GADJO DILO- GIPSY DON QUIJOTE

Albina PUSKÁS-BAJKÓ
"Petru Maior" University of Târgu-Mureș

Abstract: Tony Gatlif is of Roma descendance, being in the same time the most popular Roma filmmaker in history. He is the only one the majority of people are pretty familiar with, or if not with his name, with his masterpieces, undoubtedly yes. From these the most well-known film is Gadjo Dilo (1997), which is of course far from being a true representation of Romanian Roma life, but is a problematic dialogue on what authenticity in presenting a nation can be. This problematic and problematizing dialogue is disguised in a travelogue- a genre which has a vaste tradition in literature and film also.Of the many defining characteristics of Balkan cinematic aesthetics, Dina Iordanova identifies one that is outstandingly obvious, the feature of the travelogue or quest narrative. The travelogue is typical of the Balkans as a specific construction of this space as one existent in the Western European imaginary. Basically, this is what happens in a Balkan travelogue: a traveler, commonly a western European will visit an exotic location, in our case the Balkans (in Heart of Darkness it was the Congo, in The White Mary, it was Papua New Guinea), in order to discover. It could be the discovery of other cultures and national customs, language, wisdom, clothing, religion, however, it tends to be something missing from the main character's life. This lack of the unnamable will drive him/her through dangers hard to imagine. The protagonist hopes to be able to explore a reality that is much more genuine, closer to „the real thing" than in his culture, which usually, in these stories, has lost its primordial connection with nature and the natural life. From this point of view, we could consider the travelogue a quest narrative, a quest for authenticity and truth.Based on the intersection of the real and the unreal; having its focus mainly on normality but only to underline the supernatural; a typical (literary or filmed) story of quest will be a perfect fusion between realism and magic to make the reader or viewer ask themselves questions rather than provide the right answers. Stories of quest have a long tradition in literature, and they are almost always tales based on a voyage, a road of trials in which a hero hears a call and leaves their home- alone or in the company of others- to search for the treasure. Along this voyage they undergo several trials, receive help from unexpected sources, fight enemies and they may even be killed during all these trials- physically or emotionally. On many occasions, they die only to be born again, ending in fact the lifestyle they led up to that moment. No matter if the protagonist finds the treasure or dies in search of it, the emphasis is on their change; they always change who or what they had been beforehand.

Keywords: Travelogue, quest, Romani people, Tony Gatlif, tradition, myth

"Rather than being given the chance to portray themselves, the Romani people have routinely been depicted by others. The persistent cinematic interest in "Gipsies" has repeatedly raised questions of authenticity versus stylization, and of patronization and exoticization, in a context marked by overwhelming ignorance of the true nature of Romani culture and heritage. "[1]

[1] Dina Iordanova, *Cinematic Images of Romanies*, in *Framework, Introduction, no. 6*

BDD-A21877 © 2014 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:36:10 UTC)

There is no need to state that this phenomenon is understandable as film-making is an essentially visual art and it is truly obvious that those who conceive films will exploit the "visual richness of their (Gipsies') excitingly non-conventional lifestyles. Often allowing for spectacularly beautiful magical-realist visuals, the films featuring Romani have used recurring narrative tropes"[2]

Tony Gatlif is of Roma descendance, being in the same time the most popular Roma filmmaker in history. He is the only one the majority of people are pretty familiar with, or if not with his name, with his masterpieces, undoubtedly yes. From these the most well-known film is *Gadjo Dilo (1997)*, which is of course far from being a true representation of Romanian Roma life, but is a problematic dialogue on what authenticity in presenting a nation can be. This problematic and problematizing dialogue is disguised in a travelogue- a genre which has a vaste tradition in literature and film also.A few of the best and most well-known fictional travel stories are closely tied to travel literature. In this genre sometimes readers should make the distiction though between fictional and non-fictional writings, this categorization is almost impossible to put in practice, like in the writings of Marco Polo and John Mandeville, as the act of travelling constitutes the core of travelogues. Anpther instance of a fictional work of travel literature starting from a journey that actually happened, is Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which had been inspired by a voyage made by Conrad up the River Congo.

Heart of Darkness had been analyzed more than any other literary work that is studied in universities and highschools, due to, in my opinion, its deep ambiguity in what its true eaning should be. *Heart of Darkness* became well-known but also controversial from the post-colonial reader's point of vew, as it could easily be interpreted as a journey into one's own soul, as a sort of self-discovery, but also as a story of subjugation of the so-called „primitive people" of the Congo, even if Kurtz, the main character seemingly wants to get to know and assist them in their trials and tribulations- which might remind us of the attempts made by the Frenchman in *Gadjo Dilo*, attempts which have been interpreted and reinterpreted endlesly by film critics, by native Roma viewers and non-native viewers, too. Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957) is the very best example of a postmodern travelogue , which chronicles Jack Kerouac's years traveling North America with his friend Neal Cassady, "a sideburned hero of the snowy West." Bearing the names Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty, the two roam the country in an almost desperate but in the same time romantic quest for self-knowledge and experience. The writer's love of America, the Americana introduced into the novel, his sympathy for humanity, and his sensitivity to language as jazz music combine to make *On the Road* an inspirational work of lasting importance, this novel of freedom and ambition for more knowlwdge put in words the

Of the many defining characteristics of Balkan cinematic aesthetics, Dina Iordanova identifies one that is outstandingly obvious, the feature of the travelogue or quest narrative.[3] The travelogue is typical of the Balkans as a specific construction of this space as one existent in the Western European imaginary. Basically, this is what happens in a Balkan travelogue: a traveler, commonly a western european will visit an exotic location, in our case the Balkans (in *Heart of Darkness* it was the Congo, in *The White Mary*, it was Papua New Guinea), in order to discover. It could be the discovery of other cultures and national customs, language, wisdom, clothing, religion, however , it tends to be something missing from the main character's life. This lack of the unnamable will drive him/her through dangers hard to

[2] Dina Iordanova, Cinema of the Other Europe: *The Industry and Artistry of East Central European Film.* London: Wallflower Press, 2003

[3] Dina Iordanova, Cinema of Flames: Balkan Film, Culture and the Media, London: BFI Publishing, 2001., p. 55-70

BDD-A21877 © 2014 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:36:10 UTC)

imagine. The protagonist hopes to be able to explore a reality that is much more genuine, closer to „the real thing" than in his culture, which usually, in these stories, has lost its primordial connection with nature and the natural life. From this point of view, we could consider the travelogue a quest narrative, a quest for authenticity and truth.

Based on the intersection of the real and the unreal; having its focus mainly on normality but only to underline the supernatural; a typical (literary or filmed) story of quest will be a perfect fusion between realism and magic to make the reader or viewer ask themselves questions rather than provide the right answers. Stories of quest have a long tradition in literature, and they are almost always tales based on a voyage, a road of trials in which a hero hears a call and leaves their home- alone or in the company of others- to search for the treasure. Along this voyage they undergo several trials, receive help from unexpected sources, fight enemies and they may even be killed during all these trials- physically or emotionally. On many occasions, they die only to be born again, ending in fact the lifestyle they led up to that moment. No matter if the protagonist finds the treasure or dies in search of it, the emphasis is on their change; they always change who or what they had been beforehand.

The Other, also known as the double or the alter ego, appears quite often in stories of quest, being a common character in all literary genres. Just like a shadow, which is a dark, distorted, however a perfectly familiar image of the person who casts it, *the Other* may at first glance bear little resemblance to the hero, as the two of them look and act in opposite ways. A more attentive examination makes us realize that their relationship is intimate- indeed, they are in fact impossible to separate. Every now and again, their relationship is literal: the Other might be the protagonist's sibling or he could even be his best friend. And then again, they could be complete strangers, though the Other is familiar –and this familiarity is disturbing. Seeing the Other for the first time, the protagonist might be under the impression that they have met somewhere before although the memory of it is coming back. As they get to know each other with the passing of time, striking similarities start to appear, starting with personal data shared betweeen the two of them.

The stranger who is peculiarly unsettling, the opponent our protagonist should feel genuine hatred towards, looks and behaves so much like the protagonist, they seem to be twin-siblings, the stranger reminding us of the undesirable and disreputable family member, the friend to whom our protagonist is attached so efficiently they aren't able to escape the grip, no matter how different from each other they may be. All these make it all the harder for the character to break off, though they usually try to break or deny this tie, to separate themselves from the Other, attempting desperately even to run away, the reader or viwer becomes aware step by step of the fact that these two characters will never be able to exist without each other.

On a symbolic level, the Other represents that dark unacknowledged part of the main character's personality, well hidden from the eyes of the worldand even from the protagonist's own consciousness. Precisely because if this, Robert Loouis Stevenson names the violent, lustful bestial alter-egof the spotless Dr. Jekyll, "Mr Hyde"- he is supposed to be hidden. As it happens often, the character refuses and looks down upon their double, like Mr. Hyde, as this double is actively and openly evil, not in a hidden way, their immorality shown in the personification of primitive yearnings, energies untamed that society manages to tame in the rest of us. The Other could be the personified evil or a projection of our darkest fantasies.

Thus, this projection into the Other is everything one cannot accept in themselves. Literary and film-protagonists will frequently fear or despise their doubles as those embody not only something that society bans in our lives, but also our secret fantasies that might seem shameful to a few authoritative figures in our lives- these figures can be themselves, too- a

BDD-A21877 © 2014 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:36:10 UTC)

phenomenon that happens more frequently than we might think, the urges experienced could seem incompatible with their self-image, the person they want to be in the eyes of society. The adorably sweet people or the ones who sacrifice themselves for the sake of others, without ever mentioning it, could have represeed feelings of hatred, a deeply-rooted desire for freedom...All these repressed yearnings will be shown in the figure of the Other, having to face them in this way at least.

Whenever an individual is unwilling to make acknowledgement of the fact that the features embodied by the Other are actually a rejected or despised part of their own personality. They will suffer, unless the protagonist comes to terms with their double, though it might seem repulsive or degrading. Getting acquainted with the Other is a significant part of the hero's journey, this meeting represents a crucial event in the protagonist's journey toward the final objective of his search. It is quite often the first major step in the whole process of the journey after the departure, since the character is incapable of following the path ahead of him/her unless he came to terms fully with the dark side of his/her personality. Only a true hero will be able to look into the eyes of their double and accept it, the Other standing for everything they find disgusting and terrifying in themselves. Admitting that the Other is part of them means in fact that they accept their mirror image.

Once the protagonist came to terms with his double, he will encounter several helpers and guides during his journey. As their journey is so filled with obstacles, these questors of mythical treasures get into trouble quite often. Faced with an insurmontable obstacle, a mystery that appears to be insoluble, an adversary owning more magical, physical or psychological powers than they do, even the most popular and mightiest heroes will need assistance. This assistance could come from extremely unlikely sources, such as an army of friendly ants in the Grimm Brothers' story „The Queen Bee" helping the protagonist find a thousand pearls scattered under the forest. Two main types of helpers appear in these stories of quest as leitmotfs, *The Wise Old Man* and *The Good Mother.*

The Wise Old Man offers his help appearing as a magician or shaman or prophet, usually showing special knowledge that goes beyond average human knowledge. He passes his general erudition only to those who prove to possess adequate merit, to be worthy of such rare powers as The Wise Old Man's. This character performs in specific roles as a father figure, taking the protagonist on the journey of wisdom, training them in all the aptitudes necessary in their following enterprise they have to undertake. A great example is shown in the figure of Merlin the old wizard from the Camelot legend, his role in the boy's growth to be a king is crucial, as Merlin initiates Arthur just like a surrogate father would. After the initiation process is finalized, the initiator, The Wise Old Man might let the youth go on his way alone and intervene only at times when higher powers are needed (for instance, in the movie *Star Wars* , at the climax of the action when Luke Skywalker finds himself in a situation without exit-he is unable to hit the enemy target by means of his computerized gunsight, he is paid a visit by his late master/mentor Obi-Wan Kenobi, who reminds him of the secret he is in need of in order to accomplish his assignment. The true essence of the figure of The Old Wise Man is that of a trigger that releases the hidden but existent potential in the hero. His advice, training, renders the character more powerful, as all inhibitions are shed off with the assistance of this old character.

The Good Mother is sometimes the real mother of the character, or an aunt/godmother. On the other hand, she may be spinster, childless-she isn't important as a biological mother, but as a spiritual one, the maternal feature being constantly associated with assistance. In ancient mythology, The Good Mother almost always appears as the goddess of earth, who provides mankind with all the goods of nature. In *Cinderella* the Good Mother is the fairy godmother, who eases the grief of the mistreated girl, magically dresses her in splendid gown and supervises her initiation. This character is also popular in popular arts: she appears in *The*

BDD-A21877 © 2014 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:36:10 UTC)

Wizard of Oz as Glinda, Witch of the South, very protective of her people and having the kiss that acts as a guard against evil, keeping harm away from Dorothy. Frodo, the central character of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings,* receives an amulet from the queen of elves, Galadriel, who presents the questy hero with a vial full of magical light to brighten his way in the dark along his voyage to the shadowland of Mordor. Apart from the protective talisman given to the protagonist by the Good Mother, the most essential feature of this magical character is maternal love and caring, sometimes offering material support, too.

In Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Blacaman the Good, Vendor of Miracles,* the hero only discovers his extraordinary powers during his trials in the process of initiation, which also include the harsh treatment he is subjected to by the old charlatan, who, in a reversed way, becomes his mentor and benefactor- the boy's transformation into a miracle worker is only possible with his help. In Herman Hesse's *The Poet,* Han Fook's spiritual guide is a mysterious stranger who recites the poem Han Fook had in mind thus starting a true spiritual journey for the hero. In William Faulkner's *The Old People* Sam Fathers, the son of a Choctaw chief and a negro slave- girl, teaches Isaac McCaslin how to hunt. When Isaac is deemed old enough to go on the yearly hunting expeditions with Major de Spain, General Compson, and Isaac's older cousin McCaslin Edmonds, he kills his first buck, and Sam Fathers ritualistically anoints him with its blood, this ritual symbolically initiating him to be a true man and a hunter.

Whatever their individual concerns, helpers ultimately teach the same primary lesson of life: by practically presenting the young protagonist to a bigger picture of the world than what they have known before and by giving them a means of approaching their untapped and unsuspected abilities inside them, these wise helpers show the option of a fuller, more accomplished life.In order to arrive at this phase of choice between the old way of living and the new one, they first must have a call- this is the drive that will motivate them throughout their voyage. The hero who has a kind of call will always be a more courageous, more resistant , and above all, more curious individual than average ones surrounding him in his world. They need courage and endurance to fight against the fate others succumb to, against social conventions of their lives- especially since their own fears and habits draw them to stay home, to safely choose the existent reality, rather than try something new and unknown.

In order for these heroes to take upon themselves their adventurous expedition, it is of utmost importance for them to envision (consciously or unconsciously) the perils hidden in the option of remaining where they are. It is extremely important that they possess a penetrating mental vision, an outstanding faculty of seeing into the inner nature of things. To leave the safety and familiarity of the known for the unknown as the quest's calling demands of them usually appears more hazardous than staying where they are. However, this might be tricky. The quest motif in mythology and literature symbolizes the absolute necessity of radical, defiant, creative change in the individual's life- no matter what their original culture might be. Putting a stop to the quest means accepting failure to develop, to progress. It is imperative for the protagonist to learn the uncomfortable truth that all is in continuous change, passage and movement. Animated things will alter and grow-in every possible way and unstoppably. Life is an unending cycle of death and rebirth; things that are significant today may become meaningless and redundant as the future unfolds. Their willingness to take the search for the ‚treasure' upon themselves is a sign that they comprehend and accept the human condition. In other words, to stagnate is to die.

The hero's quest usually starts with a call to adventure. A ‚herald' appears and issues this call. The herald must be something from the outside, from the unknown, even if on some occasions, the call is yielded from the character's strong drives and desires for something different. More frequently though, this call will come from the outside world, such as another

BDD-A21877 © 2014 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:36:10 UTC)

country or culture or region or heaven/hell. Heralds can come in many shapes:giant, fairy, saint, old man or even an animal.

As it appears in the influential work of Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, these are the stages of the hero's journey through their quest[4] -all easily identified in the film *Gadjo Dilo*:

1.) The hero is introduced in his/her ORDINARY WORLD (hints to Stephane's home which didn't quench his thirst for more)

2.) The CALL TO ADVENTURE (reminiscence of Stephane's father on his deatbed, talking about this magnificent singer, Nora Luca, from Romania)

3.) The hero is reluctant at first. (REFUSAL OF THE CALL.) several obstructions are met by our traveling protagonist, Stefane)

4.) The hero is encouraged by the Wise Old Man or Woman. (MEETING WITH THE MENTOR.) Stefane's mentor being Izidor.

5.) The hero passes the first threshold. (CROSSING THE THRESHOLD.), the crazy Frenchman drinks with Izidor in front of the mayor's house.

6.) The hero encounters tests and helpers. (TESTS, ALLIES, ENEMIES.) several hurdles hinder our hero in finding his „holy grail"- Nora Luca.

7.) The hero reaches the innermost cave. (APPROACH TO THE INMOST CAVE.) the crazy frenchman is accepted and loved by a Gipsy woman, this beig the closest he will ever get to their secretive society.

8.) The hero endures the supreme ORDEAL. Looking for his „holy grail", he has to witness discrimination at its peak, a victim being killed the moment Stefane started to believe everything was in its place.In *E.T. The extraterrestrial*, E. T. momentarily appears to die on the operating table

9.) The hero seizes the sword. (SEIZING THE SWORD, REWARD), the sword in the movie being Nora Luca's voice and heart- both easily approachable but impossible to possess.

10.) THE ROAD BACK . the two lovers travel back to the Gipsy Camp in their Lada.

11.) RESURRECTION. While his beloved lady is fast asleep in his car, Stefane makes the greatest discovery of all: it is virtually and practically impossible to capture love and music- they are like quicksilver-clench your fist and it will escape.The hero emerges from the special world, transformed by his/her experience.

12.) RETURN WITH THE ELIXIR. Stephane has to destroy his beloved tapes of Gipsy songs on a milestone- a clear symbol of the start of a new era in his existence.

The hero comes back to the ordinary world, but the adventure would be meaningless unless he/she brought back the elixir, treasure, or some lesson from the special world. Sometimes it's just knowledge or experience, but unless he comes back with the elixir or some boon to mankind, he's doomed to repeat the adventure until he does. Many comedies use this ending, as a foolish character refuses to learn his lesson and embarks on the same folly that got him in trouble in the first place.Sometimes the boon is treasure won on the quest, or love, or just the knowledge that the special world exists and can be survived. Sometimes it's just coming home with a good story to tell.As with any formula, there are pitfalls to be avoided. Following the guidelines of myth too rigidly can lead to a stiff, unnatural structure, and there is the danger of being too obvious. The hero myth is a skeleton that should be masked with the details of the individual story, and the structure should not call attention to itself. The order of the hero's stages as given here is only one of many variations

[4] Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, Third Edition, New World Library, Novato, California, 2008.

BDD-A21877 © 2014 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:36:10 UTC)

– the stages can be deleted, added to, and drastically re-shuffled without losing any of their power.

The values of the myth are what's important. The images of the basic version – young heroes seeking magic swords from old wizards, fighting evil dragons in deep caves, etc. – are just symbols and can be changed infinitely to suit the story at hand.

The myth is easily translated to contemporary dramas, comedies, romances, or action-adventures by substituting modern equivalents for the symbolic figures and props of the hero story. The Wise Old Man may be a real shaman or wizard, but he can also be any kind of mentor or teacher, doctor or therapist, crusty but benign boss, tough but fair top sergeant, parent, grandfather, etc. Modern heroes may not be going into caves and labyrinths to fight their mythical beasts, but they do enter and innermost cave by going into space, to the bottom of the sea, into their own minds, or into the depths of a modern city.

The myth can be used to tell the simplest comic book story or the most sophisticated drama. It grows and matures as new experiments are tried within its basic framework. Changing the sex and ages of the basic characters only makes it more interesting and allows for ever more complex webs of understanding to be spun among them. The essential characters can be combined or divided into several figures to show different aspects of the same idea. The myth is infinitely flexible, capable of endless variation without sacrificing any of its magic, and it will outlive us all.

In terms of its narrative structure, *Gadjo Dilo* is a very conventional film about the Gypsies. As Gatlif opens his film, Stefane is wandering on foot on a barren, inhospitable road in a wintry Romania. Armed with recording equipment and blank tapes, the young man is on a quest to find Nora Luca, the singer who was the favorite of his dead father. But given the hardships of the road, Stefane seems on the verge of abandoning his nomadic life when he encounters Izidor, an old gypsy musician who says he knows Luca.Izidor, whose son, Adrjani, was recently arrested and imprisoned, believes Stefane has been sent as a blessing from God. He invites Stefane home to the gypsy encampment of dirt-floor houses and makeshift dwellings that is enlivened by colorfully clad gypsies who ``can fix anything'' and sometimes make a living as musicians.At first, Stefane causes a sensation in the gypsy community, some of whose members believe he is a thief and a bandit (the very things they are often called in open society). But Izidor defends his charge, and Stefane soon becomes a friendly curiosity.In no time, Stefane falls in love with Sabina, a foul-mouthed, independent-minded dancer played by native Hungarian actress Rona Hartner. But eventually, Stefane must hear the voice he searches for and find the place he belongs.Gatlif, who was born in Algeria to Gipsy parents of Spanish origin, directs with a great sensitivity to the Gipsy community and an equal awareness of how Gipsy traditions might be perceived by outsiders.In the early scenes, Isidor Serban's drunken, shouting, grieving Izidor is a public nuisance, a late- night loudmouth who drinks firewater and mourns his son.The first glimpse of young Gipsy women is equally shocking. Speaking in their own language, the young women leer at Stefane and call out to him in a manner that might curl the hair of a drunken sailor.But even as Stefane is drawn into the hidden and misunderstood culture of the Gipsies, so are the outsiders who comprise Gatlif's filmgoing audience. The Gipsies' manner of outrageously insulting and cursing, openly expressing their emotions and living in the moment is infectious.Stefane also begins to understand the Gipsies' place in a larger world and the perils of prejudice and intolerance that affect their daily lives and periodically place them in physical danger.

Although the plot is linear, Gatlif fills ``Gadjo Dilo'' with fragmentary scenes that add up to a portrait of Gipsy life. There are several magical moments that have a documentary verisimilitude. In one, a bit of jury rigging from power poles results in the arrival of electric light. In another, Sabina finishes bathing by ``scrubbing'' herself and her wet hair with

BDD-A21877 © 2014 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:36:10 UTC)

wildflowers. Also powerful is the graveside mourning ritual that is first demonstrated by Izidor and reprised by Stefane.

Gatlif, the director reverses the usual stereotypes in the sense that it is the Frenchman who wil be suspected of being a dishonest thief by the local Romani who will steal their chickens, children and women, not only because he is a foreigner and different from them, but also because his shoes are full of holes, his clothes are used and it is Izidor who gets him some more decent outfits. Even his civilized habits brought from the Western world are weird from the point of view of the local community. At first, for instance, he is too polite for local standards, he doesn't want to drink vodka or gamble, moreover, he cleans Izidor's house, hoping to surprise his host- in which he succeds, in an unpleasant way though. He must slowly become accustomed to local habits, to go native. He also meets and inevitably falls in love with the „passionate", „exotic", „sensuous" (using some of the cliches about Romani women in the Western mentality) girl, Sabina.

The critical reception of *Gadjo Dilo* reads it as a film about self-discovery and truth:

„Stephane's is a process of acculturation-he moves fully in the direction of Romani society and emuates its habits in order to gain access. In this sense his exoerience fused with the camera's eye purports to be an intimate discovery of the people behind the wall of stereotypes so robustly constructed around romani culture. Gatlif's pedigree-half Roma himself-assures us that this is a true picture."[5]

Stephane's search is-on the surface for a singer, Nora Luca, and this quest slowly evolves to the phase when he records and catalogues any music he hears. When he first bumps into Isidor in the street and plays him the Nora Luca song on his small tape recorder, Isidor replies that there are songs like that everywhere around there. It is only the moment Stephane fully understands what Isidor really means that he forsakes his dear plan of transcribing the object of his quest, as the Nora Iuga song is in fact the treasure that made him start his journey.

Nora Luca was the favourite song of Stephane's late father, an ethnologist (interesting enough, as the great controversy of „Gipsy films" revolves around the question of their ethnologically correct representation) who had spent his whole life traveling and recording folk songs. Stephane's father had been listening to this specific song on his deathbed, assigning Stephane with this quest: to find its singer. The task could bring the father figure closer to Stephane who spent his childhood missing his father. The father's absence remains a mystery to the young man, so, in fact, his quest for the Nora Luca song is superficial, in fact he is searching for an underlying meaning to this overwhelming lack of a father. In a twisted logical conlusion, if he manages to successfully finish his father's quest, finding what his father had desired so much, he could fill the emptiness left in his heart by the former's absence and then death.

Stephane wishes to capture the object of desire in a sterile context, without any intervention, as he wants to take it home with him. As his relationship with Sabina evolves, she becomes the link between him and the community, taking him to several Roma musicians, so that he can record several songs. In one session, she gets involved and starts to belly dance as the musicians start playing their instruments. He sound of her feet stumping on the floor and her cheering voive disturb Stephane in the recording process and he asks her to restrain from dancing and singing. At this point in the story, Stephane is still just a disciple: he is unaware of the fact that if he wants to capture the authentic Gipsy song, he will not be able to do it in studio conditions... as the exact same authenticity he chases so fervently will disappear. When songs are sung, emotions will make the audience clap their hands, stump

[5] Niobe Thompson, ""Understanding the Gulf: Tony Gatlif's *Gadjo dilo* "Central European Review 2.41 (27 November 2000). 15 November 2004

BDD-A21877 © 2014 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:36:10 UTC)

their feet, sing along and maybe smash some plates- thus the borderline between artist and audience is faded. Gipsy songs are performed by everyone, that is why there is no specific Nora Luca song- as it is not owned by anyone- everybody who can sing and enjoy it, can become Nora Luca for a moment. The object of desire is elusive, it cannot be possessed, it will slip away, as it is specified in Jacques Lacan's *Seminar VII* about courtly love. In Lacan's view the ‚Lady' the Knight was looking for was inexistent- it is just an empty signifier, an illusory construct, a pretext that makes the knight (the man) start his journey of self-discovery. This is a hard lesson of life Stephane learns in the party at the pub in Bucharest: that Nora Luca doesn't exist.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I would like to thank the POSDRU/159/1.5/S/133652 Project entitled „Sistem integrat de îmbunătățire a calității cercetării doctorale și postdoctorale din România și de promovare a rolului științei în societate" for its substantial financial support in my research.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Campbell, Joseph,*The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Third Edition, New World Library, Novato, California, 2008.
2. Conrad, Joseph, 1990, Heart of Darkness Unabridged. Dover Publications, Inc. New York, 1990
3. Gocic, Goran, *Notes from the Underground: the Cinema of Emir Kusturica*. London: Wallflower Press, 2001
4. Iordanova, Dina, *Cinematic Images of Romanies*, in *Framework, Introduction, no. 6*
5. Iordanova, Dina *Cinema of the Other Europe*: *The Industry and Artistry of East Central European Film*. London: Wallflower Press, 2003
6. Iordanova, Dina, *Emir Kusturica* , London: BFI Publishing, 2002
7. Iordanova, Dina, *Cinema of Flames: Balkan Film, Culture and the Media*, London: BFI Publishing, 2001
8. Kerouac, Jack, *On the Road*, Viking Press Books, new York,1957
9. Salak, Kira, *The White Mary*, Picador Press, 2008
10. Thompson, Niobe,"*Understanding the Gulf: Tony Gatlif's Gadjo dilo "in* Central European Review 2.41 (27 November 2000). 15 November 2004

FILMOGRAPHY

1. Black Cat, White Cat (1998), directed by Emir kusturica
2. Gadjo Dilo (1997), directed by Tony Gatlif
3. In Serbia: A Gypsy Marriage (1911)
4. I Even Met Happy Gypsies (1967), directed by Alexandar Petrovic
5. Time of Gypsies (1989), directed by Emir Kusturica
6. Black Cat, White Cat (1998), directed by Emir Kusturica

BDD-A21877 © 2014 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:36:10 UTC)