



Katitzi is one of the strongest characters in Swedish children's literature. In Katarina Taikon's (1932–1995) autobiographical books, the reader follows Katitzi from the age of seven when she lives in an orphanage through her upbringing with a large family who are forced to travel around Sweden and live in tents and caravans until she is married off at the age of fourteen. Eventually Katitzi escapes and builds her own life, starting at Stadsmissionen in Gamla Stan in Stockholm. The thirteen books about the Roma girl, published between 1969 and 1982, have been read by hundreds of thousands of children and young people; the books were printed in several editions and in 1975 they were lent out 213,000 times. Five years later, they were lent out no less than 432,000 times. Since then Katitzi has appeared as a comic book, a picture book, a TV-series, an LP, a DVD, and most recently as a theatrical play.

As Katitzi gets older the literary genre changes; beginning as children's books, the series develops into literature for young adults. But throughout all of the books Katitzi remains a brave and angry, but also worried and thoughtful, figure

home. When Katitzi rejoins the family it is with the wicked "lady", her father's new wife, and together they experience a discriminating Swedish society. The family can rarely stay longer than three weeks at each site, children are denied regular scholar attendance and during the meagre war years they have to survive without ration cards. Prejudices, violence and other kinds of humiliation belong to their everyday life that, in Katitzi's case, is also populated by friendly people who want to help. Characters range from the homeless alcoholic Lump-Nicke living in Tantolunden and the attentive teacher Carlström at Mariaskolan on Södermalm, to the limp potato-picking mate Karin. The white spitz-type dog Swing becomes a loyal and comforting companion across several of the books.

Katarina Taikon had experienced both the film and the theater world when she wrote the first Katitzi book. She acted, for instance in Arne Sucksdorff's movies **Uppbrott** (break up, 1948) and **Singoalla** (1949), and appeared as Rosa Taikon in the play **Huset i Montevideo** (the house in Montevideo) at the theatre Folkan. After studies at Birkagårdens college

who, although let down by adults time and again, never loses her willpower. Under vulnerable circumstances, Katitzi finds paths to a decent life and eventually self-actualization. With her willpower and unruly questioning of authority she unmasks the nascent welfare state's supposedly good will. For several generations of children and young people Katitzi was a captivating and lovable eye opener. The Katitzi books are examples of the new type of realistic children's literature emerging in the 1960s with everyday stories that violate previously harmonious narratives of children and young people's lives. A different sense of lived reality is given substantial space in the books, and current social issues are woven into the stories. More poetic moments are also present, and the depictions of Taikon's father are particularly sensitive.

We meet Katitzi when she is brought home from an orphanage by her father and her siblings Paul, Rosa and Lena. She does not recognize them, gets scared and refuses to go. The nice lady "miss Kvist" persuades the grouchy matron to let the girl stay for a while so that she can prepare for the move

and the trade institution Pählmans she ran the KFUM café Vips American Ice Cream Bar, situated at Birger Jarlsgatan, Stockholm, for a few years. Additionally, she was already known as a champion of human rights. In 1963 her first book **Zigenska** (gypsy woman) was released. The book immediately created a debate concerning the conditions of Romani people in Sweden. Among other things, Taikon criticized the author Ivar Lo Johansson for at once beautifying and disparaging the views on Romani people - he presumed that they would be kept in their camps and not "forced" into a traditional Swedish lifestyle. Along with other social and cultural workers Katarina Taikon worked to empty the tent camps and allow the Roma to find permanent homes and go to school. Activists persistently attended politicians, including prime minister Tage Erlander, and crept into the Social Democrat's first of May demonstration with messages about racism and discrimination against Romani people, disturbing the governing party's self-image. They also fought for the continued Swedish residency of newly arrived Romani people from, amongst others, Poland and France.

Johan Taikon, the author's father, remained stateless throughout his life. Born in France, he came to Sweden with his family, which belonged to the Romani group of kelderash (copper workers), at the turn of the century after many years in Russia. Together with seven other Romani families they formed the beginning of a new Swedish minority, which today ranks as one of five national minorities. They supported themselves as, for example, copper workers, tin workers, musicians and Tivoli-owners. Until 1914 Johan Taikon's family often spent half the year in Sweden and the rest in Europe. The traveller tradition stopped with the first Foreigners Act of 1914, followed by a spiteful debate on an imagined mass immigration of Russians, Poles, Jews and Romani people, who were considered politically and racially dangerous for the country. The Romani people, exclusively, were, on strictly ethnic assumptions, banned to immigrate to Sweden. This meant in principal that the Romani people who remained in Sweden until the law was repealed in 1954 were not able to travel out of the country.

This year is the 500th anniversary of

were perceived as foreign vagrants—to be integrated. They were simply too different, but since one could neither deport them (most were Swedish citizens) or exterminate them, convincing them to make a voluntarily leave was considered the best method.

The artist and draughtsman Björn Hedlund (1922–1987) illustrated all the Katitzi books, which can be described as chapter books with illustrations on about every other spread. A selection of original illustrations, including book covers, is shown in the exhibition at Tensta Konsthall. Related to literary stars such as Pippi Longstocking, Huckleberry Finn and Nils Holgersson in graphic and expressive scenes, a wild and charming child is visualized. The details and environments from different parts of Sweden visited by Katitzi, from Stockholm and Uppsala to Vännäs and Umeå, are depicted in black and white images throughout the series. Along with the text they tell us about the injustices and prejudices that largely dictated the Romani people's living conditions in the recent past, struggles continuing to influence their situation even today.

the first mention of Romani people in Swedish documents. They are called gypsies (a group which also includes the so called "travellers") and should, if found, be arrested and deported. Priests were not allowed to baptise or bury them. A regulation that forced the stray Romani women and children out of the country and the men to be hanged came in 1637, after a period when monarchical power sought to distinguish permissible begging from vagrancy. Not being a resident was in the coming centuries considered to threaten the social order, something that Katarina Taikon, and ultimately Katitzi, eventually experienced. The author was born in 1932 in a camp outside Örebro, and when her mother, Agda Karlsson, died less than a year later, the family found itself in a camp at the bridge bracket at Skanstull by Gullmarsplan. Not having a fixed home also made it impossible to have stable employment. The racist "stray investigation" from 1923 is an example of how governmental officials looked at travellers and Romani people as a threat, but while thinking that "travellers" can be integrated into society—they were seen as domestic vagrants—there was little chance for the Romani people—who

The notion of illustration suggests that the image is less important than the text. In Katarina Taikon's and Björn Hedlund's case, this is not quite true. Their long-standing and close friendship was reflected in their intimate collaboration on these books. The preparatory work was based on Katarina Taikon's stories about her childhood and her life, and Björn Hedlund depicted these stories with sketches and drawings. The creation of the Katitzi character can therefore be described as both a linguistic and a graphical process—even if the actual history precedes the drawings.

In the Katitzi books, text and image come together in a way that makes the drawings move beyond the purely illustrative to become a vital part of the story. Björn Hedlund's artwork adds new layers to the stories in which the protagonist is given additional dimensions, sharpening her features and personality. His depictions of Katitzi signal the protagonist's inherent power, visible in her features and forming a contrast to the text's often cruel stories. The drawings are characterized by a realism that moves beyond the simplistic stereotypes of children's literature.

Recurrent in the images is also the daring use of decorative elements in environments, backgrounds and dramatic perspectives. It is an approach that bears the traces of psychedelic poster art from the late 60s and early 70s.

But even before the series' first book, *Katitzi*, was published by the Christian publisher Harriers bokförlag AB, with a cover text by Beppe Wolgers, in 1969 the tabloid *Expressen's* readers had already learned of the story. There it was published as a short story. Many of the events and incidents were already mentioned in Katarina Taikon's 1967 book *Zigenare är vi* (we are the gypsies), published by Tidens Förlag. Some of the books came out at Gidlunds förlag but most of them appeared at Tai-Lang, the publisher set up by the author and her husband, Björn Langhammer. Even the kids' magazine *Kamratposten* published *Katitzi* in two different periods, 1969-70 and 1973-75, but then as a serial and as a cartoon. The impact of the *Katitzi* story is also proven by the comic *Katitzi* published once a month in 1975 and 1976 by Williams publishers in Bromma. In addition to the two sections on *Katitzi*,

each number contained games and puzzles with and without *Katitzi* and prizes such as conjuring books, gramophone players and *Katitzi* Books. Sometimes there were even *Katitzi* crosswords attached. In the Children's mailbox Katarina Taikon/*Katitzi* replied to questions of various types, for example "Was it cold to sleep in a tent? Annica Jansson in Vällingby", to which was given the answer "Ugh, yes, it was both cold and nasty". Stories with titles like "Daddy comes on a visit" and "When Uffe came to hospital" were also included in each issue, in addition to collect-images of animals and the series *Linus & Lotta* telling a story about the adventures of two friends.

Linus & Lotta, are two ginger kids celebrating Lucia, building go-carts and losing their money when buying milk for mom. Like the comic competitions, the potterings and the collect-pictures anchor the comics in a traditional Swedish children's culture in which the welfare state's lifestyle and norms prevails. There are also explicitly pedagogical elements about how not to behave in nature. The stories, however, suggest a contemporary social reality with divorced parents and

modern health care. The comic, although still focusing on *Katitzi*, is situated in a traditional Swedish context. Interestingly, the motto "a Swedish comic book" is visible on several of the comic's covers, which can be read as a mark against American cultural domination. Björn Hedlund's colourful illustrations are adapted to the comic magazine aesthetics with simplified forms and compositions consisting of many small frames.

If the cultural importance of *Katitzi* has been evident for a long time, the commercial potential was proven when the comics were published as a book by the publisher Bonnier Junior Press in 1979. The material is taken from the comic, but the magazines are re-edited and based on new colour-originals, again made by Björn Hedlund. However, the covers were made by Hans Thor. The magazines focused on *Katitzi* and the only other element is a drawn interior of a so-called "box-tent", housing the Taikon family, and a photograph of a so-called three-bar-tent, followed by a section on Romani history from Katarina Taikon's book *Eigenvalue* (1970, Nature and Culture). The publisher Bonnier Juniorförlag also published

picture books such as ***Katitzi kommer hem och Katitzi-det brinner*** with cute images made by Lisbeth Holmberg-Thor, known as the illustrator of Gösta Knutsson's tales about Pelle. Her *Katitzi* is prettier than Björn Hedlund's girl, and in the picture book the first person narration is mixed with third person writing. ***Hur blev det sen då, Katitzi?*** from 1977, with photographs by Björn Langhammer, tells the story of what happened to the gypsies when *Katitzi* grew up with words and images depicting how the activism of Katarina Taikon, among others, managed to change some, but far from all, of the problems in the Romani situation.

1979-80, the Swedish Public Service company SVT broadcasts the TV-series *Katitzi* in six episodes starring Janne "Loffe" Karlsson as the Taikon father, Monica Zetterlund as the lady and a young Kjell Bergqvist as Paul. Directed by Ulf André Katitzi, as played by Sema Sari, becomes a physically expressive girl who is not as verbal as the protagonist found in the books. Music plays an important role in the series and is written by Katarina Taikon's relative and close friend Hans Caldaras, who also designed the Romani

costumes. He also served as one of two Romani fact checkers. In 2006 the TV series was published on DVD. In the 1960s and 70s, when the series first appeared, an audio version on LP accompanied the TV-show. Interestingly, the Katitzi LP was recorded on Bert Karlsson's record label Mariann. It involved well-known singers such as Lasse Holm, Anders Glenmark and Ingela "Ping" Forsman.

The translation of the Katitzi books began already in the 70s, first into the neighboring Nordic languages (Danish in 1972, Norwegian in 1975 and Finnish in 1977) and into German in 1974. The French translation came in 1984 and in 1999, after the fall of the Berlin wall, when the discussion on the Romani people's situation was again being discussed, a Czech translation was published; in 2001 the books were translated into Slovak, Hungarian and Romanian. A translation to Romanes was made in 2010 by Hans Caldaras, who also recorded the story on CD. In English, there was only Emma Broström's dramatization in 2010.

It was Lars-Erik Brossner, former trombonist in the group Nationateatern

Director Kajsa Isaksson made Katitzi into a super heroine who energetically, moves across the catwalk-like stage in a striped dress. The Lady has become fancy and the coughing father a charmer with a goatee. Mia Ray's Katitzi draws with white chalk on the ground, hopes to go to school and dreams—one of her dreams is to write a book. Kajsa Isaksson herself says that "Our show is about finding home, no matter where you are. Who you are. It's about prejudice and ignorance but also about community, struggle, family, bureaucracy, rights and dreams." In conjunction with a tour, in an ambitious effort seminars and talks on democracy and equal rights were organized in collaboration with the anti-racist organization Expo, Riksteatern. This Katitzi premiered in Strömsund and was seen by thousands of primary school children all over Sweden. The play will next be staged 2 March 2013 when the Teater Piraten's version will premiere at the cultural center of Hallonbergen.

The stories of Katitzi live on more than forty years after they were first published: the movie is frequently rented and purchased on DVD and CD, the play

and head of the Folkteatern theater 's children's section En Trappa Ner, who commissioned Emma Broström to do a family show based on the Katitzi books. In the winter of 2010, the play premiered in Gothenburg. The events in the story take place in a present in which rootlessness, overcrowding and the search for a real home are frequent themes. Sören Bruner transformed the stage into a circular ramp upon which boxes served as flexible furniture. A common theme in the show is Katitzi's will to go to school and, in Cecilia Miloccos' interpretation, the nine year old girl becomes a curious and sensitive child who has been compared with Ronja Rövardotter. In Emma Broström's dramatization, Lena, the sister who is two years older than Katitzi, is absent, but the grandmother figure Mami, who Katitzi comes to when running away from home, has a prominent place. The warm meeting between the grandmother and Katitzi becomes an essential scene and the rousing Romani-inspired music helps to accentuate the plot.

In 2011 when the play was staged at Riksteatern, the music was also central but now with a hip-hop feeling to it.

is performed in different places and the books are circulating. But despite the fact that the Katitzi books are a unique literary treasure, with few exceptions neither the Katitzi books nor Katarina Taikon are mentioned in general works of Swedish children's literature. This is the "Romani year" in Sweden and only one of the books is in print in Swedish today, through the organization En bok för alla.

Katitzi 1969

In **Katitzi** we get to know the girl who lives in an orphanage, where she feels at home, although her peer Ruth sometimes annoys her. One day Katitzi's father comes to the orphanage to take Katitzi home to her family. When she gets there, she experiences a completely different life than what she has become accustomed to at the orphanage. She soon finds her place, despite a wicked stepmother, but has difficulty understanding all the injustices her family members confront, realizing that Romani people are not considered to be as everyone else in society.

Katitzi och Swing 1970

In **Katitzi och Swing** we follow Katitzi, now 8 years old, on a journey through Norrland together with her family and her dog Swing.

Katitzi rymmer (Katitzi Escapes) 1971

In **Katitzi rymmer** Katitzi decides to leave life in the camp and the strict and unpleasant stepmother who Katitzi calls "Tanten". She takes off trying to find her "grandmother" Mami living in a residential home in Uppsala.

Katitzi och Lump-Nicke 1974

Katitzi has turned twelve and a half years old, and she now counts as an adult and ready to get married. Dad Taikon is seriously ill and hospitalized and Katitzi must fend for herself. In Tantolunden she gets to know Lump-Nicke and the well-traveled actress Julia Caesar, who makes Katitzi dream away as the character Carmen. Katitzi finds a wallet filled with money and is accused of theft.

Katitzi i skolan (Katitzi in school) 1975

In **Katitzi i skolan** Katitzi can finally start school like other children her age. But it will not be quite as she imagined because the other children at Mariaskolan at Södermalm, Stockholm are not as open-minded as one would wish.

Katitzi Z-1234 1976

Here Katitzi meets a woman who comes directly from Auschwitz. The woman tells her what is happening outside of Sweden. Katitzi is deeply affected by what she is being told and to show her compassion she writes Z-1234 on her arm, in the same way Romani people are tagged in the concentration camps.

Katitzi i ormgruppen (Katitzi in the Snake Pit) 1971

Katitzi has just turned nine, the world is at war, and her family arrives in Strömåker in the north of Sweden. After a short time they must move out again. We follow Katitzi's life in the camp, how she gets to know Saga and Sam before ending up in a real snake pit.

Katitzi, Rosa och Paul 1972

Now Katitzi is 10 years old. With Rosa and Paul Katitzi, she gets away. They face many problems in their new life, but also meet new friends such as the kind Gösta and the limp Karin, who wants to become an artist.

Katitzi i Stockholm (Katitzi in Stockholm) 1973

Katitzi, Rosa, and Paul visit their father, who now lives in Stockholm. To help her father, Katitzi starts selling Christmas postcards. She earns money for the family, but will it be enough to make Dad Taikon truly happy?

Katitzi barnbruden (Katitzi the Child Bride) 1977

In **Katitzi barnbruden** Katitzi has not yet reached the age of thirteen. Dad Taikon's wife treats Katitzi increasingly poorly and accuses Katitzi of theft. Dad Taikon tries to resolve the situation and decides to marry Katitzi away to Lazi, six years older, who promises her a life of luxury and opulence.

Katitzi på flykt (Katitzi fleeing) 1978

Katitzi is treated very badly by her new husband Lazi, and is both beaten and raped. She is unhappy and decides to escape. When she escapes the family honor is damaged and she is therefore sought by the whole Swedish-Romani community.

Katitzi i Gamla Stan (Katitzi in Gamla stan) 1979

Now Katitzi has a place in a home for girls. For the first time since she was a little girl she can live in a house and sleep in a warm bed. Her future is still uncertain and she does not know how she will support herself or what she wants to do with her life. There is danger lurking around the corner because Romani law still considers Katitzi to be Lazi's wife.

Katitzi uppbrott (Katitzi breakup) 1980
In **Katitzi uppbrott** we meet a fifteen year old Katitzi for the first time participating in a movie as the major star. Everyone should attend while shooting a Romani festival, including joy and singing but among the actors are Lazi and his family.

Katitzis resa genom Sverige (Katitzis journey through Sweden) is produced in collaboration with Angelica Ström, Taikon's daughter. In cooperation with ABF, the publisher Natur och Kultur and the libraries in Rinkeby and Tensta, a series of seminars is organized.

Monday 29.10
17:00

City tour in Katitzi's footsteps, with Angelica Ström and Lawen Mohtadi. Gathering at 17 at the corner Sjukhusbacken/Ringvägen (at the Rosenlund side) at Södermalm. Send preregistration Hanna Holmer: hanna.holmer@abfstockholm.se

Tuesday 30.10
15:00

Reading with Angelica Ström at Tensta library and then a guided visit to the exhibition

Wednesday 7.11
18:30

Katitzi: messy hair and fighting spirit, lecture on children's literature by researcher Kristin Hallberg at Tensta Konsthall

Saturday 17.11
14:00

Lawen Mohtadi presents her biography of Katarina Taikon, *Den dag jag blir fri*, the day I will be free, at Tensta Konsthall

Saturday 8.12
13:00

Reading with Angelica Ström at Rinkeby library and then a guided visit to the exhibition

Saturday 22.12
14:00

Maria Lind talks with Rosa Taikon at Tensta konsthall

Wednesday 9.1
18:30

Talks on the Katitzi character with Hans Caldaras who, among other things, wrote the music and designed the Romani clothing for the TV series (1979), and Kajsa Isaksson, who directed the Riksteatern's show (2011–2012), at Tensta Konsthall

