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# Tony Gatlif prompted by Cécile Kovacshazy: I am not here to speak about the ‘Gypsy problem’

Cécile Kovacshazy

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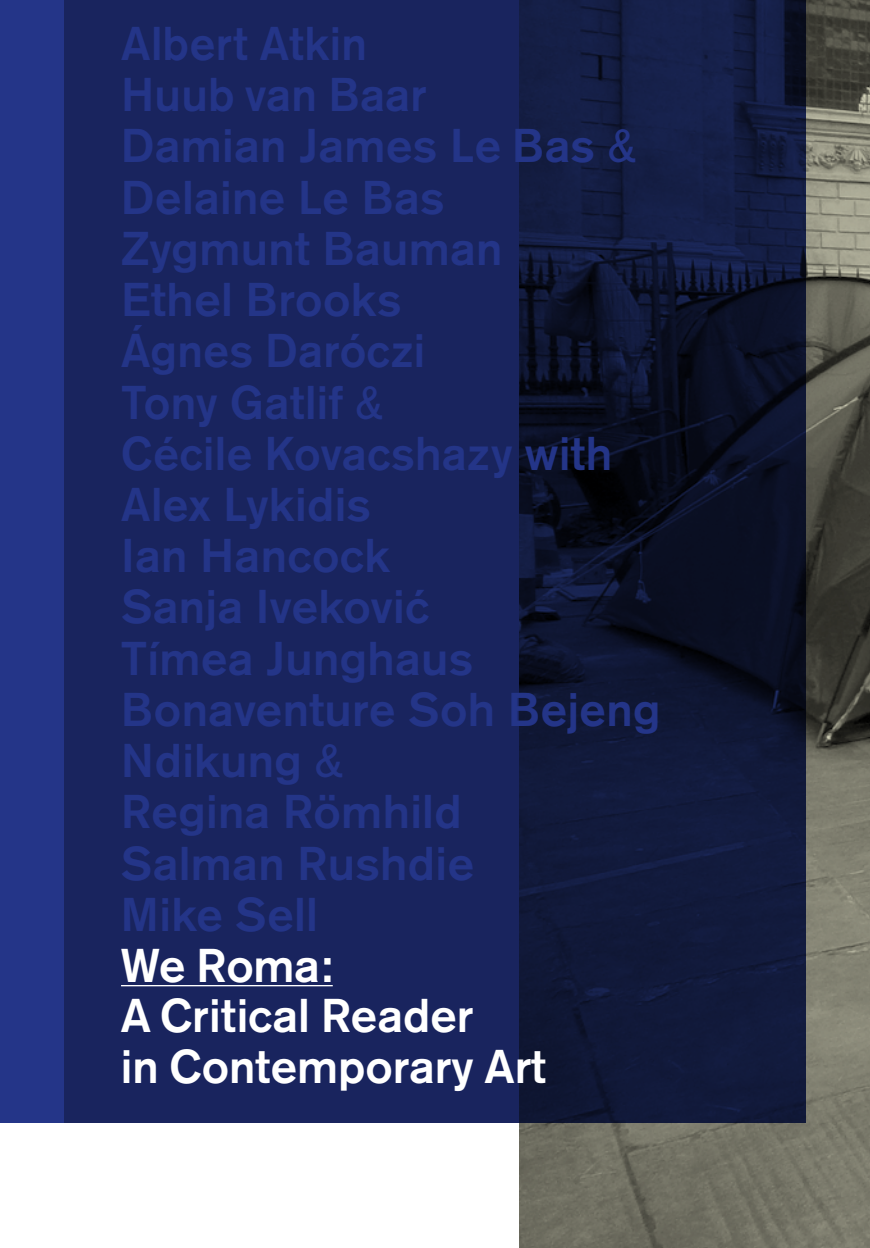
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**We Roma:  
A Critical Reader  
in Contemporary Art**



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# We Roma: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art

Edited by Daniel Baker and Maria Hlavajova

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Tony Gatlif prompted by Cécile  
Kovacshazy with film synopses  
by Alex Lykidis  
I Am Not Here to Talk About the  
“Gypsy Problem”

Tony Gatlif: I'm not here to talk about myself or to talk about the so-called “Gypsy problem.” I am here to present images. Images of something that is close to my heart, namely images of a global Roma population, neglected by most of the world since the Middle Ages. In the 1970s, when I discovered the misery they were living in, and how non-Roma—non-Manouche, non-Yenish people—spoke about them without holding back, and full of ignorance, I found that repugnant. That was when I began to rebel. A rebellion without violence asking: Who are you talking about?! Are you talking about Roma, Manouche, Kale, Yenish? No! You speak of criminals who ought to be locked in prisons. Roma are the sum of many, many families, not “just” a people. Of course, it is a culture, but first and foremost it is a family.

Cécile Kovacshazy: Exactly. And even when one talks about Roma without the all too usual link to criminality, according to preconceived ideas made up by non-Roma. Such references are often a total fantasy, or false truths that become shamelessly generalized.

TG: Yes, it's a fantasy—a nightmare in fact. What people should do is spend some time with Roma, not drive straight past the places where they live, projecting that there is an imminent danger there, that you will be caught, cut up into pieces and eaten. In the 1970s and 1980s, I traveled to many places, to Turkey, to Spain. . . and when people spoke to me about areas where Roma live, they always warned me not to go there. “Don't be stupid,” I would reply. “They are my friends!”

We must seek other examples to be able to think otherwise. I traveled all over Andalusia with a friend of mine, a flamenco singer, around 1990. It was part of my research for *Latcho Drom* (1993). I returned to places that I thought I knew well from

working on another film a decade prior to this, *Canta Gitano* (1982). Things were different this time around: there were no Roma. People from Sacromonte, a famous Gitano borough, were now parked in Polygon, an unsavory neighborhood on the outskirts of Granada. When I finally found my old friends, they welcomed me straight away. In a bar my friend once said to me: "If a 'Gypsy' doesn't cheat you when you come in, he cheats you when you leave." That said it all! We perhaps can't get rid of the old fantasies against Roma. But we should try, and certainly in art, to put forward the new, more positive ones.

These fears and these fantasies about Roma, everything they have been blamed for, have been going on for centuries. Take old writings by Romantic novelists for example, from Miguel de Cervantes to Victor Hugo, who portrayed them as responsible for all wrongdoing, as lawless people. Remember the story about Esmeralda, a girl who had been stolen by an old "Gypsy" woman, an aged "Egyptian" as people said at the time, who put Quasimodo in her place? Clearly, it is not a true story, but it has been read by multiple generations of school children, who remember the crime forever. The picturesque literature of this sort has caused enormous harm. Hugo, by virtue of his fame, set off a poor image of Roma.

CK: Perhaps we should start by cleaning that fantasy mistaken for reality.

TG: You might be right. In the 1990s, when I started looking at these subjects, that was what I took issue with. Not to engage in the identity politics, but rather to create a context within which the questions of honor could be argued anew. And it is part of this effort to demonstrate that a lot has happened simply because of what was written about Roma, particularly in novels as we have just discussed.

In the lead-up to making my first short film *Canta Gitano*, I met writer Matéo Maximoff through a chaplain named André Barthélémy who was working with the Kalderash, a Roma subgroup, in Montreuil. He was wonderful. He learnt Romani to encourage Roma to come to church. He acted as a benefactor, helping them fill in official papers, etc. I began to understand just how many Roma had been sent to concentration camps. I was an actor before, but I had had enough of "acting" and I said, "I'm going to make a film about this." *Canta Gitano* is about Roma deportation, because I couldn't bear the fact that so painfully little was known about Roma deportations and the Holocaust. With Matéo, we took all the Kalderash people in a lorry and drove to the countryside. Then I met Mario Maya in Arles, a fantastic and famous Roma dancer and choreographer from Granada. He was very young at the time. All gaje like "Gypsy" music, so we would tell them what they wanted to hear through music. He joined me immediately. We created a song, we wrote the music, and we made a film about the war with the Nazis.

We must change the image other people have of Roma. We must start by telling them the cruel truth: "You have killed them in their thousands!" It is said that 500,000 were exterminated during WWII. That's the hard but important place to start from. Instead of rejecting and accusing Roma of everything, we need to start by recognizing that it is we, society at large, who are guilty. As an approach to making a film, for example, it's quite a provocative, confrontational one I think, even though *Canta Gitano* didn't get much recognition. But since then, I have never stopped working for recognition—the recognition not for myself but for Roma. It might be that if I had chosen another subject, I would be better known and speaking to a much larger audience. But the audience I have acquired, however modest, is absolutely the most wonderful one, helping me to pursue my





cause to which I as an artist have dedicated 30-plus years of work. This work is focused on an image; it involves changing the image, and in fact it is geared at creating circumstances in which this new image can be understood and hopefully accepted. That was the aim of *Les Princes* (1983), where I demonstrated that the settlement process carried out by French President Charles de Gaulle in 1969 in transit towns completely destroyed the communities of French Roma. The French got rid of the anthropometric identity card in 1969, but kept the “nomad’s card.”<sup>1</sup> The forced settlement process involved burning caravans. These transit towns that used to exist, and still exist in Strasbourg and Montpellier for example, are camps where you can put your fist through walls because they are so thin, made of polystyrene. I showed that in *Les Princes*: some people are scared of people who live in caravans, so they hunt them, settle them by force, and once these Roma are in the towns, because they can’t work, because people won’t employ them, they can’t pay their rent, electricity, so the riot police are called and they are expelled. And once they are out, what do they become? Nomads.

In my film, there is a character inspired by a true story in Nice. A grandmother took to the road by herself, between 1979 and 1980, as a protest—long before the *Marche des Beurs* in 1983.<sup>2</sup> She informed all the journalists, thanks to her granddaughter who knew how to read and write, but not a single journalist came. She walked north for miles, but nobody cared. *Les Princes* tried to show that what is lacking is respect, and

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the anthropometric identity card and employment issues experienced by Roma whose legal status in France became bound to the term nomad in the early twentieth century, see Karola Fings, *In the shadow of the Swastika: The Gypsies during the Second World War*, vol. 2 (Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1999). Eds.

<sup>2</sup> The *Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racism* [March for equality and against racism], commonly referred to as *Marche des Beurs*, is an antiracist march that occurred in France and involved over 60,000 people. It lasted from 15 October to 3 December 1983, starting in Marseille and ending in Paris, whereupon a delegation met with then French President François Mitterrand. Eds.

that often the only thing gaje are interested in is the surface of things: places like Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer and folklore, but not the social aspects—and certainly not the Roma people themselves.<sup>3</sup> I think *Les Princes* was the first social documentary to speak about and to Roma in France. Writer and filmmaker Guy Debord helped me to promote the film. He became a good friend at the same time. He liked the film immensely, because he understood its message, that Roma are people who you can’t just boss around, and that even a grandmother acting alone can make a difference by protesting on the roads. That they mustn’t be settled by force; they are unique, not interchangeable.

It is mainly a film about changing the image we have of Roma. About nomadism, education, and the need to eliminate racism—from the heads and imaginations of teachers and white children, with whom they need to share the desks at school.

And there is no such thing as “assimilation” of a Roma! If you assimilate a Roma, (s)he isn’t a Roma anymore. You’ve got to allow a space for the Roma culture. Instead, we treat the difference as a sort of a disease, a sickness. You mustn’t “help” them as if they were sick children. You mustn’t give them a wheelchair when they know how to walk.

CK: Further, *integration* and *assimilation* are not the same thing. Integration means including people while keeping their specific cultural characteristics, whereas assimilation means that they lose all of their specific characteristics. I would also like to clarify that the people you are talking about most of the time are Gypsies who live in caravans. But most Roma in Europe are sedentary and live in houses—we estimate 99 percent do so.

<sup>3</sup> Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer in Camargue, France is the site of an annual pilgrimage made by Roma who once there venerate their patron

saint, Black Sara. Roma camp for 8 to 10 days and many are baptized in the Church of the Saints. Eds.

**TG:** I was fed up with people not understanding anything, such as the history of where the different Roma peoples originate from, so I said to my producer that I didn't want to make films anymore! Or that I would make a major film. I went away with a small team for a year, without coming back to France, and I filmed. There are Roma all over the world. I traveled what could be called the Roma road, from India to Spain and even to Algeria because I was born in Algeria and there were Roma all over the place there. The producer, Michèle Ray-Gavras, asked me what it would be about. I replied: "It won't be about anything!" The film won't have any commentary, because talking about Roma isn't always the best way to communicate who they are. Looking at the past, we know almost nothing; there are very few pages about Roma in any books we read. For *Latcho Drom*, I told my producer that the music would do the talking, that it isn't folklore, or a concert, that I am going to film Roma at home. About why and how they learn this music, and how they transfer it from one country to another, how they are inspired by one country or another. I would follow this music, these people, and their landscape.

**CK:** And a people's suffering.

**TG:** The producer agreed immediately. She was interested in the music, and I was interested in the image. So I set off. I began in India. Then Egypt. It was beautiful; the people were beautiful. The children were poor, but they had wonderful pearly white smiles. The women were magnificently beautiful. Because the way they looked at you was frank and luminous. I continued my journey in Turkey where things got a little darker: just a little because Turkish Roma have kept their roots, maintaining the happy air that was characteristic of their culture in India. But when I reached Romania, it was sinister. It isn't Roma who are sinister, it is that the situation in Romania during the Ceaușescu

era was catastrophic for Roma; you could see the suffering in their eyes. I was filming a catastrophe, which wasn't what I wanted to do in the film, but you could—and had to—see it. The further we traveled into Europe in the film, the more people were suffering. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, there was misery, not to mention the tragic circumstances in Hungary. The same in France. In Spain it was horrific. . . .

But musically they were extraordinary. Like in Rajasthan. When they picked up the cimbaloms, their bows, it was fantastic. Double-bass strings were too expensive, so they had used red, yellow, and blue electric wires instead. Not one instrument was in tune, because it was cold and people went outside quickly to play. But the music had such power and unbelievable emotion. Even though it wasn't written down and they hadn't rehearsed, they just started. As in India or elsewhere in the East, the music involves somebody starting, then somebody else, then the next, and so on. With a glance, after a section, they say "my turn" and off they go. In music, everybody is a conductor.

*Alex Lykidis: Latcho Drom (1993) is comprised of a series of musical performances that partially retrace the medieval migration of Roma from the Indian subcontinent through North Africa and Anatolia into Europe. The first performance takes place in Rajasthan, India followed by ones in Egypt, Turkey, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, France, and Spain. At each location, Roma play music and dance, their friends and family acting as their impromptu audience. Between performances, we catch glimpses of the daily lives of the performers and witness them traveling with various modes of transport from their current location to an unspecified elsewhere. Gatlif avoids the perils of culturalism by emphasizing the socio-economic conditions that have shaped the evolution of Roma cultural practice. For instance, the Egypt sequence begins with close shots of a man and woman hammering a piece of metal into shape; soon a girl starts to dance and a young man begins to beat a drum to the rhythm of the hammering, suggesting a link between cultural forms and material histories of labor and industry. In the Romanian sequence, we hear for the first time an overtly political song that castigates Nicolae Ceaușescu for his despotic rule during the Communist era. This and other songs*



that follow, notably one about Auschwitz-Birkenau performed by a Hungarian Holocaust survivor, highlight the significance of oral storytelling to Roma historical recollection and commemoration. The travelogue structure of *Latcho Drom* emphasizes the cultural affinities between Roma and North African people, something important to Gatlif given his Algerian origins. These connections are foregrounded in Gatlif's later films as well: in the performative interactions between Tomatito and Sheikh Ahmad Al Tuni in *Vengo* (2000), in the musical friendship between Khalid and Miraldo in *Swing* (2002), and in the shared narrative function of Roma and North Africans as affective influences on a French couple traveling southward in *Exils* (2004). At the end of *Latcho Drom*, La Caita (who reappears in *Vengo*) sings on the outskirts of an abandoned tenement block, the site of an earlier eviction of Roma tenants; sitting plaintively on the hills overlooking the tenement below, she strikes a lonely yet powerful figure. The social isolation of a Roma character in this scene, a recurrent trope in Gatlif's oeuvre, evokes the forced marginalization and segregation of Roma throughout their history.

*Latcho Drom* was a hymn, and it had to be done immediately. It is a positive thing that has helped to change young people's ideas. Through *Latcho Drom*, young people understood that there was another kind of music. Because it was at the start of *world music*, to which we have all contributed by holding Roma music festivals and so on. In *Swing* (2002) too, I introduced Manouche music because it was totally unknown at the time.

A few years later, I went back to France and something happened to me that was very revealing. I was in a bar. A small group was playing Manouche music, very good Manouche music with a double bass and guitar. I congratulated them and asked them which families they were from, Montreuil, Strasbourg. . . . They were very surprised and told me that they were from here, that the music was "their" music. I then asked them what their group's name was. Their answer: *Gadjo dilo*. How about that! They weren't Roma, and they played magnificently. I was proud that non-Manouche people could take Manouche music and play it so well. Today, everybody plays Manouche music.

AL: *Gadjo dilo* (1997) and *Swing* (2002) both begin on the road with young Frenchmen on their way to Roma settlements in search of cultural knowledge (on the outskirts of Bucharest, Romania, and Strasbourg, respectively). In *Gadjo dilo*, Stephane is a young man who wants to record Roma music like that of Nora Luca, his father's favorite singer. In *Swing*, Max is a boy who wants to learn to play the jazz guitar in the style of the Manouche, like the famous Django Reinhardt. Stephane and Max come under the stewardship of Roma father figures (Izidor and Miraldo) and become enamored by a Roma woman or girl (Sabina and Swing) who teach them about Roma customs. Initially seeking only cultural knowledge, Stephane and Max soon come to realize that the Roma way of life is more important than the community's cultural production. This is made clear in the final scene of *Gadjo dilo* when, after Izidor's son is killed, Stephane decides to destroy all his recordings of Roma music, burying them in the ground, pouring alcohol over them and dancing on their "grave" as he has seen Roma do at an earlier funeral. Stephane and Max embody the utopian investments that have historically informed outside interest in Roma culture. From the novels of Alexander Pushkin and Leo Tolstoy to the films of Emir Kusturica, Roma characters have been used to symbolize the desire to escape the social constraints of modern life. While Miraldo and Izidor display the *élan* stereotypically associated with Roma identity, they also leverage the outside interest in their culture to attain social or economic advantages, such as improved relations with the state and their non-Roma neighbors: Miraldo, who cannot read or write in French, asks Max to write letters for him to the state welfare agency and Izidor hopes to earn the respect of non-Roma villagers by showing off Stephane to them at a local bar. The importance of reorienting outside interest in Roma culture towards the socio-economic empowerment of the community is further highlighted by the sudden deaths of Izidor's son and Miraldo that remind us of the disjunction between Roma cultural visibility and destitution. In both films, Gatlif stresses the inseparability of culture from everyday life by blurring the boundaries between musical performances and the rest of the narrative: in *Swing*, for instance, we witness one of Miraldo's friends pluck a barbed wire fence and along with the sounds of a barking dog create music that hauntingly evokes the Holocaust; in another scene, Miraldo encourages his wife to stop peeling potatoes, pick up her violin and join the rest of the band. Both *Gadjo dilo* and *Swing* self-consciously acknowledge the uneven power dynamics that structure the reception of Roma culture by mediating our access to it through non-Roma characters, who we meet first in the narrative and whose journeys of discovery mirror our own as spectators. The ending of *Swing* complicates our carefree immersion in Roma culture: Swing sits sobbing in front of a dilapidated school building after being abandoned by Max at the end of the summer; by her side lies a notebook given to her by Max full

of his observations on the Manouche that Swing is unable to read. The inadequacy of Max's notebook for Swing symbolizes the limited value of our own interest in Roma culture in light of the discrimination that many Roma continue to face today.

**CK:** I love what the old Roma says in *Gadjo dilo*: "In France, people love Gypsies, in France, all the Gypsies have a job." The Roma character being naively sincere and the French author of course not at all.

**TG:** Yes, it was to annoy the politicians. *Gadjo dilo*, you can't imagine how much of an impact it had. The impact has been enormously positive and useful. *Gadjo dilo* is useful. *Latcho Drom* is useful. It isn't the same thing as being *in the service of* or being paternalistic. For example, I made *Liberté* (2009) because I couldn't cope with the lack of knowledge among Roma and non-Roma about the WWII period in France anymore. Roma were sent to camps too! After *Vengo* (2000) I had an accident and I told myself that I absolutely had to make a film about the deportation before something happened to me.

**AL:** *Vengo* (2000) tells the story of Caco, the patriarch of an Andalusian Roma family embroiled in a bitter feud with a rival clan. Caco organizes parties attended by famous Roma musicians to lift the spirits of his physically disabled nephew, Diego, the likely target of the rival clan's retribution. Diego's disability and the casting of Antonio Canales, a renowned flamenco dancer, in the dramatic role of Caco undermine the stereotype of the carefree, naturally performative "Gypsy." Roma performativity is further denaturalized through an emphasis on the unglamorous economic realities of cultural production, highlighted by the coexistence of dancing and prostitution in Caco's nightclub and the fact that the manager of the singer La Caita also works as a street cleaner. Gatlif thus captures the paradox of cultural visibility and socio-economic marginalization felt by many Roma. The focus on the gathering phases and aftermaths of performances in *Vengo* draws our attention to the socially invisible gendered labor that sustains Roma communities: we see, for example, old women dressed in black clean up after an outdoor party and help a drunk Caco into the house. *Vengo* is best known for its crowd-pleasing musical performances, but equally note-

worthy is the way Gatlif politicizes spectatorship by delineating between internal and external investments in Roma culture. In the opening scene, we are at first situated within the intimacy of the stage where Tomatito and Sheikh Ahmad Al Tuni are performing, surrounded by a small group of standing patrons. A cut then reveals another, larger audience seated in chairs in front of the stage, whose presence feels like an intrusion because we are made aware of it so late in the scene. During a later performance by La Caita in a restaurant, several Spanish soldiers walk over and stand ominously behind her in silence as she sings for Caco and his family. Only near the end of the scene do the soldiers defuse the tension by applauding approvingly. The unease we feel during these performances destabilizes our spectatorial pleasure by reminding us of the structural violence, such as the coerced Roma performances in Nazi concentration camps, that has often accompanied outside interest in Roma culture. The film's tragic conclusion, in which Caco's agonizing death is accompanied by the sounds of industrial machinery, serves as an ironic commentary on the continued exclusion of many Roma from the benefits of modernity.

I was frightened because I detest death. I put it off and put it off, but there came a time when I told myself I had to do this project. But how could I make a film about Manouche deportation while still being useful? Manouche rarely go to the cinema. The film wasn't a great success. But in one of the clauses in my contract, I put that once the film had been released commercially, after two months, all Roma—and mainly Manouche, Yenish, etc., associations would be entitled to show the film without paying anything. When Manouche called on me to ask me what the conditions were for them to show *Liberté*, I told them: "Do it, it's free. Just don't charge anything if you show it." Without this clause, the film would not have been useful. And now the film is shown all over France. To begin with, I went to screenings, and I took part in the debate. But after a while, I stopped and I said to the Manouche who were in the room: "I'm not going to talk on your behalf, come and take the microphone." And I managed to get them to talk about their forebears who had been interned, in Poitiers, in Saliers, etc. They spoke about everything that had happened. And I thought it was important for everybody to speak, both Roma and non-Roma. This film, *Liberté*, doesn't belong to me.





CK: Decolonizing imagination, that's what it is you do with your work, and that is also something that I believe I invest in myself when I write about or translate books by Roma for a wider audience. Few people know such remarkable examples of literature like, say, Lakatos' novel *Füstös képek* [Smoky pictures]. I especially love the dark humor at the end around an account of Roma in 1939, and their happiness in learning they would take a train that they had been promised would lead them somewhere they would find work. "Work," the magic word, the word they all dreamed of. Because work is the only way, they think, to escape from misery, hunger, cold, and the unending discrimination that is their experience.

Or the book I am currently translating is *Katzenstreu* by Stefan Horvath. He is a Burgenland Roma, who has written about the racist attack that took place in Oberwart in 1995 against Roma to "clean the minorities out of Austria." There was a sign next to the bomb: "Roma, back to India." One of the author's sons was among the people killed in the attack. The narrator-author explains that he doesn't want to tell the story, he doesn't want to speak in public, but a sort of voice inside him has driven him to testify on behalf of "we Roma," to tell the tale, which he has chosen to do through literature. He becomes a spokesman for people without a voice, and as he talks about the 1995 attack, about barbed wire, "memories" of Auschwitz-Birkenau come back to him. These "memories" are peculiar since Horvath was born *after* the end of the war. I find it fascinating: Horvath has a memory of something he didn't experience himself. In each chapter, he puts himself in the skin of different characters: the victim's father, the killer, the killer's parents, the "brave" people from the bar on the corner. One might suggest Horvath is a kind of second-hand witness, defined by his own terms that are markedly different from those of the original witness.

TG: I agree, these are remarkable works, I love them. And you know what? At their core, like in my films somehow, there is a desire to live a dignified life. As we talked about image and imagination. . . they concern not only Roma, but everybody. Given the times in which we live, this possibly means we *all* need to embark on the long journey of indignation against injustices of various sorts. Non-Roma have a great deal to learn from the Roma people about the enduring fights against the injustices of the world. We might be pushing off from different starting points, but the fight for another world is one we ought to share nonetheless.

AL: *Indignados* (2012) follows the anti-austerity protests waged in Greece, Spain, and other parts of Europe since 2010, which can be understood as acts of performative violence aiming to disrupt the hegemonic narratives of European neoliberalism. These political performances are responses to the deepening inequalities and exclusions of contemporary European societies. Gatlif has investigated the relationship between performance and social context throughout his career, so he was ideally positioned to address the protest movements. The film features documentary footage of the protests embedded within a fictional narrative about an unnamed African immigrant (Mamebetty Honoré Diallo; credited as Betty) who travels to Greece, France, and Spain in search of a better life. In many of Gatlif's earlier films, musical performances function as spectacles that complicate the forward momentum of fictional narratives. In *Indignados*, staged cultural performances are replaced with unscripted political protests that include their own forms of performativity: raising banners, beating drums, jumping, marching, chanting. Gatlif highlights the musicality of social and political gestures by merging diegetic sounds, such as that of Madrid protesters hitting metal barriers, with acoustic arrangements on the film's non-diegetic soundtrack. He also blurs the distinction between performance and everyday life by showing affective rituals occur within quotidian contexts. In one scene, Egyptian immigrants embrace for an extended period of time after hearing news of the successful protests against the Mubarak regime in Cairo, and later several men hold one of their hands enigmatically *over their eyes*. *Indignados* echoes the confrontational narrational style of its source material, Stéphane Hessel's manifesto *Time for Outrage!*, a major influence on the anti-austerity protests. Hessel's words are used as textual narration in the film, which contains many other types of direct address: people looking into the camera, close-ups of slogans written on banners, shirts or walls, and a staged

performance by a flamenco dancer. Gatlif's positioning of the anti-austerity protests within an immigrant narrative mirrors Hessel's linkage of discrimination against immigrants to the economic injustices of the neoliberal era. Hessel also connects immigration issues to the plight of Roma, something paralleled by Betty's interactions with benevolent Roma characters throughout *Indignados*. Gatlif manages to provide a hopeful perspective on the current conjuncture: Betty's mantra throughout the film is: "It'll be alright." Her ability to travel across borders connects the different protest movements to each other and functions as a utopian transcendence of the increasingly draconian measures used to keep immigrants out of Europe. Transcendence is also achieved visually through repeated images of clouds and tree tops, often from Betty's point of view as she lies down and looks up at the sky. In the film's bleaker moments, we see Betty harassed by police, incarcerated, fingerprinted, and deported. In these scenes, the social alienation of immigrants is emphasized by situating the police off-screen in order to evoke the impersonality and ubiquity of state surveillance and discipline.

This text consists of fragments from a conversation between Tony Gatlif and Cécile Kovacshazy in summer 2012, as well as film synopses by Alex Lykidis. The conversation has been translated from French by Language Unlimited.





**We Roma: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art** inquires into the contemporary moment through the lens of Roma artistic and intellectual practices, gathering knowledge from the Roma way of life. As the so-called West's misconceptions of itself, inherited from the legacy of the modern, are being unmasked through unprecedented shifts in politics, society, aesthetics, and economics—what can we learn from the commonalities among political struggles of historically marginalized communities such as Roma and in what we know as majority society? With the emblematic claim in the artistic imaginary “we Roma,” including in it wider society—how can we invoke the possibility of a different world and alternative futures? Artists, theorists, writers, and activists—both Roma and non-Roma—speculate on such questions and the possibility of art to imagine the world otherwise.

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