

educational screening kit

Theme #exoticism

Foreword by FOCUS Roma cinema youth project team:

We had a great deal of discussion within the team about whether to include this movie in our pedagogical selection or not, being aware of the exotic portrayal of Roma that it offers and the numerous stereotypes present. Nonetheless the film has the distinction of being one of the first to introduce Roma culture to a mass audience and show an almost ethnographic reconstruction of life in a camp. The film was a huge success among the general public and it won many prestigious awards. The film has had a remarkable career, and it is still shown from time to time by a number of television channels. Ultimately, we consider it an inescapable and important film to discuss in the educational context to awareness of the role of cinema in the shaping of stereotypes (positive and negative) and Roma representation.

Gypsies are Found near Heaven

Tabor ukhodit v nebo (original title)

Director: Emil Loteanu

Production country & year: Russia, 1976

Length: 103 min

Production: Mosfilm

Studio Website: www.mosfilm.ru

Synopsis

Based on the writings of Soviet author Maxim Gorky, Emil Loteanu brings the rolling hills of Moldova to life with swirling colour, drama, horse tricks, and song, in his telling of the ill-fated love affair between two beautiful young Roma. Zobara (Grigore Grigoriu), a wild and handsome horse thief, falls helplessly under the spell of the irrepressible Rada (Svetlana Toma). Powerless to alter their destiny, the young lovers embark on a courtship, inching ever closer to death with each fervid meeting. A seminal work in its depiction of Romany people on screen, Loteanu's visually sumptuous masterpiece is breathtaking in its scale and sheer romance.

Biography

Emil Loteanu (November 6, 1936 - April 18, 2003) was a Soviet and Moldovan film director. He moved to Moscow in his early life. Loteanu was born in Clocuşna, Moldova and after the death of his father and losing contact with his mother, who had moved to Romania, he lived his early life on the streets, sleeping in warehouses and hostels. He studied at the Mkhat studio school and graduated from the All-Russian State University of Cinematography (VGIK) in Moscow in 1962. He made his directorial debut with *Bolshaya*

gora ("Big Mountain") in 1960 at the Moldova Film Studio, and continued to make films there until 1975, when he joined Mosfilm. With films such as *Tabor ukhodit v nebo* (also known as *Queen of the Gypsies*, 1975) and *Moy laskovyy i nezhnyy zver* (also known as *A Hunting Accident*, 1977), Loteanu began to attract international attention.

Awards for *Gypsies are Found near Heaven*

1976 San Sebastian International Film Festival Golden Seashell

Other awards

1978 Nominated for Palme d'Or for *The Shooting Party*

1972 Silver Seashell for *Lautarii*

1972 Special Jury Prize for *Lautarii*

What to read to get some useful background information?

★ The production context, public reaction, directorial choices and viewpoint, and analytical questions

Read "Roma on the screen: the Roma on Europe's cinema screens - images of freedom", a general study on a small number of themes, by Dominique Chansel for the Council of Europe

https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/Source/Roma_screen_EN.pdf

Sections we recommend in particular:

- Section 1.2.1.: "Queen of the Gypsies" aka "Gypsies are Found near Heaven" by Emil Loteanu (USSR, 1976) pages 16-20

★ Stereotypes, prejudice, and intercultural education

Check the Council of Europe education pack "All different, All equal" (2004) and in particular the section "We All Live with Images" in chapter 2, "Understanding Difference and Discrimination"

<http://www.eycb.coe.int/edupack/>

★ To learn about the way identities are shaped

We recommend reading Salto Youth publication "E.M.POWER: A practical booklet on how to empower young Ethnic Minority women" (2008)

<https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-1641/EMPowerBooklet.pdf>

Sections we recommend in particular:

- Identity: race, ethnicity, nationality, pages 11-13
- Identity: the epigenetic principle, pages 13-16

★ To go further, you can take a look at

"Roma Identity", a publication of papers presented and discussed at a seminar organized during the Roma World Festival Khamoro, May 28-29, 2010 in Prague, Czech Republic, edited by Hristo Kyuchukov, Constantine the Philosopher University, and Ian Hancock, University of Texas (2010).

http://www.slovo21.cz/nove/images/dokumenty_integrace/fin_cd_roma_identity_part%201.pdf

Questions for discussion after the screening

- How is the Roma community portrayed in this movie? How would you characterize the main protagonists (Zobar, Rada)?
- How does the director use stereotypes but at the same time seem to stand back from them (for example, through humour, through the second character) ?
- Have you seen or heard similar stereotypical descriptions of Roma people? Where/when?
- How do you think these stereotypes might affect the image of Roma people today in society?
- How can stereotypes affect the identity of Roma people (self-representation, internalization of stereotypes, etc.) ?
- What do you think about the role and responsibility of mass-audience cinema in shaping representation of Roma?
- What kind of relationship do the Roma groups have with other communities in the film?
- How are the reprisals against the Roma camp portrayed?

Workshop outline ideas

1. Stereotypes vs. reality

Objectives:

- Reflect on the effect of stereotypes

Ask the participants to take a piece of paper and write down one word that is associated with their national group or community. You may also choose to brainstorm associations together as a full group, and then have the participants write down all the associations on individual pieces of paper.

Put all the papers in the middle of the circle and have every participant pick one. Make two columns on the wall, one labeled "stereotypes" and the other "reality". Participants should put their words on the wall in one of the columns or somewhere in between.

For discussion, pick some of the words and ask the group if they all agree on where they were placed. Other questions:

Do you agree with where all the other words are placed?

Can something be a stereotype and a reality at the same time? How?

How do you think these stereotypes affect the image of your group?

You can reflect on the stereotypes of Roma people that appear in the movie, for example: dance, music, horse-trading, travelling. The facilitators should use the background information to inform themselves in advance in order to be prepared to talk about these stereotypes and diversify the group's image of Roma people. Possible discussion questions:

How do stereotyped representations of ethnic groups in cinema affect discrimination against those groups?

How do stereotypes about social groups affect the identity of the people who belong to the group?

If you were to meet someone that has a stereotyped image of your group, how would you react?

What can one do to overcome stereotypes?

Have the group build a list together of possible ways to address stereotypes.

Definition of stereotypes, from “Mirrors: Manual on combating antigypsyism through human rights education” a manual produced by Council of Europe and written by Ellie Keen (2015).

<https://rm.coe.int/1680494094> (page 55):

"Stereotypes are common beliefs about particular groups and they may be positive or negative (or neutral). Although stereotypes can be useful, we need to remember that they are generalisations, and will not always be true of every individual case!

Examples of stereotypes include the following: 'Men are stronger than women'; 'Footballers can run fast'; 'Swans are white'; 'Roma don't like to live in houses.'"

Source:

<https://rm.coe.int/1680494094>

2. Our own stereotypes

Objectives:

- Reflect on our own stereotypes

Ask participants to write down individually (their written responses will not be shared):

- Stereotypes that they believe about others
- Situations when they had to face someone else who believed stereotypes about them

Ask participants to form groups of 3 people and discuss their answers with each other, if they are comfortable doing so.

Questions for discussion in small groups or in the full group:

Why do we have stereotypes?

Can you imagine someone without any stereotypes?

What are stereotypes? (You can explain or read out the definition of stereotypes during discussion.)

What can be the effects of stereotypes?

3. Power of images

Objectives:

- Raise awareness about stereotypes
- Disseminate an existing photo project

Print or project the photos from this photo project: <http://gallery8.org/romabody>.

First, show only the stereotypical images and discuss with the group what they think about these images. Then show the other images of the pairs and discuss what they think about this photo project. How does it challenge stereotypes?

After discussion ask the participants to divide themselves into groups of 2-3 people. Each group should make a photo pair. The idea is that the 2 photos should contradict each other by showing different sides or the wider context of the same thing, same person, same situation. They can take the photos of each other, inside or outside the space where you hold the workshop. Look at the photo pairs together with the whole group and ask participants to guess the idea behind the others' photos.

4. Role of cinema and media in representation of Roma

Objectives:

- Reflect on the power of representation
- Raise awareness of the role and power of cinema and media
- Raise awareness of power structures in the making of films and media programs

Show the images below this section to the participants with a projector or print them in advance. The text next to the images was written for facilitators to give some background information. Split participants to groups of 4-5 people and ask them to choose 2-3 photos that they find the most interesting and discuss:

What may be the story behind the picture?

What can you learn about the people from the image?

Then ask them to summarize their discussion in the full group.

More questions for full group discussion:

How do you think these images shape people's imagination about Roma?

What kinds of images do you see about Roma in movies, media, news?

Do you think it would be different if there were more Roma among film directors, journalists, TV program directors, news editors? How?

IT IS IMPORTANT TO STATE THAT THE FACT THAT THESE MOVIE STILLS REPRESENT A BASE TO OUR WORK, THIS IS NOT JUDGEMENTARY REGARDING THE QUALITY OF THESE FILMS. A STEREOTYPICAL REPRESENTATION CAN LEAD TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE SOCIAL PATTERNS THROUGH WHICH THE RECEIVED IDEAS ARE CREATED. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS EXERCISE IS TO UNDERSTAND THE MECHANISM AND THE LANGUAGE OF IMAGES IN ORDER TO RECOGNIZE MANIPULATION AND INFLUENCE.



GUY RITCHIE, **SNATCH** (2000)

THE LEGEND OF THE OUTLAWED: A COMPOSITION CONNECTING PROSPERITY AND CRIMINALITY. THE CHARACTERS ARE MOSTLY DRESSED IN FORMAL CLOTHES BUT THE WAY THEY ARE WEARING THESE CLOTHES DOES NOT SEND THE MESSAGE OF DISTINCTIVENESS, BUT OF THE LACK OF CLASSINESS (UNBUTTONED SHIRT, TASTELESSLY MASSIVE JEWELRY, THE SMOKING, THE HAIRCUTS, THE PRESENCE OF THE CROSS IN THE BACKGROUND IS ALSO CONTRADICTIONARY).



TONY GATLIF, **TRANSYLVANIA** (2006)

THE ILLUSION OF NOMADIC LIFESTYLE: THE WOMAN'S TRADITIONAL CLOTHING (THE VIVID COLOURS AND THE PATTERNS) AND THE FACT THAT SHE IS WEARING THE SHAWL ON HER HEAD, AND THE MAN'S UNCLOTHED BUST IN CONTRAST WITH THE OPEN LUGGAGE-RACK IN THE BACKGROUND SENDS THE MESSAGE OF A WANDERINGLY OF LIVING, OF DISPLACED HABITS COMPARED WITH THE MODERN WORLD THEY LIVE IN.



JEAN DELANNOY, **THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME** (1956)

THE SEXUALIZING FANTASY OF ROMA WOMEN: ESMERALDA DANCES IN A RED DRESS, BARE SKIN, LONG HAIR VS ALL THE OTHER WOMEN IN THE BACKGROUND, WHO ARE “PROPERLY” DRESSED (THEIR HAIR CANNOT BE SEEN AND THEY WEAR LONG DRESSES). THIS EROTICAL REPRESENTATION IS EMPHASISED BY THE FACT THAT ESMERALDA IS PLAYED BY GINA LOLOBRIGIDA. THE MYTH OF THE ENTERTAINER ALSO COMES TO LIFE, AS EVERYBODY IS LOOKING AT ESMERALDA, SHE IS THE SHOW ITSELF. THE PRESENCE OF THE GOAT ALSO GIVES A MAGIC TONE TO THE SCENE, STATING THAT ESMERALDA HAS A MAGICAL/WITCH POWER.



PETR VÁCLAV, **THE WAY OUT** (2014)

THE IMAGE OF THE UNDERPRIVILEGED (1): POOR ENVIRONMENT (DIRTY WALLS, DECORATION SET TO A MINIMUM, FURNITURE SEEMS TO BE USED), POOR CLOTHING (MAJORITY OF THE PERSONS ARE DRESSED WITH JOG SUITS)- THIS IMAGE DOES NOT GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF A WARM HOME. THE INADEQUATE PRESENCE OF A GUITAR IN THE BACKGROUND REINFORCES THE STEREOTYPICAL REPRESENTATION.



SÁNDOR SÁRA, **GYPSIES** (1962)

THE NARRATIVE OF AN IRRELIGIOUS FUNERAL : ACCORDING TO THE CHRISTIAN CULTURE, THIS IMAGE OF BURIAL GIVES MORE THE IMPRESSION OF A PAGAN RITUAL. THIS RESULT IS ACHIEVED BECAUSE OF THE PRESENCE OF ELEMENTS SUCH AS THE LACK OF DISTANCE BETWEEN THE DEAD PERSON AND THE RELATIVES OR THE COMMUNAL PRESENCE OF THE MOURNERS. THE CLOTHES OF THE DECEASED ARE ALSO UNUSUAL (THE BOOTS FOR EXAMPLE) AND THE PRESENCE OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN EMPHASISES THE NON-INDIVIDUALISED IMAGE OF ROMA.



MEN LAREIDA, **VIKTORIA: A TALE OF GRACE AND GREED**
(2014)

THE IMAGE OF THE UNDERPRIVILEGED (2): THE FACT THAT THIS SCENE TAKES PLACE OUTSIDE SENDS THE MESSAGE OF A LACK OF HOUSING AND A LACK OF ECONOMICAL POSSIBILITIES, AS THIS ENVIRONMENT BECOMES THE SOCIALISING SPACE FOR THE PEOPLE WE SEE ON THIS PICTURE. THE FACADES IN THE BACKGROUND ARE IN BAD SHAPE AND THE NEGLECT OF THE MILIEU IS ALSO SHOWN WITH THE RANDOMLY GROWING VEGETATION. THE PERSONS ARE SITTING ON CHAIRS SELECTED IN AN ARBITRARY WAY, BUT ALSO ON OBJECTS THAT SHOULD NOT BE USED AS IN THE FIRST PLACE: THE BABY CARRIAGE. THE PRESENCE TOGETHER OF CHILDREN AND OF OBJECTS LIKE THE PRAM, AND OF WOMEN REINFORCES THE UNINDIVIDUALISED IMAGE OF ROMA.



EMIR KUSTURICA, **BLACK CAT WHITE CAT** (1998)

THE MYTH OF THE PRODIGIOUS WEDDING: MANY ATTENTION GRABBING AND FLASHY ELEMENTS MIXED WITH A SENSE OF TRIVIALITY, WHICH CREATES THE IMPRESSION OF A SPECIFIC AMALGAMATE OF WEALTHINESS AND BAD TASTE (THE BREAD WITH THE JEWELRY, THE MOTHER'S CLOTHES AND HER JEWELS, THE HAPPINESS OF THE ATTENDEES AND THE PRESENCE OF A GUN).



ZOLTÁN MOLNÁR, KÁSZONFELTÍZ/ERDÉLY (2012)

[HTTP://WWW.FOTOMUVESZET.NET/KORABBI_SZAMOK/201402/MOLNAR_ZOLTAN_KEPEI_A_PETOFI_IROD](http://www.fotomuveszet.net/korabbi_szamok/201402/molnar_zoltan_kepei_a_petofi_irodalmi_muzeumban?PHPSESSID=2d9e656092019dbccd939180eed0ac45)
[ALMI_MUZEUMBAN?PHPSESSID=2d9e656092019dbccd939180eed0ac45](http://www.fotomuveszet.net/korabbi_szamok/201402/molnar_zoltan_kepei_a_petofi_irodalmi_muzeumban?PHPSESSID=2d9e656092019dbccd939180eed0ac45)

THIS IMAGE IS THE ONLY ONE THAT IS NOT TAKEN OUT OF MOVIES, BUT FROM THE PRESS, MORE PRECISELY AS PART OF THE WORK OF A PHOTO ARTIST, ZOLTÁN MOLNÁR, WHO WENT THROUGH TRANSYLVANIA TAKING PICTURES MOSTLY OF ROMAS. THE DIFFERENCES TO MENTION: WHY IS THIS PICTURE TAKEN IN BLACK AND WHITE? (DRAMATISATION OF THE SITUATION OR REINFORCEMENT OF THE REALISTIC IMPRESSION GIVEN BY THIS ENVIRONMENT?) WHY IS EVERYBODY LOOKING AT THE CAMERA, HOW IS THIS PICTURE ADDRESSING MORE DIRECTLY ITS PUBLIC THAN A MOVIE STILL? (EXPLICIT AND IMPLIED CULTURAL/HISTORICAL CODES) IS THERE A STORY BEHIND THESE PEOPLE, CAN YOU SEE ANY ELEMENT THAT LETS YOU NARRATE OR IS THIS A STATUS QUO?