Year and a new century (the 20th) with alcohol and music. During the night shadowy figures slip into the stables, and the Gypsy Loïko Zobar and his band steal the Russian cavalry's horses, which they aim to sell on the other side of the border in Bukovina, then Austro-Hungarian.

The film mixes two major narrative strands - the adventures of Loïko Zobar the rebel and his tumultuous, tragic love-life - in a very lively manner.

At the head of his courageous band of free companions, who defy the Russian and Austro-Hungarian troops with their repeated thefts, Zobar rides through the wild, magnificent scenery of the plains and mountains. He is often at risk of being caught by one of the various armies hunting for him, but always manages to escape, often in a merry manner, but sometimes also with more tragic consequences. For instance, the Austro-Hungarian army punishes the Gypsy camp which sheltered them with terrible reprisals.

Initially in love with the beautiful loulitchka, a golden-haired mute, during his wanderings Zobar encounters the proud Gypsy girl Rada - played with considerable talent by Svetlana Toma, Loteanu's favourite actress. This scornful, untameable, flaming beauty is already being passionately wooed by the Polish aristocrat, Siladi, who would do anything to please her. But a Gypsy woman's heart is not for sale.

The horse thief is captivated in turn. To win the heart of the beautiful Rada, he steals a superb white horse she is longing for, risking his life and his freedom. However, is Rada ready to give up her freedom, even for love? This epic love story will end in tragedy, in the sparkle of blades and the red of blood.

The film accordingly assumes the flavour of an epic, romantic legend. It is a rich pageant in which nothing is missing: lavish scenery and costumes, equestrian feats, music and dance, all forming a kind of entrancing ballet, in which the scene of the beautiful Gypsy girls twirling their scarves is repeated in a haunting manner.

However, at the same time, the care taken by the director to reconstruct life in a Gypsy camp somewhere in Bessarabia, with its habits and customs, helps give the film a strong sense of reality, which sometimes verges on the ethnographical.

Choices and viewpoint

Emil Loteanu's primary aim was clearly to make a great musical, a kind of opera about love and death, resembling both "Carmen" and "West Side Story".

He also wanted it to be an adventure film, with horse-riders charging across vast open spaces, brilliant historical reconstructions and, above all, colourful roguish characters. It can perhaps be considered to show the influence of the "Spaghetti Westerns" made in Italy in the early 1970s, with their wild, unconventional heroes, whose incredible "mugs" differed completely from the too smooth faces seen in earlier Westerns.

However, since he was well familiar with Moldova and its Gypsy minorities, he also succeeded in recreating with a degree of credibility the lifestyle of the Roma communities of the early 20th century, before the tragedies of the First World War, the collapse of the great empires and the mass killings of the Second World War.

Many of the actors came from the famous Roman Theatre in Moscow, which gives the entire film an aesthetic authenticity of a very high standard.

This film, accused of grotesque exoticism by some and of lyricism by others, nonetheless has the merit of being one of the first to introduce Gypsy themes and culture to a mass audience, in both East and West, to focus attention on the diversity of the Gypsies' forms of artistic expression and on the fundamental values of the moral code attributed to them - honour, courage and loyalty.

Some proposals for analysis: representations of the film

a. Appropriate use of stereotypes in an "Eastern" epic?

One of the key methodological objectives pursued when analysing this film for an audience of school pupils will be to consider the differences between the film's representations and what can be learned from historical records:

- An initial task - the most obvious one - is to examine the quality of the physical reconstructions. The fairly numerous printed images dating from the relevant era make it possible to assess the work done by the studios on the costumes, the caravans, the utensils and other routine objects. The film-maker's reasons for focusing so heavily on colour, in the materials of the dresses and scarves, become comprehensible.

- The dialogues, attitudes and behaviours are far more difficult to authenticate. Here, the pupils can be asked to think about the difficulties of transposing an attempted understanding of past "mindsets" to the screen, especially in the case of a community concerning which scientific documentation is scarce and much has been imagined: in other words, it is no easy task to avoid certain stereotypes. It can then be pointed out how skilled the director is at using these stereotypes, while at the same time standing back from them, particularly through the use of humour. The secondary characters serve to achieve this distancing effect, which is interesting from a pedagogic standpoint. An example to be noted is the typical chicken thief, whose comments concerning his own particular "art" are both realistic and hilarious.

- Lastly, thought can be given to the director's cinematographic sources of inspiration: some of the images can be seen to be inspired by the Western genre, but which in particular and how are they utilised?

b. Borders and barriers: the nomad's freedom confronted with state violence

- Another essential exercise will be to undertake a careful study of historical maps of Central Europe in the early 20th century, as a means of understanding how the Gypsies play with the borders of the empires, taking refuge on one side or the other at whim, but also encountering hostility, and even brutal repression, on the part of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian authorities.

- For example, what role do water courses play in the film? These geographical markers of otherwise invisible borders can be found in a number of superb horse-riding scenes. Which areas shelter the nomads and, conversely, which can be hostile to them? The

contrast between town and country (urban and rural areas) is very present in the film: An attempt should be made to examine in closer detail whether the urban areas pose a threat to the Gypsies' freedom, or may sometimes offer them opportunities?

- What kind of relations do the Gypsy groups sustain with sedentary communities?
- What clear comparison is made when the Gypsies chance upon a travelling theatre group?

- The desire for freedom often brings them into conflict with the authorities: Some examples should be cited.

- Repression can sometimes take very brutal forms: How are the reprisals against the Gypsy camp portrayed?

- The terrible images of burnt-out caravans, the devastated camp-site and people traumatised by unbridled violence bring to mind the early years of the 20th century. A first exercise in critical comparison for the class will be to look up the precise historical references, in particular where the pupils come from former Western bloc countries and are unfamiliar with Central Europe.

- However, is it not possible to draw comparisons on another level? The film was made in 1976, only thirty years or so after the Second World War, when other armies savagely executed people en masse in these regions. What was the fate of the Roma at the time of the Nazi invasion? Did the director intend his audience to think in this way? How could certain members of the audience fail to see the links? This raises the question of how a work is received, above all in a society where free speech is impossible, and members of the public can become experts in deciphering allusions and metaphors.

c. Love of song and dance

This third area of study, albeit essential, is the most pleasant. The aim is to take certain scenes from the film as a basis for drawing attention to the considerable contribution made by the Gypsies to east European culture, particularly in the fields of music, song and dance.

From a historical standpoint, it can be pointed out that, in the 18th century, nomadic musicians travelled from Moldova to the political heart of the Russian empire. The first known Gypsy ensemble was taken under Count Orlov's protection and very quickly became very popular.

The Gypsy musicians in a way revisited and enhanced the very diverse range of Russian traditional music. Music teachers should not miss this opportunity to hunt down some popular tunes and play various interpretations of them.

1.2.2. "CARMEN" by Francesco Rosi (France / Italy, 1984)

Screenplay by Francesco Rosi and Tonino Guerra, based on original works by Prosper Mérimée and Georges Bizet. Music: Georges Bizet. Starring Julia Migenes (Carmen), Plácido Domingo (Don José), and Ruggero Raimondi (Escamillo).

1.2.2.1. About the film

"The combination of cinema and opera adds a new dimension to the traditional approaches adopted by directors of stage productions of this work. Filmed opera could but be born of a marriage between a work and a film-director. I deliberately use the word film-director, in contrast with stage directors who are willing to go behind the camera when needs must. 'Carmen' was shot entirely against natural backdrops. Never had such vast resources been mobilised to turn an opera into a lavish entertainment.

There can be no question that the universal appeal of the myth of the femme fatale, half angel half devil, Lorin Maazel's musical direction, Bizet's music, Francesco Rosi's huge talent and the encounter on screen of Julia Migenes-Johnson, Plácido Domingo and Ruggero Raimondi make 'Carmen' a turning point in the history of opera's relations with its public." Toscan du Plantier, producer.

Director

Francesco Rosi, who was born in Naples in 1922, is a great Italian director. Having learned to appreciate cinema from a very early age, under his father's influence, he initially

studied law, but the war interrupted his education in 1943. Once it was over he resumed his student existence while beginning a career in theatre, on radio and as a book illustrator. In 1948 he met Luchino Visconti, an event which changed his life: they worked together in three films. He also worked alongside other famous names of Italian cinema, such as Michelangelo Antonioni.

His first real feature film was "The Challenge", which he made in 1958 and in which he addressed the social problems of Southern Italy. The film won the Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival (Mostra). However, his first international success was "Salvatore Giuliano" in 1961, which gained him recognition as one of the key directors of his generation, following in the footsteps of the masters of Neorealism.

Francesco Rosi's films deal with social issues and are of a realist, almost documentary nature. A morally committed film-maker, he denounced Italy's real estate scandals in "Hands over the City" (1963), which was awarded the Golden Lion in Venice. In 1972 "The Mattei Affair", a brilliant "thriller" and simultaneously a documented investigation into the oil business, won the Grand Prix in Cannes.

His long partnership with the writer Tonino Guerra - a politically engaged writer and scriptwriter - led him to make his most politically oriented films ("Uomini contro" ("Many Wars Ago") in 1970 and "Cadaveri eccellenti" ("Illustrious Corpses") in 1975) in which he sought to write a critical history of Italy in the 20th century.

During the 1980s Francesco Rosi moved away from contemporary topics and adapted a number of major literary works to the screen, beginning in 1983 with a superb filmed version of Bizet's opera "Carmen", followed by "Chronicle of a Death Foretold" adapted from Gabriel García Márquez's novel. His later films, shot in the 1990s, were "The Truce" and "Three Brothers".

During a career spanning nearly sixty years Francesco Rosi made only fifteen or so films. It therefore stands to reason that each of them is the fruit of a long, in-depth work of reflection, always focusing, as he says himself, on "the problems of human and social relations".

An adaptation of what has become a mythical story: "Carmen" on screen

Francesco Rosi is not the first director to have been fascinated by this tragic story of love and death. Although "Carmen" is today one of the great, mythical works of European literature, on a par with Don Juan or Faust, it must not be overlooked that, when Prosper Mérimée's novella was published in 1845, the character of the free Bohemian factory girl, who is both a rebel and a seductress, who chooses her lovers and discards them at will, impassioned the romantically minded but scandalised right-thinking people.

When, in 1875, the composer Georges Bizet wrote an opera based on a libretto adapted from the novella he added to the scandal it had caused from both an aesthetic standpoint and through its subject-matter. This tragedy in four acts concluded with the murder of the heroine at the hands of her lover, which went against all the rules of propriety that governed the Opéra-Comique in Paris, popular in polite society at the time. Furthermore, the score was highly innovative and departed considerably from the musical style of the era. However, what was even more shocking for bourgeois public opinion was that the plot was built around this "Bohemian" character "Carmen", perceived as highly immoral. The first singer to interpret the role portrayed a free, fiery woman, rolling her hips, piercing others with her gaze, playing with her abilities to seduce and provoke. The Carmen we see on stage today owes much to this provocative original concept of the role.

This work has since become one of the most famous, most frequently staged operas world-wide. Some of its musical themes are universally known, even by audiences with little interest in classical music.

The character of the Bohemian, which became a popular myth, has been portrayed in many ways, and Francesco Rosi's work follows a long series of cinematographic adaptations, drawing on Bizet's opera or sometimes more directly on Prosper Mérimée's novella. After the silent films of Cecil B. DeMille in 1915 and Ernst Lubitsch in 1918, each successive generation has had its own version of Carmen: between conformity - Christian-Jaque's "Carmen" - and audacity - Otto Preminger's "Carmen Jones", with black actors.

In conclusion, it can be noted that the 1980s saw a number of different readings of the myth by directors whose style and temperament varied greatly but who were all highly talented. Although Francesco Rosi's film of 1984, which we have chosen to study, is in our opinion the most forceful transposition of the work to the big screen, another, more sober

version, had been made the previous year by the Spanish film-maker Carlos Saura and was also a huge success. Jean-Luc Godard also took an interest in the story around the same time, giving it a more contemporary slant. His film "First Name: Carmen" is a very personal reading of the work, involving novel, sometimes disconcerting narrative and aesthetic approaches.

A huge public success and the winner of many awards

Best Foreign Language Film and nominated for Best Music and Best Sound at the BAFTA Awards (United Kingdom). Best Sound and nominated for Best Film, Best Director, Best Cinematography, Best Production, Best Costume Design and Best Actress (Julia Migenes) at the César Awards (France). David di Donatello Awards (Italy) for Best Film, Best Director, Best Cinematography, Best Editing, Best Production Design and Best Costume Design in 1985. Nominated for the Best Foreign Film Award at the Golden Globes in 1985.

1.2.2.2. Analysis of the film

Plot

Andalusia in around 1820. A square in Seville between the Alcalá barracks and a cigarette factory. A young woman Micaela has come to meet her fiancé, the corporal Don José, at the barracks, but he is not there. He has gone with his friends to watch the cigarette girls leaving the factory. The men are fascinated by one of them, the provocative, seductive Carmen, who sings the habanera "Love is a rebellious bird that nobody can tame. [...] Love is a Bohemian child, it has never, ever, known the law; love me not, then I love you; if I love you, you'd best beware!" She throws the flower she wears on her bodice to Don José, who picks it up and looks at it, murmuring "There are indeed witches, and that girl is one of them." He goes to find Micaela, with whom he evokes tender memories.

Through her mocking, provocative attitude Carmen triggers a violent fight with other factory girls. She slashes one of them in the face with a knife. Don José must escort her to jail, but he allows her to escape after obtaining a promise of a rendezvous "on the ramparts of Seville". He is convicted by the military authorities.

Having been released after serving his sentence, Don José goes to find Carmen at an inn, where she is in the company of smugglers. She dances for him. When he wants to return to the barracks she mocks him. The Gypsy girls and the smugglers promise him "The universe for homeland... ! and intoxicating liberty, liberty! The open sky and the universe for homeland." "Are you with us now?" Carmen asks him. For her sake, Don José becomes a deserter and follows the band in their wanderings.

In the smugglers' hideout in a wild part of the mountains Carmen and Don José quarrel. "You're not made to live with us", she tells him, "Dogs and wolves cannot live happily together for long." When the Gypsy girls read their fortune in the cards, they are foretold much happiness, but Carmen only sees death in her hands of cards, ever-present death for her and her lover.

Carmen's casual attitude annoys Don José. When she shows that she is not uninterested in the charms of the bullfighter Escamillo, Don José is consumed with jealousy. A fight breaks out between the two men. When Escamillo invites Carmen to the bullfights in Seville, Don José warns the flighty girl "Watch out, Carmen, I have had enough suffering."

In Seville, the clamour of the crowd attending the bullfight fills the arena, and Don José, crazed by love, suffering and anger, confronts Carmen, who tells him she no longer loves him: "Carmen will never yield. She was born free and will die free." She throws the ring he gave her at him. He then stabs her to death, and the chorus is heard singing "Toreador, en garde! And while you fight remember that a dark eye is watching you and love awaits you."

Choices and viewpoint

Carmen is apparently the most frequently performed opera world-wide, and millions of opera-lovers regard it as a staple of the repertoire. Unlike Godard, Francesco Rosi clearly sought not to deconstruct the myth but to bring it as alive as possible.

A child of Naples he is a native Mediterranean: as most of his films show, he is familiar with and knows how to analyse the beauty, poverty, and violence of the societies that emerged in this region, where endemic poverty pushes people to lead an agitated life, often outside the law. From Salvatore Giuliano, the Sicilian, to Carmen, the Gypsy, the desire for freedom is too often tainted with blood.

His most personal touch can undoubtedly be found in his concern to achieve an authentic reconstruction of early 19th century Spain. His desire to base the film on reality comes up against a number of impediments. Critics have pointed out that, paradoxically, the scrupulous use of Spain's architectural heritage, the choice of splendid natural backdrops and the careful recreation of the costumes imbue the film not with extra realism but with a sense of "eternal Spain", almost a Spain for the tourists.

In the end, Francesco Rosi's most original, most convincing choice was doubtless that of the singer/actress Julia Migenes in the title role of the indomitable Gypsy girl. The director was fascinated by this star's beauty and talent, and probably also by the path her life had followed. Born in the Lower East Side of New York, of a Puerto-Rican mother and a Greek father, she had a difficult childhood: Julia rapidly sought refuge in an imaginary world, where music played a key role.

She obtained a study grant, followed by a role in a musical, with which she toured all over America. While still a very young adolescent she spent her days honing her artistic skills, studying dance, song and drama, and doing menial jobs to pay for her lessons and her family's upkeep. She obtained her first leading role in "West Side Story". Her career then followed a surprising path: her tenacity, courage and love for music took her from the Bronx to the Volksoper in Vienna, to London, Paris and Berlin and to the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

While she was rehearsing in Paris, Francesco Rosi was preparing to direct "Carmen". He was desperately seeking a rare bird, a lyrical singer who knew how to dance, but who was above all a sufficiently sensual, seductive actress to play passion incarnate. This was how Julia Migenes found herself in front of the cameras. She made an unforgettable Carmen, doubtless feeding on her own private experience of a difficult, yet free, life.

The original soundtrack of the film earned Julia Migenes some awards, and her rendering of the role made her world famous, opening the doors of the greatest theatres in the world to her.

Some proposals for analysis: representations of the film

Here, we will not dare to propose new readings of a literary myth, about which much has already been written. Many school textbooks include extracts from the novella or the opera libretto accompanied by commentaries.

In the context of this study of the representation of Roma on screen, three main fields of scholastic research can be identified:

a. A fanciful but very suggestive representation of Spanish "Gypsies": From Prosper Mérimée's novella to the film, via pictures of the opera, which are the strongest, most enduring stereotypes?

- An initial area of work could be the vocabulary used, beginning with the terms designating the Roma people, which when used in certain contexts are nowadays regarded as scornful: Mérimée mixes the traditional French term "Bohemian" with words borrowed from Spanish, which are naturally intended to convey an exotic, picturesque impression. Carmen's first appearance is announced by "Here comes the gitanilla..." (a repetition of the title of a short story by Cervantes). At the same time, the words "caló" and "callí" are also used by Mérimée and commented on as follows: "Word for word: black. The name the Bohemians give themselves in their own language." The class might ask itself what has become of these expressions.

- Another study should draw a comparison between the literary descriptions and the cinematographic choices of costumes and scenery: a world of colour (where bright, saturated colours predominate), whimsy, flashiness and apparent disorder contrasts with one that is more standardised (the uniforms of the soldiers) and less vivid.

- Which iconographic codes are most often used today to evoke this world in mass public imagery, for example in advertisements (France long had a make of cigarette, "Gitanes" ("Gypsy women"), sold in a box bearing a good illustration of these graphic codes)?

- Can the torero's costume, with its baroque extravagance, be likened to the Gypsies' colourful clothing? Is this exuberance a form of defiance of death?

- In what way, and in which scenes, is the Gypsies' exclusion from mainstream society evident? In which geographical areas do they seek refuge? From the urban taverns to the mountain campsite, is their nomadic lifestyle structural or circumstantial? What are their

means of existence? Was smuggling - a business that thrived under outdated economic systems - the Gypsies' sole preserve? In fact, all the outcast population groups living near a border survived through smuggling. Attention should be drawn to the fact that Carmen is initially introduced as a cigarette factory worker and accordingly has a real job.

b. A second possible area of study is the influence, role and perception of Roma culture in traditional Spain, which is clearly a huge, highly complex task

With a group of pupils who speak no Spanish, reference need simply be made to some basic concepts, illustrated by artistic works, for instance the many pictorial representations available.

Although Cervantes showed no leniency in repeating his era's stereotypical popular ideas about "Gypsies", the great poet Federico García Lorca felt an empathy for them. In his letters or lectures he often praised specific aspects of the Gypsy culture and sensibility, saying that their songs and their dances expressed "el duende", a form of inspiration, or "la pena negra", existential suffering. On the occasion of the publication of his book "El Romancero Gitano" in 1927, Lorca gave a lecture, stating during the introduction: "El libro en conjunto, aunque se llama gitano, es el poema de Andalucía; y lo llamo gitano porque el gitano es lo más elevado, lo más profundo, más aristocrático de mi país, lo más representativo de su modo y el que guarda el ascua, la sangre y el alfabeto de la verdad andaluza y universal." "The book's title refers to 'Gypsies', but it is in fact the poem of Andalusia. I call it 'Gypsy' because a Gypsy is what is most sublime, most profound and most aristocratic about my country, most representative of its way of being, what safeguards the smouldering fire, the blood and the alphabet of Andalusia and universal truth."

Many Spanish films depict Gypsies. Here we will cite only three, still available today, which give a very large place to song and dance:

- "Los Tarantos" by Francesc Rovira Beleta, 1963, starring one of the most famous dancers of all time, Carmen Amaya, is a Gypsy version of Romeo and Juliet.

- "El Amor Brujo" (word-for-word "Love, the Magician" in Spanish) aka "Carlos Saura Dance Trilogy, Part 3: El Amor Brujo" by Carlos Saura is a superb film version of the ballet, set to Manuel de Falla's music of the same name.

- "Alma Gitana" by Chus Gutiérrez, 1996, is a love story between a Gypsy girl and a "payo". The film avoids the usual clichés by deliberately portraying Gypsies who are integrated in Spanish society. Lucía is a student and, although she respects her community's traditions, she wants to take her future into her own hands.

Lastly, it is extremely important to conclude this study by examining recent documents on the Roma communities of Spain, so as to grasp the gulf between the, albeit glorious, myths and the current problems.

c. In what way does Carmen embody freedom, rather than a femme fatale?

Carmen is indeed a fascinating woman. Several men are running after her, and she seduces Don José and causes him to abandon everything for her. Is Carmen a female Don Juan?

However, she is also a dangerous woman - which signs point to her venal nature, her liking for easy money and short-lived glory? Don Juan, or at least Molière's version of him, seems to be insatiably seeking something absolute which justifies his conduct. It is difficult to say the same of Carmen. Has she entered into a pact with dark forces? She makes use of magic, reading the cards and foretelling dire fates. She leads men to their death. She herself does not fear death, which she constantly defies. However, she faces death in the same way as she plays with love, capriciously and without any clear reason.

Is freedom not the key feature of Francesco Rosi's reading of the story and Julia Migenes' interpretation of the role? The acting techniques she uses should be closely studied. How does she imbue her character with spirit, ardour and love for freedom? Beyond the social or amorous laws of men - and the unfortunate Don José is indeed the guardian of the male order on both counts, Carmen's fiery nature combines an imaginary liberty, for which "the Bohemian children that have never, ever known the law" are a constant metaphor, and a form of female emancipation, and the women's emancipation movement indeed reached its peak in the 1970s and 1980s. In "Carmen" the freedom of the Gypsy girl, with her immoral,

excessive behaviour, clashes with men's pitiful desire to possess, base beliefs and age-old prejudice.

This encounter is naturally more imaginary than real. A further area of study could be the status of women in Roma communities, their real scope for freedom and their no less real alienation.

2. Preoccupation with the sordid aspects of Roma life or real empathy? The uncertain paths of recognition

During the 1960s, for the first time in France, a film-maker working with a Roma community in the Paris region brought out a fiction film which attempted to penetrate this environment, clothed in mystery for the "gadje". With the declared objective of telling an authentic story and showing things for real, this film-maker set up his camera on a campsite, following in the footsteps of both Italian neo-realism and the New Wave movement in French cinema. In Yugoslavia, where there were many Roma communities, which had moreover suffered terribly from the violence perpetrated under the Nazi regime, another film-maker also set out to tell a story with "actors" recruited directly within the Roma communities.

These directors cannot be suspected of unhealthy curiosity and even less of harbouring racist objectives. Their work was unquestionably governed by an ideal of political intervention, in the noble sense, by a praiseworthy concern to enhance public knowledge of these Roma whom we may encounter "without seeing them", as the song says,

A critical analysis of their projects is nonetheless also necessary. They may, with the best of intentions, insidiously help to reinforce stereotypical ideas or convey the impression of a very hard, hopeless environment. It will come as no surprise that these film-makers could not resist the temptation to tell tragic stories, often with unhappy ends, at the risk of giving the audience a very narrow, simplistic view of Roma life.

Taking all the necessary precautions, a comparison can be drawn with a number of other films of the 1960s and 70s, shot within what were then referred to as "third world" communities and often painting a very gloomy picture, more likely to strengthen the compassionate convictions of Latin Quarter intellectuals than to convey an idea of the energy and potential of these developing societies.

This is the danger of fundamentally honest films, sometimes dealing with what are, unquestionably, pressing social issues. An example is the fine Czech film "Marian" by Petr Vaclav, which came out in 1996 and which we have not studied here. It is a film which attempts to undermine indifference (hostility?) towards Roma by telling the story of a Gypsy boy. However, it is a particularly cruel story, since the weight of determinism leaves him no chance in life. Labelled a "mental retard" on account of the "hereditary defects inherent in his race", taken away from his mother, who was deemed incapable of looking after him, and placed in an orphanage, he rebels against a hostile world, whose language he does not speak, and progresses from reformatories to prison. In this inhuman, repressive environment he is incapable of building a lasting relationship with others. Exclusion and loneliness turn him into a criminal. The realism of Petr Vaclav's film stems from the fact that he based it on a true news story, that his actors too were amateurs and that he worked with children placed in welfare institutions. However, questions can be asked about the side effects of such a huge accumulation of suffering. It is unfortunately possible that someone drawing hasty conclusions from the film could see it as a confirmation of the fears and prejudices it sets out to denounce - the idea that the Roma choose to lead an existence on the sidelines of society and cannot be integrated. Is their world irreconcilable with our own? This goes to show how little room for manoeuvre artists with humanitarian aims in fact enjoy.

In contrast with these apparently hopeless stories, we have chosen to discuss four films, which we consider have adopted more unusual standpoints, and with some success. They have in common - is this their secret? - the fact that children are essential to their plots, which, by taking a somewhat naive view - of course a carefully orchestrated naivety - avoid any over-emphasis of the gloomy aspects and make it possible to open up people's imaginations - but in a free way, not predetermined by earlier representations. They thus instil a sense of freedom, and a taste for new encounters.

2.1. Between grandeur and destitution

2.1.1. "KRIS ROMANI" by Jean Schmidt (France, 1962)

2.1.1.1. About the film

Director

This film-maker devoted his entire career to making documentaries, although "Kris Romani" happens to be a fiction film. In the 1960s-70s he frequently worked for television (in particular on a number of investigative reports for the excellent programme "Dim, Dam,

Dom"). He became known above all for his militant documentary films, which pull no punches in portraying some of society's victims.

For instance, he attempted to understand how racism takes root in schools by filming a class of pupils in Ménilmontant. He also depicted the lonely lives of old people in the 13th district of Paris, left abandoned once they no longer worked. His most moving film is "Comme les anges déchus de la planète Saint Michel", in which he portrayed a group of young dropouts, drug users and often also petty criminals, who gathered around the fountain on Place Saint-Michel in Paris. This reportage interspersed with interviews describes their lives, their hatred for society and their desperate recourse to violence.

In 1987 he again addressed the tragic situation of young people on the road to ruin. "Les clowns de Dieu" (The Clowns of God) tells the story of a desperate love affair between an unsuccessful writer and a deranged young woman, who has become mute after having been raped, in the midst of other lonely down and outs.

"Kriss Romani", with its optimistic ending, is in fact the most hope-inspiring film among his very gloomy oeuvre.

Production context

The early sixties were a period of renewal, and of sharp contrasts, for French society and for the country's film industry. General de Gaulle's return to power had given the 5th Republic sound institutions, but the final convulsions of the war in Algeria still cast a dark shadow over the country's politics. France had indeed entered a prosperous period of strong economic growth, but the resulting wealth was not always fairly distributed. On the fringes of the big cities, especially Paris, huge high-rise estates were springing up, but not fast enough to replace the shanty towns (the one in Nanterre was to become infamous), with their makeshift dwellings where immigrant workers and those left on the sidelines of economic growth crowded together. The film reflects this situation.

Society was changing, notably with the rise of a new generation - the baby boomers - who on reaching adolescence were avid for new cultural trends and became eager consumers. In French cinema, the late 1950s and early 1960s saw the emergence and triumph of the New Wave movement, a group of young film-makers, best represented by François Truffaut with "The 400 Blows" and Jean-Paul Godard with "Breathless", who imbued classical French cinema, which had often become hidebound, with a new free spirit. Shooting scenes in the open air using light handheld cameras and documentary-style techniques, allowing actors a degree of improvisation, seeking to reflect new sensibilities, deliberately assuming a subjective viewpoint, all are examples of the new cinematographic tendencies. Without really being labelled New Wave, Jean Schmidt's films were strongly influenced by the movement.

A particularly successful co-operation

André Hajdu was born in Hungary in 1932. Following brilliant studies at the Budapest Academy of Music, his interest in ethnomusicology led him to become involved in researching Gypsy musical culture and to publish a number of articles on the subject. In 1955 he won first Prize at the Warsaw World Festival of Youth for his "Gypsy Cantata".

Following the events of 1956 he emigrated to Paris where he pursued his studies at the Conservatoire with prestigious teachers such as Darius Milhaud and Olivier Messiaen. It was then that he was asked to work on Jean Schmidt's film, to which he contributed his valuable knowledge of Gypsy culture and music.

In 1966 he moved to Israel, where he continued his career and is now hailed as one of the country's greatest living composers.

2.1.1.2. Analysis of the film

Plot

In the early sixties, on the outskirts of Paris, where the remaining waste grounds are gradually giving way to big high-rise estates and also to shanty towns inhabited by the immigrant workforce, a group of Roma have parked their caravans on a still unoccupied plot.

During the night the families present on the campsite are roughly pulled from their sleep by the sudden arrival of the police, who want to see their "nomad's passes". Following a bitter altercation, the police take the group's leader away to the police station.

This makes it necessary to postpone the "Kriss" (traditional community council or assembly), which had been convened to settle a complicated dispute.

As the night draws to a close an old woman begins to recount the legend of the origin of the Tzigane people to an inquisitive little girl, Puce, who is wandering around with wet feet.

When the morning comes Puce smooths down her hair, while some children are playing outside, and the Eiffel Tower is visible in the distance. A pretty girl, Saga, walks across the campsite. The dispute to be settled by the Kriss concerns her. Sitting near a samovar, a group of men discuss the problem - Saga's father Marco has promised her in marriage to the son of an influential member of the community who, as is customary, has given him a large sum of money.

The father has to keep his word and abide by the agreement, but his daughter, Saga, has refused to comply with this arrangement, in which she has had no say. She cannot count on the solidarity of the older women, who vehemently rebuke her for refusing to obey the law, which they had to accept before her. The discussion stops short, and Saga runs away while the women curse her. Little Puce, hiding under the women's skirts, watches as she leaves to look for work among the Gadje, or non-Roma. Her departure from the campsite is accompanied by the old women's grieving, black looks from the other women and the men's hostile mutterings.

Puce is lost in wonder as the old woman tells her another legend, which seeks to explain the age-old curse of the Roma people, the marvellous tale of the "root of the cross", in which a poor Gypsy encounters Christ during his Passion.

Saga walks towards the city among the factories and wastelands on the banks of the Seine. She exchanges some friendly words with an old Muslim workman, who is lamenting the death of his son.

The little girl, Puce, sets off to find the root of the cross, which the legend says will help her lift the curse.

Meanwhile, the group's leader returns to the campsite and the men gather round him to discuss the situation. They begin to get worked up, and the father is beside himself with anger.

Saga has gone to join her godmother on another campsite. On hearing what has happened, the godmother tries to reason with her, saying she must agree to go before the Kriss and that women have to bear with men's more violent side if they love them. Saga exposes her idea of going to live like the Gadje, but the godmother is sceptical. "We don't mix" she says, before losing her temper and lashing out "Go away! Go and be a prostitute. Go and live with the Gadje. Here you're already dead!"

The camera focuses on the pediment of an official building, inscribed with the words "Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood". It is an employment office. After a long wait, Saga is received by the officials, who treat her courteously but are surprised to see her there. She only has her "nomad's pass" to show, not the papers she needs to be able to work. She is sent away.

Kind little Puce, helped by a little boy she has chanced upon, continues her search. She has indeed discovered a huge root on a plot of waste land, but a lorry comes and takes it away with some rubble and other rubbish. She sets off in pursuit of the lorry, as far as the Seine embankments, but she cannot catch up with the precious root.

Saga goes from one shop to another, looking for work as a salesgirl, but without success. She encounters the prejudiced reactions, whether openly expressed or not, that continue to pursue her people.

Puce and Saga, the little girl full of dreams and the courageous young rebel, have both failed, but only on the face of it. Puce will unwittingly be given the "sign" she was waiting for: the tribal council (Kriss) decides in Saga's favour and, realising that the boy to whom she was sold truly loves her, she accepts the marriage of her own accord. The young couple will try to break with the oppressive weight of tradition and lead a life more in keeping with their times.

Choices and viewpoint

The above description is unfortunately lengthy and rather linear. However, it gives a better idea of the director's aims. The film is a strange mix of an almost childish, poetic, naive fiction, making it possible to refer to a wealth of folk tales collected on the campsites and to see things through the little girl's wonder-filled eyes, and a harsh documentary denouncing the treatment of the Roma community, while simultaneously drawing attention to its inner tensions, particularly as regards the condition of women.

The fact that the cast included many Roma, the decision to shoot the entire film outside the studio on the campsites themselves, in the no man's lands not yet given over to

the emerging suburbs, the choice of small teams using light handheld equipment, as already experimented by the New Wave filmmakers, all this gives an authentic flavour to the scenario, although the storyline is sometimes over-emotional.

Forty years later, this film has an extremely strong impact - the scenery, now totally transformed, of the outskirts of Paris, the reminder of the discriminatory legislation in force in the 1960s, the depiction of the precarious living conditions that reigned during the much-regretted thirty-year economic boom have today assumed the status of a historical record.

Jean Schmidt's personal involvement and the musical score, composed by Matelot Ferret with the co-operation of the great musicologist Andre Hajdu, make this an impressive, original work, concerning which one can only regret the fact that it is not screened more often.

Some proposals for analysis: representations of the film

a. A fascinating reportage

Technical and aesthetic choices drawing inspiration from both Italian neo-realism and the experimental approach of the French New Wave. Pupils should be encouraged to look at the very free use made of the camera in a number of scenes, following the characters' movements with great flexibility. Preference is always given to natural lighting, reproducing the soft contrasts of the news reel images of the time. However, this does not rule out some remarkable use of light in a few key scenes, such as the night-time police raid, during which the police officers' lamps brutally spotlight the caravans' sleepy occupants.

- A community under surveillance

This opening scene sums up well the constraints inherent in the authorities' mistrust of the Roma community. This is an opportunity to study the techniques used by the director to make the audience relive the fear instilled by a police raid, as if they were too were members of the group. The particular atmosphere of the time (1961-62, the last throes of the war in Algeria) should also be addressed, since it led the French police to be excessively wary of population groups of Maghrebi origin and to the continuation of the specific measures applicable to "nomads", who were required to carry a special pass.

- Uncertain living conditions

As the story unfolds, the film shows, without lingering unnecessarily on them, a whole series of detailed pictures reflecting the difficulties of the protagonists' daily lives. This is an easy subject to work on in a school context, since it merely entails careful observation, but at the same time a demanding one, as it involves reconstructing an entire set of living conditions on the basis of visual evidence. The analysis can concern the community's accommodation - the caravans - the amenities available to them, their food, clothing, and so on.

- Urban fringes

This film, shot entirely on the outskirts of Paris, offers a perfect opportunity for a geographical analysis of the spatial environment as perceived and experienced. Saga's journey and the wanderings of the little girl make it possible to have an idea of the then ill-defined spaces that existed between industrial premises, huge construction sites and abandoned farms marking the creeping border of the city. At the time empty plots could still be accessed by the travellers for use as campsites.

b. Ancestral traditions - necessary rules or unbearable constraints?

With young teenagers it is always difficult to avoid the formulation of sweeping, dogmatic opinions. In this case care must be taken to ensure that the enticing ideas of adolescent rebellion and freedom to love as one pleases do not trap pupils into a too facile denouncement of traditions and customs, which, albeit open to challenge, are worth examining in depth. A film of this kind can naturally lead to some very interesting discussions, provided the teacher insists on a high standard of debate and well-reasoned arguments.

The following questions can be raised in particular:

- In what way is the "Kriss", or community council, a form of collective self-government? Conversely, is it a means for a patriarchal authority to monopolise decision-making power?

- The women seem to accept, and even lay claim to, their status as second-class citizens. How can this attitude be explained?

- How does the film depict the community's children? Do they benefit from their huge freedom or are they the victims of culpably lax parenting?

- What relations exist between the generations? Do the old women have a negative or a positive role (in the first case as potential hard line defenders of the status quo, and in the second as a link with the past and guardians of a strong oral tradition which they pass on to the younger members of the community)?

- How can one decide where one stands as an individual in relation to the constraints of membership of a community and the demands and attractions of the modern outside world? How can members of such communities open up to others who still too often regard them as strangers and outcasts?

All of these questions raised in the film can prove to be burning concerns for many pupils.

c. A precious oral tradition

Firstly the pupils should be asked to play the role of ethnologist, listing the many legends, stories and sayings that little Puce finds so fascinating. This initial work can then serve as a basis for drawing comparisons with other bodies of popular tradition so as to determine whether these oral traditions are specific to the community concerned or have, conversely, been borrowed from other identifiable sources.

The legend of the "root of the cross" can serve as the starting point for consideration of the Roma attitude to religion, blending Christian beliefs with various syncretic elements.

2.1.2. "I EVEN MET HAPPY GYPSIES" by Aleksandar Petrović (Yugoslavia, 1967)

2.1.2.1. About the film

Director

Aleksandar Petrović was born in 1929 in Paris. He studied at the University of Belgrade then, like many great East European film-makers, benefited from the cinema tuition of the Prague Institute in 1947-48. Back in Yugoslavia, he divided his activity between writing about cinema and making short films. In 1961 he was at last able to make his first full length fiction film, "Two" ("Dvoje"). The following films "Day", "Three" and especially "I Even Met Happy Gypsies" earned him a flattering reputation and international recognition. He continued in 1968 with "Rain on my village"; in 1972 he adapted "The Master and Margarita" from the famous novel by M. Boulgakov, then in 1977, "Group Portrait with Lady" from Heinrich Böll.

He is a striking film-maker with a strong personality, having been able to break with the routines and habits of 1950s Yugoslav cinema to bring in a new storytelling style whose amazing alchemy blends poetry, dark humour and delight in the absurd. Thus, his work is disturbing and has often raised critical controversy despite - or because of - his international success.

Production context

The late 1960s were an important period for Yugoslav society and its cinema. For many years, the pitiless Nazi occupation and the terrible struggles of the Yugoslav resistance had left a traumatic imprint overlaid by glorification of the building of a new society. This was grist to the mill of directors more concerned with political conformism than with a considered approach to visual and narrative quality. True to the noted slogan "We demolish yesterday's world to build tomorrow's", interest focused more on edifying tales of heroic partisans fighting the occupying army, or deserving engineers dedicated to building the nation. But gradually more independent and imaginative new film-makers were seen emerging, helping to give the Yugoslav film industry greater originality in three essential directions: firstly a wish for critical scrutiny, often with an undercurrent of caustic humour, of contemporary society without concealing its difficulties and disorders even in its most day-to-day features; next, renewed attention to Yugoslav diversity in its outer margins, in its rural peculiarities, in its different nationalities; lastly, a genuine attachment to the fate of individuals with their passions and their conflicting interests.

This definitely meant discarding the daunting concepts of “positive hero” and a work’s “ideological correctness” to accept plurality of viewpoints and the director’s choice of subjectivity.

It should also be remembered that the late 1960s were marked both by signs of political and economic openness (in July 1966 the League of Communists irrevocably condemned bureaucratic centralism and advocated some development of the market economy) and the rise of student and academic protest with the notorious strike at the University of Belgrade in 1968.

Reception of the film: audience response, critical reactions

The smashing success of Aleksandar Petrović’s film in 1967, both in filling the cinemas and in critical acclaim, is to be taken as a clear symptom of the new sensitivity of Yugoslav audiences and society. Distinguished by the Great Golden Arena Award of the Pula Festival in 1967, it also enabled the Yugoslav film industry to gain splendid international recognition. It won the Jury Prize and the “Prix de la Critique Internationale” at Cannes in 1967, as well as being nominated for the Oscars. Above all, it was purchased by more than one hundred countries, and because of this extensive distribution the film could amply recover its production costs.

2.1.2.2. Analysis of the film

Plot

The film owes much of its realism to having been shot in its entirety among the Gypsies of Vojvodina in northwest Yugoslavia. The director enlisted many Roma and village folk in the film, not only as extras but also as “amateur” players of short scenes from everyday life. The superb landscapes of Vojvodina, often shown in their wintry bleakness, the Gypsy music played on traditional instruments, the use of the Roma language mingled with Serbian, everything heightens a powerful impression of authenticity.

The forceful Bora is married to a woman much older than himself and does not get on with her. His work is gathering goose feathers, a chancy and unprofitable trade compelling him to travel all over Vojvodina to the remotest corners of the countryside, wherever the muddy paths and poor taverns take him on his endless journeys. On the way home from one of his trips, he makes the acquaintance of Tissa, a pretty Gypsy girl. At the table of an inn, she confides in him. She can no longer bear the aggressive advances of her stepfather, a certain Mirta, brutal and grasping, in whose house she is forced to live. Bora falls under Tissa’s spell and tries to wrest her from the clutches of Mirta so that he can love her in freedom. But the rather sordid deal he offers his rival is spurned with contempt, and hatred takes hold between the two men.

Bora nonetheless succeeds in arranging the young woman’s escape and takes her to his village. But once there, the unfortunate Tissa finds herself virtually a prisoner in her lover’s family, caught between his mother, wife and children. And while Bora is compelled to resume his goose feather journeys, the young woman endures reproach, abuse and ill-treatment while working hard under malicious surveillance. She takes advantage of an opportunity to run away again: fascinated by the big city, full of hope, she reaches Belgrade... But there she suffers one disillusionment after another. There is no room for her in this unfeeling, hostile city.

Worn out and destitute, Tissa resigns herself to going back to the bullying Mirta. Back from his trip, Bora hears the news. Madly hurt and jealous, he hastens to meet his rival, wrestles with him and stabs him to death.

Choices and viewpoint

It will have been understood that “I Even Met Happy Gypsies” is an innovative film as it signifies a twofold departure, not only from a cinema with strong ideological bias, which in a “socialist” society would not have brooked any suggestion of lingering poverty, forms of discrimination, and violence between men and women, but also diverging from a mainstream cinema glutted with the commonplaces of romance and folklore. This new departure is made for the sake of a more “social”, perhaps should one say more “ethnographic”, perception. In that sense, it prepares the way for films like “Les Princes” and “Time of the Gypsies”.

In an educational scheme, a warning should be issued: when newer generations rediscover it, the film is fraught with ambiguities and they are very likely to gain nothing but a rather harrowing miserabilist vision from it.

Indeed, Aleksandar Petrović has to his credit the first ever cinematic presentation of the difficulties met by Gypsies in their attempt, whether deliberate or forced, to settle down while retaining their customs. The film claims a realistic and observant perspective of their precarious life. But the picture which it draws is very grim: economically excluded from a still very backward rural society, the Gypsies get by on expedients and types of work disdained by others. The trade in goose feathers is one, but no longer enables them to earn a decent living, just to hang on, in most insecure circumstances with no future. Personal rivalry can thus only increase, driving the most resolute - or perhaps the least resigned - to petty crime. Amorous passion is but another mirage in these chaotic existences: its exacerbation brings on violence and murder. The families also suffer its direct consequences.

One criticism, as if stunned by these representations, hands down the unequivocal verdict that "the men are greedy, brutal and uncouth; the women are despised, beaten and trodden in the (ever-present) mud, especially if they try to flee their sad condition". (Pierre Coppée, Jacques Ledune and Jean-Marie Devaux).

Hence the importance of the teacher's role in directing critical study with young pupils. The entire crux of this work is never to make general or dominant assumptions about human behaviour, but to ensure that it is clearly understood how personal tragedies can result from difficult social situations compounded by a culturally induced mentality. And in that respect, the film also sets out to be a great tragic tale, between love and death, dark blood and white feathers.

Some proposals for analysis: the representations of the film

a. Authenticity or miserabilism?

The film, as has been said, is of incontestable documentary value but the teacher must first place the work in its proper setting (Vojvodina, a singular region of the former Yugoslavia) and time (late 1960s).

Once this is done, begin by analysing with the greatest care the material conditions of daily life:

- Residential: are the Roma all of settled abode; in what way; in which neighbourhoods? Is any spatial segregation observed in the organisation of the villages or towns?
- What is the structure of these dwellings? Are they distinguishable from the peasant houses of the other populations? Are there elements of "modern amenities" in the lighting, kitchen, etc.? Any significant signs of relative poverty?
- Dietary habits, dress: are there indicators of a "Gypsy" identity in the dress; do the women's clothing and adornment differ from those of the other populations?
- What overall perception of this daily life does the film give us?

b. Precariousness typifies the lifestyle

- Which economic activities enable the various characters to survive? There should be close study of the goose feather trade in which Bora engages: between which economic players is he the middle-man? What is the point of this form of salvage? Is it an archaism left over from a self-sufficient economy? Could it still have economic or ecological justifications today? What are the unwritten "rules" of this traffic?

- What other employment possibilities are available to the various characters? Are domestic chores the specific lot of women, and in what way?

- Leaving for the city - here, Belgrade - can it be a solution? What other employment possibilities does it hold? Does the film make a positive appraisal of them?

- What about the future? Do children appear in the film? How are they represented? Is schooling hinted at? Will they be offered any other fate?

c. Conflicts and confrontations: tormentors and victims?

A conscientious effort should be made to abide by two essential phases in the above analyses.

First, closely study the types of conflicts that can arise as the action unfolds: economic conflicts, between bargaining and complex money deals? Ethnic conflicts between

different cultures? Intergenerational conflicts, for example between old women and younger ones; between the lawful wife and the young mistress; among the different family groups? To use a modern-day expression, is there a clearly discernible “battle of the sexes”? Do the men have conflicts driven by passion, and in which forms?

On the basis of this initial approach, a reasoned debate should be held to consider the processes whereby these conflicts are generated and managed, their triggering factors, and their resolution in the perpetration of the violent act:

- How much weight is carried, respectively, by the difficult living conditions, the pervasive poverty and the lack of education / breeding?
- Is political “law” present in the film, in the form of, if not the state’s authority, at least that of cultural and social control?
- Is the film a condemnation of a “macho” culture where women are concerned? Are the men prisoners of “archaic codes” of honour and revenge?
- What is the possible place of a personal ethic, of an individual responsibility?

2.2. A lesson in freedom

2.2.1. “DEVILS, DEVILS” by Dorota Kędzierzawska (Poland, 1991)

2.2.1.1. About the film

Director

Dorota Kędzierzawska was born in Lodz in 1957. Attracted at a very early age by the flavour of film-making, she studied at the Faculty of Science and Culture of the University of Lodz, then at the Moscow Cinematographic Institute. As a director her output has been small, but she has always made very personal films outside the standard mould of commercial production. Her stylistic meticulousness, her choices of humanist subjects and the sharpness of her perception make her films exceptional works that give her genuine status in world cinema, even though she unfortunately remains little-known to the general public.

“Devils, devils”, her first feature film, dates from 1991, “Crows” from 1994, and “Nothing” from 1998.

Production context

1991, the Iron Curtain has vanished. Poland is experiencing its first years of democratic renewal amid upheaval and economic difficulties. For Polish film-makers, like many other artists of the former “people’s republics”, a time of greater freedom of expression but also discovery of the new economic constraints, of competition to attract the audience of the Western cinemas and above all of the big Hollywood film factory.

Public reception

This first feature film had real success with the critics, as witness the variety of prizes won in many international festivals: Special mention for young directors at Cannes in 1991, some Golden Lion awards in the Polish Film Festival at Gdynia, Special mention at the International Women’s Film Festival of Créteil. However, the film has been distributed very discreetly.

2.2.1.2. Analysis of the film

Plot

The 1960s in Poland, the last moments when the Gypsies still travelled the roads. Their arrival in a small village disrupts people’s habits, their presence is irritating. But at the same time it stirs up curiosity, it awakens conflicts and passions in a sleepy settlement. The construction of the screenplay hangs by a slender thread, namely the story, in this rural backwater, of an adolescent girl named Mala: she is at the age of the first amorous flurries, the first uncertainties, contradictions and latent sufferings. Building an identity is no easy matter, between group pressure and personal impulses.

The village seems so peaceful, but frustrations, muted tensions, are at work there. Mala’s mother lives alone with her daughter, set somewhat apart. A schoolmaster torn between his love of poetry and the mediocrity of his position, ironically reflected by his stammering, seems incapable of coming to terms with his emotions. The Gypsy band’s arrival acts like a litmus, between the children’s fascination and the adults’ fear and hostility. Mala’s destiny may swerve towards adventure or be shattered by the callousness of the adult world. But at all events, when the Gypsies set off once more, nothing will ever be the same again in the girl’s life.

Choices and viewpoint

The film stands out primarily for its visual quality and its narrative boldness. The subject is handled in an impressionistic, poetic way. In front of a young audience, often used to the codes and rhythms of the made-to-measure productions turned out by the Hollywood industry, the first thing to consider is the matching between the preferred forms of expression, the story the director wants to tell, and the emotions and feelings she wants to arouse. The film is in fact not at all talkative, with dialogues often cut down to the expression of simple things as if what lies deepest could not yet be put into words: this no doubt evokes a form of adolescent unease, but in a broader sense it refutes the very widespread illusion about the importance of what is said over what is seen. Dorota Kędzierzawska's cinema is based on belief in the image and its enticing or imaginative power.

Some proposals for analysis: representations of the film

The film is no doubt before all else a subtle analysis of a girl's emotional education. One might believe, moreover, that the passage of the Roma has a strictly metaphorical value first and foremost. Nonetheless, the film also offers a superb vision of their traditional life, whether genuine or fantasised.

a. A vision out of a mythical past?

- It may be appropriate to begin by asking about the possible dating of the film's action. While the articles written about it upon its release often mention "the sixties", it will be stressed that no exact indication, no plain historical reference is discernible in the pictures or in the dialogues: lack of any sign of modernity - no trace of motorisation for example - but the presence of very severe clothing - white dresses for girls, dark suits for boys - old but not readily datable, taking us back to the world of some distant past but probably still close in memory.

- Can the landscapes help us with more exact localisation? While the film is built very much on close-ups of characters and their faces, this intensity is often relieved by breathing-spaces that open onto broad expanses of green meadows or russet fields, sandy hills and craggy rocks. These bleakly beautiful spaces are empty, crossed only by small groups of children or by the caravans and carts of the Roma. It is the vision of an isolated rural Poland far away from the great commotions of history. A "long-lasting" Poland, to borrow Fernand Braudel's expression? Or a deliberately timeless realm of fairy tale and parable?

- By obliterating every too definite landmark in space and time, does the director then set out to usher the viewer into a "time past, somewhere in Poland" (that is "nowhere", to place a new construction on Alfred Jarry's wry formula, which may also be understood as "once upon a time") so as to make us penetrate that realm of fairy tale?

- Is it the realm of childhood memories? That of dreams, the age-old content of the archetypes of dreams?

- These choices will thus need to be considered in analysing the representation of the Roma: there is no attempt at ethnographic authenticity, it refers to other traditional images bound up with a whole series of cultural representations. These are above all nomads, a wandering people: how does the director stage their arrival (they seem to pop up from nowhere...), their travel (whose poetic beauty, with the horses and carts, is emphasised), their encampment (romantic or realistic)?

- How is the music presented? How does it illustrate the theme of "Roma", or on the other hand is it an ironical counterpoint to that theme?

b. How the Gypsies bring out both the interpersonal and the inward tensions and conflicts

How exactly is the arrival of the Roma contingent filmed? A study should be made of that very interesting sequence where the schoolmaster is left to his lonely dream of grandiloquent poetry as all the children turn their gaze away from him, fascinated by another form of dream passing before their eyes: the troop of Roma. Close examination of the editing will be very useful in this context.

What feelings do the village children experience towards the Roma? It will be of special interest to examine this question, if proper care has been taken beforehand to work on

the visual and narrative choices of the film: the refusal to clarify the situations by dialogue implies that much is to be understood or at least glimpsed from the actors' gestures and facial expressions: smiles, wrinkled foreheads, clenched fists...

Is Mala fascinated by the Roma because she has something of their witchcraft in her nature, or is she drawn by an unyielding strangeness?

To understand the issues of the adults' intervention, there should be careful study of the few important characters:

- Mala's mother: hypotheses as to her status can be elicited from the students: single woman, deserted unmarried mother? What of the repercussions on her marginal position in the village community?

- Then the schoolmaster in his powerlessness and poetic grandeur.

- In what way, by what filming methods, is the intervention of the village residents, led by the municipal authorities and the parish priest, held up to ridicule?

c. The Gypsies: an ambiguous metaphor?

At the end of the analytical work, the actual title of the film should be reconsidered: who really are the devils referred to?

The world of adults, hedged with institutional, political and religious structures, obviously sees the Roma as disturbing "invaders" because they arouse dangerous hopes and dreams (which?); what threat can they raise in the community?

In conclusion, an effort will be made to identify this representation of "the Roma" with an artistic, particularly a literary, tendency which has seen them as embodying freedom, rejection of ties, dreamlike poetry, and so on.

2.2.2. "INTO THE WEST" by Mike Newell (USA / Ireland, 1992)

2.2.2.1. About the film

Director

Mike Newell owes his current status as a leading English film director above all to the huge international success of a number of films he made in the 1990s, including the well-known romantic comedy "Four Weddings and a Funeral" (1994), which won two prestigious awards: the César Award for Best Foreign Film and an Oscar nomination for Best Film.

This success crowned an already lengthy career. Mike Newell, who was born in 1942 and is a graduate of the University of Cambridge, began working for various British TV producers in 1963, making a number of series or films for television, including many with very high viewing figures.

In 1980 he moved on to directing feature films, a field where eclecticism was to become his hallmark. The films he made varied considerably in genre, from the horror film "The Awakening" to drama such as "The Good Father". In the meantime he consolidated his reputation in some international film festivals.

The 1990s marked a new stage in his career. "Enchanted April" (1992), a film about four bourgeois British women on holiday in the 1920s, earned Miranda Richardson the Golden Globe for Best Actress.

His flattering new reputation having opened the doors of the Hollywood studios to him, Mike Newell was to confirm his talents there by directing Al Pacino and Johnny Depp in "Donnie Brasco" (1997), a tragic drama in which an FBI agent has to infiltrate a mafia "family". He went on to make some very diverse films, such as "Pushing Tin" (2000) or "Mona Lisa Smile" (2003).

Lastly, he followed in Chris Columbus's and Alfonso Cuarón's footsteps as directors of the Harry Potter series by making the fourth instalment of the adventures of the young apprentice wizard - "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire", a symbolic consecration for a filmmaker who has undoubtedly succeeded in continuing to view the world through a child's wonder-filled eyes.

- A highly talented screenwriter

Special mention should be made of the screenplay's author, Jim Sheridan. Born in Dublin in 1949, it was there that he founded "The Project Arts Centre", an experimental theatre, which soon became an arts showcase of the 1970s. In 1981 he moved to the United States, where he became Director of the Irish Arts Centre theatre. He became famous with

the first feature he directed, "My Left Foot", for which he also wrote the screenplay. He met Mike Newell and worked with him on a number of films, a partnership they were to renew with "Into the West".

2.2.2.2. Analysis of the film

Plot

Following his wife's death, Papa Riley, a descendant of the Irish "Tinker" or traveller community, has chosen to settle in a down-at-heel suburb of Dublin, where he is doing what he can to bring up his two young sons Tito and Ossie. However, life is hard, and the family struggles to survive, living by expedients - welfare, little fiddles and petty crime. Papa Riley too often seeks an easy refuge in the bottle, which does nothing to help matters.

One day Ward, his dead wife's father, comes to visit the family. The old man continues to lead a nomadic lifestyle, still living in an ancient gypsy caravan and travelling the quietest roads. He brings with him a beautiful white horse named Tír na nÓg, meaning "Land of eternal youth", which he mysteriously found on the seashore.

The boys immediately fall in love with the horse, which their grandfather claims is more than just an animal, and take it to live with them at home. However, a corrupt policeman spots Tír na nÓg and steals the horse to sell it to a wealthy horse-breeder. The boys set off in search of the horse, find the stud farm where it is locked away and organise its escape. They then ride off to roam through Ireland, a headlong journey during which the children learn about both the dangers of a life of adventure and the intoxicating pleasures of freedom.

Worried out of his mind, Papa Riley contacts the other members of the Traveller community to ask them to help him find his sons. They are initially wary and turn him away, remembering his past misdemeanours. Then, Kathleen and her brother take him in and agree to help him.

In the meantime the police have opened an investigation and are also hunting for Ossie, Tito and Tír na nÓg all over Ireland. The net is closing in on the fugitives, and the children have several miraculous escapes.

The long pursuit ends on a beautiful isolated beach. The horse escapes from the pursuers by galloping off beneath the sea, with little Ossie still clinging on to its neck. At the bottom of the sea the child sees his mother's face, which still haunts his dreams. A wave then lifts him back up to the surface.

The reunited family returns to the Traveller campsite, where Papa Riley performs the traditional funeral rite the community expects of him. In front of his friends and his sons, he burns the caravan in which he lived with his wife, thereby laying her soul to rest.

Choices and viewpoint

Apart from the melodramatic plot, which keeps both adults and children on the edge of their seats, this film is a sensitive, accurate portrayal of the situation of the Irish Travellers, of their growing tendency to settle and their social exclusion. The story of a beautiful friendship between a horse and two children is at the same time an attempt to share in an empathetic way, and without wallowing in the sordid aspects, the difficulties, hopes and dreams of these communities native to the British Isles. However, Jim Sheridan's scenario is subtle and fairly complex. He weaves together three different, contrasting strands - a realistic presentation of the social situation, a familiar, childish fantasy, drawing on the American Western, and more lyrical references to ancient myths and legends - with a horse born of the sea and the dead visiting the living in their dreams. The fleeing children's resumption of a roaming lifestyle is simultaneously an opportunity to (re)discover the wild, magnificent scenery of Ireland. This film by a talented director intended for the general public is particularly recommended for younger pupils - for example those in the 10 to 13 age-group.

Some proposals for analysis: representations of the film

a. "Travellers" or "Tinkers", a community and a lifestyle to be discovered

There are a number of theories concerning the origins of the nomadic Irish "Tinkers", whose name is probably derived from the metal tin, a reference to one of their traditional activities, metalworking. This familiarity with metalwork brings to mind another nomadic community, the Kalderash (coppersmith) Gypsies of Eastern Europe. However, there is generally recognised evidence that the Tinkers are not Gypsies, but are of Irish origin. This is

because they speak a specific language, Shelta, which linguists have compared with pre-Celtic Irish dialects, although it also contains traces of Roma vocabulary.

Whatever the case may be, the term "Tinker" was used in documents written as early as the 12th century to designate travelling craftsmen who worked metal and forged arms and decorative objects. At the same time, they were pedlars, china-repairers, basket-makers, and so on. In the 15th century some of them migrated to Scotland, where small communities still survive today, hiring themselves out as farm labourers or winkle-gatherers.

The land expropriations of the 17th century and the huge famines of the 19th century led to the emigration of thousands of Irish peasants, while the most disadvantaged were left homeless. Wandering the roads and excluded from society, they mixed with the older "Traveller" communities, surviving by constantly moving on, more often than not on foot, sleeping in barns in winter and under the open sky in summer. It was only towards the end of the 19th century that they began to use gypsy caravans. Horse-dealers, seasonal labourers, chimney-sweeps, each profession had its own style of caravan, adapted to its needs, whereby its members could be identified. Although the caravan undoubtedly represented a considerable improvement in the quality of daily life, it also had unwelcome side effects by helping to enlarge the gulf between the "Travellers" and the settled communities.

With the development of industrial society, the Tinkers' lifestyle was called into question. Mechanised farming led to the disappearance of many seasonal jobs, and mass production made their skilled handiwork obsolete. Many Tinkers settled down on the outskirts of towns and cities, often on rundown housing estates. They lived off insecure jobs, social welfare and begging. All too often they were despised by other settled Irish people. Those Tinkers who retained their nomadic lifestyle found their campsites relegated to unhealthy plots of land with no water supply, frequently located alongside the public waste dump. The children were often discriminated against when an attempt was made to send them to school. Discrimination was also encountered by the adults, who were banned from pubs and certain shops or forced to stay in areas where the population was not too hostile to the Traveller community.

Throughout the film many scenes depict the Travellers' current lifestyle. The contrast between Papa Riley's failed settled lifestyle and the poetical vision of the nomadic way of life may admittedly seem simplistic, but it is in any case a useful starting point for an analysis of the changes in the Tinkers' situation and a discussion about safeguarding their own particular culture.

The entire first part of the film, which follows in the best traditions of British naturalist cinema - Ken Loach's empathetic approach comes to mind - sets out to draw a realistic, uncompromising picture of the social integration difficulties encountered. In their work on this subject the pupils will for instance be able to discuss the rundown working class housing, the burden posed by unemployment, the little tricks that people use to survive. In what way does the job which Papa Riley accepts in the black economy bring to mind the ancestral metal-working skills? What prejudices on the part of the social workers, otherwise well disposed towards them, do those seeking to take advantage exploit in order to swindle the family allowances system a little? What attitudes do people develop in this difficult environment? What harmful role does alcohol play? Why is there an instinctive distrust of the authorities, especially the police?

Through the character of the grandfather, and also the more fleeting scenes of the old campsite, it is possible to reconstitute the Tinkers' former lifestyle - their roaming ways, their knowledge and love of horses, their handcrafts. However, the most fascinating thing in this film is what it has to say about a culture that is still alive but threatened with extinction: attention should be drawn to the importance of the oral tradition, so well portrayed by the story-telling grandfather, and to certain traditional values - rejection of private property, faithfulness to one's friends, respect for children, a sense of community.

Caught between the two worlds, are Papa Riley and his sons relegated to the sidelines of both the Tinker and the settled communities?

b. Characters seeking to discover their own identities

Like many films for young people - it was doubtless not by chance that Mike Newell agreed to become involved in the Harry Potter saga - "Into the West" adopts the style of an adventure story and tells us two initiatory tales:

- A child searching for his past and his mother (a quest for knowledge)

The child, who is cut off from his past by his mother's death and his father's choices, wishes to rediscover the truth. Pupils' attention can be drawn to the many obstacles and trials he encounters throughout the film (typical of all initiatory quests for knowledge): the initial loss of the horse, hostile human or natural forces (cold, hunger, fear). On the other hand, what "auxiliaries" come to Ossie's aid during his adventure? Attention can be drawn to Tír na nÓg's role as a mysterious, but indispensable, guide, to the strength the boy derives from his grandfather's words, to Tito's fraternal assistance. The opportunity should also be taken to assess what the father contributes, which gradually proves to be of considerable value. The discovery of the tomb and the dive into the depths of the sea are the culminating points of this quest, with the child little by little moving away from the real world to reach the "other side of the mirror". When Ossie comes back up to the surface, where his father gathers him into his arms, it is indeed a rebirth. Another subject for analysis is the characters' "doubles" or what they stand for - Ossie has a double in Oisín, whose legend is told by the grandfather, and the horse symbolises the mother or death.

- A man seeking to recover his dignity

- Unable to accept his wife's death and destroyed by guilt, Papa Riley appears to be nothing but a wreck - what are the physical and moral signs of his decay? In particular, how have abandoning the Tinker traditions and community and his preference for solitude made him especially vulnerable? Can this be perceived as a metaphor for the risks run by the Tinkers should they too readily renounce their cultural identity?

- At the same time, how does Papa Riley find the energy to react? How do his children's love and his community's new-found solidarity come together to provide him with the support he needs to confront the police who are hunting down his children? How and in what scenes does he regain his dignity? What traditional Tinker rite does he ultimately agree to perform so as to release his wife's soul and again be at peace with himself?

- What parallel can be drawn between the fate of Oisín, the king of the legend, and this fallen "king" of the Travellers? They both left their own worlds for a woman and took refuge in harmful other worlds.

- What lesson do the film's final scenes doubtless seek to teach?

c. A story drawing on various legendary sources

The teacher should have the pupils analyse the elements that categorise this film in the fairy tale genre. The pupils should ask themselves whether this is a weakness of the plot or the mark of a work that relies on fantasy. They can investigate the many references to Mediterranean or Celtic mythologies - mermaids or the "lady of the lake", for example. A specific area of study could be the symbolic significance of the horse in Roma culture or the classical antique tradition - Pegasus, the horses of Poseidon, the horse that plays the role of psychopomp in the "Iliad", guiding the souls of the dead to the underworld. The horse and his rider are required to accomplish some almost fantastic feats - they jump over a blazing fire and are aided or frustrated in their quest according to the usual laws of storytelling. The importance and complexity of the role played by the four natural elements - fire, air, water and earth - should be noted; they are by turns amicable or threatening.

Alongside these strong references, it can be noted that the two children's imagination is impregnated with modern popular culture, as promoted through cinema and television - pupils should be encouraged to identify the allusions to the American Western and the myths of the Far West. They should also be asked to think about the question Tito asks his father at the end of the film "Are the Travellers cowboys or Indians?"

d. A basis for some specific writing work

In a classroom context this film, with its clear storyline, could be an initial opportunity to discover the activity of film criticism. The pupils could be asked to write a short press article, particularly as a group work exercise. To this end, the terms "criticise" and "evaluate" should first be well-defined, since for young pupils the first may have a negative connotation and the second a positive one, and a few simple rules should be laid down. A critic should not

simply recount the film's plot, although some information is essential for the reader to understand what he is talking about, but should express a viewpoint, a value judgment on the work done by the director and his team. It is not enough to say "it's good" or "I didn't like it". The critic must tell the reader what pleased or displeased him about the story, the characters, the images, the lighting, the music, all backed by sound arguments. A critic gives someone who has not yet seen a film points of reference, which enable him or her to understand immediately why the film is being recommended (or not).

3. An exuberant, baroque vision - the films of Emir Kusturica

3.1. Emir Kusturica or the lure of excess

Born in Sarajevo on 24 November 1954, in a "country which no longer exists" to use his own words, Emir Kusturica is one of the most remarkable modern film-makers - one of the most original, baroque and surprising. He had a fairly wild youth in Sarajevo, where he already sought to reconcile cinema, music and football - and, free of prejudice, was attracted by people from very diverse backgrounds, which led him to befriend young Gypsies of his own age, of whom there were many in Yugoslavia, particularly Sarajevo and the surrounding area.

- Promising beginning

Emir's family sent him to Prague to study at the film academy, the famous FAMU, which was to train so many excellent professionals of the seventh art. He proved to be a brilliant student and, while still at the academy, made two short films. His teachers saw him as a promising talent. While a student, Emir Kusturica could take advantage of conditions at the FAMU to discover and come to appreciate the great classic films, whether Russian, Czech, French, Italian or American. They had a strong impact on his film-making style, and tributes and references to the great film-makers are omnipresent in his work.

In 1978, he made "Guernica", a short film, as a graduation exercise; it was a falsely naive depiction of anti-Semitism as experienced by a small boy. This film won First Prize at the Student Film Festival in Karlovy Vary.

- A rebellious nonconformist

Back in Sarajevo, he worked for television. However, as a result of his non-conformist attitudes and freedom of tone, his first medium-length film was banned from the television screens. His second film "Titanic" - aka "Buffet Titanic" -, based on a short story by the Yugoslav author, Ivo Andrić, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, won First Prize at the Yugoslav Television Film Festival.

The same year he made his first feature film, "Do you remember Dolly Bell?", based on a screenplay which he co-wrote with the great Bosnian poet Abdulah Sidran. This largely autobiographical film spoke about the identity-building difficulties of children torn between the fascinating West and Tito's authoritarian regime in Sarajevo in the 1960s. Having won some awards at the Venice Film Festival and the Festival of São Paulo, this film brought him to the attention of cinema-goers.

He was to remain in the spotlight, since his second film "When Father was Away on Business", which came out in 1985, won the Palme d'Or (Golden Palm) at Cannes, a swift consecration for this young director, then aged only 31. The film, on which he again collaborated with Abdulah Sidran, tells of the painful experience of families separated by the regime's arbitrary policies.

Inundated with offers from international producers on the lookout for new talent, the ever-unpredictable Emir Kusturica then decided to join his friends' rock band as bass guitarist. This led him to frequent the musical scene, where he met one of Yugoslavia's top rock singers and musicians: Goran Bregović. Their friendship would play a key role in shaping the musical element of Kusturica's films, which was to become a distinctive component of his work.

- International consecration

The American studios, in particular Columbia, were becoming pressing and, in the end, he decided to work with the journalist Gordan Mihic on a film based on a real-life news story of trafficking of children within the Roma communities. "Time of the Gypsies" was a huge public success and won the Prize for Best Director at Cannes in 1989. We will come back to this film at greater length below.

On completing shooting, Emir Kusturica was invited to New York by the director Milos Forman, who was looking for someone to replace him at Columbia University.

- *The war disasters*

The complex task of directing the film was made even more difficult by the outbreak of war in Yugoslavia, to which he was a powerless witness stranded thousands of miles away. Emir Kusturica broke off shooting on a number of occasions in order to travel home to help his parents who were suffering abuse at the hands of the militia. Despite these tribulations, he completed "Arizona Dream", which won the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival in 1993.

Greatly shocked at the way the media depicted the war and distressed by his own powerlessness to do anything from the United States, Kusturica felt the need to tell the international film audience his own version of the tragedy that was tearing his country apart. This led to the shock of "Underground", a film which dealt with this theme not in a truly realistic manner, but through metaphor and poetry. Shot partly in Prague, for the studio work, and partly in Belgrade, for the outside scenes, full of the atmosphere of war, this is doubtless Kusturica's most painful, most powerful film to date. It won him a second Palme d'Or in 1995, despite the controversies and the sometimes fierce debate it caused.

Tired of the critics' unending attacks and deeply affected by separations from friends and professional contacts as a result of the war in the Balkans. Kusturica seemed ready to stop making films.

- *1998: a new departure, thanks to Gypsy madness*

A new departure came in 1998 with a film radically different from the previous one, full of colour, music and jokes, "Black Cat, White Cat". Kusturica appears to have deliberately chosen to return to the magical, colourful world of the Gypsies of the Balkans, so as to forget the murderous madness and the tragedies.

- *Creative energy*

Following many abandoned projects, Emir Kusturica decided to return to the tragic theme of war through a love story in "Life is a Miracle" (2004) - a very optimistic title -, for which he set a camp up with his team in the mountains, where they reconstructed a traditional wooden village, Küstendorf, which is an ecological village and was furthermore made into a film set.

Carried along by his élan, Kusturica shot some films, made a documentary film on Maradona and also finished working on an opera version of "Time of the Gypsies", which was first staged in June 2007 at the Bastille opera house in Paris.

3.2. "TIME OF THE GYPSIES" (Yugoslavia, 1988)

3.2.1. Analysis of the film

Plot

On a muddy piece of waste land, crossed by gaggles of honking geese, a young bride with a long white veil screams her disappointment and anger, as her husband, already dead drunk, is carried away by his friends in a wheelbarrow. A madman standing by an adjacent fountain calls on God to explain the misfortunes visited on the Gypsies: "My soul is free as a bird. It glides along, then dips back to earth. My soul cries, laughs and sings." An unlucky gambler loses his scant belongings with a few throws of the dice.

This symbolic opening sequence already sets the tone - there will be no point in seeking a rational, linear storyline. The film is an, apparently chaotic, inextricable mix of magical moments, dream-like scenes and sordid episodes, set to a haunting music, the main themes of which have become classics.

Within this jumble a tragic tale gradually takes shape, that of Perhan, a young Gypsy boy who believes in love and in a future escape from his impoverished background. He is the guiding thread of this adventure filled with colourful characters, sometimes mad sometimes sane, who are condemned to suffer and to lead a wandering life, but a life of dignity since, although they are thieves, it is for the good cause - their own - the only one which they regard as respectable in the face of the hostility they encounter from "honest people".

Perhan, the illegitimate son of a Slovenian soldier and a Gypsy woman, lives in a strange hovel in a poor district on the outskirts of Skopje in Macedonia with his little sister Danira, who has a crippled leg, and his maternal grandmother Baba, a healer and a tender, albeit rough, authority figure. Despite their poverty and the, not always funny, misdeeds of

Uncle Mezran, a drunkard and womaniser, who sponges off the family and gets young girls pregnant, Perhan leads a happy life with his grandmother's rough-and-ready kindness, his accordion and a pet turkey. He has long been in love with Azra, his pretty neighbour, who is attracted by his good nature and amazed at his gifts: Perhan can make metal objects move solely by using his willpower. However, the young girl's mother, a hot-tempered, greedy woman, does not want to hear about marriage - Perhan is a paltry suitor because he is impoverished. He would need to be rich to win her over.

The plot thickens. The district is ruled by a "godfather", Ahmed Dzida, and his brothers, who derive their wealth from all kinds of shady businesses. Perhan's uncle owes them a large sum of money. Drunk and carried away, he has no compunctions about threatening the grandmother in an attempt to extort her meagre savings from her and ends up lifting the family shack off the ground with a crane. By luck, Ahmed needs the grandmother's healing powers since his only son is seriously ill. She succeeds in curing him. In gratitude, Ahmed offers to take Perhan away with him to earn a lot of money in Italy. The grandmother agrees on condition that Ahmed also pays the cost of medical treatment for the crippled little sister, whom he promises to take to hospital in Ljubljana for an operation.

A strange convoy sets off, comprising a high-powered car pulling Ahmed's caravan and a minibus driven by one of his brothers. Perhan's journey takes him right across Yugoslavia. On this long road, they stop off in villages where other Roma communities live. There, Ahmed adds to his "band", buying a young boy Irfan off his impoverished family, recruiting a fancily dressed dwarf and so on. They reach Croatia via the famous Highway of Brotherhood and Unity, built under Tito to link Belgrade and Zagreb: along the way, in a beautiful dream-like scene, Perhan and his little sister see their scarcely known mother's bridal veil floating on the wind. They at last arrive at Ljubljana hospital in Slovenia, where they leave the little sister behind.

Upon his arrival in Italy Perhan discovers the squalid campsite, in an unlikely suburb of Milan, where he is now to live. He rapidly grasps what the clan expects of him. Ahmed and his brothers live by exploiting bands of children and people with disabilities whom they force to beg, to steal and, in the young women's case, to prostitute themselves. Perhan is revolted but believes in the promises made to him by the godfather, who treats him with a blend of fond paternalism and threatening authority. Like his companions of fortune he agrees to join in the clan's shady dealings, and irrevocably loses his innocence.

Perhan is now the prisoner of a life he did not want. At least he still has his love for his grandmother, his little sister and, above all, Azra, whom he dreams of seeing again. However, he cannot escape his fate. Having become a right-hand man to Ahmed, who suffers a heart attack, is left half-paralysed and is betrayed by his brothers, Perhan believes he can achieve his dreams - put some money aside to get married and have a home, like the house Ahmed claims he is going to build for him.

However, the situation quickly changes. Having been brutalised, threatened and thrown out by Ahmed's brothers, Perhan boards a ship at Bari in order to return home. His disappointment then takes on tragic overtones. Azra, whom he proudly goes to fetch from her mother's house waving a wad of banknotes, is pregnant, apparently with Uncle Mezran's child. The promised house does not exist. Perhan returns to Milan, determined to have it out with Ahmed. He travels via Ljubljana, where he discovers that his little sister has not been cared for, as Ahmed promised, but has also fallen prey to the clan and is being exploited somewhere on the pavements of Italy.

His world collapses, with no hope of deliverance. Perhan hangs on to life by pride alone. He nonetheless has to find his sister and the little boy, his future son, to whom Azra gave birth, dying in the process. Above all, he is consumed by a desire for revenge. He will avenge himself with the help of young Irfan, thanks to his powers of telekinesis, which he utilises at a grotesque feast held to celebrate Ahmed's remarriage with a beautiful young girl. However, death will not be confined to the Dzida clan alone.

Choices and viewpoint: magical realism?

The film's original title, "Dom za vesanje", means "a home to hang for", which is completely different from the title finally chosen for the film's international distribution.

Much has been written about this fantastic film by Emir Kusturica, a huge and lasting success, which played a considerable role in helping people rediscover the world of the Roma, especially their musical culture. As part of a teaching strategy, the key concern should be to draw a distinction between the documentary aspects of an often well researched, very

authentic film and the director's intuitive artistic approach and personal views, while at the same time showing the film's great unity.

Pupils should be told that, following his first international success with "When Father was Away on Business", in 1985, Emir Kusturica devoted a great deal of time and effort to devising an ambitious new project. He got the initial idea from a, sadly true, news item, relayed by the press, concerning organised trafficking of children within the Roma community. A mafia-like gang smuggled children or disabled people across the border into Italy, where they forced them to beg and sometimes to prostitute themselves. As already mentioned, from his childhood in Sarajevo the film-maker is fairly familiar with Roma life, having befriended some members of the community in a manner devoid of prejudice. Moved by the children's story, but rejecting the comfortable solution of adopting a moralising stance, he decided to find out more so as to build a scenario close to the truth. While learning the language, he sought to gather information and eye-witness accounts concerning both the living conditions of the Roma in what was still Yugoslavia and the most sordid aspects of the trafficking. It was then that he heard the tragic story of Perhan for the first time. It was on the basis of this field work that he developed his film project, while looking for international financial backing. With the support of Columbia, Kusturica gathered together a big budget, which would leave him truly free to make the film in his own way. He was thus able to take nine months to shoot the film, to choose to make it in the Roma language (gaining acceptance for his idea of sub-titling the versions for release abroad) and to select actors from the Roma community, who lived rather than played their roles. Only one member of the cast was a professional actor, Bora Todorović, who plays Ahmed the "godfather". Davor Dujmović, a fantastic actor who plays Perhan, was discovered on the street by Kusturica (the young actor who seemed destined for an astonishing career unfortunately killed himself in 1999). The rest of the cast are all Gypsies (the grandmother is played by a powerful, matronly Gypsy woman, Ljubica Adžović). Kusturica managed to integrate them in his directing, to which they convey an authenticity that gives the film its strength.

Above all, the director gave free rein to his imagination, transforming a sordid story into a lyrical poem, a curious mixture, which, as we know, was to become the director's trademark. Kusturica indeed chose to tell the story as a dream-like fiction, while preserving the realistic, documented aspects of the Gypsy community's life. The film therefore depicts a world that is both real and imaginary, stuck in the mud of day-to-day life and carried away by dreams ... a jumble of comic, sordid and magical moments, tracing the destiny of Perhan, the Gypsy boy who thought he could escape his condition. As in his previous film ("When Father was Away on Business"), Kusturica wished to take an insider's view of his subject-matter, and the Gypsy community is portrayed through Perhan's often ingenuous, sometimes cynical gaze.

Lastly, it should be pointed out that the film is rooted in Roma culture in a fantastic way through the extraordinary work done by the musician Goran Bregović: the author of the musical score drew much inspiration from traditional themes so as to give the film a real "Gypsy sound". "Ederlezi", the women's poignant song on St George's night, has become known world-wide. Emir Kusturica, himself a musician, is aware that music is inseparable from the Gypsy existence.

The music is naturally the cornerstone of the entire film. A vital raw material - like the elements - air, water, fire and earth - which are ever-present in the story - music is the fifth element of 'Time of the Gypsies', inseparable from the Gypsy community. The composer Goran Bregović left his mark on the film, just as Ennio Morricone did with the works of Sergio Leone.

Some proposals for analysis: representations of the film

Giving pupils an understanding of the film's aesthetic and narrative choices, as described above, should dictate the teacher's main objectives:

- helping them to appreciate this beautiful, complex film as an overall artistic work and thereby attempting to approach the visionary universe of Emir Kusturica,
- but also daring to identify the most authentic documentary aspects and holding a group discussion on the representations made accessible to the general public.

a. Discovering the world of the Gypsies - but not any old world

- Pupils' attention should be drawn to the desire to achieve a realistic plot. An initial area of work could therefore be the language spoken in the film, which will doubtless surprise many members of the class. Is it possible to identify words close to those used in other European languages? Documentary research can be carried out concerning the linguistic problems encountered by the various Roma communities in Europe.

- Contrary to what too many commentators assert, this is not a timeless fable but a story well situated in place and time. This film is now twenty years old and is a reminder of a state that was wiped off the maps, whose diversity, well apparent in the film, could be pointed out to the pupils. Perhan journeys throughout the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: he sets off from Skopje, crosses Macedonia, to arrive in Kosovo, where Ahmed buys Irfan (Irfan's father wears a Muslim's white skull-cap). They then move on to Serbia, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina (the taxi driver comes from Brčko, in northern Bosnia). They then reach Croatia via the famous Highway of Brotherhood and Unity. Lastly, they arrive at Ljubljana hospital in Slovenia.

- Various nationalities are referred to as the story unfolds (the Slovenian soldier lost in Macedonia, the Albanians in Kosovo, the blond nurses in Ljubljana); different religions co-exist, and the Roma often resort to an inventive syncretism, merging Muslim first names and identity markers (Ahmed, the decoration of certain houses, the prayers and invocations), the magical Orthodox feasts (St George's day), the presence of churches (it is in front of a church that Perhan tries to hang himself) and little remote chapels in the rain and a huge variety of popular superstitions and magical practices.

- How were the Roma treated within this "socialist" state? Were they the victims of political and economic discrimination? Although the film never expressly addresses the problems of economic and social integration, they are clearly present: poverty and unemployment, access to education and to health care. The film's images should be considered as a starting point for research and discussions rather than a documentary record.

- Attention can be drawn to the few, fleeting references to Tito's memory (he is only represented figuratively in naive paintings on the stands of a fairground) and to the cutting remarks about politicians in general: "It is the politicians who should be hanged" says the family's kindly neighbour when he comes to rescue Perhan.

- Which city in Italy did Ahmed's gang choose? What urban landscapes are shown in the film? Which political and economic factors fed the "Italian dream"? In what, sometimes tragic, ways can this dream be seen to be recurring today in other Roma communities in the Balkans?

- How can relations between the Roma and the Italians be described? From what standpoint is the police raid on the campsite filmed? Does it appear over-exaggerated or excessively brutal?

- The film gives a good idea of the unfortunate realities of the trafficking and the exploitation of the most vulnerable members of the community. Kusturica's film should be used to reconstitute the hard lives of these children and people with disabilities forced to beg for a living, to commit petty crimes and, in the case of the young women, to prostitute themselves in dire conditions.

b. Questions about certain representations

- Kusturica shows the importance of family relations within the Roma communities. This very broad theme will enable pupils to undertake research into many subjects:

- The concept of the extended family, with several generations cohabiting and also various branches;

- The presence or absence of father and mother figures. Perhan does not know his father, and his own son nearly fails to know him. Little Irfan is sold by his father. Ahmed's son, perhaps the only person who really loves him, is left fatherless. There are substitute father figures, but they are either deplorable (the uncle) or swindlers (Ahmed). To reiterate the title of a famous Italian film, "Padre-padrone", the father is all too often a boss.

- Is the mother fated to be a mere dream? The children are haunted by their mother's image, which floats in the sky, and Azra gives birth in her wedding dress, again floating in the air ... It is as if the beauty and purity of ideal motherhood could not exist on earth.

- Perhaps the only survivors are old women, capable of healing others, of understanding, transmitting a heritage and loving?

- Particular care should be paid to studying the relationships between men and women:

- Are women portrayed solely as men's playthings or do they have a genuine autonomy?

- How can Azra's unfaithfulness be explained? How is she made to appear less guilty and more an innocent victim?

- There are many teenage mothers in the film: is this a form of cultural fatalism? What does this seem to say about girls' access to education? If the teacher so wishes, this could be a very interesting opportunity to discuss means of sexual education and access to contraceptive methods for socially disadvantaged population groups.

- Ahmed, the crime lord, is willing to abandon his wife, who had given him a son. How does he plan to be able to marry another woman? What can be said about the conduct of the young new wife in the final sequence, her attitude towards her husband and her reaction to his murder?

- As a general rule, how do the members of the community interact? It would be interesting to open up the debate so the pupils can give their own impressions. Will they highlight the importance of top-down hierarchies, the burdensome ties resulting from cronyism and the exercise of authority through the power of money and physical violence, the total lack of pity shown by many members of the community and the virtually omnipresent dishonesty? Or will they be more sensitive to the diversity of a largely collective existence, in which an individual is nothing without a support and friendship network and people are often touchingly faithful (as is the case with Irfan, who will be Perhan's last source of help)? Despite everything, there are indeed forms of mutual aid and solidarity within this community and sometimes surprising displays of affection, even if they may seem to us to have little to do with generally accepted standards.

- Kusturica's film has sometimes been criticised for not denouncing the people traffickers and exploiters of human misery with sufficient virulence. This is because Kusturica's characters are neither perfect heroes nor criminal rogues - they are human beings ("human, too human") attempting to survive in a harsh world. They indeed have no scruples and are sometimes quite nasty and even cruel. They live in a pitiless world, a world where fathers sell their children, where the crippled are sought after so they can be made to go begging, where easily bedazzled girls are turned into prostitutes. In this respect can it not be said that "Time of the Gypsies" echoes the universal theme of the dominated minority ethnic group, in which strong vital impulses clash with many forms of alienation?

- The same reading can be made of the film's strange eulogising of alcohol. This is a film in which people drink huge amounts, but not in the same ways or with the same effects: the grandmother's little pick-me-up does not have the same implications as the drunkenness of the young bridegroom in the first scene. A list can be made of the various situations in which alcohol is consumed, in daily life and on grand occasions (weddings, wakes, feasts). The binges may be individual or collective, happy or despairing. They may help to drown sorrows or provoke nostalgia and remorse. To cite a famous poem by Charles Baudelaire, the entire film is an invitation to "Be drunk".

- Another kind of "drunkenness", a disarray of the senses, is primarily caused by music. Here too much can be learned by listing the musical sequences: Perhan's accordion, the brass instruments that accompany his departure and his alcohol-fuelled despair, the singing of the women on the feast day, all these pieces of music, whether calm or frenzied, light-hearted or deafening, punctuate the lives of the Roma and give some refinement to their depressing daily existence. Music is life itself, in its strongest, finest aspects.

c. Representations that perhaps teach us more about the director than about the Roma communities?

- This brings us to a key stage in the analysis. The aim here is to make the pupils understand that they have before them the lyrical, baroque vision of a talented film-maker, not reality as a sociologist would describe it in scientific terms.

- It is therefore entirely necessary to set aside some time to study Emir Kusturica's film-making style, analysing one or two scenes in detail. Sequences based on a documented reality can quite easily be contrasted with those founded in pure fantasy, or with other, more subtle, ones where reality imperceptibly gives way to poetry. Why not the wedding scenes scattered throughout the film? The opening credits are set to a wedding parade, the film ends

with Ahmed's wedding, and the dramatic scene of Azra and Perhan's wedding comes in-between. The pupils should be encouraged to study how the virtuoso camera work and the key role played by Goran Bregović's music combine to create the lyrical effects or the movingly pathetic moments.

- Some scenes have become oft-cited classics:

- The St George's night scene carries the audience away into Perhan's dream, in the middle of the river, to the sound of the women's voices singing "Ederlezi", a hymn to the lovers (Perhan and Azra) who promise to be true and to cherish each other forever in this almost pagan ceremony.

- The image of the highway at night, while Perhan and his sister see the bride's veil of their mother flying. It is a poetic and tender moment.

- The wild wedding at the end of the film, when there is a mixture of different elements: horror and grotesqueness, cakes, alcohol and blood. In fact, the fascistic images seem to be completely natural.

- A number of themes linked to dreams, fantasy or tragedy recur in Emir Kusturica's work. A both entertaining and beneficial exercise could be to identify variations on and repetitions of the same themes in other films, such as "Black Cat, White Cat", which is commented on below. We will list only the most obvious of these themes here: brides with their white veils floating in the air; wheelchair bound, paralysed old gang bosses; cardboard boxes moving around; grandmothers who can do magic; and gamblers who lose their last shirts playing cards.

- This mixture of baroque images and constantly repeated motifs have led people to compare Kusturica's aesthetic approach with Fellini's delirious film-work or Chagall's naive images, in which clearly identifiable patterns repeat themselves. The film is simultaneously sad and funny and the forceful images remain imprinted on the audience's memory.

- The film also includes many references to other cinematographic works. We know that Emir Kusturica developed an incredible knowledge of classical cinematographic culture and likes to pay tribute to the grand masters, or to copy their style in humorous pastiches. Young pupils may often lack a knowledge of these references. They should be helped to discover certain of them, from the easiest (Charlie Chaplin whom Perhan's uncle imitates during his better moments, the Westerns the mafia boss watches on his badly-tuned television, etc.) to the most complex (the tribute to Orson Welles, Saint George's night where the serene river scene evokes Tarkovsky's "Andrei Roublev").

- Lastly, a more general area of study is the major philosophical themes that underpin the film and which doubtless say much about the artist's thematic obsessions: "Time of the Gypsies" is built around the contrast between the muddy ground and the air, the desire to fly away and the inevitable fall. Is this an image of the will to tear oneself away from the fate one is getting bogged down in, from the final burden of destiny, which some might call social conditioning? There is no shortage of examples of this form of "dream of Icarus", from the simple spoon that Perhan with his gift for telekinesis lifts up from the table and makes dance along the wall to the young man's dream in which he hovers in the air above the celebration of the feast of Saint George, via the house lifted up into the air by uncle Mezran's crane. The most poetic flights are naturally those of the brides, whose long white veils float in the wind: the image of the mother on the highway, Azra's levitation with her round pregnant stomach; the most dramatic is the one in which Perhan himself loses his life, a leap into empty space from the railway bridge, with the unconscious hope that he will grow wings ...

- Can "Time of the Gypsies" be regarded as a kind of tale of the initiation rites of becoming adult? How can one grow up without abandoning one's childhood dreams? How can one enter the adult world without selling one's soul to the devil? Does Perhan succeed in preserving the values taught him by his grandmother: resisting the temptation of easy money, which is also dirty money? Does this cursed money, which sent Uncle Mezran mad with his endless gambling debts, get the better of Perhan's life and hopes?

3.3. "BLACK CAT, WHITE CAT" (France / Germany / Serbia, 1998)

3.3.1. Analysis of the film

Plot

On the Serbian bank of the Danube, two Gypsies, Matko Destanov (Bajram Severdzan) and his son Zare (Forijan Ajdini), eke out a living through small-time smuggling with the crews of the huge barges that pass along the river. Between card games, which he plays alone, Matko waits for the boats to make their deliveries. However, his dealings with

Russian sailors are not always very fruitful, leading him to acquire a load of deer horns, for which there is an alleged "German market", and an excessively heavy washing machine, which ends up in the river.

Tired of these second-rate schemes, Matko dreams of a big job: he hopes to hijack some railway wagons filled with fuel, but he needs some money to "oil the palms" of all the customs and railway officials working at the border. He therefore turns to Grga Pitic (Sabri Sulejman), the local mafia boss and an old friend of his father, for some financial help. This eccentric "padrino", with an amazing set of teeth, is paralysed in the legs: he uses an old garden tractor as a wheelchair and spends most of his time watching a video-cassette of the American film "Casablanca", of which he knows the dialogue of the final scene by heart. This larger-than-life character is cared for by his grandsons, the skinny giant, Veliki, always on the lookout for an ideal wife, and his kind but fat younger brother. Grga Pitic unenthusiastically agrees to help that wretch Matko, who, to win him round, has no compunctions about lying that his father, to whom the gangster had an old debt of honour, has passed away.

Matko and Zare gaze rapturously at a German cruise boat, which sails past all lit up. Just then another local gangster, the cunning Dadan Karambolo (Srđan Todorović), comes belting in. Far from sharing the old godfather's outmoded elegance, Dadan is a gangster of the new generation. Completely "over-the-top" and ready for anything, he apes a successful "Scarface" of the Balkans: surrounded by grotesquely ridiculous sidekicks, he fills his big white limousine with a harem of cooing girls and snorts cocaine against a deafening background of techno music. The ever-naive Matko attempts to involve this self-styled "patriotic big businessman" in his deal, whereas the gangster is in fact more concerned about a serious family problem: his younger sister is so tiny that people have given her the pretty nickname "Ladybird" but she is such a midget she cannot find a husband.

In a small bar near the Danube kept by a strong, old woman, Sujka, Ida (Branka Katic), the barkeeper's pretty granddaughter is dancing in front of the television. When Zare comes into the bar he hovers around her. The two youngsters joyously flirt with each other. The next day, filled with euphoria, Zare dashes off to fetch his grandfather (Zabit Memedov), who was fading away in a hospital room. Restored to health, the old man confides in him that he has carefully concealed the money he got from selling his cement factory.

In the meantime Grga Pitic is watching "Casablanca" again for the hundredth time and continuing to worry about the lack of a wife for his grandson, who is waiting for the love of his life and turns down all the potential wives offered to him.

During the night Matko gets ready to carry out his heist of a tanker wagon, but Dadan double-crosses him, drugging him and taking the wagon for himself, killing the corrupt railway official in the process. When he wakes up, considerably the worse for wear, Matko is pressurised by Dadan, who is not content with having stolen his booty, but also claims to be owed money for his participation in the botched job. Matko cannot afford to pay. At Sujka's bar, later in the evening, cunning Dadan then forces him to accept a strange deal: if Zare, Matko's son, marries Ladybird, Dadan will forgive the debt. However, despite the noise in the bar, clever Ida overhears the conversation between the two men and understands what is happening.

Under the summer sun, while a band plays on the little beach, pretty blond Ida teases Zare, pulling him into the warm waters of the river. She tells him what she overheard. Zare, who no longer conceals his liking for Ida, is naturally not at all willing to join in his father's latest scheme.

Matko tells his problems to his father, who of course advises him to call on the help of his old friend Grga Pitic. Adding new lies to old, Matko tells him that Grga is dead. The old "godfather" is nonetheless alive and kicking, although he has had to go to hospital, where he enjoys watching "Casablanca".

In Dadan's big house, the preparations for the marriage are in full swing, despite noisy protests from "Ladybird", who is dunked in the well to shut her up. Ida's grandmother comes to find Dadan, to whom she is willing to marry off her granddaughter for money. What she does not know is that Ida and Zare are hidden nearby and hear everything.

Ida et Zare frolic in the sunflower fields, where they discover love.

Despite everything, the wedding with "Ladybird" is to go ahead, and the preparations for the wedding feast begin: Zare is dismayed and again seeks his grandfather's help. The only solution the old man can come up with is to sacrifice himself to prevent the wedding. He falls senseless to the floor, apparently stone dead. On being informed, Dadan goes crazy -

there can be no question of postponing the wedding. So Zare and Matko have to struggle up to the attic with the grandfather's body and try to keep it cool with blocks of ice.

Zare and "Ladybird" do not know each other, are not in love and yet they are getting married. Their fathers have forced them into it. Tied together and held still by Dadan's two bodyguards, who give the responses to the priest, himself drunk on altar wine, the bride and groom are really not happy. They agree to flee. Hidden inside a gift-wrapped box, the minuscule bride escapes through a hatch, then hides herself in a steel drum on a boat, before seeking refuge in the hollow trunk of an old tree.

All the wedding guests set off to find her. She is saved at the last minute by the old godfather, who arrives in a strange red lorry driven by his giant grandson. They have stopped in a little wood, and the giant is astonished to see this tree trunk running along. The giant and the midget fall instantly in love. However, Dadan and his sidekicks arrive on the scene. The old mafia boss and his two grandsons pull out an impressive range of weapons. Will the two gangs fight each other?

As one might have guessed, love triumphs in the end. The wedding ceremony can be resumed, but with two new couples. Scarcely disrupted by the apparent death of Grga Pitic, whom Dadan and Matko quickly hide in the attic alongside Zare's grandfather, the party goes ahead and the band plays like mad. Drowning in music and alcohol, everyone dances into the night to celebrate the wedding of the giant and the "Ladybird". As dawn arrives, the last events unfold: the two old friends come back to life, Dadan falls into the outhouse toilets, which Zare had rigged to fall apart; he struggles around in the manure while everyone laughs at him.

Zare and Ida escape along the Danube on the beautiful boat, taking with them the savings that grandfather had hidden for them in an accordion.

Witness to human folly, two cats, one black, one white, like the name of the whiskey, watch from afar.

A pig continues to devour a rusty old Trabant abandoned on an earth track.

Choices and viewpoint

As can be seen from this lengthy plot description, in which we have attempted to adhere as closely as possible to the film, Emir Kusturica took pure pleasure in telling a funny story, without concerning himself with logic and reason. It is a story free of constraints, told headlong with the principal aim of entertaining the audience.

Some may even be surprised that we have included this extremely enjoyable work in our selection of films on the image of Roma, since it seems to drift away from its main subject to depict a number of disconnected burlesque events, involving what are sometimes cartoon-like characters.

However, we consider that it gives a good idea of the strong feelings Emir Kusturica claims to have - and we have no reason to disbelieve him - for the Roma people, in particular the Gypsies of former Yugoslavia with whom he is well familiar. When the film was released he told the press "I was not born a Gypsy, I became one."

As already mentioned in his biography/filmography above, Emir Kusturica was deeply affected in the early 1990s by both the emerging political divides in his home country and the critics' unfavourable reaction to the ambitious film in which he attempted to give his views on this sad situation. The debate surrounding "Underground" almost led him to end his career.

"Black Cat, White Cat" is virtually a resurrection (and we have seen that such miracles are present in the film), deliberately optimistic and euphoric in tone.

Having been commissioned by a German television channel to shoot a documentary on Roma music, Kusturica gradually conceived of an entirely fictitious work, apparently drawing some inspiration from a story, told within the community, of a patriarch who died just before a wedding and was kept on ice so as to avoid postponing the ceremony. The filmmaker doubtless also drew on a short story by Isaac Babel, "The King" (1928), which depicted a crime lord with a strong awareness of his family responsibilities.

Kusturica's sources are moreover of little import. Based on a very loosely outlined plot, the sequences allow considerable room for improvisation, depending on the locations, the chosen background for the film. Above all, this brings into play the Roma gift for repartee. "With Gypsies there's no difficulty as they can talk about anything in that harmonious way, typical of their language" ("Positif", October 1998). Indeed, as in "Time of the Gypsies", Kusturica trusted a troop of Gypsy actors, most of whom were amateurs, living in the vicinity

of Skopje, often choosing them for their extraordinary physical appearance, their "cartoon" like aspects, as he himself pointed out.

Kusturica was thus seeking to return to his roots and restore his appetite for life and for film-making through contact with Gypsy communities, communities who are merry-makers. He also reminds us that it is possible to safeguard a culture, a way of life, without wielding political power or seeking to dominate others.

As is usual in Kusturica's work, music is omnipresent in this film: brass instruments, accordions, strings and voices combine in an explosive mix of Gypsy music, rock and techno. These rather wild tunes, composed by Dr Nelle Karadlic, Vojislav Aralica and Dejan Sparavalo, are one of the film's driving forces, earning it the amusing sobriquet of "Gypsy opera for geese and a fanfare". These tunes have travelled the world, winning over a huge audience of all ages.

Some proposals for analysis: representations of the film

a. A mad menagerie

Kusturica always uses animals in his films, like Perhan's turkey in "Time of the Gypsies". In the case of "Black Cat, White Cat", the title already contains a reference to animals and it is interesting to study the role animals play both in the story and beyond in the real life of the Roma community.

An initial amusing exercise is to list all the birds, cats, dogs, horses, rodents and so on that appear in Kusturica's two "Gypsy" films. It should then be noted that these animals are always free to wander around the spaces they share with human beings. Is this a metaphor? In any case, geese parade through a group of bathers, goats walk under tables, cats romp through attics, and the soundtrack also often blends in animal noises.

The big pig gnawing away at the abandoned Trabant is also free to roam. This is a good opportunity for pupils to amuse themselves by imagining all the possible interpretations of this scene: animals/nature's revenge on an industrial/mechanised world? The relegation of a certain kind of society to the "dustbins of history"? A car that's only good as pig-food?

The proximity of people and animals naturally leads to comparisons: the crazy gangster Dadan screams out the song "like a pit-bull", wishing to be identified with fighting dogs, and his cheeky harem responds: "terrier". The human characters love to call others by tender or light-hearted animal epithets, the women in particular are often animalised - "little dove", "old baboon" and "cow".

However, the pupils should mainly be asked what role the director gives the animals:

- Are they mere witnesses - whether perspicacious (the cats) or indifferent (the geese)?

- Are they part of the action? (The goat closes the trap of the toilets on Dadan).

- Or are they metaphors (the pig, the cats)?

- Is there a kind of humorous mixture, as if it was a fable or a cartoon?

- Is there a pantheist idea of the universe, where people are completely integrated in the animal world?

b. Cinematographic games: allusions, references, pastiches ...

As in his other films, Emir Kusturica multiplies the nods, references or allusions to the great film-makers he admires. In "Black Cat, White Cat" the fragmented plot facilitates the incorporation of all kinds of quotes and tributes.

With a school audience, whose knowledge of cinema is still rudimentary, it is enough to identify a few easy references:

- To give the pupils a better understanding of burlesque comedy, reference can be made to the incredible scene in which Matko tries in vain to detach the railway official's body from the level crossing barrier: a mechanical ballet (the barrier goes up and down purely as physical forces dictate) is used to create comic effects, which become even funnier when they are repeated again and again with just slight variations. The burlesque register is again utilised when characters fall into the river or into the toilets, in the chases through the forest, and the various disasters that occur, some to hilarious effect.

- The characters are virtually all characterised not by what the dialogues reveal of their thoughts and feelings, but by their picturesque appearance (some have the most

incredible mugs) and their ridiculous behaviour. Attention can be drawn to the crazy gangster Dadan, with his hysterical outbursts: he brings to mind, with a great gift for pastiche, all the thugs Hollywood has accustomed us to, a mix of Al Pacino's flamboyant gangster in "Scarface" by Brian de Palma and Scorsese's seedy mafiosi.

- The characters are often paired, and ever since Laurel and Hardy it has been a known fact that nothing is funnier than a mismatched couple. Another amusing exercise is identifying these crazy couples throughout the plot.

- Lastly, it is necessary to show how Kusturica's work also feeds on references to his own films and themes, how his films are linked, despite their huge visible differences. Just one example may suffice to heighten pupils' awareness of this aspect: where does "Black Cat, White Cat" begin? - on the banks of the Danube - and where did Kusturica shoot the final scenes of his previous film "Underground"?

c. The world of the Gypsies - colourful and eccentric?

- An unquestionable fellow feeling... As already mentioned, Gypsies are the core theme of two of Kusturica's films and virtually all his other films include scenes with Gypsy musicians. Emir Kusturica's family is not of Gypsy origin, but he lived alongside them from his early childhood and regards them as the very symbol of freedom.

A comparison of the characters and situations found in "Black Cat, White Cat" with those already analysed in "Time of the Gypsies" is particularly enlightening. There are strong similarities. To mention but a few: thwarted young lovers, part-paralysed mafia-like "godfathers", strong-willed grandmothers, dwarfs, weddings and deaths... trafficking of all kinds, fanfares and alcohol-fuelled feasting all night. There are also recurring comic or poetic images, from escapes inside cardboard boxes to troops of geese and brides wearing white veils.

However, the tone of this film is considerably different. The tragic atmosphere and pessimism of the 1987 work have been replaced with a joyous, burlesque fantasy.

One example, easy for pupils to grasp, is that in both films a "baddy" finds himself in a very difficult position in the final scenes in a little wooden hut concealing an outdoor toilet. But, whereas in "Time of the Gypsies", Perhan stabs to death one of the godfather's brothers, whom he has found defenceless in this ridiculous position, and who falls prostrate covered in blood, dragging the hut-like lavatory along with him, in "Black Cat, White Cat" the gangster Dadan plunges into the booby-trapped toilet before being hosed clean.

The lighter tone of "Black Cat, White Cat" is in a way a refusal to engage in a social and political analysis of the life of the Gypsy community, as "Time of the Gypsies" attempted to do, albeit in a manner devoid of realism. Can this be regarded as the director distancing himself to some extent from his earlier, more committed works, for which he was criticised and which caused much debate?

At the same time, for the purposes of our study, this film is consequently of lesser interest. It is true that the Gypsy community can increasingly be perceived as a refuge for Emir Kusturica's rich imagination, a form of adoptive country, at times resembling a utopia, to some extent a parallel world whose traditions and codes of behaviour he likes to revisit as the whim takes him. Kusturica's Gypsy characters are doubtless more of Kusturica's world than the Gypsy world, although the director is careful to recruit real men and women, who speak their own language and whom he allows to improvise. Engaging, picturesque rogues, these characters are filled with the vital force, the love of freedom, the originality and the irrational tendencies which the director finds so attractive. Characters from nowhere, with no real ties, they also reflect the director's acknowledged sources of inspiration in their "revisited" music.

In "Black Cat, White Cat" the old "godfather" wears a strange pendant around his neck: close-ups make it possible to perceive that it combines the symbols of the three great monotheist religions: the star of David, the cross and the crescent. On being questioned about this strange medallion, Kusturica explained that he liked this syncretism, adding that it was "the Gypsies' response to wars of religion."

What if Emir Kusturica was projecting on to a largely imaginary Roma community his own ideal of freedom and tolerance, which his homeland, former Yugoslavia, was unable to preserve in the violent throes of recent history?

But a vision which may imprison the Roma in new stereotypes and help confirm the negative images conveyed by the media.

- ... but the main problem this kind of film can pose is linked to the context in which it is received: one can indeed allow oneself to be carried along by the madcap directing, the adventurous story and the captivating music. However, afterwards one may be left with a feeling of unease, and some less-indulgent viewers may see some of their prejudices confirmed.

What in fact have we seen? Characters with no sense of history, for whom all that counts is the present, and the present is a tumultuous existence, which may indeed be fascinating but can be perceived as terribly superficial and ruled entirely by emotion, a thoughtless existence with no future prospects and no collective causes.

Merry-making is linked to an immoderate love for alcohol, guns and fisticuffs. All these passions, not solely attributed to Roma communities (one need but think of Hollywood's portrayal of the Irish), look very good on screen, but the flattering representation given of them may also, as we know, sustain a brutally macho culture - a real man knows how to drink and fight.

Characters who live according to their own, apparently unchanging, customs, outside the law of the nations in which they are theoretically integrated: questions must be asked about the facile way in which Kusturica solely depicts Roma who survive by means of expedients, little schemes or fiddles or serious crime. Although it is the subject of a very burlesque sequence, the death of the railway employee is still a murder, with the perpetrator going unpunished.

Above all, one key episode in the film should give rise to a real debate. This is the comical depiction of the arranged marriage. In a ceremony full of buffoonery, the future spouses are chained together and the gangster's bodyguards pronounce the marriage vows in their place. Naturally all is well that ends well, and love will triumph. However, everyone knows that reality can be far less rosy and that forced marriage remains a sensitive issue in certain communities, whose traditions are still very much alive and may clash with European concepts of human rights. To cite but one example, taken from recent news items, the legal age of marriage in Romania is 18, but the authorities generally tolerate marriages of under-age Gypsies arranged by their families. All the same, there are initial signs of a revolt among some young women. In preparation for the country's accession, the European Union asked the Romanian government to pay greater heed to forced marriages. Individual freedom is not always compatible with the traditions of the clan and peer pressures.

4. A view from the inside? - the successes and contradictions of the films of Tony Gatlif

4.1. Tony Gatlif, music at heart

It is not possible to discuss the image of Roma in cinema, without reserving a very special place for the films of Tony Gatlif, a French director and scriptwriter, but also an actor and a composer. For several years now he has been managing a production house, named "Les Princes" after his first film about his own community, which he had rediscovered.

-The street urchin

This director stands out firstly on account of his origins and his personal experience: Michel Dahmani (his real name) was born in a suburb of Algiers in 1948. His family are Andalusian Gypsies. He lived on the streets with the other boys in his neighbourhood, playing truant from school, but a teacher who set up a school film club managed to imbue him with a love for the cinema.

To avoid an arranged marriage, he fled his family at the very early age of 12 -13 and became a shoe-shine boy. Aged about 14, he left Algeria and managed to make his way to France, where he roamed between Marseille and Paris, leading a hard life of petty crime on the streets.

- The start of an acting career - a lucky star

He spent time in juvenile correction homes, but by pure luck, he was able to enrol in acting lessons. As an admirer of the actor Michel Simon, he managed to gain access to him: Michel Simon, amused and attracted by the young man's daring, recommended him to his agent. He was thus able to attend an acting school. Although virtually unable to read, he found himself on the stage of the TNP.

- The desire to speak out

In parallel with his acting career, Tony Gatlif wrote his first screenplay, "La rage au poing", (Raging Fists) based on his experience of life in the reformatories.

However, Toni Gatlif was keen to get behind the camera himself: after a first short film, he made his first feature film, "La Tête en ruine", in 1975. From then on he worked all the time, sometimes abandoning fiction for documentaries. In 1978 this led him to make "La terre au ventre", a film about the Algerian war as perceived by a "pied-noir" woman and her daughters.

- Claiming a Roma identity?

From 1981 he began to work on a theme which he would explore ever further with each new film - the condition of the Roma community, of whom he became in many respects a spokesman, drawn to this people with no fixed abode and an incomparable musical heritage. In fact, the identity quest is tied to the artistic quest and also the political denunciation, based in a deep empathy.

He made "Corre Gitano" in Spain with a cast of Gypsies from Granada and Seville. He himself considered the film a failure, but it was important as it was the first film in which he returned to and laid claim to his Gypsy roots. It is a film which says "I am a Gypsy. Despite everything, the persecutions, the contempt, I am a Gypsy. I exist, we exist."

His first real success came with "Les Princes" about a sedentary group of Gypsies settled in suburban Paris. This brutal film, which pulls no punches, drew attention to the problems of this community sentenced to poverty and rejection. The film, which established his reputation as a scriptwriter, also brought Tony Gatlif into contact with someone who was to play a considerable role in his life, Gérard Lebovici, a major film producer and a morally committed intellectual.

- Interludes

During the second half of the 1980s, thanks to Lebovici's unfailing support, he made some films which temporarily took him away from Roma themes. In "Rue du départ", the story of a teenage girl who runs away in search of a father figure, "Don't Cry My Love", about a young projectionist in love with an actress, and "Gaspard et Robinson", the wanderings of a lorry driver and an abandoned old woman, Toni Gatlif showed himself to be an accomplished, sensitive film-maker, still in touch with social problems but capable of transiting from the subtle portrayal of emotions to the blackest comedy.

- The Roma people's messenger

It was in 1992 that Tony Gatlif returned to Roma themes with a project he had long been nurturing. "Latcho Drom" is a halfway house between fiction and documentary. It is a quest for roots, which attempts, through various kinds of music, to retrace the mythical wanderings of the Roma people from their origins in India's Rajasthan. With a small team, Toney Gatlif spent more than a year roaming around Egypt, Romania, Hungary, France, Andalusia in Spain and Northern Africa. It is an extraordinary journey, set to haunting pieces of music. Toney Gatlif was to say "For me this film is a hymn, in the primary sense. A film which reforges a link, through music, for the entire Gypsy people". The public response to this film, which did much to help people rediscover a little-known musical scene, was enthusiastic.

In 1994 another encounter, with a novel and its author, Jean-Marie Le Clézio, was to be the starting point for his next film: Tony Gatlif adapted the French writer's tender, poetic novel "Mondo" to the screen. It is the story of an orphaned child who lives by expedients on the streets of Nice. He could be a little Rom, but Tony Gatlif, true to the spirit of Le Clézio's work, preferred to give him an anonymous "Mediterranean" background: the child comes from elsewhere, symbolising the stranger in the city.

In 1997 Gatlif devoted a third film to Gypsy themes: "Gadjo Dilo" (The Crazy Stranger), an ambitious film, which was a huge public success and won many awards at the festivals in which it competed. We will study it in detail below.

Although "Je suis né d'une cigogne" - aka "Children of the Stork" -, a poetic film about undocumented immigrants, disconcerted the public and the critics, Gatlif had a new success with "Vengo". This was his second attempt to approach "flamenco" culture after the unsuccessful "Corre Gitano". This time round he scored a success: with the co-operation of a great dancer, Antonio Canales, Gatlif succeeded in ridding the film of the folklore that all too often surrounds flamenco, showing only the basic outlines. Music and dance played a considerable part in this story. "Vengo" is set in Andalusia, the deep South, where codes of honour are so strong that they can lead people to kill. "I hate showing killing in my films but, with 'Vengo', I had no choice. This tragic end was the only possible outcome. Revenge is part and parcel of the traditions of the South. Its roots go deep into the local culture, just like jealousy. I was born in this culture and I am always trying to translate it to the screen."

"Swing", made in 2001, tells of a childhood love affair between a young "gadjo" and a pretty Gypsy girl (a "manouche" from eastern France). The plot may seem naive, but it is an opportunity to pay tribute in a fantastic way to "Gypsy jazz", the greatest exponent of which was Django Reinhardt, and to present some now classic musical themes, full of wild energy.

- A film-maker commanding recognition and a fierce defender of the Gypsy cause

In 2004, the success of "Exils" (Exiles) in competition at Cannes confirmed Gatlif's recognition by the entire cinema industry, crowning the enthusiasm many film-goers, particularly young people, show for his work. As Youssef Chahine applauded him, Tony Gatlif received the Prize for Best Director from the hands of Quentin Tarantino, who had chaired the jury.

"Exils" is a poetic tale of two young people's search for their roots and is clearly linked to Gatlif's own personal experience. "This film was not born of an idea, but of my desire to focus on my own scars. [...] My mother is a Gypsy, my father an Arab, I was born in Algeria, which I left as an adolescent. I had always refused to make a film on the subject because I was afraid of opening wounds which had not yet healed. I took my time but now I think I've got there. I am making peace with where I come from."

In "Transylvania", Tony Gatlif continues to deal with themes of wandering, filming his heroine's journey into the heart of Romania to discover herself through the people she encounters there. He enthusiastically explored the mixed culture and music of the Roma,

Hungarians, Romanians and Germans. Mid-way between a documentary and a fiction film and set to popular music, this is a surprising road movie about Zingarina (Asia Argento) and her friend Marie on the roads of Transylvania, where they are in search of Zingarina's lover, a Romanian musician by whom she is pregnant. Although her love is rejected, Zingarina becomes fascinated by this strange country, where she meets Tchangalo (Biol Unel), a German of Turkish origin, without borders or ties, with whom she may find freedom ...

Today, while working on other projects, Tony Gatlif is more heavily committed to defending the Roma people in Europe. He serves as their spokesman in the media, appearing on television to denounce the exclusion and repression these communities suffer, and his rhetoric is becoming increasingly radical as time goes by. It must be said that his strong, sometimes excessive personality does not always meet with unanimous approval within these communities. Moreover, Gatlif himself refuses to be locked up in a single identity and prefers to describe himself as of Mediterranean origin. "I am a man of the Mediterranean. It is there that I really feel at ease."

4.2. "GADJO DILO" (THE CRAZY STRANGER) (France, 1997)

4.2.1. Analysis of the film

Plot

On a snowy country road, in a winter landscape, somewhere in the plain area of Walachia, Romania. A young Frenchman, Stéphane, travelling by foot with little luggage, seems to be wandering aimlessly, sometimes causing astonished reactions of amusement among the young girls with coloured shawls sitting crowded together on the carts that overtake him.

On a deserted village square as night falls he tries in vain to get someone to open the door of a bar, the only place still lit up. He is intercepted by an old man, who is waving a bottle around and vociferating. This man, Izidor, is loudly bewailing the fate of his son, Adriani, who has just been arrested by the police. He ends up dragging Stéphane along with him in his drinking session before taking him back home with him, blind drunk, to the Gypsy village where he is one of the leaders of the community.

When morning comes the incongruous presence of this "gadjo dilo", or "crazy stranger", is received with curiosity by the children, mistrust by the men and superstitious protests by the women, although some, finding him attractive, also make ironic allusions. The men are ready to chase off this stranger. However, Izidor wants to keep this "Frenchman" whom heaven has sent him. Struggling to express himself, Stéphane - who has only a few words of the Romani language - manages to explain that he is looking for a mysterious Gypsy singer, Nora Luca, of whom he has a recording on a cassette that belonged to his recently dead father.

Izidor happens to be a virtuoso violinist. With other musicians from his village, he is frequently asked to play at parties or weddings. A gangster-like jovial, fat Rom, who has become rich, comes to collect the band in his powerful Mercedes so they can play at his daughter's wedding. Stéphane is happy to accompany the musicians to these feasts, where he enjoys the exuberant customs, the catchy music and the joyous dancing and hopes to learn more about the singer he is looking for.

Back in the village, the young man is attracted to Sabina, a shy woman with a quick laugh and a cruel sense of repartee. She lives alone, a little apart: she was married at a very early age and followed her husband to Belgium. But she left him because she did not love him and came back to Romania. She therefore speaks some "Belgian", as the villagers say, and is sometimes willing to serve as interpreter for Stéphane.

Having received a little money from his mother, Stéphane buys an old banger, which he uses to travel the region between breakdowns. Sabina sometimes accompanies him. These eventful trips draw them closer together. They meet some picturesque characters and others who are more worrying, involved in some fairly shady dealings. They also meet many musicians and listen to a lot of music, but they still cannot find Nora Luca. Izidor takes Stéphane to see one of his friends, whom he thinks may be able to help him. However, the old friend has just died, and Izidor goes to play and dance on his tomb.

Adriani, Izidor's son, then returns to the village having been released from prison. He is welcomed with open arms. He has not forgiven the Romanians living in the neighbouring village for denouncing him to the police. With two friends, he goes to the village's central café, where he insults and provokes the Romanians present. One of them insults him in turn.

Adriani suddenly throws his glass in his face, and the man collapses. In the ensuing tumult, the young man flees the scene.

While Stéphane and Sabina are flirting together in the forest, without a care in the world, the Romanians from the neighbouring village, enraged at the death of one of their own, set off to avenge themselves on the Gypsy village, where they create havoc before setting fire to the houses. The women and the children only just have time to escape into the woods. On their return, Stéphane and Sabina discover the smoking ruins. Adriani is dead, burnt alive in the shack where he had hidden. Sabina is beside herself, and Stéphane has trouble calming her. They then go to announce the terrible news to Izidor, who was playing with the band that day at a Romanian family feast.

Bitter and discouraged, Stéphane decides to end his search. He destroys and buries the music cassettes he had recorded and, with Sabina, leaves the Gypsies who had adopted him.

Choices and viewpoint

An honest, almost documentary approach, devoid of over-simplification: this would seem to best describe the cinematographic work of Tony Gatlif in this fine film "Gadjo Dilo". As already mentioned, Tony Gatlif is himself half Gypsy and, since "Les Princes", has endlessly addressed both his own origins and the concept of cultural mixing, which he believes is one of the key characteristics of Roma culture, especially their inventive music.

This young Frenchman's quest to find a Gypsy singer with a fantastic voice could be seen as naive, derisory or quite simply absurd. It is symbolic in two ways. Through his character's journey, Tony Gatlif continues to seek his own roots. However, he also asks himself about encounters with and recognition of the "other". He thus poses a fundamental question: how can one both assume one's identity and seek to go beyond it, opening up to others.

Initially perceived as a "parasite", a crazy man, perhaps even a thief, the young man will manage to rid himself of his aura of a "Western tourist" and to penetrate the barrier of prejudice against Roma culture that has such solid foundations. Although his approach is a personal one, although the Roma themselves tend to reject others, and although the anger of the Romanian villagers gives rise to a genuine "pogrom" against the Gypsy village, the general atmosphere is one of cautious optimism.

This is a touching film on account of its unbiased humanism. It takes a clear stance against the xenophobia and prejudice that cause the Gypsies' isolation, arguing the case for this people with its freedom of expression and non-conformism. It brilliantly portrays the warmth of their relations and the solidarity of their community, as well as their openness to a universality rooted in music and dance.

The real hero of this winter journey is music. It is through music that Stéphane forges close ties with these people whom the sedentary communities look down upon. It is the beautiful music that enables Tony Gatlif to penetrate, with passion and love, the private existence of this Roma village. The music is never simply "decorative": from joyous bouts of drinking to despair, from laughter to tears, it covers all the registers of human emotions, from outright buffoonery to violent grief.

This story of a young Parisian who finds love and a purpose to life among the Gypsies of Romania led a French newspaper to note Tony Gatlif's special touch, creating an atmosphere that is "incredibly joyful and peacefully anti-establishment" ("Libération", 08/04/1998).

Some proposals for analysis: representations of the film

- a. *Questioning of otherness... often linked to the overturning of clichés and stereotypes.*

This is one of the film's key themes that is present throughout. As part of a pedagogic approach, a useful starting point for a discussion could be careful analysis of a number of scenes:

1. *The opening sequences: between poetic wandering and harsh reality?*

- What viewpoint is the audience invited to share from the very opening sequence? Why does the film-maker avoid giving any clues, any geographical or temporal bearings, for many minutes? Which mental images and cultural references can this wanderer lost in an unfamiliar world bring to mind? What does the choice of an ice-cold winter day add to this atmosphere?

- What are the audience's "first contacts" via Stéphane's own encounters? The carts, the police car? In this connection, questions can be asked about the specific information that certain close-ups give the audience: there are several pointers to the story that is about to unfold.

- What is the atmosphere like in the Romanian village where the young man arrives? Are there signs of a human presence? What is the effect of the barking dog, which is moreover never shown? The complex, rich soundtrack should be carefully studied.

- The meeting with Izidor: what, apparently impenetrable, barrier exists between the two men? In passing, questions can be asked about the effects of the subtitling of the Romani language, available as an option on the DVD editions. Are these first contacts friendly from the outset? What elements gradually bring down the barriers and enable these two men to communicate?

2. Within the Roma community: from rejection to acceptance

- Which precise shots show the reactions of the different members of the village - the children, the women, the men - to the young Frenchman's strange presence in their midst?

- What principal signs of mistrust, hostility and scorn does Stéphane encounter? In what sense are certain exclamations particularly ironic? How do they reverse the prejudices and negative clichés about the Roma to be found in most of Europe? These lasting prejudices that mean that the Romanian Gypsies are still outcasts in their own country. "Look at this stranger. He's crazy. He must have stolen our chickens. Stop thief!"

- How can one account for the sobriquet "gadjo dilo" that many of them spontaneously give him?

- How does Stéphane go about gradually defusing the distrust he arouses? Is Izidor's backing a key factor here?

- Is Stéphane's integration into the community a slow or a fast process? (Here, care is needed to identify the temporal indicators throughout the film - pupils' attention should be drawn to them.) Is he accepted once and for all, or can his integration be questioned? What can be said about the children's games with him? Are they exempt of all forms of mockery?

- Conversely, which blunders does the young man make that may offend his hosts' sensitivities? In what way is the scene in which Stéphane tidies Izidor's house from top to bottom, angering the latter, a particularly enticing one?

3. Knowledge of the other

- The limits of a certain "desire to know":

- Is Stéphane's search for the famous Gypsy singer, Nora Luca, whom he will never find, inspired only by devotion to his dead father?

- Is it, as some have claimed, an initiatory quest?

- Which situations may show the audience that the young man has more tangible objectives? What equipment is he carrying in his very light luggage? Which particular technical skills does he seem to have a perfect command of? (Not forgetting the nice scene in which he rigs up a makeshift gramophone.)

- Based on his age, Stéphane could still be a student or a young researcher. Which disciplinary field is he doubtless working in? What is he seeking to collect? What may he be noting in his book?

- A good approach could be to explain what ethno-musicology entails today and to launch a debate on Western desire for "scientific" knowledge of other cultures. Are those who make compilations of "traditional" music always disinterested? Is it possible that such music can be exploited (hijacked) artistically and economically?

- What symbolism can be read into the destruction of the recorded tapes and the notebook of observations?

- The power of love:

- How can Izidor's affection for the young Frenchman be analysed? What part of it is showing off: "He's my Frenchie", or superstition: "It's my fate"? In the circumstances can he be perceived as a substitute son at a time when Izidor's own sons are imprisoned or injured?

- What lessons in life does the old man teach his protégé? How does the film show that they are well learned?

- Sabina and Stéphane: how does the opening sequence point to their future relationship, although the audience cannot yet understand the reference? What are Sabina's initial reactions to Stéphane's presence in the village? How can they be explained? (for example, her rejection of the young man when he wants to help her carry wood)

- At what point does Sabina begin to change her attitude towards Stéphane? How is the audience informed? What symbolises this change?

- How does Sabina's love oblige Stéphane to accept Roma values and representations in a deeper, more intimate way?

- This is an opportunity to lay the foundations for a very interesting debate, always fascinating for adolescents, on intercultural unions, with their promises, joys and risks ...

- The magic of music:

- What is the particular advantage of choosing "ethno musical" research as a starting point for the storyline?

- In what way do the musical scenes emphasise the events?

- Why is the scene with the makeshift gramophone so moving?

- What social role does music apparently play in this community?

- What comparisons can be drawn with other films by Tony Gatlif which include musical scenes filmed in Romania - "Latcho Drom" and "Transylvania"?

b. A documentary objective free of complacency and over-simplification

We shall not go into this other possible area of scholastic work here, as we have already discussed the teaching approach in many of the previous information sheets. It need simply be said that the teacher should ensure that the pupils, depending on their prior experience, have well understood the information being conveyed by the film as the scenes unfold. This entails constant analysis of the geographical, historic and sociological components, which should be linked to the scientific documents and teaching materials available.

1. The choice of giving the film a foundation in reality: bearings in space and time

- The action unfolds in Romania, but where is the village's precise location? How can the landscape be described? What types of vegetation can be observed? Working with maps is a good idea.

- How can the region's overall level of development be assessed? What human activities are depicted - agricultural, industrial, craft-related?

- The villages and their inhabitants: how are they depicted?

- When was the film made? At the time Romania still bore the marks of Ceausescu's dictatorship and the accompanying economic and ecological disasters.

2. Daily life in a Gypsy community

- Material aspects: housing, clothing, food. Pupils should attempt to distinguish elements linked to age-old traditions from more modern influences (for example, replacing one's horse-drawn cart with a car is clearly a sign of accession to the ruling class).

- This community functions according to its own rules: an attempt should be made to identify the main signs of this. Questions should be asked about the strength of the traditions still alive today: how do they ensure the group's solidity and unity (and perhaps even its survival)? Conversely, are they partly responsible for the deadlocks in this society?

- What negative aspects can be noted? For instance, what can be said about women's condition? The character of Sabina is a good example of the danger of taking things for granted: she seems to be proud freedom incarnate and to be completely independent (economically and sexually) but it is clear that she was forced into marriage. Could she live alone, without depending on the community? Is Roma society ruled by machismo?

- Do the children enjoy an enviable freedom or are they negligently left to their own devices? Are there signs that they attend school?

- Is the importance of a social hierarchy within the community perceptible? How are the rich and powerful represented? What "marks" of their status as people of note or "godfathers" can be identified? Do they seem to have amassed their wealth by honest means? How are they perceived by the, frequently poor, majority of other Roma? Is their influence important? Do they have a paternalist attitude? Do they exercise forms of violence?

3. *Anti-Roma racism: testifying without passing judgment*

- How do the Roma relate to those around them? How do the public authorities appear to behave? It can be recalled that, at the very start of the film, we see Adriani being arrested by the police.

- In what ways is the community affected by external constraints? The Gypsy minority has been constantly despised and repressed, and this has led to ingrained prejudices and resentment.

- Particular care should therefore be taken when analysing the dramatic sequence of the Romanian villagers' reaction to the murder committed by Izidor's son. This is a very clear allusion to a number of tragic events caused by intolerance in contemporary Romania, such as the "pogrom" in the village of Hadareni, part of the municipality of Chetani, in the region of Targu: "On 20 September 1993 a Rom stabbed a Romanian during a personal dispute; a mob then lynched two Roma and burned another alive in his house. They went on to set fire to and destroy several other houses. The Roma fled the village. [...] They returned only with the cold weather, looking for a shelter among the ruins of what were formerly prosperous homes." (Claire Auzias, "Les Poètes de grand chemin, Voyage avec les Roms des Balkans", Editions Michalon, 1998, pp. 230-32).

4.3. "VENGO"¹ (France / Spain, 2000)

Tony Gatlif directed and wrote this film, but he also arranged the extraordinary music score, with the help of famous musicians and singers of Andalusia: María Altea Maya and Tomatito, La Caíta, Gritos de Guerra, Silva Pisa, La Paquera de Jerez. Mention should also be made of the Moroccan group, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Tûni.

All the characters are played by Spanish Gypsies: Antonio Canales (Caco), Orestes Villasán Rodríguez (Diego), Antonio Pérez Dechent (Primo Alejandro), Bobote Primo (Antonio), Juan Luis Corrientes (Primo Tres), Fernando Guerrero Rebollo and Francisco Chavero Ríos (the Caravaca brothers), and María Faraco (La Catalana).

4.3.1. Analysis of the film

Plot: chronicle of a tragedy foretold...

The entire film is set in Andalusia, between Seville and Jerez. In the "South of the South" to reiterate Tony Gatlif's own expression. The plot is interspersed with musical sequences, which accompany the events, constituting a form of symbolic counterpoint to them.

The film, which has little in common with the staple products of Hollywood, opens with an unexpected, virtually documentary musical sequence, which is at the same time loaded with symbols: the audience are "carried away" on two frail barques which cross a river to the magical accompaniment of an Arabian flute and "oud". A musical evening is taking place in a magnificent setting; the twin origins of Andalusia's musical heritage are present, with flamenco guitarists and a Moroccan band, accompanying the singing of an old man.

To the sound of bells ringing, we see a modest tomb, to which the camera will often return: a mere plaque in a wall full of small alters, protected by a glass screen and lit with candles. The plaque shows the photograph of a teenage girl and the simple words "For you, Pepa, every evening I will light a candle, I will open a bottle."

The man standing before his daughter's tomb is still young. This is Caco, an Andalusian Gypsy who resembles the Tony Gatlif of a few years before. A black Mercedes

¹ Word-for-word "I'm coming" in Spanish.

draws up in front of the little white chapel. A man, Alejandro, quickly gets out of the car. He discovers Caco lost in prayer before a statue of the Virgin.

An isolated group of houses along an empty road. The Mercedes comes to a halt. Caco, followed by Alejandro and two other male relatives, get out and are disconcerted to discover that the wall has been daubed with the words "Sandro, we will avenge you." To the astonishment of three old women dressed in black sitting at the entrance to the alleyway between the houses, Caco rushes along the path. With relief, he sees Diego, his brother Mario's son. The young man is disabled, but full of life. Caco hugs him and suggests that they go to have a good time in Seville, listening to La Caïta, a famous flamenco singer.

In Seville, Caco organises a memorable evening for his nephew. Through a cousin he meets on a bridge he arranges for la Caïta and her musicians to play for them. That evening, in an alleyway, he asks La Catalana, a pretty young prostitute, to give Diego some love. Caco introduces the two young people to each other in a café, then slips away leaving them together in a tender tête-à-tête.

In the nightclub "El Rey", which he owns, a cheerful, slightly tipsy Cato is exchanging jokes with the hostesses, including an imposing matron whose distinctive voice and spirited behaviour set her apart. He goes to fetch Diego, questioning him about how his evening went.

The superb flamenco performance is under way. La Caïta's singing bewitches everyone, not least a group of young soldiers out for a good time, who gradually gather around the Gypsies' big table, also enchanted by the music. Diego sings and dances. He is happy. Caco and the others watch over him tenderly. Caco drinks a lot.

At dawn, Caco is again in front of his daughter's tomb, talking quietly to her. Alejandro and his friends keep a discreet watch, while listening to a Muslim singing in the wind, whom they claim has "duende".

The three old women paint over the message of revenge with whitewash. Diego plays one of Pepa's favourite Arab songs to Caco. Caco arranges a new party for Diego on a piece of land in front of the house. To the music of three fantastic guitarists, three women dancers set the party afire and it lasts until morning. Caco has drunk to excess but cannot dispel his suffering. The three old women help him to bed.

In his troubled sleep, with daylight playing on his face, Caco dreams of a deep voice singing "Soufi" while an ecstatic female dancer's white veils whirl to the music.

The three old women again try to erase the threat that has been painted afresh on the wall.

In a bar set up under a tent Caco goes to meet the men of the Caravaca family. His brother Mario killed Sandro, a member of this clan, which is seeking blood revenge, a feud that is becoming all the more intense since the Caravacas are about to christen the dead man's daughter.

Mario has fled to Morocco. Caco knows where he is and is protecting him, but he is worried for his nephew Diego, who could suffer the Caravacas' revenge.

In the middle of the road, the only place where he can get his cell phone to work, Alejandro receives a phone call from Mario in Morocco. He lets Mario hear the music he is playing on the Mercedes' audio system. So Diego can talk in peace with his father, the men stop the few cars travelling along the road. Then they all start dancing in the middle of the road, carrying Diego along with them in the rhythm of their feet striking the ground.

Caco, together with a beautiful young woman, Alejandro and his parents, is going to spend the evening on a boat, where a Muslim band and dancers are performing. However, the men of the Caravaca clan are already seated, and the tension is palpable. When Caco's girlfriend gets up to dance, one of the Caravaca men joins her and, after dancing a few steps, slips a banknote into her dress. This is a blatant insult. Caco challenges the Caravacas, but the owner of the boat holds him back. To show he fears "neither the Caravacas nor God", Caco stabs himself in the arm. The others manage to drag him away. They abandon the soiled young woman alone on the road.

In a room at the "El Rey" nightclub Alejandro is helping Caco to bed. However, the Caravaca brothers send their sidekicks to demand that the family surrender Mario or they will kill his son, Diego. Alejandro is beside himself with rage and threatens the bodyguards: "Blood will flow."

In front of the house the men are playing football like kids with some pomegranates fresh off the tree. Caco tells Alejandro he has just sold the nightclub and wants to organise an even wilder party. Alejandro warns him of the Caravaca clan's intentions. Caco goes to pray for help in front of the statute of the Virgin in the church.

At the Caravaca christening people are singing and dancing. An old woman, whose voice is still powerful, charms them with her songs. Caco arrives with his band. He attempts to reason with the Caravaca brothers, but things become heated. It is impossible to make peace with these men imprisoned in their archaic codes of honour.

The Mercedes is on the way home, when Caco asks to be let off near the chapel, under the worried eyes of his entire family. He returns alone to see the Caravacas, a sacrificial victim. As soon as he appears in the distance Sandro's wife cries out hysterically to stir up the men. One of the Caravaca brothers goes to meet him and stabs him in the side.

Caco staggers along the path. He collapses near a workshop, from which a deafening mix of mechanical noise and engines escapes, providing an accompaniment to his death pangs.

In the night the headlights of a car sweep across a deserted road, while a voice sings "I have no country, I have no homeland".

Choices and viewpoint

Families, fiestas, fever and fate... The story can be summed up in a few words: in the magnificent Andalusian countryside, a blood feud occurs between two Gypsy families. A murder must be avenged. To cancel this blood debt and save his family's honour, Caco, magnificent in his despair, goes to meet his death. He has good reasons to do so: the loss of Pepa, his daughter, is burning him up, but he also wants to save the life of his feeble-minded nephew, Diego, who has a passion for life, love and dancing.

This is doubtless not the essence of the film, as it is all a question of the beauty of the images and music, the beauty of a dancing girl's body, the charm of a voice. The frequently madcap rhythm becomes sad at times, and poignant at others. Tony Gatlif said what he intended was to make not a film about flamenco, but a "flamenco-film". To succeed in this venture he can call not only on his distant origins (Andalusia is the cradle of his Gypsy family) and his strong sense of Gypsy identity, but also on his remarkable cinematographic skills and talent for bringing music alive on screen. In "Vengo" Andalusian popular music is never there for decoration. It is the only star of the long opening scene and carries the entire plot along. It also constitutes the chorus of this antique tragedy, with its inevitable, relentless outcome.

Some proposals for analysis: representations of the film

a. An antique tragedy

- A proud but broken man: How is Caco's suffering following the death of his daughter expressed in the film? How does the director suggest that he cannot resign himself to this event?

- The world of the Gypsies, as portrayed by Gatlif, is a cruel one, that of revenge. Why is the audience never given any explanation for the initial murder? Have the two clans been enemies for long? What elements of Caco's words and body language show that he is beginning to feel weary of this age-old violence?

- Does his self-sacrifice have a meaning? What are its implications? Is there reason to believe that it will finally end the cycle of revenge and blood law's rule? Will Caco's sacrifice save Diego's life? What kind of victory would he then achieve?

- What can be said about Diego's disturbing role? Why must his life be saved at all cost, even Caco's final gift? Why, and in what ways, does he represent complete purity in a troubled world? How does he portray a form of "evangelical innocence"? How, with his need for love, does he appear more relentless than his friends and even Caco? What are his relations with music, singing and dancing?

- What are the chief values of this community? Are they "Gypsy" values or are they more widespread in the Mediterranean region? Though might be given to Tony Gatlif's statement "I hate showing killing in my films but, with 'Vengo', I had no choice. This tragic end was the only possible outcome. Revenge is part and parcel of the traditions of the South. Its roots go deep into the local culture, just like jealousy. I was born in this culture and I am always trying to translate it to the screen."

- In what ways can this film be linked to certain Greek tragedies?

- The Gypsies in "Vengo" seem to leave a sedentary life and to be well integrated in society, although they derive their livelihood from the "world of fiesta and the night" - to use a euphemism. How does Tony Gatlif succeed in showing that wandering and journeys remain

important for all that? The endless trips by car, in this big Mercedes with the doors always open, as if about to set off for all possible destinations ... The wind that is listened to religiously, because it "sings like the Gypsies". The road that brings the Gypsies together - the road on which they dance and play football. It is both a comic touch and a symbol that Diego's cell phone will work only in the middle of the road, whereas inside the house "there's no network". It is Caco's death set to the din of the old engines the mechanics are trying to repair. And what image do we see in the background as the closing credits roll? What different interpretations can be given to it? Wandering is a way of life, as Pepa's favourite song says, with its refrain "I have no homeland, I belong in no landscape."

b. Is it solely a male world?

- Absent female figures haunt the film. Why is the cause of Pepa's death not stated? Why is her mother never mentioned? It is as if all the women Caco loved have disappeared. Their death is a "flame that will never die".

- Does the women's death represent the death of the Gypsy people? We can remember the violence in the christening.

- The role conferred on the singer La Caíta is perhaps a response to this concern: this "pura Gitana", as the dialogue repeatedly points out, creates through her artistic talent not just an atmosphere of happiness and of living life for the moment, but also a sense of warm fraternity. How can the growing number of young Spanish soldiers who gather around her be interpreted, an arrival which might initially be perceived as a threat by certain members of her audience and certain Gypsies (as suggested by the glance Alejandro gives the others)?

- Are there many other live female characters? The female figures should be identified with care; their presence is often fleeting but always noteworthy: "La Catalana, the prostitute" who is so beautiful and tender, the bar hostess at "El Rey", with her superb big mouth, and the dancing girls, whether Muslim or Gypsy, with their relaxed, supple movements.

- Women can also be mere objects in the men's game of provocation. The scene on the boat should be carefully analysed. What kind of atmosphere is engendered by the Muslim dancing girls? Why does Caco's girlfriend allow herself to be pulled on to the dance-floor? How is she utilised by one of the Caravaca brothers to throw down a gauntlet to Caco? Why does he abandon her in the middle of the night?

- Women are also capable of pushing men into violence. How does Sandro's widow react when she sees Caco?

- Lastly, consideration should be given to the role of the three old "aunts" dressed in black as only the old women of the South know how to do, seemingly in mourning for their entire life. They will doubtless be perceived as a mute presence, confined to domestic tasks, gathering up the bottles and the drunken men when the fiesta is over. They could be seen as Parcae, anxiety-inspiring fates impassibly weaving the threads of people's lives. However, they also have the reassuring role of living in harmony with the seasons and the daily routine, from harvesting olives to preparing food. Why do they strive day after day to clean the threatening message off the wall? They tirelessly cover over with white the blood-coloured words crying out for revenge.

c. The soul of "flamenco"

As already mentioned, it is the music that interests Tony Gatlif, even more than the colours and the substance of his film. It is flamenco which gives this work its soul. For Tony Gatlif this music, which he already brought alive on screen in "Latcho Drom", represents the Gypsy people's unity and identity. "'Vengo' is first and foremost that: a cry, a song, a hymn to life, to love, to mourning, to the blood pact. A hymn to the Mediterranean." He underlines this again when he describes "the guilty South, with the burden of the past, of remorse and suffering. Flamenco is never pretty, it is a music filled with pain. Death is not pretty or romantic either. People die there like animals, as is usually the case."

As a result the music often takes over from the acting, to the point where we might ask ourselves about the truly "cinematographic" nature of the work. In other words, a musical analysis may be essential to grasp the film's meaning and implications. Here, it will be necessary to obtain the assistance of the music teachers, a fruitful interdisciplinary co-operation.

Far from the hackneyed formula of mass folklore for the tourists, the extraordinary soundtrack is red hot flamenco. A few pointers for a discussion can be given:

- Attention can be drawn to Tony Gatlif's audacious decision to recruit the famous Andalusian dancer, Antonio Canales, to convey the spirit of the South, although he himself never dances: "I told Antonio: Don't play it, you are flamenco."

- Dancing is rarely a staged event but is part and parcel of life for Diego, Caco and their tribe and the hated Caravaca clan; it brings them alive. In many scenes, the warmth of the music even seems to offer a means of pacifying the men's feud, almost of forgetting who they are, for instance in the scene on the boat, when the two groups join together in accompanying the Muslim dancing girls, until the tensions resume following an unfortunate move by one of these dancers.

- In the christening scene the camera dwells on the passionate singer, long neglecting what is happening in the background, where things are coming to a head.

- Lastly, the song of the final sequence, repeating the words "I am from nowhere / I have no country / I have no homeland", is the harrowing, visceral complaint of the eternal wanderer.

- It can be noted that the scenes of music and dance are always extremely natural and never give an impression of performance or artifice. In this respect the opening scene, showing the musicians' fantastic gift for improvisation, can be interpreted as a metaphor, not only for the film itself but for life in general.

Last of all, the music is an extraordinary plea for intercultural dialogue. Tony Gatlif said that his film could have been called "Vengo del Moro" ("I come from the Arab world"). The opening scene moreover begins with a reminder of the oriental origins of Gypsy music. "I bore in mind that the music I love has its origin in Soufi music. It includes Arab music, Andalusian music and Gypsy music. This music contains the idea of a trance, something which rises and no longer touches the ground, but touches the souls of the audience and the musicians, something beyond control."

The Andalusian culture of the region of Seville is constantly engaged in a dialogue with Arab singing and dancing. The most extraordinary sequence is doubtless that of Caco's dream, in which a dark-haired young woman spins round and round to the Soufi music, with her hair forming a second corolla above that of her white dress, as her skirt fills out like that of a whirling dervish.

4.4. "SWING" (France, 2002)

4.4.1. Analysis of the film

Plot

A ten-year-old boy, Max, is on holiday in Strasbourg, staying with his grandmother in her fine house. He wants a guitar that he can learn to play. With this aim in mind, he sets off to find the sedentary "Manouches" of the "Polygone" district, a troubled neighbourhood where communities of immigrant and Gypsy origin co-exist.

Max arrives in a world of which he is a little afraid and which he finds inhospitable, since he is first insulted and rejected by the other kids he tries to talk to. He obstinately continues and ends up meeting Swing, a Gypsy girl with big dark eyes and an untidy mop of hair. She serves as go-between in his negotiations with Mandino Reinhardt, the junk dealer, who sells second-hand instruments.

Max and Swing strike a deal which is a real rip-off. In exchange for a brand new CD player, he is given an old guitar, which is missing a string, soon replaced by a bicycle brake cable. The little Gypsy girl claims that the guitar was formerly Django's.

In a restaurant for tourists in the old part of Strasbourg, Max listens entranced to a manouche guitarist, Miraldo (played by the great musician Tchavolo Schmitt), who is amazingly skilled. Somewhat naively, he goes up to him and asks to be taught the rudiments of his art. Miraldo, a little surprised, does not turn him away but gives him a kind welcome. They agree on an exchange of services. Miraldo will teach Max the basics of guitar-playing, and in exchange the boy will serve as scribe for him.

In the yard of a low-ceilinged house in the Polygone district the Gypsy caravans are now permanently parked. Although they have flats, they keep the caravans out in front, more often than not living in them, a reminder of the time when they were free to roam. It is in his caravan that Miraldo gives Max his first guitar lesson. As agreed between them, he then asks the boy to write a letter to the social services, who have not yet paid the benefits to which his family is entitled.

Swing accompanies Max on his way back home. They take an adventurous short-cut, with many comical traps they could fall into. Through play and laughter they strike up the beginnings of a beautiful friendship. From Swing, Max learns about freedom and nature, opening up to others and transforming what was a fairly boring holiday into a voyage of discovery. He also feels the first stirrings of love when he realises that Swing, with her "tomboy" attitudes and appearance, is indeed a girl.

For the space of a summer the walls between the two communities seem to have been breached, as have the gates of the bourgeois villa, since Max's grandmother even agrees to do business with the Gypsies, despite their bad reputation, in order to get rid of some old junk.

During a series of evenings, each more wild than the previous one, Max discovers that Miraldo has friends among the Muslims, the Jews and the local Alsatis. Music is a unifier, bringing together cultures and opening up hearts. The seductive Gypsy music and the Arab songs blend together in a deep, rich harmony, in the odours of beer and the warmth of the partying.

Max gradually learns to understand the Manouche culture. His curiosity leads him to take an interest in their unhappy past as a scorned, persecuted nation. At the heart of the film is the moving story which Swing's grandmother, an old woman with a wizened face, agrees to tell Max, although the other children seem to have no interest in the past. She talks about police harassment, arrest and deportation, the loss of her family, her escape with her brother, when both of them were so very young. She remembers the concentration camps where her family disappeared, swallowed up by the horrors of the "Samudaripen" (the Romani term for "genocide"). At the end of this painful tale, she begins to sing the soft words of an ancient lullaby in a pure voice. Max becomes the depositary of her terrible testimony, writing it down in his diary, which he keeps in a school exercise book, becoming the scribe of this nation without the gift of writing... and at the same time learning the meaning of nature, love for freedom and independence.

During one of their guitar lessons, Miraldo is taken ill. He collapses in the yard, eyes wide open to his guitar and to heaven. In a scene, which is perhaps more dream-like than real, his caravan and guitar are given up to the flames.

There follows a painful separation between Max and Swing. They throw the burnt remains of the much-desired guitar into the river. As a final paradox, Max, the "sedentary" one, sets off on a "lovely" journey he has no wish to undertake. His mother, a wealthy, modern, working woman, who leads a stressful life, takes him off to Greece for a holiday.

The battered gate of the settlement closes on Swing, the "traveller" child, perhaps condemned to be a prisoner of her condition.

Choices and viewpoint

In this new work Tony Gatlif continues to explore the world of the Roma, following "Latcho Drom" and above all "Gadjo Dilo". Here too, the film tells the story of the initiation of a "gadjo" within a community unknown to him. It is again a comparison between two worlds that interests this maker of films about tolerance and respect for others. The discovery concerns many aspects of life, but above all friendship and music.

The film has its weaknesses, due in part to the decision to tell the story from Max's necessarily naive viewpoint (it sometimes verges on melodrama with many clichés about childhood and first love), but music constitutes the guiding thread of this film and its main aesthetic interest. It is music which brings the main characters together and, above all, which unites this Roma community. Many sequences are devoted to musical numbers, whether solos or played by groups. It is a pleasure to recognise some well-known tunes, already heard in Kusturica's films; others were specially composed by a trio of musicians: Tchavolo Schmitt, who plays Miraldo, Mandino Reinhardt and Abdellatif Chaarani. Tony Gatlif also contributed to the extraordinary soundtrack.

The film reflects the child's private diary: simple, candid, open to all possible dreams and hopes. Apart from Max's discovery of the world of the Roma and his first love, the film's leading character is indeed Gypsy music and its key message of hope in fraternity, overcoming the barriers between communities.

Like the image of Miraldo flying over the Alsatian landscape after his death, the film is a hymn to liberty and the lightness of flight. This dream seems all the more attainable in that the leading roles are children and the action takes place during the school holidays, when they are free of their usual constraints. However, Tony Gatlif is careful to return to reality at

the end of the film. All the characters will again have to confront their real condition. Although the Roma appear to be free, their sedentary lifestyle, their material difficulties and the discrimination they suffer limit their possibilities and constitute as many obstacles to their liberty.

Some proposals for analysis: representations of the film

a. The presence of nature: freedom on the city's fringes

- The setting is Strasbourg, in the region of Alsace, in eastern France, but the filmmaker deliberately chose to avoid portraying the city as seen by visiting tourists. Which districts and areas does his camera reveal to us? Only one scene refers to the advantages of a tourist city's centre for the "Manouche" musicians. It allows them to earn a living from their talent.

- The grandmother's beautiful house, an early-20th century villa, is briefly mentioned: it's in the "rich" part of town, as Swing maliciously points out. Tony Gatlif shows us Max leaving and returning there, climbing over the high locked gate of the family home. In what ways can this be perceived as a metaphor for both the divisions between communities or social classes and the, albeit difficult, efforts to overcome them? Here it is merely a matter of crossing spaces and overcoming barriers to free oneself of constraints and approach others.

- The scenery is often a very ordinary urban landscape, such as the service station on the city's outskirts run by the musician Khaled. However, at what time of day is this commonplace setting filmed? For what surprising scene does it provide a backdrop? In other words how does the director transform an ordinary place into an almost dream-like setting? How do music and dance add to the magic?

- Conversely, other landscapes come as a surprise. On the very edge of the city, where the last high-rise blocks neighbour the still wild area of the "ried", there is a place where the city dips its toes in side branches of the river, flowing through a tangled jungle, a place where the children set off on adventures filled with unexpected events.

- This story, which brings to mind the writings of Henri Bosco, is above all full of sensuality and bathed in the sounds of water, of lost tracks along shady river banks. The camera has wings and is ready to take flight, able to enter into harmony with nature.

- This almost parallel universe is also inhabited by animals, but they are not exactly the same animals as non-Gypsies believe they know - for example, hedgehogs have a very special role in the Roma imaginary bestiary.

b. A sedentary community struggling with great difficulties

- What impression does the district where the Roma live convey? Does it look as if their nomadic lifestyle is gone for good?

- Which occupations do they carry on? How do these occupations link them to society at large?

- In what way is attention drawn to both the importance of welfare benefits and the problems the Roma experience in obtaining them?

- The film takes place during the summer holidays. But do the children appear to attend school? Why is Swing unable to use the textbooks Max gives her when he leaves? How can the fact that she abandons them on the pavement be interpreted? What theories can be advanced to explain this situation?

- Tony Gatlif is a very lucid, honest artist; although he sets out to eulogise the Roma community, he unhesitatingly pinpoints certain problems or negative aspects of its behaviour. A list should be made of these, with particular emphasis on the situation of women within the community.

c. A specific kind of music: swing

- The pupils can be given a basic idea of this manouche music, a mix of jazz and blues, by playing some excerpts from recordings by Django Reinhardt, whose shadow haunts the film.

- The numerous musical scenes show that swing is open to Arab and Yiddish musical influences. Mandino Reinhardt, in a very present supporting role, himself

acknowledged that this was a novel approach. The pieces of music, most of which are original, are on the borderline between Gypsy, Yiddish and Manouche music.

- "The film's wealth is Django's influence, a wild reprise of "Yeux Noirs" in a caravan filled with a haze of smoke and alcohol fumes, a lively jam session that starts up again at dawn when everyone's eyes are tired, a thirteen-year-old boy who is a future Bireli Lagrene, an Arab song taught to a Strasbourg girls choir and listened to by an admiring Jew, the virtuoso playing and moustache of Tchavolo Schmitt." (Tony Gatlif).

- "Swing" is indeed full of music, which spills over in a genuine whirlwind; the story opens with Tchavolo's virtuosity, and many traditional tunes find a new youth - "Yeux noirs" and "Va prendre ton violon", a call to play together.

- It is indeed fraternity that is being portrayed here: the music is representative of a people, but also of its exchanges with others, as in "The Jew, the Arab and the Manouche" where the Gypsies play with all their Mediterranean cousins. This encounter is followed by the magnificent dialogue between a guitar and an oriental oud.

- The entire soundtrack is interspersed with improvisations, cries by the musicians, exclamations by the actors. This is a living music which sings of a culture that is reinforced when it is shared with little Max in his initiation to life.

d. Remembrance of the genocide, the desire for fraternity and peace

In this film - and this is perhaps its key interest - Tony Gatlif for the first time confronts head-on the question of the genocide of the Gypsies, the "Samudaripen".

"Samudaripen" means "genocide" in Romani. The word is based on the verb "mudare" ("to kill"), from which the abstract substantive "mudaripen" ("murder") is derived. The suffix "-ipen" is always used in Romani for an action. The prefix "sa-", an indefinite pronoun, means "all". In other words "Samudaripen" means "to kill everyone". (Claire Auzias: "Samudaripen, le génocide des Tsiganes", L'Esprit Frappeur, 2004).

The subject was long hushed up, if not taboo. It is true that it raises ethnic issues, which are difficult to resolve for a well-meaning artist. The, sometimes violent, discussions surrounding representation of the Holocaust spring to mind - it is possible to remember the brilliant work by Claude Lanzmann - : it must not be turned into a fiction, the cinema must not make a spectacle of it, it must work with the remaining traces without trying to depict what happened.

Tony Gatlif simply chose to give the screen over to Héléne Mershtein, a camp survivor who was willing to break the silence. Let us listen to what the director himself had to say about his work "There is a problem of failure to transmit the Manouche culture because of this business with the camps. It had to be in the film, but I could not "fictionalise" it. We sat Héléne Mershtein, who had been deported with her family, down in a nearly dark caravan, just with the camera placed on a table. We filmed her in close-up. We asked her to tell us about it if she wanted. She began to talk to us. It is a simple testimony, like Lanzmann did in "Shoah". I just took the shots facing her because there is no cinema here. You cannot play with that."

He added "This five-minute sequence is there for remembrance's sake, to make it clear that the Holocaust was the origin of all the problems. Very few of the Manouche community came back from the camps. Those who did escape were young, because the old were vulnerable. It was they who possessed the knowledge. The Manouche culture is an oral one. If the story is not told, it is forgotten. And there is no one left to tell it ... "

Based on these considerations about the importance of remembrance, it is easier to understand why music is also one of the key components of the film: these songs and pieces of music are threatened with extinction. It is therefore important for Miraldo to find someone to whom he can pass on the heritage. The part of European culture that the Nazis did not succeed in eliminating must not be destroyed by a pseudo-modernity amid general indifference. The fact that Max is an outsider also shows the desire to open up a community traditionally closed in on itself (to shield itself from external aggressions rather than by choice). In one superb scene the Roma and the Muslim musicians teach the choir of young French girls their songs in their native tongues.

Tony Gatlif thus made a film about his own role as an artist, since he devoted a number of films to this community, which helped to change its image and to win a broad audience for its music. In this respect he is a great heritage transmitter: "Swing" is a record and a portrayal of this memory threatened with extinction.

