

## **Social Representation of Gypsies: films and filmtitles**

Bigazzi Sara

Institute of Psychology

University of Pécs

e-mail address: [bigazzisara@hotmail.com](mailto:bigazzisara@hotmail.com)

[bigazzisara@pte.hu](mailto:bigazzisara@pte.hu)

postal address: PTE Institute of Psychology

Pécs, Ifjúság útja 6 7624

<http://pszichologia.pte.hu/?language=en>

Hungary

### **Abstract**

In cultural evolution, propagation of representations is part of the process of selection in relation to contextual adaptation of social groups. One aspect of this process is drawing self/other boundaries. Two researches are presented that explore the representation of Gypsy, as a secular archetype of the other, through films. 919 films on Gypsies produced in 35 nations between 1895 and 2003 were taken in account. In the first part, a temporal and contextual macro-analysis was performed in order to uncover historical and contextual factors that might have influence the temporal and geographical distribution of the production. In the second part a content analysis of the titles was carried out, as the first contact with the film giving a perspective of sense. Content categories involved the presence of the word gypsy (as adjective or subject, its distribution over time), the main object of the title (subject, object, space, time or conjugated verbs), the impersonification of the titles (called whom and how); the type of the object (acts, art, concrete objects, body, love, nature, psychological dimensions, mysticism, justice, history, metaphor of life, abstract concepts, numbers)

The constructivist theory of Social Representation endows the process of meaning production with a social nature. The meanings or representations arise, live and transform in an “intersubjective reality” (Moscovici, S. 1984; Jodelet, D. 1992; Jovchelovitch, S. 1996; László, J. 1999). This intersubjective reality is a set of communication fields and social interactions that give cultures, groups and individuals the space to create a socially constructed, jointly experienced mediated reality. “In the communication among the members unknown actions, objects, events and concepts become well known and meaningful representations, parts of the group social reality” (László, 2005, 65 p.)

The object of this study is the social representation of gypsies. Here gypsies are not considered as Romani, Sinti, Jenis and other groups defined by sciences, but as a representation constructed by the outside society. According to the French anthropologist Williams (in Prónai, 2000) these different groups distance themselves from each other, and the most shared feature among them is that they also have a homogeneous united representation about the people of the outside world - the gadjos.

At the same time in a given social context as in the group itself and between different groups antagonistic or competing representations can arise. Moscovici (1988) described representations in relation to the social consensus around their content, distinguishing between polemic, emancipated and hegemonic representations. Members, groups and cultures create (in some measure) different representations about an object, and the spread of them reflect the symbolic struggle of power relations in the given social context (Jovchelovitch, 1996).

The following study maps the social representation of gypsies through film communication. In the scientific field of psychology films were studied usually among the interpretative frames of psychoanalysis, or as a stimulus in the study of cognitive processes (as perception, interpretation, memory and participation). We can find only a few social psychological researches. These consider films as a social phenomena scrutinizing the process of reception. Can cited as an example the research of Halász L. (1974) about how the artistic communication (the film of Sára Sándor: Gypsies) can effect the social prejudice and social distancing.

This article introduces two studies. The first regards the distribution in time and space of the movies representing gypsies. The second is a content-analysis of their film titles, considering the title as a film element that provides a perspective on reception.

## **1. The macro-analysis of gypsy films**

### **a. Research questions**

The theory of social representation creates a mutual relation between communicative practices and the meaning endowment of the constructed reality. Our case is between gypsy films and the representation of gypsy that they hold. I tried to answer to the following questions: Through the macro-analysis of these films which inferences can we deduce about the relation between the reality construction in a given social frame and the demands of communication? Which are those historical periods when the image of gypsy appears more through the films and why? Which social and historical processes can exist in the background of these communicative demands? Can the representation of gypsy satisfy proper stylistic and linguistic possibilities for the films? Which gypsy image can suggest to us film linguistic solutions?

### **b. Data**

I have found 919 films in which the representation of gypsy of the filmmakers appears. These have been individualised through filmographic references (Antonietto A., 1985a, 1985b, 1986), in specialised film libraries of cultural and social promoting associations (ARCI, Lunaria, ERRC, Centro Studi Zingari Romani Union ), in narrative works about the ethnic minorities of the gypsies and through the searching in internet. Consequently, the films I have found do not form the whole population of the films belonging to this genre. There are mainly two reasons for it. The first is that in the film libraries the cataloguing of the films is mainly grounded on the genres which are bound to a particular vision of the world that is reflected in the film's aesthetic. The second is that the representation of the gypsies in the movie communication does not get exhausted by those films in which the central theme or the narration itself involves one or more characters belonging to this minority. Indeed, even the smallest hint in a scene, even the single framing can turn into an instrument given to the fruitor for the construction, the

reconstruction, affirmation, justification or modification of his representation. The delimitation and closing of the population took place when I had no more new information from the sources written above.

These films were produced in 35 nations between 1895 and March 2004. The first of these films comes out with the foundation of the cinema, in 1895, the year of the patent of the cinema and also the year of the first movie projection in the *salon Indien* in Paris. The film, which seems to have been lost, is an essay short film of George Méliés, director of the house Robert Houdin, who together with the brothers Lumière is considered as the inventor of the seventh art. Among the other directors we can find big firms like, Griffith, De Mille, Lubitsch, Dieterle, Ray, Losey, Siegel, Saura and Kusturica.

To take inferences on the social relevance of the gypsy theme the distribution for nations of these films could be compared with the general movie production. However (because of the paradox nature of films as an artistic creation and an industrial product at the same time) there are no data recorded in a national neither in an international level on the quantity of general film production.

### **c. Analysis and descriptive results**

The 919 films in which Gypsies are represented have been produced in 35 different nations. In the 1<sup>st</sup> graph I have included only those nations which have produced at least the 1% out of the global population.<sup>1</sup> The largest number of these films are American (21,6%), followed by the French (20,7%) and the English (13%) production. These three nations together have produced almost the two-thirds of the examined films.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> graph nation

Whereas in the Eastern-European regions the population of romani and other groups called gypsy is more numerous as in the Western-European regions and in the USA (Piasere, 2003), in these nations less gypsy films were born (for example in Rumania and in Bulgaria it seems that less than 1% of these films were produced). Taking into account the nations with low production and those which are not present in the graph, I assume that this data can be considered mainly as effects of the general film production of the different nations.

---

<sup>1</sup> In relation to the amount of the noticed production the following nations have been excluded: Polony, Rumania, Sweden, Mexico, The Netherlands, Japan, Canada, Swisse, Argentina, Belgium, Finland, Portugal, Bulgaria, Greece, Senegal, Egypt, Saudy-Arabia, South-Corea, Venezuela.

Regarding the distribution on time as we can observe in the 2<sup>nd</sup> graph these films are not systematically distributed by years. There are two peaks in the timescale. Between 1914-1915 40 films, between 1968-1969 44 films were produced.

2<sup>nd</sup> graph timescale

The 50% of the films produced between 1914-1915 are American. Moreover, considering only the American production of the whole film population it has its higher values in these years, when the 9,4% of the American films born (212 the total of found American films). 6 English films were made in these two years, even if the English films has their higher value few years before, in the period between 1909-1911 (17 films) and in 1922 (7 film in a year). Beyond American and English films, 4 Danish, 3 French, 2 Spanish, 1 Austrian, 1 German, 1 Italian, 1 Swedish and 1 SU film were produced in this period.

Between 1968-1969 44 films were produced, 34% of them in France. This period is also one of the most fertile time in French production (1983, 1968-1969, 1978-1979), when the 8% of the all French “gypsy” films born. Beyond these French films, in this period we can find 5 French coo productions, 5 American, 4 Hungarian, 4 Turkish, 2 Italian, 2 Czech, 2 English, 2 German, 1 Belgian, 1 Spanish and 1 Swedish films.

#### **d. Discussion**

*d1. The gypsy films national distribution and “gypsy” groups allocation: film communication as a possible strategy to deal with the “other”*

As I pointed out above the national distribution of gypsy representing films probably reflects the general film production of these nations. The distribution of the given thematic film group if we can compare it with the quantitative data of the general production in the specific nations can show in which nation through films the representation of gypsies appear as a “fixation point”. Nevertheless I would like to assume a consideration. It seems that – apart the general film industry of the nations – fewer the “Gypsy” called populations are present in a nation the more they are fixed on the images of the great screen. The deal with the unknown could be an interpretation of this inverse correlation. It seems like that the extraneous becomes a fixation and a source of fear and of conceptualization when the interaction in the everyday life is least. People must to “struggle” in a cognitive way with the unknown and alien person, to endow him with sense. The film, as also other communicational channels, can mediate this process.

Piasere (2003) outlines an axis as regards the density of the gypsy population in the different nations, in absence of clear data and of never existed census of their number. The axis divides Europe in a „Gypsy-Europe” – where we find 60-70% out of the whole gypsy population and which includes the Balkan area and East-Europe – and in a South-western Europe – formed by Spain and France – where the 15-20% of this population lives. In the rest of Europe - Italy, North-Europe and Russia included – we find a very low concentration of these populations. I suppose that in the European area where the groups so called Gypsies are less present the representation of Gypsy can be more associated with the concepts of stranger, unknown, other. This representation of otherness can not depend only the quantitative proportion of these groups, but also of their lifestyle that gives to the majoritarian society to create differentiation.

Piasere also draws an invisible line on Europe stressing the difference between the two extremes of the continuum „ sedentarism *versus* nomadism” as the ways of life of the Gypsies. It seems that at the south of this line (East-Europe, Balkans, South-Italy and Spain) we can mainly find sedentary families whereas at the north of this line there are mostly nomad families.

According to Piasere there are historical reasons behind the relation of geographical distribution of gypsy groups and their nomad or sedentary lifestyle. Romani arrived in West-Europe (about 1400) in the age of forming of the first capitalism (mercantilism, uprooting of the peasants from their land and so on) which searches for low cost labour. This new kind of production anyway is not able to incorporate Gypsies in its dominance-submission mechanism. They set up real resistances through the collective strategy of the journey and the atomization (leaving out the history of Spain). From that moment and through the centuries the standing „degypsiation” of the western regions has started. In the same period Eastern Europe and particularly South-Eastern-Europe was entering in the feudalism under the expanding Ottoman dominion which by the XVII century reached the actual region of Slovakia. In many nations such as Moldavia, Valachia and Transilvania the Roms were integrated in the feudal system as slaves and as slaves they became fortunes of value to be found.

The geographical differences between nomadic and sedentary “gypsy” groups are supported also by social-psychological researches. Mamontoff (1999) studied the social representation of gypsies from a structural perspective. In her research pointed out that the more frequently used attribution to “gypsy” in France is the nomad lifestyle, which was also the most important element in the figurative nucleus of the representation. It seems that the characteristic of nomadism becomes a peculiar trait or an evaluative dimension for the differentiation of the gypsy, and help to render more homogeneous groups that are different in their culture, language and origins. Indeed just in the western countries we find those groups of Gypsies – the *frange* in Ireland and Schotland, the *jenis* in Germany, the *camminanti* and the *dritti* in Italy, etc. – from the linguistic point of view have not Sanskrit (that is Indian) origins, but because of

their nomadic way of life are associated to the group of the Gypsies, which call themselves *rom* and *sinti*. The concept of journey seems to be settled in the collective imaginary of the gypsy, where journey means also not-integration in a production system as well as declination of the work (Piasere, 2003). **It seems that in the western countries the compressing idea of gypsy- and because of its homogenizing quality – can be easier interpretable as the otherness and strangeness defined by the outside society.**

d2. *Possible social factors and film linguistic solutions behind the gypsy films: Who are the gypsies in the films?*

In this paragraph set out from the meaning attribution functionality of the communicative processes I would like to reflect to the gypsy films two production peaks in time. According to this we communicate about something (any kind of object, concept, event, person or group that is part of our reality) when it becomes important to us in a given social and historical moment. The standpoint of the importance can be the meaning endowing of a new, unknown phenomena, whether its change, re-evaluation on the grounds of the new situation. This process results in the continuous re-elaboration and evaluation of our reality construction that has its cause in the incongruences in the present based on the subjective experiencing – in contrast with the extreme post-modern approaches – of a mediated, notwithstanding existent reality. This discussion would like to answer the question of why in these two historical moments people speak about gypsies more. In the following analysis I used two viewpoints to give explanation of this phenomenon. Firstly I tried to outline those societal and cultural events socially experienced that can lead to the increased film communication about gypsies. Secondly I delineated those stylistic and linguistic possibilities proper of film that can be satisfied by the content of the gypsy representation in those times, namely how and how much strict is the relation between film language and the represented content by the film. At the same time if we accept the two production peaks as a phenomena of communication – without the data in the total output of film industries – I hold the importance to remark, that the possible relations between the products of the artistic communication and/or of the industry of entertainment and the social processes are indirect and ramified. These interpretations can give a partial explanation of a multifactorial phenomenon.

1. **The Tens and the Gypsy as a freak?**

- During the Tens movie production increases in all economically developed states (Prédal, 1996). In 1913, 2754 films are produced in the world (882 in French, 643 in Italy, 576 in the United States, 308 in Germany, 268 in England). Therefore this peak can be considered as an effect of the general increase in movie production which is a typical of those times.
- This peak coincides with the beginning of the First World War. It can be also explained by the general increase of the film production and the propaganda function of the industry of entertainment,

however we know that more than half of the films are produced by Us that has been less conditioned by the War. Indeed the same American production touches its maximal value in gypsy films in these years.

- The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were characterized by general migration waves. The restructuring of the population on a larger scale occurred influenced by various general factors, as favourable economic conditions in the United States and in West Europe, the development of the railway net and the navigation becoming faster and cheaper. One of these migrations involving moreover groups of gypsies goes from the Balkans and East Europe towards Great Britain and France, between 1870 and 1913. Indeed the other general migration wave involving also gypsies is towards America between 1880 and 1914 (Fraser, 2000). Probably the social, economical and political effects of these large migration waves of gypsies had resonance in the film production, where it is possible to express “the new” and to explain “the unknown”, covering them by meanings. The arrival of “these unknowns” may have activated the need and the supposition of the need for the hypothetical public, to acquire familiarity with “the new” through the means they have in their disposal. In this way, it is possible to suppose that the peak expresses the influence of this migration towards America, and that of the British some years before (1911-1913).

- The last explicative hypothesis concerns the change on time of the meaning attributed to movie. The film is considered, from its born to the end of the Tens, as a picture, where the shots are autonomous entities following each other without unity, without a holding proper language . The strength of these autonomous pictures was based on the communicative skill of the image itself. The main principles regarded the image saturation, the recall of attention, the expression of “colour” and “musicality” (Prédal, 1996). The depiction of the gypsy image perfectly fit into the schemes of the arising film semantic. According to Krackauer (1962), even if everything that can be find in the reality theoretically can also be filmable, there are “subjects, that we can define cinematographic as seems that they exert on the mean a particular attraction. As if the mean was predestined (and in the same time desirous) to represent them”. The attraction arises from the long time stereotype of “the other who is different from us”. In the same century we can find a great amount of gypsy descriptions of this kind and not only for the nomad lifestyle and their appearance. The notes report different evaluative criteria: clothes and ornaments, behaviours (circus activities, illusionists, fortune-telling<sup>8</sup>) and music<sup>3</sup>. Reasuming this last

---

<sup>2</sup> “The groups of Ludari arriving in America at the beginning of 1900 were composed by illusionists, actors and animal taimers. Lot of them arrived with their bears and monkeys.” Winstedt, E. O. (1912-1913), *The gypsy Coppersmiths’ invasion of 1911-1913/GL(2),6*, p. 244-303

<sup>3</sup> There is a little example reported in various historical descriptions of anthropologists regarding the first presumed migration of Roma from India: “In the 1011, the Persian Poet Fidusi, has terminated the Book of Kings. In it is narrated the arrive of ten thousand “Luri”, received by the king Behran-Gor, who asked them to his father-in-law, the Indian king Shangul... In spit of the legendary character of the text stay the relevant written evidence that a nomad population with Indian origin, reputed great talent musicians, arrive in Persia before the 10<sup>th</sup> Century.”



supposition interwoven with emigration process and the propagation of film communication can give us a possible answer to the gypsy represented film production phenomena in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The accentuation of some meanings of the social representation of gypsies in those times filled the film image of special contents, becoming attraction. Posing the relation between the reflection of reality (migration processes) with the fantasy and the fear about “the new”, “unknown” and “different”, in a growing industry of communication (arise of the movie), the representation of gypsy can become object of social sharing also through the attraction of the image (representation of the film in that time).

## **2. The Sixties and the Gypsy as the stereotype of freedom?**

- While in 1968 West Europe was characterised by student movements, general strikes and demonstrations that generally attacked the capitalistic system of production, in the regions of Eastern Europe a general level of discontent was expressed against the Soviet oppression and the communist ideology – that has its most representation in the Czech Spring. These years are considered as a kind of political “take of consciousness” expressing the desire and intention to change the given political system. The concepts of freedom and liberty entered in everyday speeches, as social slogans. In my supposition these social processes drawn up –without the claim of completeness- influenced in a large measure the increase of films representing gypsies, where the image of gypsy appeared as otherness filled with positive meanings of that social context representing freedom. The positive image - as well as the negative – was constructed around the extremely simplified and homogenized timeless image of travelling and thus not belonging indicating freedom in space and time. In this image nomadism is collocated in the absence of past and future, where the existence passes day by day in the everyday life. On the other hand in this image of freedom we can find the evaluative and normative system of our society, where the private property and the material goods, and thus the wellbeing constructed and obtained has a central role. From a historical point of view, the concept of property means to connect to the soil (space) and to think to the future (time), which are the necessary conditions to obtain the desired wellbeing. For the major societies the positive representation of gypsies reflects a new possibility of otherness, the symbol of the opposition to the given social being. The representation of the “Other” exists interwoven with the representation of self (Jahoda, 2001). Films use their proper instruments to exemplify and to emphasise, through this process reality becomes transcribed in a new unity, where the film image shows us the visible of a society. According to Sorlin (1977) “the visible of a period is what image producers try to pick up for transmit, and it is what the public of a film accepts without noise”. In the visible a society shows its interests, its obsessions (“fixation points”) and gives body of these elements through its representations. Than the visible takes it in account how society sees and interprets the world around itself, in other words, takes in account its ideology. “In short, the movie does not give

us an image of the society, on the contrary, what a society considers as an image, including a possible image of self, does not reproduce the reality, but the manner of deal with it” (Casetti, 1998, 141 o.).

- *Nouvelle Vague* can be another explicative hypothesis to the increase of films dealing with gypsies between 1968-1969. It was a movement of reflection on the cinema and on reality as well as a cinematographic production in France which immediately and explicitly put itself as a final break with the current way of making cinema. This philosophical and film movement afterwards has had a worldwide influence. A central landmark for this new generation of directors was André Bazin and his theorization of the ontological realism grounded. ”The consequence is that the realism in cinema – that is a psychological, technical and aesthetic realism at one time – is not a measure amongst many: it is what marks out its nature in the deepest way”. (Casetti, 1998, p.37). The basic principle of this movement is the refusal of authoritarianism as a value, with all its theoretical and practical consequences. It researches the expressive freedom in its language, in its creative systems and in its themes. Even if the film subject has not had a political background, they take position in the presentation of human values and they seek for new ways towards freedom. According to this movement the first step towards freedom is the exemption from the economic blackmail of the productive systems, so that a low budget, shooting on the road and everyday situations became the conditions for the realization of the cinematographic work. The central issue of their piece is the marginality of the man in front of the obtuse strength of the social mechanism. In this perspective the film art can see political value in the commitment beside the sociography of gypsy groups; the marginalized position, the social exclusion, the centuries survived prejudice, the appreciation of the culture of a minority can become standpoints motivating to the production.

In the beginning of the century films satisfy the need to anchor the unknown (American and English films, on its context through migration flows also “gypsies” arrives) keeping the colourful and exaggerated image of otherness (the image of the film self representation shows and differentiates). While in the Sixties the sociographical approach of otherness prevails, which symbolizes freedom both through the critics against the social system which appears throughout the exclusion of gypsy groups and through the freedom given as result of this exclusion.

## **1. Films holding the representation of gypsy: the content analysis of titles**

The global sense of a film is given by a variety of languages that stand in dynamic interaction one to each other. Very often it is difficult to express an opinion on the film when we come out from the movie because the interpretative processes on the experience often begin just in that moment. The interpretative

processes of the receiver depend on the *degree of openness* of the artistic piece (Eco, 1976), that is the indefiniteness of the meaning of the work's elements and of their relations. To construct a consistent meaning a social space is required, where people can compare their opinions, ideas with others. With the get on of the elaboration, taking into account the possibility of the first impressions radical change, the receiver will be able more and more to define deliberately his relation with the film. Indeed this process is activated before the vision of the film, when somebody decides to see it. The intention, than the choice are results of the first meeting with a set of elements of the given film, these elements try to guide our attention before the reception: the playbill, the trailer, the title, the plot, the film director, the advice of someone, and so on. Each of these elements sets up an ensemble of expectations, imagines and previsions, based on our current knowledge, vision of the world and system of values, Each one of this elements puts a *collusive proposal* (Carli, R. 1993) on the table. Each one of this elements puts itself as a pleasant mirroring. Each one of this elements lets sense the possibility of an authoritative alliance with the aim of supporting our point of view in a theme that is of interest to us.

## 1. Research question

Probably the most important and most complex function of film titles<sup>4</sup> is to give a „perspective of sense” to the elements that form the cinematographic work. The title has its existence out of the work and it points to the work. In pointing to the work the title takes its places in a particular linguistic system which is based on the *allusion* transmitting a collusive proposal. In this regard the title is the frame and the background that can bring some elements into relief in a particular moment, as well as give to other elements of the film the role of a rhythmical, aesthetical and argumentative support in the emerging determination of a sense. Title wants to influence the meaning forging on the receiver. Considering the heterogeneity of the fragments – framings, scenes and sequences - that compose a film in a more or less strong synergy with the significant action of the editing (Ejzentstejn, S. M. 1937), the role of the title in the fruition of a film can also be considered as a kind of „principle of Gestalt composition”. From this perspective the title can be considered as an **autonomous work** itself. Set out from this theoretical approach in the following section I would like to make inferences on the perspective of sense given by the titles of the gypsy representing films to the receivers. There are trends in their titling? Around which dimensions are constructed and what they suggest to the receiver on the representation of the gypsy?

## 2. Method of the content analysis and hypothesis

The titles of the 919 films were qualitatively content analysed through various dimensions:

---

<sup>4</sup> Between other function e.g.: the identification of the film, didactic description.

- First I examined the frequency of the word gypsy and its synonyms in the titles; its appearance as subject or a part of an attribute structure; the distribution in time. The hypothesis was that word gypsy as reference to otherness, will be used for attraction therefore more frequently. In addition the word gypsy will appear more frequently as subject, than attribution; with the aim to evoke a mental image closely connected to a concrete existence, rather than an abstraction and objectification process which refers to any kind of positive or negative ethical adhesion and therefore to a subsequent ideological principle. Finally I supposed that the distribution in time of the titles that deal with the word gypsy as a subject will be different from those titles where gypsy is an attribution. Based on the two peaks of the Tens and the Sixties and the social processes behind them I supposed to find gypsy, as subject more at the beginning of the century, while as an attribution more between the titles of the Sixties. The differences between the first reference of titles with and without the gypsy word in the title were also scrutinized.

- 919 titles can be examined as propositions or partial propositions. In the second segment titles were divided in the following five categories in relation to their main reference:

1. Persons; In this category entered all titles that refer to a person that activate the identity of the possible receiver given the possibility to identify, to project and to differentiate just through the perception of the title: E. g.: “Two little vagabonds”, “Four Devils”, Carmen, la hija de bandido”.

2. Objects; abstract concepts, infinitive actions or concrete, living (animals/plants) or inanimate objects were included in this category. E.g.: “Gypsy warning”, “The adventures of Dolly”, “The call of her people”, “Gitan jealousy”.

3. Time; These titles give to the receiver a perspective in time. E.g.: “One summer”'s day”, “Gypsy night”.

4. Space; The main aim of these titles to place the receiver between spatial delimitation. E.g.: “Under the greenwood tree”, “Eldorado”.

5. Actions expressed with a conjugated verbs; This category of titles abandons the abstract logical level that generally titles has choosing a more concrete level through the conjugation of the verb. E.g.: “Catch me and take me away”, “Wake up the gypsy in me”.

- For the third step all those titles where persons are nominated I categorized through two dimensions: according the names used in their nomination and the sociographic qualification of them. Concerning their nomination I distinguished between the titles if they refer to the person by his/her proper name or through a common name or a collecting name. From the sociographical point of view if the titles refers to children, to a man, to a woman or to a group.

- Finally I divided in subcategories the category of objects. Action, art, concrete object, body, love, nature, reference to a psychological state, justice, a concrete place, history, the metaphor of life, mystic concepts, abstract concepts, information, numbers were these subcategories.

In all steps I see the frequency of the different categories, in some cases crossing the used categories.

#### a. **Results**

##### *The concept of gypsy in the titles*

The word gypsy and its synonyms (zingaro, tzigane, gitano, bohemien, rom and so on) as hypothetical force of attraction only in the 30% of titles was used. It appeared nearly with the same quantity as a subject (54%) or an adjective (46%). Simultaneously was used in the titles to declare the “strangeness, otherness” of the represented subject (gypsy as subject) or to present the recognizable form constructed on similarity (gypsy as adjective). In the following graph the distribution on time of the gypsy term (as indicating a subject or an adjective) can be observed.

##### Graph distribution on time of gypsy term

The two type of using the word gypsy uniformly distributed in time. Just one tendency (statistically not proved) can be observed, that is opposite to the expected. While in the beginning of the century the two type of use spread equally, from the beginning of the Sixties the gypsy subject referring to a concrete existence is used more. Than the gypsy adjective to what refers? Or what the authors above all point to with its use? To answer to these questions I employed the categorizations emerged in the other analytical steps.

##### *The impersonification of the titles*

The categories employed in the second step of the analysis reflect the main reference of the titles, considered as partial statements. The 52,8% (486) of the titles refers primarily to persons (because of the collusive projective function of the title). Taking into account all those titles where persons are nominated (589), we can find an equal distribution of those which name a virtual male (33,2%), or female (34%) character or a group of persons (30,6%). The less used is that of children (3,6%), because titles were grouped in this category only with an explicit reference to childhood. In the impersonificated titles persons are called most frequently (43%) with a common name (boy, woman, man, girl, person), not so rare to call the virtual characters with their proper name (35%), and finally through a collecting name, their belonging (22%). In the 4. graph, we can observe that crossed the two classification standpoints female characters are mainly called with their proper name, this strategy in titling put the

female characters in a more personal light, than males, strengthening the gender stereotypes. If few persons are nominated in a given title, usually common names, but also collecting names are used. Defining persons through their belonging suddenly used also with the male and the child characters.

#### Graph 4

Finally we can find the gypsy term together with the 53% of collective characters, with the 34% of the male characters and with the 24% of the female characters. The term is mainly used as an adjective with the female characters, and as a subject with the male and collective characters.

#### *The world of objects as reference of film titles*

The second biggest category (31%) concerns the world of objects and concepts. These 258 titles were further categorized. The following categories arise in relation to their content: action, art, concrete objects, body, love, nature, psychological dimensions, right and justice, history, mystic elements, place, life, information, numbers. Graph 5 shows the distribution in percentage through these content categories.

#### Graph 5

The first sub-category is includes all titles that have as main objects verb derivations and delimits actions (es.: hunt, adventure, the squall, travel etc.). The 41% of this subcategory concerns travel. This subcategory is used more in the titles of American films (40%). If we consider the American production through the different subcategories, they use mostly that of action (25%), followed by the subcategory of body (14%) and nature (12%). In relation with the societal inferences of the first analysis it seems that the films of the first peak (1914-1915) - characterized mainly by American production and based in societal processes (migration waves) and film linguistic possibilities (film as succession of images) - use titles concerning action.

I found 35 films in relation to art. Above all dance (25%), melody (17,1% and music (14,3%) are drawn up in this subcategory. The 25,7% of this subcategory are English, the 17,1% are Turkish, the 14,3% are French film titles. An interesting result that between the 35 Turkish film titles 1/5 is in relation with the category of art, producing a direct and systematic relation with the historical origin of artistic ability of gypsies<sup>5</sup>. The French film titles in this category are about flamenco, Joseph Reinhardt (violin) and

---

<sup>5</sup> “in the Turkish Ottoman Empire the Gypsies became professional musicians and it is told they were payed very well in the case of feasts and ceremonies. They maintained the monopoly in this field learning to play very difficult instruments, such as the german psaltery, the violin, the Pan-pipes. So they kept this fortune inside the group handing it

Django Reinhard (guitar), who is the father of a new style, well known jazz named gypsy jazz. It is interesting to note that the 3 American film titles in this subcategory are about these jazz-musicians.

The subcategory of *concrete objects* (es.: clothes, food, flag, roulette, etc.) are present in 14% on the main category of “the world of objects”. The 37,8% of them refer to travel (camion, railway, roulette). This kind of title are used mainly by French films (37,14%). Through all the subcategories French films use more frequently that of concrete objects (25%), followed by nature (19,23%) and action (11%). It is easy to fit this data with the data that mainly French are the films in the second peak of the general production (1968-1969) which can be characterized by the realistic and everyday life supporting ideology of the Nouvelle Vague.

The subcategory of *body* (26%) seems to be related to passion, symbolized prevalently through two terms: blood and heart (together constitute the 88,5% of this category). Blood, as temperament, is anchored to American (4), Danish (4) and Russian (3) films. Heart, in a more romantic vision, principally anchored to French and German movie. In 59,3% of the titles of this subcategory, the “body” occurs together with the term “gypsy”. There are 7 films with the title “Gypsy blood”.

In the subcategory of *love* I found 27 film titles (10,1%). The terms more frequently used are love, romance, passion. Spanish movie uses more these titles (22,2%), followed by English (18,5%) and American (14,8%) film titles. At the same time considering all the subcategories Spanish (40%), Italian (25%) and Soviet (22%) films prefer to use in their title the concept of love.

The subcategory of *nature* (30,7%) contains objects, as fire, wind, star, river, plants and animals of various type. For the 38,4% are French for the 30,8% are American film titles. At the same time through all the subcategories French filmtitles use mainly this subcategory of the nature followed by the Hungarian (15,38%), THE Spanish (13,33%) and the American (12,5%) film titles.

In the subcategory of *history* I found only 10 film titles (3 American, 2 English, 2Hungarian, 2 German and a Spanish-English-Italian coproduction). Only in 4 there is an explicit reference to Holocaust. The presumable silence in the movie communication can be an effect of the not connection of the event with the minority.

### *Title as space*

Only the 10% of the whole population of titles has as main reference a spatial delimitation. On one hand most of them (50%) refer mainly to a real geographical space with the tendency of a space self-reference of the authors. A geographical name as a title of a film can give us the impression of a documentary. The

---

down from father to son”<sup>5</sup>... In *Gli zingari. Storia, tradizioni, lingua e cultura di un “popolo senza patria”* a cura di A. Arlati, F. Manna, C.Cuomo – Opera Nomadi di Milano – Numero speciale de *Il Calendario del Popolo*, Milano, Teti Editore, 1996.

intention of the authors could be to call the attention to the realism of the representation. On the other hand there are titles referring to general spatial unities (in the city, on the hill) or fantasy spaces (heaven, hell, Eldorado) that bring the spectator in an imaginary context, or titles relative to spaces of nature (wood, near the river, under the tree) or to the contextualisation of travel (on the road).

At last we can find the space of the world, vastness of infinity, that show us far horizons (sensation to be little in the circumstances beyond one's control). The first type of space definitions (real) gives us a sign of "presumed realism" of the authors, the second type of space definitions (unreal, generic, religious, natural, and associated with travel) channel the imagination towards contexts of sensations.

## Graph 6

### *Titles concerning the time*

I found 29 titles which has as main reference the time, In the 55% of the cases of this category the title has as reference the night. Beyond the unknown, secret, invisible and fear, related to the night, we can find also passion and sexuality in the collective imaginary. Moreover, in the book "The Monsters of Imaginary"<sup>6</sup>, Fortunati explain the conception of the monster (and of the wonder) in a historical perspective, connecting it with the meaning of the different in relation of the moment of the day. "To the daytime system of the imaginary belong the monsters of overplus, related to the archetype of the hero, who face up them and win with his sword: The giants, the orcus, the dragons or the monsters, as the wolf, are connected to the issue of devouring. To the night time regime, where the complete overturn of valour is attended and our revolution of the order of the things is realising, belong the monster for lack, as dwarfish, elf, gnomes related to the process of Gulliverisation and associated with the issue of swallowing" (Fortunati, 1995, p. 43). This supposition can be inquired through a film analysis.

### *Activating titles*

The category of action through a conjugated verb is only the 4,5% of all titles of the population. Usually, when we speak about titles, the partiality of the statement implicates the exclusion of a conjugated verb. Through this process the meaning will be interpretable in a more abstract way. Two different phenomenas can be observable in these "strange" titles. One is that one third of these titles (29,2%) are associated with the term gypsy. The second is that one third recalls a subjective perspective; as where somebody speaks to the fruitor through the title, or even as this somebody invite symbolically to act ("Prendimi e portami via" – Take me and bring me away or "Wake up the gypsy in me"). In this case the

---

<sup>6</sup> Fortunati, L. (1995), *I mostri nell'immaginario*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, p. 43



perspective of meaning becomes more specific and dynamic, and the proposal of interaction for the spectator is more explicit and almost obliged.

**b. Discussion**

The results of the titles content-analysis can be organized around two symbolic representational fields. I suppose that these two dimensions endow majorities to define gypsy as “otherness”. One of them is an action field, travel. The second is an emotional state, passion. The two dimensions are present both in a concrete level and in an abstract respect. The concept of travel itself emerges through infinitives in the American film titles produced mainly at the beginning of the century and through concrete objects in the titles of the French film mostly produced in the Sixties.

The passion is construable as love or as body and heart. The dimension of passion is represented also by the multitude of women called by their proper name. It is interesting to note that there are 61 versions on Merimée’s Carmen. The mysterious and exotic figure of Carmen was always contrasted to the proper codex of the female behaviour and to the morality of Europe of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>7</sup>. In a lot of artistic, musical and narrative products of the last century, the social representation of the gypsy female character suggests a free, strong, deviant, seducing and sensual figure. This romantic construct can be seen in direct opposition of the not gypsy female representation that includes a controlled, chaste and submissive behaviour originated in the ideal of the Victorian English and Catholic Europe. The author defines a moral position not only through the behaviour of the figure of gypsy Carmen, but also the behaviour attributed to her victim, Don José, the weak man, who loses everything, killing also the object of his desire. The definition thus regards not only the female immorality, but also the valour retained not appropriate of the male genre.

**Conclusions and future hypothesis: The social representation of gypsy in films**

Our visions of the world we share and compare with others through a multitude of communicational fields. The life of these perceptions, thoughts, contents, judgements depends simultaneously on how we can use them in our everyday life and how much they are accepted in the societal context around us. In this second process film play an important role, because it can move crowds and approach people to each other (industrial product) and because the moving of the interwoven image and text and its narrative

---

<sup>7</sup> Helbig, A.: New York City Opera Project: Carmen, Gypsies, Morality, sexuality.  
[www.columbia.edu/itc/NYCO/carmen/gypsies](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/NYCO/carmen/gypsies)

form (stressing the processes of projection and introjection) create a parallel world to our which also nourishes it.

In the following studies presented I make inferences about the social representation of gypsy through two dimensions related to world of films. In the first part of the study I started from the theoretical approach that we communication about an issue (all type of social objects, person, group or event) when in a given social context this issue becomes important. Moreover the specific linguistic features and thus its undertaken ideological perspectives of the communicational channel, in our case the film, have an impact not only on the content of the issue, object of communication, but even the quantity of the communication. In this way becomes important when we speak about something and what kind of linguistic possibilities we have to present our representation of it. The two projecting period of film productions about gypsies are 1914-1915 and 1968-1969. It seems both of them mediate the definition of 'gypsiness' as "otherness", the distinction from the society's self-image. However in the film communication of the period 1914-1915 the otherness presented reflects the deal with the new, with the unknown and the differentiation by it. While in the period 1968-1969 – chiefly, as a European product – the otherness as critics of the self-image (students and workers movements) and as its refusal mediated by an empathic emotional setting (French Nouvelle Vague ideological vocation) and the concept of freedom reflects a more concrete existence on the representation of the gypsy (gypsy as subject of the title; use of concrete objects and geographical delimitations in the titles).

In the second part of the study I content-analysed the titles of the films, as autonomous but interdependent works. I delimited two meaning dimensions. These two dimensions the conceptual nets of passion and travel give means to the members of the majorities in the identity (the self and the other) construction. I suppose the existence of two basic elements in the central nucleus of the representation of the gypsy, frozen and fixed in the centuries, transmitted also by movie communication without variations in time and space: passion and travel. To question how and how much these elements are present in the films we need the content analysis of the films themselves. At the same time in the following I would like to express some idea in relation to the general supposition that the contents concerning the social representation of gypsies rather a functionally created and used category of the majorities members than a set of features of a given group. In the process of construction of the proper (national, social, personal) identity through various dimensions come into existence the delimitation of the other (other, than me), which we endow with attributes often through our self-definition. Along which dimensions we define the otherness is a function of our system of values and our self-image.

From this perspective passion, as sensual love and hot temperament, historically associated to the denied and neglected kantian sublime and dominated by the reason and the moral and ethic values we transfer in the "other", who becomes cause of attraction and of repulsion and the same time. The result of the

attraction is the comparison with the other, while the differentiation through the comparison gives the possibility to the repulsion. The parallel dualism contemplates the role of consciousness and unconsciousness, fear and desire, emotion and reason, all living in the attribution of passion to the social representation of gypsy. On one hand the passion anchored in its excessively material acceptance becomes “wildness”, related to body and blood, to the innate temperament, on the other hand in an acceptance more abstract can be linked to the artistic creativity, with dance, with singing and with the music.

Travel, as permanent instability, creates an existence out from all time and space coordinates connected to the representation of the gypsy. In this representation the travel is associated to wandering without a reason and an goal, out of all kind of context. This conception of travel is not valid for majorities (animated by objectives in restricted fields of coordinate). The same time and space representations acquire – before on a economical and social level, after in a mental plan – higher and higher importance, the starting point of which process is roughly coincides with the arrival of Roma and Sinti groups in Western- Europe. Moreover give even explanations to the inclusion of local groups in the category of gypsyhood. In the eyes of majorities the not relation with stable space and time coordinates unties the figure of gypsy from concepts as private property, work, responsibility. Also in this case we have to do with the definition of the other in the comparison with the self, as well that acquires a positive meaning (freedom), as a negative one (thief). These two nested elements (travel and passion) provide a wide range of concepts in relation to the stereotype and to the prejudice of gypsies. Although the historically rooted interaction between the self and the other gives a background to these elements, in their remaining and spreading obstinately depend rather on the self-representation of whom are not gypsies, than on a real and continuous interaction widely present in the society

## Reference List

- Antonietto, A. (1985) Les tsiganes dans le cinéma in *Etudes Tsiganes* n. 4 (85) p. 41-49, Paris.
- Antonietto, A. (1985), Les tsiganes dans le cinéma in *Etudes Tsiganes* n. 3 (85) p. 37-45, Paris.
- Antonietto, A. (1986) Les tsiganes dans le cinéma, derniers tours de minavelle in *Etudes Tsiganes* n. 1 (86) p. 41-49, Paris.
- Arlati, A., Manna, F., Cuomo, C. (ed.) (1996): *Gli zingari. Storia, tradizioni, lingua e cultura di „un popolo senza patria”*. Il calendario del popolo. Milano, Teti editore
- Bateson, G. (1972) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind. Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. Chandler, San Francisco.
- Bigazzi, S. (2002) *The group functionality of social memories and social representations in the gypsy-gadjo case*, Paper presented in the 8<sup>th</sup> Summer School in S.R. & C.
- Carli, R. (1993) *L'analisi della domanda in psicologia clinica*, Giuffrè, Milano.
- Casetti, F. (1993), *Teorie del Cinema 1945-1990*, Bompiani, Milano.
- Casetti, F. (1999) *Dentro lo sguardo, il film e il suo spettatore*, Bompiani, Milano.
- Eco, U. (1976) *A nyitott mű poetikája: A nyitott mű*. Gondolat, Budapest.
- Ejzentstejn, S. M. (1937) *Teoria generale del montaggio*, Marislio, Venezia.
- Erős, F. (ed.) (1996) *Azonosság és Különbözőség*, Scientia Humana, Budapest.
- Fortunati, L. (1995), *I mostri nell'immaginario*, FrancoAngeli, Milano.
- Fraser, A. (1996) *A cigányok*, Osiris, Budapest.
- Halász, L. (1974): *A cigányok című film hatásának összehasonlító vizsgálata*. Budapest, MRT
- Halász, L. (1996) *Szociális megismerés és irodalmi megértés (Social perception and narrative comprehension)*, Akadémia kiadó, Budapest.
- Helbig, A. (2004): *New York City Opera Project: Carmen, Gypsies, Morality, Sexuality*. In [www.columbia.edu/itc/music/NYCO/Carmen/Gypsies](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/NYCO/Carmen/Gypsies):
- Holmes, V.C: (1978) *The german gypsy question in Britain, 1904-1906*. *JGLS* (4), 1/1978, p. 248-249.
- Jahoda, G. (2001) *Beyond stereotypes*, in *Culture & Psychology* 7(2), SAGE Publications, London, p. 181-197.
- Jodelet, D. (ed.) (1992), *Le rappresentazioni sociali*, Liguori, Napoli.
- Jovchelovitch, S. (1996) *In defence of Representation* in W. Wagner (ed.) *Social Representations Revisited*, Blackwell, Oxford, p. 121-131.
- Krackauer, S. (1962), *Film: ritorno alla realtà fisica*. Il Saggiatore, Milano
- Laszló, J, Stainton Rogers, W. (ed.) (2002), *Narrative Approaches in Social Psychology*, New Mandate, Budapest.

László, J. (2005): *Történetek tudománya*, ÚMK, Budapest

László, J. (2001), *Societal Psychology, History, Identity and Narratives*. Paper presented to the „Theory and method in Societal Psychology” EAESP Small Group Meeting, 26-29 April, Pécs, Hungary

László, J. (1999), *Társas tudás, elbeszélés, identitás*, Scientia Human, Budapest.

László, J., Forray, K. (2002) *A Roma közösség kultúrája és iskolai pszichológiája*, PTE BTK, Pécs.

Ledda, L., Pau, P. (1994) *Gente del mondo, voci e silenzi delle culture zingare*, Artemide Edizioni, Roma.

Mamontoff, A. M. (1999), *Integration des Gitans, apport des representations sociales*, Cahiers Internationaux de psychologiesociale, 29, 1, 64-77

Moscovici, S. & Perez, J.A. (1997) *Representations of Society and Prejudices*, Papers on Social Representation, volume 6, p.27-36.

Moscovici, S. (1984), *The Phenomenon of Social Representation* in R. Farr & S. Moscovici (ed.) *Social Representation*; Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 3-70.

Moscovici, S. (2001) *Why a Theory of Social Representation?* In K. Deaux & G. Philogéne (eds.) *Representations of the Social*, Blackwell, Oxford.

Piasere, L. (2003) *Breve storia dei rapporti rom e gage in Europa*. In D'Isola, Baldoni, Sullam, Baldini, Frassento (eds.) *Allaperiferia del mondo*, Fondazione Roberto Franceschi, Milano.

Prédal R. (1996): *Cinema:cent'anni di storia*, Baldini&Castoldi, Milano.

Prónai, Cs. (ed.) (2000), *Nyugat-Európa, Új Mandátum*, Budapest.

Ricci Bitti, P.E., Zani, B. (1983) *La comunicazione come processo sociale*, Mulino, Bologna.

Szigeti, F.A. (2005): *A cigány tematika megközelítése a II világháború utáni magyar filmművészetben* in [www.romapage.hu/rovatok/tud/tudomány.php](http://www.romapage.hu/rovatok/tud/tudomány.php)

Sorlin, P. (2005): *Sociologie du cinéma*. Editions Aubier Montaigne, Paris.

Wagner, W., Hayes, N. (2005): *Everyday discourse and common sense, the theory of social representations*. Palgrave Mcmillan, New York.

Wagner, W. (1998) *Social Representations and Beyond, Brute Facts, Symbolic Coping and Domestic Worlds in Culture & Psychology* 4/(3), SAGE Publications, London, p. 297-329.

Winstedt, E. O. (1912-1913), *The gypsy Coppersmiths' invasion of 1911-1913/GL(2),6*