"Double Coding" in Roma and African American Filmic Representation: A Diachronic Comparison

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This paper addresses how we might analyse films by way of double coding or dual address, a phenomenon that refers to the way that performances, images, and situations in film can be decoded differently by two distinct populations.[1] In this piece, I reference how images are received and decoded by the minority population represented in film, Roma and African Americans specifically, as opposed to the ways in which the same images could be interpreted by majority populations. To illustrate this in practice, I employ a diachronic approach comparing similarities between the themes and dual address in films made by African American artists with large African American casts from the 1970s, or the decade following the United States Civil Rights movement, to Central and Southeast European films following the post-European Union expansion (2004–present) with large numbers of Romani people in the casts, so included in my analysis are European films produced in EU member and non-member states. I compare these films thematically and draw on my previous work linking similarities between African Americans and Roma and their path to legal equality and diverse representations.[2] European Romani populations and African Americans share a number of similarities, primary among them is their enduring marginalised positions in their societies. They are also linked in their perceived difference from the majority and their racialised positions within their societies. By referring to racialised perspectives, I recognize that describing individuals through the frame of "race" is commonplace in

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1 Bial, Henry: Acting Jewish. Negotiating Ethnicity on the American Stage and Screen, Ann Arbor 2004, p. 3.
2 Rucker-Chang, Sunnie: Challenging Americanism and Europeanism. African Americans and Roma in the American South and European Union "South," in: Journal of Transatlantic Studies 16.1 (2018), pp. 181–199.

American society and scholarship, but typically minimally utilized, if not absent, in European frames of reference. However, positioning race outside of European contexts of identity ignores the consistent externalisation of minority populations whose origins lie outside of what majorities consider to be "European" – i.e. white.[3] Race, as I use it in this chapter, relates to the inflected position of minorities and is not necessary bound to "biological conceptions of race but on institutional and biopolitical mechanisms, which differentiate populations into subgroups having varied access to means of life and death."[4] Moreover, this notion of race relies on the fact of "blackness" and positions these minority groups as distant from the ideal, or whiteness, or a system of socio-political supremacy benefitting those who have access to power and can take advantage of structures that support their advancement.[5] This opposition renders these groups perennially left to "exist in relation to" the dominant group.[6]

The inflected position of blackness remains true in both the American and European contexts.[7] The question of who belongs and who does not is framed by discourses of the nation and its core, or fundamental aspects of what the dominant members of the nation believe it to be.[8] Given that film reflects the desires, goals, and fears of a nation among other things, race, as it surfaces through film, provides a powerful component of the dialogue on the relationship of racialized minorities to the nation. The films I analyse accommodate at least two audiences, and in doing so provide a means to understand the competing forces of inclusion and exclusion of Romani communities in the chaotic period of post-EU expansion (2004–present), and African Americans in the 1970s, an equally tumultuous period where African Americans sought to rectify the failures of the Civil Rights movement of the previous decade, mobilising their "blackness" to demand not just political equality but social

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3 El-Tayeb, Fatima: European Others. Queering Ethnicity in Post-National Europe, Minneapolis 2011, p. xvii.

4 Chari, Sharad / Verdery, Katherine: Thinking between the Posts. Postcolonialism, Postsocialism, and Ethnography after the Cold War, in: Comparative Studies in Society and History 51.11 (2009), pp. 6–34.

5 For more on the discussion of whiteness see Mills, Charles: The Racial Contract, Ithaca 2004; Harris, Cheryl: Whiteness as Property, in: Harvard Law Review 106.8 (1993), pp. 1707–1791.

6 Fanon, Frantz: The Fact of Blackness, in: id.: Black Skin, White Masks, London 1952, p. 83.

7 For more on the discussion of racial formation(s) in both Europe and the US see Omi, Michael / Winant, Howard: Racial Formation in the United States, Abingdon 2014; Gilroy, Paul: Postcolonial Melancholia, New York 2005; Anthias, Floya / Yuval-Davis, Nira: Racialized Boundaries. Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-Racist Struggle, London 1992.

8 Balibar, Étienne: Is There "Neo-Racism?," in: id. / Wallerstein, Immanuel (eds.): Race, Nation, Class. Ambiguous Identities, London 1991, pp. 18–20.

recognition as well. During both periods, the definition of "European" and "American" were being challenged, repositioned, and even reinterpreted by way of revolutionary movements.

The films that I analyse to explore these time periods include (in order) *The Spook Who Sat Next to the Door* (Ivan Dixon, 1973), *Black Girl* (J. E. Franklin, 1972), *Trapped by Law* (Sami Mustafa, 2015), and *Genesis* (Árpád Bogdán, 2018). These four films have minority directors and a significant number of minority cast members, whose characters are set against a backdrop of social change, national insecurity, and shifts in the political and social realities, all of which have a profound impact on their lives, stories, and character development. Specifically, these films respond to the failures of the Civil Rights movement and Romani Rights movement(s). The failures of these movements, not only allows for prejudices and intolerances to persist, but also creates fertile ground for the emergence and maintenance of the fears of the majorities, who feel that their privilege will slip with the emergence of minority equality, which portends the possibility of majorities becoming a minority themselves.[9] In considering these films in this way, I explore the dual messages imbedded in films as sites of framing or reframing the nation and relationship to difference.

Double Coding

In the 2004 book *Acting Jewish,* Henry Bial explores how Jewish identity "circulates between the two worlds of essentialism…and postmodernism."[10] "Jewishness," then, according to Bial, is "performative" and, despite great successes in Hollywood, elements of Jewishness remain outside mainstream mass culture, and works by Jewish artists "speak to at least two audiences: a Jewish audience and a general… audience."[11] In order to explain this in practice, Bial references films he described as "double-coded" and denotes "the specific means and mechanisms by which a performance can communicate one message to Jewish audiences while simultaneously communicating another, often contradictory message to gentile audiences."[12] According to Bial, Jewish actors and actresses, focused on deemphasizing their Jewishness, and opted to "pass," and make the coding of their "difference" something supplemental to a reading from the outside or the ability to decode certain cultural signifiers recognisable as "Jewish."[13] This ability to assimilate or "pass" offers an

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9 Appadurai, Arjun: Fear of Small Numbers, Durham, NC 2006, p. 84.

10 Bial: Acting Jewish, p. 16.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid, p. 4.

13 Ibid, p. 16.

interesting point of departure for this discussion of difference, race, and filmic frames of the nation as it illustrates the mutability of double coding. For the Jewish films that Bial analyses, "passing" as members of the "dominant culture" was an option.[14] However, in the films that I consider here, "passing" cannot be employed as a strategy, because the ability to affect the majority is allusive for most, if not all, actors and actresses in the films I analyse because of the power of race. The possibility of the double-coding of these images relies on deeply held beliefs in the position of alterity of the one who is differentiated and visual cues of difference. Given this significant difference, Bial reminds us that this double coding is similar to W. E. B DuBois' concept of double-consciousness, or "the sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others" that people of colour experience."[15] Also referred to as a "twoness" of existence, or the need to always see oneself through the frames of the majority.[16] Franz Fanon recognised this phenomenon as "epidermalisation," or the way that people of colour internalise their inferiority in reference to the majority.[17] In this regard, Bial recognises a similar coding in African American cinema, whereby performances on screen or on stage are "caught between loyalty to the Black community and the compromises necessary to succeed in a white-dominated society."[18] I believe that similar phenomena are observable in the cinematic output of European Romani communities. As such, I employ both double coding and double consciousness as similar ideas in the films I analyse below.

This double coding similarly corresponds to the notion of a "double bind" extant for racialised minorities to maintain a normalised position in society and be close enough to the majority but not too close.[19] To recall Bial's language in reference to the Jewish image on screen, it is "to be Jewish enough, but not too Jewish."[20] As these concepts relate to film, performance, and race, each mandates a mediation between "black" expectations and "white" normalised culture, a reality that is similarly revealed through filmic portrayals of African Americans and Romani characters in film. The relationship of these groups to the majority as distant plays a primary role, particularly in understanding the function of double coding.

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14 Ibid, p. 17.

15 W. E. B. DuBois via Bial: Acting Jewish, p. 16.

16 DuBois, W. E. B.: The Souls of Black Folk, Chicago 1903, p. 5.

17 Fanon: Fact, p. 4.

18 Bial: Acting Jewish, p. 17.

19 Carbado, Devon W. / Gulati, Mitu: Acting White? Rethinking Race in Post-Racial America, Oxford 2013, p. 11.

20 Bial: Acting Jewish, p. 30.

Historical Context

During the Civil Rights movement (1954–1968), many members of the African American community in the US resisted white supremacy and fought hard to secure a semblance of equality. Similar Romani empowerment in Central and Southeast Europe came only after candidate members fulfilled the mandated changes to their economies and political systems. In Central and Southeast European countries, unlike in the previous four EU enlargements, the additional requirement of securing minority protection was tied to European Union accession.[21] It followed then that with the accession of these countries to the EU, Roma Rights and Roma Inclusion strategies became the focus of a number of European Union and Council of Europe initiatives. Also relevant was the Decade of Roma Inclusion (Decade), a non-governmental directive with a number of ambitious goals for Romani economic and social inclusion. The Decade concluded with a recognition of its failures, as there was no marked difference in the economic and social inclusion of Roma throughout CSEE.[22] What links all of these initiatives is that they were created outside of Romani communities, reinforcing the paternalism of the majority, disregarding or minimising the importance of internal Romani uplift.

Elsewhere I have analysed how 1970s Blaxploitation films appeared alongside others featuring more realistic aesthetics, featuring African Americans in more normalised filmic portrayals, recognizable to members both in and outside of the community.[23] These films stand in great contrast to Blaxploitation films that featured oversexualized men and women fighting for the cause of their community, or "sticking it to the man," in an attempt to regain the humanity that society had taken from them.[24] These films have been discussed from the point of view of dual address: they simultaneously challenge the status quo by positioning African Americans in the role of the protagonist – fighting racist structures, individuals, and disadvantaged surroundings.[25]

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21 Sasse, Gwendolyn: EU Conditionality and Minority Rights. Translating the Copenhagen Criterion into Policy, in: EU Working Papers 16 (2005), pp. 132–148.

22 Jovanovic, Zeljko: Why Europe's "Roma Decade" Didn't Lead to Inclusion, Open Society Foundations, 21.9.2015, accessible at: https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/why-europe-s-roma-decade-didn-t-lead-inclusion. [Accessed: 27.4.2020].

23 Rucker-Chang, Sunnie: African American and Romani Filmic Representation and the 'Posts' of Post-Civil Rights and Post-EU Expansion, in: Critical Romani Studies 1.1 (2018), pp. 132–148, here p. 134, DOI: https://doi.org/10.29098/crs.v1i1.8.

24 For more on Blaxploitation and the various potential readings of events in the film see Guerrero, Ed: Framing Blackness. The African American Image in Film, Philadelphia 2012, pp. 68–71; Riley, Clayton: A Black Critic's View of Shaft. Black Movie for White Audiences, New York Times, 25.7.1971.

25 Semley, John: Who's Bleeding Whom? Analyzing the Cultural Flows of Blaxploitation Cinema, Then and Now, in: CineAction 80.1 (2010), pp. 22–29.

Because the directors of these films were primarily members of the minority groups represented in them, the films offer counter-narratives in the form of self-representation, and *talk back* to the dominant populations, racist structures, and cultures that had ignored them and disregarded them for generations.[26] Because of the double coded nature of the images, one potential reading recognises that a great deal of push back against these images occurred as the films did not accord with the goals of the Civil Rights movement to create pathways for greater inclusivity to view African Americans as equal. Because so much has been written on the role of Blaxploitation cinema, I will continue where I concluded in a previous piece by discussing a few of the realistic films that premiered, albeit less bombastically, alongside the Blaxploitation cinema.[27] Similarly, I will discuss in greater detail the Romani films that engage in self-representation and the double coding that accompanies them and how the failures of the Romani Rights movement(s) and Civil Rights movement provided the visual signifiers in these films.

Self-Representation and Talking Back

The Spook Who Sat by the Door is reminiscent of Blaxploitation aesthetics, minus the gravitas, in its valorisation of African American heroes who work to defeat white structural racism. The film differs greatly from the others of the movement, however, as it features a protagonist successfully negotiating both black and white America. Also interesting is that the film firmly engages with the contemporary politics of the time and the post-Civil Rights trope of inclusion as the protagonist, Dan Freeman, participates in the initial affirmative-action programmes meant to racially integrate the FBI and lead to institutionalised multiculturalism. The film highlights the failure of said programs to foster meaningful inclusion, illustrating that there was no real change in the association with African Americans and Blackness with inferiority, and interrogates the double-consciousness as the protagonist is fighting against a system that was not created to accommodate him or others like him. Images and language are coded from the first opening credits scene, which features two carved figures of African origin in the centre of the screen. This image provides the backdrop for the film, and one of the first characters to appear on screen is a Southern senator who is seeking re-election but is lacking support, particularly among the "Negros." The solution that he and his staff decide on is to blame the CIA, because they have no African American staff, and they

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26   Hancock, Ian: Danger. Educated Gypsy: Selected Essays, Hatfield 2010.
27   Rucker-Chang: Filmic Representation.

challenge the organization to integrate. Also in this scene are two women: the senator's pollster, an African American woman, and a white woman who suggests interrogating the CIA for its lack of diversity. The two women in this scene are telling, because they exemplify the engagement of a working identity, or the performative identity that a member of a minority group assumes in order to counteract the known stereotypes associated with their community.[28] While this concept was originally focused on work place discrimination, the concepts and the self-imposed solutions of doing "'extra' identity work" to combat stereotypes associated with an individual's ethnic or racial group.[29] The African American woman in this opening scene refers to African Americans, "Blacks" at the time, as "Negros," despite her boss correcting himself and saying Black instead of "Negro." Presumably she uses the term "Negro" to disassociate herself from the militancy of the Black Pride movement. This scene underscores understanding of the twoness of the African American experience as fundamental to understanding this film. However, so is the position of the majority as it dominates the background and influences the actions of the Black characters in the film.

Freeman begins his training program with a cadre of African American men working to be among the first to racially integrate the FBI. Freeman is shown to be of exceptional ability and character as he becomes the only individual in the group who successfully completes the training, makes it to graduation, to find he is the only person standing among a sea of empty chairs – a telling scene as the camera is in a high angle indicating Freeman's powerless position. The scene also references an earlier one where the chairs were filled with potential African American candidates taking examinations to begin their FBI training.

Freeman's experience illustrates his difficulty in maintaining such a liminal position, but regains his community *bona fides* after he leaves his job at the FBI to become a community social worker and organiser. In the final scenes of the film, Freeman appears to be a fully entrenched revolutionary, leading the struggle for recognition and educating members of his community about the various means and merits of violent resistance. By the close of the film, Freeman dons a dashiki and justifies murdering his friend to his fellow revolutionaries by stating, "anybody who gets between us and freedom has got to go." The film ends with Freeman drinking in his house with superimposed images of the violence happening outside his doors and a news announcer discussing the violence in Oakland, California, announcing that the president has declared a state of emergency. The final credits roll over the same two

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28 Carbado, Devon W. / Gulati, Mitu: Working Identity, in: Cornell Law Review 85.5 (2000), pp. 1259–1308, here p. 1262.

29 Ibid.

carved African figures that the film opened with. This time they are shown to be in Freeman's apartment, except this time they are to the left of the frame, with the city lights showing through the windows behind them, illustrating the integration of Africanity and the city in Freeman.

From one point of view, the film highlights the promise of Civil Rights inclusion measures and the potential for African Americans willing to work within the systems provided for them as a result of advances made during the Civil Rights period. Alternatively, the film illustrates the pitfalls of working within a system that does not actually provide the necessary support to ensure a working environment amenable to the meaningful inclusion of African Americans into spaces historically designated for whites only. This interpretation highlights the embeddedness of a Jim Crow, or segregationist, mentality even in the absence of actual laws to support distancing of "white" and "black," and implores African American spectators to abandon casual integration and demand equality, even if through violence.

Similar to *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* is the 1972 film *Black Girl,* which is also an adaptation, but this time of a 1971 play by J. E. Franklin, that explores the promise of integration and the Civil Rights movement. The film is a family tale focused on Billie Jean, a young girl who drops out of high school to pursue a dancing career. She lives in a multi-generational household with her mother, Mama Rose, and grandmother, Mu'Dear, and ill-wishing sisters who provide a lens to see what her future might portend if Billie Jean stays in her community. These matriarchs, considered "warrior mothers" by Forsgren as they are the bedrocks of the black community, can support and uplift the community in ways that men cannot.[30] Also among the cast is Netta, a boarder in Billie Jean's house whose mother is mentally ill. Netta has effectively adopted Mama Rose as her own, but Netta contrasts with all of the other characters of the daughter generation as she leaves the neighbourhood to attend college. She even has plans to continue with law school upon graduation. Netta represents the assimilationist, evident not only through her education, but also in her return to Mama Rose's house, which is tellingly on an airplane. This scene is the only one in the film that includes a white person, and, given the inclusion of technology, implies Netta's connection to modernity. This juxtaposition of Netta's promise and the fatedness of the sisters' future of stasis is reinforced by colourism and contributes to the double coding of the film, suggesting that the opportunities Netta has enjoyed may be the result of her relatively fair skin.

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30   Forsgren, La Donna L.: In Search of Our Warrior Mothers. Women Dramatists of the Black Arts Movement, Evanston 2018, p. 12.

That the film positions Netta in the role of Billy Jean's saviour must be unpacked, in that the dynamics of Netta's proximity to whiteness seems instrumental to her ability to overcome a situation – a feat that has alluded her darker-skinned cohabitants. Netta's skin is not so fair that she is able to pass as white, but she is an acceptable hero for non-Black filmgoers as she relates to the "tragic mulatto," a character type Donald Bogle describes as sympathetic, because she is as much white as she is black, a state that also makes her tragic as her fate would have been less fluid if she had been one race or the other.[31] The film proves that, despite the successes of the Civil Rights movement, opportunities exist only for some, primarily for those whose have proximity to whiteness, not of the "working identity" sort, but one that stems from colourism and defines them and their prospects.

Contemporary Central and Southeast European cinema featuring large Romani casts illustrates similar tendencies and offers a form of double coding by addressing the drive for European inclusion in the context of post-2004 European Union accession, which highlighted Romani rights and minority inclusion during the accession of former Communist Central and Southeast European (Western Balkan) states. Films from this period with large Romani casts employ dual addresses to engage in a dialogue about the positionality of these communities. Initially, they were in keeping with the characteristics of the Romani Rights movement in that the dominant stakeholders were not the ones who would benefit from any advances of the movement [32] – i.e. they were white filmmakers creating films about communities that were not theirs. Films coming just a few years later are more diverse and include productions made by Romani directors and, similar to African American films of the early 1970s, illustrate the challenge of Romani Rights to provide the structural and cultural support to properly include Romani populations into their societies. These examples from Romani cinema effectively *talk back* to the structures that have systematically oppressed and marginalised Romani communities throughout Central and Southeast European countries for generations.[33] These Romani filmmakers create forms of self-representation to address structural inequalities existing in their societies. In doing so, they highlight the failures of their societies to properly address structural and social marginalisation and inequalities.

Films such as *Roming* (2007), *Just the Wind* (2012) and *An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker* (2013), present the Romani characters in them as simply character types, distant from the majority populations. In these films,

31   Bogle, Donald: Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks, London 2016, p. 6.
32   Bhabha, Jacqueline / Mirga, Andrzej / Matache, Margareta: Realizing Romani Rights, Philadelphia 2017, p. 2.
33   Hancock: Danger.

Europeanisation has not impacted the Romani communities as they remain in their alterity in frames unrecognisable to the majority. These films offer a sympathetic gaze from the outside while maintaining the status quo that distances these same characters from normalisation. Films that come alongside and just follow the ones from the early 2000s, particularly those made by Romani directors who talk back to those who would "deEuropeanise" them, even if the exploration of their Europeanness includes the incorporation of stereotypes such as criminality, hypersexualisation, and difference from the majority.[34] These differences exist in code similar to the way that stereotypes pervaded African American cinema of the 1970s. However, it was these same controversial elements that helped to pave the way for inclusion into not only mainstream cinema but, also, arguably cultural acceptance. Just as *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* and *Black Girl,* and others from the period provided a space to explore the effects of legal inclusion without the cultural apparatuses to accompany those changes, these films by Romani directors about members of the Romani communities continue to produce double coded readings that teeter between the cultural acceptance of the majority by way the visual normalisation of Europeanness or whiteness – and local or cultural expectations of one's community.

In Romani cinema after 2004, this has primarily come in the form of documentaries, which is a compelling genre due to the purported ability to present a type of *truth.* As a matter of practicality and expediency, documentaries are a logical choice. The films are relatively inexpensive to produce and provide a space for the director to explore norms through a putative objectivity. Films included in this category are the documentaries *To Become Slovenian* (2011)*, Trapped by Law* (2015), and *Three Brothers* (2016), among others. These films represent a turn to the realistic, an escape from the pastoral, and a refuge from fetishised exoticism similar to the move away from the double coded African American films of the 1970s – Blaxploitation and what followed. In fact, the 2015 documentary *Trapped by Law,* takes European Union accession and broad European Union inclusion efforts to task for failing to effectively protect and include large swathes of Romani refugees, despite their deep ties to Europe. The film documents the struggles and challenges of two brothers, Kefat and Selami, one born in Kosovo and the other in Germany, who are forced to return to Kosovo for unclear reasons. Kosovo is for them the unknown and unfamiliar. Nevertheless, they are forced to stay there as they receive various letters rejecting their appeals to return to Germany.

34   Kóczé, Angéla / Rövid, Márton: Roma and the Politics of Double Discourse in Contemporary Europe, in: Identities. Global Studies in Culture and Power 24.6 (2017), pp. 684–700, here p. 689, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2017.1380338.

Through the film, we learn more about the brothers, the family members they left behind in Germany, and their ignorance about Kosovo. In fact, the brothers talk about Kosovo using language that expresses their disappointment and disassociation from a place that holds no meaning, other than alterity, for them. The film ends with the brothers receiving something called "tolerated status" (Duldungsstatus) from Germany, which allows them, at least, the possibility of staying there. Even with said status, at the end of the film, the ability for the brothers to remain in the country remains unknown.

Kefat and Selami are rappers and their history suggests petty criminal activity. In choosing to focus on these two, the director Sami Mustafa choses risky subjects of focus. The two accord with some of the worst stereotypes associated with Romani communities, rendering them difficult subjects for viewers to sympathise with. The brothers are reminiscent of the protagonists of Blaxploitation cinema who defied social gentility and decorum. They are fighting against a system that is difficult to understand – the country of their birth or long-time residence is not the country of their citizenship, nor does it provide them any special rights. Moreover, the film talks back to European integration efforts illustrating the irony of the efforts of the EU focusing on Romani inclusion efforts while forsaking the actual Roma who are impacted by legal complications. Finally, the film presents a contradiction of the brothers: they began the film as pariahs, but become more acceptable in society as they fulfil the stereotypes of performers. They are rappers and connected to an art form once associated with resistance and "connective marginalities," as hip-hop music and its culture served as a "global signifier for several forms of marginalisation," but has since become associated with the negative excesses of consumerism and criminality.[35] Thus, their development and eventual acceptance while in Kosovo relies on stereotypes and expectations of Romani performance similar to the expectations of African Americans in films of the early 1970s. The film is shot similarly in a documentary style with mostly medium shots, and offers an emphasis on the brothers and their surroundings, which allow us as the spectator to feel sympathy for them as they navigate a confusing situation. The documentary relays the irreconcilable loss of country and a commentary on the failure of the EU to protect the vulnerable.

Cinematic output of the late 2010s remains predominantly documentary, but the 2018 film *Genesis,* by Hungarian-Rom Árpád Bogdán presents a sea change in Romani cinema and a compelling example of self-representation well regarded on the festival circuit. *Genesis* addresses the 2009 Hungarian Roma village attacks but through the point of view of a young boy, Ricsi,

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35   Osumare, Halifu: Global Hip Hop and the African Diaspora, in: Elam, Harry J., Jr. / Jackson, Kennell: Black Cultural Traffic. Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture, Ann Arbor 2005, pp. 266–288, here p. 269.

whose house is burned and immediate family killed in attacks by Neo-Nazis. Exacerbating his situation is that his father was imprisoned just prior to the attacks and was harshly sentenced to years in prison for stealing firewood. The film features three interconnected family stories. The first story is about Ricsi and how he copes with losing his entire immediate family. The second focuses on a young girl Virág who learns that she is pregnant by her boyfriend who is affiliated with the group who attacked the Ricsi's village. The final story recounts the tale of Hannah who is suffering, and, while it is initially unclear why she is suffering, it is revealed that she has lost her child and never recovered emotionally. Hannah is an attorney who is called upon to represent Virág's boyfriend, but ultimately abandons his case to represent Ricsi's father and reunite father and son.

Genesis is one of a few contemporary examples of a fictionalised Romani filmic text of self-representation. Risci's redemptive innocence but surprising ability to exercise restraint or fight back when necessary provides a rich counter-narrative to the stereotypical image long associated with Roma on screen. Moreover, regular medium and close up shots as well an overwhelming dominance of darkness and drab colours offers an emotive experience and provides visual ques that compensate for the absence of clear emotional expression of the characters in the film. *Genesis* is a film with a diverse cast of characters, offering universal narratives and stories of dashed hope, disappointment, loss, and sadness. The universalities present in the film renders its characters and their experiences relatable to any viewer, irrespective of their membership in a majority or minority community. However, through including the familiar story of the Romani murders of 2008 and 2009, Arapad does not simply evoke pity for Risci and his family, he explores Romani stories, experiences, and emotions and includes them alongside those of the majority. By placing Risci's story at the centre of the film, there is a subtle demand that Romani experiences, truths, and humanity be recognised as equal and a constituent aspect of the nation. This film is focused squarely on Hungarian society, but the demand to be recognised and seen as equal members of the community resonates with post-Civil Rights African American film. What is important to note here is that this appeal for recognition is mediated through images, experiences, and characters of the majority population, which is an acknowledgement of the "twoness" of the Romani community, specifically of Hungary, but in Europe more broadly. This expansion of the national imaginary, through the frames of the majority, becomes clear at the end of the film, when the intertwining stories of the characters are resolved. The final scenes of the film reveal Ricsi reunited with his father whom Hannah represents, and an instance when law actually supports and protects Romani equality. Hannah tells an adoption agency that she is willing to adopt any child, irrespective of race or handicap, and Virag is preparing for life as a single parent but with her mother by her

side. Thus, the resolution is powerful and the spectator sees all of the characters unite to create a more complicated, diverse, and inclusive story.

African American and Romani visual representation relies on, rather than eschews or minimalises, differences as the primacy of race renders minimising difference simply not an option for those defined by it. Although some members of their communities can "pass," most are burdened by racialised frames and must exists not only in reference to their own experiences and expectations, but also to those of the majority. In the films I analysed above, race acts as a powerful sign to implicate the positionality of these groups, illustrating in some instances how unassimilable the groups are, relegating them to the fringes of society, and in other situations the films offer a plea and justification for inclusion. Interestingly, however, the films similarly activate this difference to impose a message of potentiality of overcoming one's station in life through hard work, progress and / or perhaps most importantly, social change. Properly historicising these films illustrates how the distance of these minority populations from the majority changes depending on the time period in which they were created but never enough to actually unite them. The periods of post-EU expansion (2004–present) and the decade following Civil Rights (1970s) are marked as significant in relation to race and inclusion, because the focus on change and potential for change provides a lens, situating the images as relational to significant social, political, and cultural changes at the time.[36] Double coding provides a useful frame to track the power of race

36 While the movements converge in many ways, they also diverge greatly, most notably in terms of scope. Whereas the US Civil Rights movement of the 1960s was focused on one country, Romani Rights is more aptly described as movements as there have been as many movements for Romani equality as there are states in Europe. What unites Romani Rights and the Civil Rights movement is the struggle for equality that each of the movements sought to enshrine by law. The primary way that the movements are said to differ is that Romani Rights is viewed as a top down approach, whereas Civil Rights is defined as being bottom up and fronted by the very people who would benefit from the progress gained from the success of the movement. However, interest convergence, as advanced by Derrick Bell, illustrates how in order for Civil Rights to have any level of success, it required that those in power recognise that there was as much a benefit to mainstream society as there was to African Americans. Chief among these benefits to the majority or the US government was that the advancement of Civil Rights provided a context to win the Cold War, now well documented in works such as Dudziak, Mary L.: Cold War Civil Rights. Race and the Image of American Democracy, Princeton 2011; Borstelmann, Thomas: The Cold War and the Color Line. Race Relations in the Global Arena, Cambridge, MA 2009. Although Civil Rights could not have been possible without the struggles of those who fought against the status quo, interest convergence convincingly illustrates how the Civil Rights, similar to Romani Rights movements, required the support of those in power. The movements are also similar in that the advancement of African Americans precipitated a violent backlash throughout the United States to the advancement of African Americans, which some would

and the position of minorities in relation to majorities. In employing such a means of analysis, it is possible to track how different spectators receive the same information, and, despite the prominence of the minority in these films, the images, representations, and experiences are articulated through the language of the majority.

argue has endured into the current period. Arjun Appadurai described this phenomenon of the majority reacting to the advancement of the minority based, in part, because they realise that they could lose their position with the advance of the minority "the fear of small numbers"; Appadurai: Fear.