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"I was born here"

Positioning by Origin and Citizenship in a Conversation between a Collector and a Roma Family in the early 1950s, Sweden

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This article examines an audio recording with a Roma family made by the collector Arvid Andersson in Sweden, in the early 1950s. The aim of this article is to unfold this jointly constructed conversation between the collector and the Roma family members. The analysis of the conversation shows a delicate interplay between the Roma family and the interviewer, and we especially stress the agency of the family in the process of negotiating belonging, challenging a discourse about the Roma as a passive group merely subjected to discrimination and stereotyping. The foreignness of the Roma was continuously stressed, while the Roma opposed being positioned as foreigners and tried to clarify that they did belong in Sweden and contributed to society.

Aim and Questions

"I'm visiting a Gypsy camp in Reftele and have come into contact with these dark-skinned people." This is how Arvid Andersson (1910–1971) announces, and thereby frames, an audio recording made circa 1951 in a Roma camp in his home village of Reftele in the province of Småland, Sweden.[1] At the beginning of the 1950s, the Swedish farmer Andersson began a parallel career as a collector for the Dialect Archive in Lund.[2] His initial contact with the archive seems to have been in 1951 when he sent the archive a recording, and in 1952 he started to make recordings on a more regular basis. For over a decade, Andersson made several recordings of traditional Swedish dialects for the archive, but we focus on this early recording by him of a conversation with an anonymous Roma family. Neither the name of the family nor the year of the recording were documented, but for several reasons elaborated below we believe it was made in or near 1951. The only information given in the registry is the name of the collector and the place of the recording. Since Andersson approached the Dialect Archive in Lund, he apparently was mostly interested in documenting and preserving Swedish dialects, customs and traditions. His reasons for also recording an interview with a Roma family are unknown.

Andersson's choice to interview the Roma family is noteworthy since documentation of Roma groups into the 1960s usually consisted of text-based folklore accounts, legends, questionnaires and answers, photographs and even elaborate genealogies (Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2019, 2020; Hyltén-Cavallius & Fernstål 2020; Tillhagen 1947, 1949a, 1949b, 1950). Roma voices and experiences, as in much historiography concerning Roma groups over time, were filtered through the collector's point of view and his or her purpose (cf. Marsh & Strand 2006; Stark 2018). The sources are often one-sided, prejudiced and filled with misconceptions (cf. Cressy 2016: 63–64; Pulma 2015: 13; Tervonen 2010: 21; Willems 1997). Very few "in-group" historical sources and materials exist in the Swedish archives. The fact that Roma history and knowledge have traditionally been communicated orally and for a long time had no written language has added to the lack of "in-group" sources. In addition, Roma groups have in general not gained much access to institutions responsible for documenting society and writing history (cf. Stark, Mikkola & Olsson 2019). In light of this, the recording of an interview with a Roma family constitutes a unique material in Swedish archival collections, and the fact that it is an audio recording gives us access to unfiltered Roma voices.

[1] Recording number b00698:b3, Institute for Language and Folklore.

[2] The Dialect Archive in Lund is now part of the Institute for Language and Folklore, a governmental agency with a mission focusing on dialects, folklore, names, language policy and language planning.

The aim of this article is to unfold this jointly constructed conversation between the collector and the Roma family members by examining the family members' positioning-making processes that can be interpreted from the recording (Anthias 2002). In our analysis, we pay attention both to the role of the collector and to the agency of the Roma family, in order to show how family members respond to and act upon the questions asked by the collector.

The questions we ask are: what was Andersson interested in knowing? What was the response and what kind of conversation was jointly constructed? How were power relations between majority and minority expressed, and how were larger issues concerning belonging, cultural citizenship and authority addressed?

"The Swedish Folklife Sphere" and Minority Representation

In her extensive work on what she called the Swedish folklife sphere, Barbro Klein addressed questions about silences surrounding minorities in archives and museums, social movements and Swedish folklife and folklore research, and how these silences are intrinsically linked with the construction of what is perceived of as "Swedish cultural heritage" (see Klein 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2008). Her research covered topics such as the Swedish homecraft movement and its construction of a craft canon at the beginning of the twentieth century that excluded the craft of indigenous Sámi, Swedish Roma groups, Jews and other ethnic minorities (Klein 2000a, 2000b: 180–181; cf. Hyltén-Cavallius 2007). The effects of this production of a canon, she argued, resonated within the practice of the movement until recent times: "The exclusions that were established at the start have been taken for granted to this day both within the movement and by other Swedes" (Klein 2000b: 181).

Following Klein's research interests in the Swedish folklife sphere, minority representation and the construction of Swedish cultural heritage, this article addresses knowledge production pertaining to the Roma in Swedish folklore and dialect archives, as well as Roma agency around 1950 in Sweden, a society then largely permeated by antigypsyism[3]. When highlighting Roma presence within a Swedish archival context,

[3] The information given in historical sources usually mirrors the often prejudiced view of the majority population. This prejudice with its long historical roots is often designated by the term *antigypsyism*. The term is widely used to highlight structural discrimination and racism directed against Roma groups today, and, in Sweden, historically towards people called "zigenare" and "tattare" (e.g. Selling 2014; SOU 2010:55; Vitboken 2014; Westin et al. 2014). The term was created in analogy with antisemitism, i.e. hostility and prejudices against Jews. In a similar way, antigypsyism stresses the prejudices and preconceptions of the majority population about the Roma, as well as myths and stereotypes with long historical trajectories. This structure has caused persecution, violence and discrimination as well as assimilation interventions in all spheres of society in Sweden, from civil society to schools, congregations, municipalities and the state (e.g. Montesino 2002, 2010; Montesino & Ohlsson al Fakir 2015; Ohlsson al Fakir 2013; Selling 2014; Vitboken 2014; Westin et al. 2014).

it is not the silences that are most salient. Instead, it is the large amounts of material produced about the Roma from a majority Swedish perspective. In our research project, "Antigypsyism and the Collections", one of our aims was to find materials within the archives that more closely represented the Roma's own voices. By following clues in the collections, doing "creative" searches in databases and going through an enormous amount of material, we found sources with a different tonality, that were not chiefly permeated with the collectors' points of view (Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2020: 15–16; Ginzburg 1989; cf. Maliniemi 2009; Sassoon & Burrows 2009).

Analytical Approaches and Methodology

Our narrative analysis is influenced by Floya Anthias' (2002) work on migration, translocality and identification, where she showed how experiences of racialization were articulated in narrations among British-born youngsters with Greek Cypriot background. Instead of "identity", she explores narratives of location and positionality, in which relational, situational and locational issues are brought to the fore. A narrative of location "tells a story of how we place ourselves in terms of social categories such as gender, ethnicity and class at a specific point in time and space" (Anthias 2002: 498). She stresses that these narratives do not necessarily have a beginning, a plot or an ending, and could be composed of fragments in the larger narrative frame. Anthias conducted her fieldwork in a contemporary, multi-ethnic British context, but her analytical approach is well suited for tackling the conversation studied here. The Roma in Sweden have experienced racialization processes similar to Anthias' interviewed youngsters and lived lives in which they were constantly migrating (e.g. Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018). For us, it was of particular interest to investigate the questions posed by Andersson because, when he entered the camp, he did so as a representative of the majority population, a position that brought certain advantages (Klein 1990: 46; Klein 2006). His questions were "framing devices" in the conversation which set the tone and structured the situation in specific ways (Goffman 1986). Andersson takes a dominant position in relation to the Roma family, which gives him the "right" to ask questions, and also to expect answers. His situation, being a white, land-owning, majority Swede with a long connection to the place and the province, conditions his position. The Roma are conditioned by being seen as foreigners within the nation, strongly defined by an itinerant life and being seen as dark (cf. McGarry 2017). Not only Andersson as a person, but also his recording device participated in constructing the situation in which he was in charge of the interview (Latour 1999; cf. Gustavsson 2014). The questions seem largely to be rooted in widely spread stereotypical, even racist and discriminating, views of the Roma, although at other times, as we interpret

it, Andersson asks questions in order to establish a possibility for the Roma to portray themselves as productive and contributing members of society, and thereby negating the stereotypical view of the Roma as lazy (e.g. Nordisk familjebok 1922: 772).

Our method has been to approach the recording and the conversation in several ways: analysing the audio and the transcribed conversation, undertaking collaboration with Roma representatives, and comparing situations in the interview with similar, approximately contemporary experiences told by other Roma individuals whom we interviewed in our former project "At the Outskirts of the City – Swedish-Roma Life History and Camps Sites from the Twentieth Century" (Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2017, 2018).

The recording is rather short; it is only twelve minutes and thirty seconds long, and a general characteristic is that it is very "messy". Half the time there is a conversation going on between Andersson and several members of the extended Roma family. The other half of the recording consists of music played by the Roma family. The sound quality is very poor. Sometimes there are several persons simultaneously involved in the conversation, interrupting and talking over each other. When the interviewer asks one person a question, quite often one or two persons make comments or additions to the answer from behind. We have listened carefully and have thoroughly transcribed the dialogue between Andersson and the members of the family. In order to make our interpretations, paralinguistic factors such as tonality and laughter were included in the transcription of the conversation (Klein 1990: 46; Klein 2006). First, we tried to get a grasp of the dialogue as a whole, trying to understand what was going on and what they were talking about (cf. Goffman 1986). Then we approached thematic chunks of the dialogue and transcribed them separately while listening carefully to the intonation and nuances of both the interviewer and the interviewees. In other words, we listened to how the questions were asked, how they were responded to and what reactions they entailed.

In some places, the family members speak Romani chib with each other. The family belongs to the Roma group Kelderash and they speak the Romani chib variant Kelderash. Three Roma men and a woman, knowledgeable and experienced in both Swedish Roma and Kelderash culture, traditions and language, assisted us with the translations and interpretations of these sequences and helped us interpret how the interview situation unfolded.[4] This has been of the utmost importance for understanding when and why the family needed to communicate in Romani chib. Sometimes they seem to have chosen

[4] Sabrina Taikon, Vedel Demitri, Fred Taikon, head of the association É Romani Glinda, and Djemail Agusi, language planning Romani chib at the Language Council of Sweden, Institute for Language and Folklore.

Romani chib out of habit, sometimes they spoke Romani because there was a need to talk without the interviewer understanding, for instance out of fear or insecurity. The latter motive has been of the greatest interest to us.

Arvid Andersson: Farmer and Collector in Reftele

The farmer Arvid Andersson undertook dialect recordings for the Dialect Archive in Lund for over a decade, and his work produced over 1,600 items in the registry. His initial contact with the archive was made in 1951 when he offered his services by simply sending them a tape with a recording.[5] At the time, the staff at the archive were not especially impressed. Technically, the recording was good, they said, but the recorded dialect sample was more like standard Swedish than a genuine dialect.[6] A year later, however, the archive sent Andersson instructions on how to perform dialect recordings in a proper way: "the theme is not important, but the informant should not recite, rather let the informant talk about the good old days with farming, craft, celebrating Christmas etc., and the interviewees should talk genuine dialect and would preferably not have moved to the area later than age three to six".[7]

Arvid Andersson was born in 1910 on the farmstead of Backen in western Vimmelstorp, Reftele, in the province of Småland, where he lived his whole life until his death in 1971. He was by then a local character and went by the name "Vimmeltorparn", a nickname derived from the place name Vimmelstorp. Due to his father's sudden and early death, Andersson had to take over the farm at the age of sixteen. It is said by the local history society[8] that he was not really interested in farming, and in addition to tending the farm, he wrote articles for the newspaper *Värnamo Nyheter*. He also seems to have had a burning interest in documenting what was perceived to be vanishing: dialects, traditions and milieus, craftsmen, and local government meetings in his part of Sweden. Andersson seems to have had similar motives to those of other collectors of the time connected to the folklore archives and museums who were engaged in collecting people's experiences, traditions, building techniques, crafts, memories and

[5] Correspondence between Andersson and the Dialect Archive in Lund, 13 March, 6 August and 7 December 1951, 6 October, 23 October, 29 October and 3 November 1952. The letter from 6 October 1952 contains instructions from archive assistant Sten-Bertil Vide on how to properly perform a dialect recording.

[6] Letter to Arvid Andersson from Gunnar Hedström, head of the Dialect Archive in Lund, 13 March 1951.

[7] Letter to Arvid Andersson from Sten-Bertil Vide, 6 October 1952. Underlining in original. Translation by authors.

[8] The following paragraphs are based on information concerning Arvid Andersson's life given by Gunvor Nygren, president of Reftele local history society; e-mail conversation 19 January 2018 and 24 January 2018. In the Dialect Archive in Lund, the personnel registry says that Arvid Andersson was born on 8 December 1910 and died on 3 July 1971, and that he was a farmer, living in Vimmelstorp, Reftele parish.

voices (see e.g. Gustavsson 2014; Harvilahti et al. 2018; Hyltén-Cavallius 2007; Skott 2008; Vallström 2002).

Andersson also seems to have had a huge interest in technical progress and development, and invested early not only in recording devices but also in a colour-film camera and a television. To be able to afford his investments, he arranged film showings and sold some of the timber on his land. In the local history society, it is said that his mother was discontented with Arvid making recordings and films instead of taking care of the farm, which in his father's days was known as a very well managed farm.

Background: the Roma in Sweden

In 1999 the Roma were recognized as one of five national minority groups in Sweden, together with Swedish Finns, Jews, Tornedalians and Sámi, who also are recognized as an indigenous group. They are protected by the Swedish law on national minorities, which among other things includes protection of language and culture (SFS 2009:724). The Roma minority comprises several Roma groups, including Swedish Roma, Finnish Roma, and Resande (which in Swedish means Travellers), and thus several different varieties of Romani chib are spoken. Belonging to the minority group is based on self-identification (e.g. SFS 2009:724; SOU 2010:55: 82).

The oldest historical source in Sweden mentioning people believed to be of a Roma group is from 1512, when a travelling company of women, men and children arrived in Stockholm on the day of Saint Michael the Archangel, September 29th. The word used in the Stockholm Municipal Court Records was *tatra* (*Stockholms stads tänkeböcker 1504–1514* 1931). Authorities and cultural institutions have since then had a long-lasting interest in groups called "tattare" and "zigenare", translating approximately to "Tinkers" and "Gypsies". In this article, when referencing historical sources, we use the term "Gypsy" to replace the Swedish word "zigenare" in accordance with the language of the time; otherwise we use Roma which is the term commonly used today since both "Gypsy" and "zigenare" are mainly perceived to be derogatory (for in-depth discussions regarding the terms, see Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018: 18–24, 2020: 15–20; Hyltén-Cavallius & Fernstål 2020).

The family interviewed by Arvid Andersson belonged, as mentioned above, to a group that is called Kelderash. The earlier ancestors of the Kelderash Roma in Sweden had migrated from Russia and other parts of Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century. After 1914, they came to stay permanently in Sweden due to the First World War, which broke out the same year, and the Aliens Act of 1914, which prohibited "foreign Gypsies" from entering Sweden (SFS 1914:196). Leaving Sweden would thus have made a return quite uncertain (Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018: 22–23).

In Sweden, the Roma who had stayed after 1914 continued to live itinerant lives characterized by a continuous search for safe places to pitch tents or place caravans, and for short-term employment such as re-tinning of copper pots or refining scrap. Sometimes families arranged displays of the camp for a fee, which often included, for instance, dance performances, staged Roma weddings and/or Roma courts. During the first half of the twentieth century, many Roma families made a living from musical entertainment and some families operated an amusement fair with attractions such as merry-go-rounds, fortune telling, wheel of Fortune and competitions such as roll-a-penny and ball-throwing. Most of the Roma were not allowed to settle in one place for more than a short period or to register within a municipality, and schooling for children was basically non-existent (Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018: 83–118).

This way of life continued for several decades. During the Second World War, folklore archives, police and other governmental monitoring agencies engaged in documenting and collecting information on Roma culture and everyday life. They also registered each individual in a special census, although this did not mean that the Roma were registered within municipalities. The census was conducted throughout Sweden on the same day, 31 May 1943, by local police who entered the camps to register all individuals (Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018: 46–47; Hyltén-Cavallius & Fernstål 2020; Kotljarchuk 2017; Zigenarnas antal och levnadsförhållanden 1944).

The Post-War Situation in Sweden

By putting together information in Andersson's recording with details in yet another governmental inquiry, which went under the name of "The Gypsy Investigation" and was carried out in 1954–1956, we estimate the recording to be an early work of Andersson's from the autumn of 1951. The aim of the government was to register all Roma in Sweden (with the help of local police authorities), and the folklorist Carl-Herman Tillhagen of Nordiska museet (the Nordic museum) was hired as a "Gypsy expert" to conduct interviews with Roma families regarding their living circumstances (Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2019, 2020; SOU 1956:43). At the time, most Roma still lived itinerant lives (see **Figure 1**). In the investigation, a family who had been staying in Reftele is mentioned, and it says that they had been living in tents there from early September until early December 1951 and that the father earned a living mainly from re-tinning copper pots (SOU 1956:43: 147). In the recording, an elderly man who seems to be the head of the family states that they work with re-tinning of copper pots and that they are musicians. Re-tinning and music were quite common sources of livelihood among Roma at this time, but the connection to Reftele suggests that this may be the family in the recording and thereby we have the probable time of the recording: the

autumn of 1951. A question from Andersson about whether they will stay in Reftele during the winter also indicates that the interview was conducted in the autumn. In addition, another question from him about whether the family can play the waltz (song) "Nidälven" helps to frame the time of the conversation to around the turn of the decade, since this song was recorded in 1949 by the popular artist Harry Brandelius and became a hit.[9]

Figure 1: A Roma camp in Norrköping, Sweden, in the 1950s. (Photo: Carl-Herman Tillhagen, in *Sveriges zigenare* vol. 1–5, Nordiska museet).

[9] This inventory is only one of several surveys and registrations of the Roma carried out by Swedish authorities during the twentieth century, as part of the societal control of Roma (Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018: 41–55, 2019: 130; cf. Kott 2014). Our usage of this kind of material illustrates the general complexity related to historical sources about the Roma; on the one hand, the source is produced by the monitoring powers in society, and on the other hand, it, in this case, contributes a possibility to gain more knowledge about the family.

At the time of the recording, the Second World War had ended only six years prior to it, but Sweden was turning into a more prosperous country. During the war, Sweden took what has later been described as a neutral position and was not invaded by Germany as were its Nordic neighbours, Denmark and Norway. Sweden exported material to countries in Europe during the entire war. The fear of being invaded was constantly present and Sweden, for instance, allowed German trains transporting soldiers to Norway to pass through the country. After the war, Sweden's industry expanded. The country recruited qualified labour from several European countries and thus saw an increase in immigration. This was also a time of large-scale social engineering which saw the construction of the *folkhem*, literally "the people's home", signifying the welfare state (see e.g. Nilsson 1996).

The Roma in Sweden, however, had not yet gained access to basic human rights such as permanent housing and proper schooling. Their previous businesses such as amusement fairs, which for some families had been quite rewarding, had to be abandoned during the war because of the rationing of petrol and poorer times in general. Copper pots were also becoming obsolete and thus work in coppersmithing and re-tinning dwindled. While the country in general was becoming wealthier during the post-war period, many Roma families were still poor and had no access to welfare in most cases (Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018: 58, 139).

In 1952, the Roma in Sweden were officially recognized as Swedish citizens when the Minister of Social Affairs, Gunnar Sträng, stated that "the estimated 700 Swedish citizens who are known as Gypsies have the same rights and obligations as other Swedes" (Riksdagens protokoll 1952: 21–23, translation by authors). In 1954 the entry ban of the immigration law for the Roma was lifted, which had been in force since 1914 (Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018: 23). In the same year, the above-mentioned governmental investigation and census of the Roma was carried out with the goal of assimilating the Roma into the majority society and into what was considered a "normal" life according to the ideal of the *folkhem*. This meant permanent housing, schooling and more regular jobs (SOU 1956:43; Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2019). However, becoming part of the welfare state was a slow process, and it was not until the 1960s that most of the Roma acquired the possibility to move into proper and permanent housing, and Roma children could now regularly attend school (e.g. Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018: 181). Since the 1940s, Roma representatives had asked for better living conditions and education, especially for their children (e.g. Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018: 113–118; Selling 2020: 28–34).[10] During Tillhagen's interviews with the Roma as part of "The Gypsy

[10] Letters: "Till KONUNGEN" and "Till Ecklesiastikdepartementet", The Swedish National Archives.

Investigation", most families expressed the wish for permanent housing and schools, which the author Katarina Taikon and other Roma activists repeated at the beginning of the 1960s (Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018: 181–205; SOU 1956:43; Taikon 1963). That these wishes had been prevalent for a long time has also been expressed in later autobiographical works (e.g. Caldaras 2015; Lundgren & Dimiter Taikon 1998).

During the time of the recording, then, most Roma were still nomadic and quite poor. Importantly, the Roma largely depended on the benevolence of the majority population to get permission to set up camp for a few days or weeks, and perhaps to allow children into the local school during the stay. Roma families were often forced to move between municipalities since the local authorities did not want the expense of having to take on the responsibilities of letting them stay long enough to register within the municipality (e.g. Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018: 181). There are many accounts by Roma individuals of local police showing up at any time of the day or night to evict them, as well as accounts and records of families being harassed in their camps by local people, even to the extent of violence (Ericsson 2017; Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018: 77–83). During this time, the Roma were not in a position to refuse or turn away sudden visitors to their camps. They had to behave "well", since they were also dependent on the benevolence of others.

"Where do you come from?"

After Andersson's announcement at the very beginning of the recording that he was visiting a "Gypsy camp" in Reftele and had come into contact with "these dark-skinned people", the actual conversation between him and the Roma family begins.[11] It seems that they had already been chatting for a while when the recording starts, perhaps introducing themselves to each other. An overview of the roughly twelve-minute interview shows that they cover topics such as origin and family structure, occupations and taxes, coping and the Second World War, wealth and adventures, language, music and fortune telling. As we mentioned before, it is Andersson who sets the tone of the conversation and has the possibility to ask questions, to which the interviewees reply, although sometimes moments of joking and ironic comments are the response. Besides questions, Andersson also asks the Roma family to play music and to perform a fortune-telling session with him.

In the following, we will look more closely at a few parts of the conversation that involve positioning by colour, place and origin (cf. Johnstone 1990). Which places – imagined and real – are evoked during the conversation and what do these places do?

[11] All translations of the recording were made by us, except from Romani chib (see earlier note).

The setting of the conversation is the temporary camp in the small village of Reftele, Småland. Andersson turns his attention to an elderly man, whom we interpret to be the head of the family, and poses a question, or more accurately, urges the man to talk about his family and their origin:

> "But tell me something about your family and how, where do you come from and…"
>
> "We come from South Asia," the elderly man answers.
>
> "Ah, yes," Andersson says, indicating that he understands, but the elderly Roma man repeats:
>
> "South Asia."

Andersson then continues to talk about the family's whereabouts and origins:

> "Have you been in Sweden for a long time?" The man answers quickly:
>
> "I was born here in Sweden."
>
> "Well, but, you mean…" Andersson says hesitatingly. The man interrupts:
>
> "*The tribe* is from South Asia. The tribe," he repeats.

Our overall impression of the situation is that Andersson was curious, followed an impulse and simply entered the camp one day – unannounced and uninvited – and is treated politely, but somewhat cautiously. For the Roma, experiences of interacting with the majority population contained elements of violence and hostility, exchange of goods and services, dependence and benevolence, but sometimes also love and marriage (Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018). Life history interviews conducted by us within our project with Swedish Roma who had experienced growing up in camps revealed a situation that was to a large extent characterized by temporary multi-sited dwelling, evictions, harassment and decampments. There are many stories about majority Swedes entering the camps or standing outside screaming nasty things, sometimes throwing rocks or just looking or staring at the inhabitants. In one of the interviews, a woman in her seventies comments on the experience of being stared at as a child, that it felt "like we were some kind of animals" (Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018: 79–81). Within this context of common experiences among the Roma, it is understandable that the family was cautious when asked questions by Andersson, a stranger who had entered their home.

Andersson's opening words in the recording, "I'm visiting a Gypsy camp and have come into contact with these dark-skinned people", indicates that his purpose was to get to know more about the Roma, who were often identified by their colour as outsiders (Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018). One may wonder what preconceptions about "Gypsies" Andersson had when entering the camp. Most likely he was aware of exotic "Gypsy" stereotypes in Swedish popular culture in the 1930s and 1940s (Hyltén-Cavallius 2012: 284). Film theatres showed titles such as the popular *Singoalla* from 1949 (called *Gypsy Fury* in the US and *The Wind is My Lover* or *The Mask and the Sword* in the UK), based on a novel by the Swedish author Victor Rydberg from 1857. The story is set in medieval times and tells of a Roma girl meeting a knight and their tragic love story. Roma representatives took part in the film as extras. These included Katarina Taikon, who later wrote that "I remember that at Terrafilm they got very angry with me because I had explained in a newspaper interview that I thought the depiction of the Gypsies was not at all true to reality" (Taikon 1963: 41, translation by authors). Popular songs with titles such as "Gypsy, you took my heart" (originally in German, and recorded by Zarah Leander) and "You black Gypsy" (originally in German and Swedish) were heard on the radio. A general characteristic of these song texts is that they "mostly depict scenes of heat, passion and betrayal against a backdrop of a gypsy encampment, involving fire and wagons, with accompaniment from violin played with heavy vibrato, minor key harmonies and habanera-like rhythms" (Hyltén-Cavallius 2012: 284).

In the popular culture productions from the first half of the twentieth century, there is a repetitive pattern in the use of the "Gypsy" as a stereotype, with which Andersson, like many others, must have been quite well acquainted. This stereotype was a continuation of the use of already existing clichés. It was used by Rydberg in the novel *Singoalla* as well as by August Strindberg in *Tschandala* 1897 as a contrast and counterpart to Swedishness, middle-class maskulinity, desirable sexuality and the success of modern civilization (Laskar 2015). In general, the stereotype of the male "Gypsy" seems to have been portrayed as swarthy, unreliable and somewhat criminal, whereas the female "Gypsy" was dark, mystical and sexually tempting. Both genders were depicted as fiery, dramatic and exciting. That the people Andersson visited in Reftele were "dark-skinned" was important to him to point out immediately at the very beginning of the recording. During the interview, he says to a woman:

"You are so very beautiful," using the plural "you", referring to the Roma women.

"Yes," the woman replies.

> "You have many admirers, right? You are very beautiful."
>
> "Yes, we have beautiful," a man interrupts, probably meaning "beautiful women".
>
> "Yes. Have you been on many adventures?" Andersson asks the man. "Have you been out at sea?"

These are a few examples of questions which Andersson asks that are clearly based on stereotypical ideas of exotism. In the context of the Roma being regarded as exotic elements in Sweden, his introductory question "Where do you come from?" is consistent and logical, positioning the Roma in another place, outside the geographical borders of Sweden. The man who answered "South Asia" assumed that Andersson did not mean their last camp site before Reftele; he was probably used to this practice of being positioned as being from somewhere else. In his short answer "South Asia", he refers to the diasporic narrative of Roma roots in India (e.g. Hancock 2002: 6–13; Willems 1997: 56–61). There has been little longing to return to the iconic homeland of India reported among most Roma groups. Instead, the homelands for the Roma, many of whom share a migratory history, can be multiple and different places which can be invoked and used strategically at different moments (cf. Silverman 2012: 39–40).

When Andersson asks if they had been at sea, a man answers "I have been to Hitler", probably meaning that they had been travelling in Germany, and several Roma participants mention countries they have been to. The answer leads the interview in another direction, towards how they had been coping in Sweden during the Second World War. During the conversation, the elderly man reveals that they have been travelling a lot back and forth to Norway and Denmark, and one of the women says that she was born in Norway. The man also refers to travelling in Romania, Spain, France, Italy, Germany and Iceland. Most likely, some of these places are part of his childhood experiences, since the entry ban for the Roma that was introduced in 1914 made it difficult, if not impossible, for Roma groups to cross the Swedish border. He mentions that he speaks German, French, Italian, Swedish and Kelderash and he, and others in the group, demonstrate their language skills by saying a few sentences in those languages. One woman jokingly shouts: "Talk Egyptian to the microphone!" This was probably a reference to the earlier widespread notion that Roma had migrated from Egypt.

At the beginning of the interview, the elderly man initially evokes the Roma's diasporic roots in South Asia, and then he says, "I was born here in Sweden" in his next utterance. By doing so, he inscribes himself within the geographical space of Sweden as well as in the notion of the nation and resists Andersson's positioning him outside Sweden, which Andersson seemed to do by being hesitant about believing that the man

was born in Sweden. That the family stressed their belonging in Sweden was further strengthened by the content of the interview regarding livelihoods. Andersson asks the family if they are wealthy. Perhaps the question is based on the long-lasting conception that Roma possess gold treasures. The elderly man replies that they are maybe not like before, now they are a little poor and because several relatives had died, he has had to help out. A woman assures Andersson that she is coping. A few more words are exchanged but Andersson seizes on the word "coping" and asks:

> "Pardon me, but how are you coping when you are out like this?"
>
> "Well, we are coppersmiths, tinning and making copper vessels and such," the elderly man says.
>
> "And musicians," another person adds.
>
> "Yes, that we do too," the elderly man says.
>
> "Well, yes," Andersson says.
>
> "That's what we are making a living from," the elderly man states.
>
> "But I mean…," Andersson says but is interrupted by the elderly man:
>
> "And in the summer, we trade horses and everything."
>
> "Yes, I mean one should not get the impression that you live off others, but that you work?"

Here Andersson phrases the question in such a way and in a tone that establishes an opening for the elderly man to tell him more about their work, but the question is interpreted as questioning them having regular jobs.

> "No, no, no," the elderly man protests. "We help each other. We help those who do not have anything. We have to help the family."
>
> "Yes, well," Andersson says.
>
> "We do not live off others. We work," one of the women states firmly.

Worth noting in the conversation that followed Andersson's question "how are you coping when you are out like this?" is that the Roma did not interpret this to mean

how they were coping living outside in tents or caravans during the autumn but being out travelling. It was important to them to establish that they were working and coping economically, not living off others; they were good members of society. The emphasis on being full members of society returns at the very end of the recording, after the Roma, at Andersson's request, had told him his fortune and played some music:

"But can I ask you, you are not registered anywhere, are you?"

"Yes, we are registered here in Sweden."

Andersson questions his answer:

"Are you?"

"Yes."

"Where in Sweden?"

"A few of us in Gothenburg, a few in Stockholm, a few in Malmö. And I'm registered in [inaudible]."

When this has been clarified, Andersson continues to ask about their civic status:

"Well, but you don't have to pay taxes, do you?"

"Yes, we do," the elderly man objects.

"Do you?"

"Yes, all of us pay taxes."

"Well, I say."

"We contribute, just like you," the man establishes their position.

"Yes, yes," Andersson replies.

"I was born here in Sweden."

"Well, yes, I understand that," Andersson says.

As the Roma family informed their visitor, they had several occupations from which they earned a living, a very common situation for the Roma in Sweden at the time (Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018: 57–100). The Roma, however, have often been portrayed in literature and newspapers, for example, as lazy and unwilling to work, and sometimes also as beggars and thieves, for example in the novel and film *Singoalla*, in which the Roma relatives of Singoalla steal silver treasures from a church. Thievery was presented as a fact in a Swedish encyclopedia from 1922: "The character of the Gypsies is described everywhere today as lazy, mendacious and vengeful [...] Pilferage is generally performed by women and children, but larger thefts and highway robberies are very rare" (Nordisk familjebok 1922: 772, translation by authors). In 1938, the Swedish historian Allan Etzler wrote: "The Gypsies show from the beginning a distinctive parasitic character. Pointed out as common sources of income have always been theft, mainly petty thefts, begging and the art of fraudster: divination and sorcery etc." (Etzler 1938: 375, translation by authors).

That Andersson's questions to the family regarding wealth and how they were coping resulted in the feeling of a need to explain themselves and defend themselves against common prejudices is quite understandable. Throughout the interview, they seem to strive to position themselves as belonging in Sweden, as respectable citizens by being hard-working, registered within a municipality and paying taxes.

To be active in the everyday cultural and social life of the country there is a cultural citizenship that must be considered in addition to legal citizenship. Nation-building can be viewed from three perspectives (Yuval-Davis 1997). The first, the genealogical, is constructed of people's descent, that is, through blood, race and kinship. The second is civil and focuses on citizenship as a determinant of the borders of a nation; it relates to the sovereignty of nation states and their specific territoriality. The cultural perspective is the symbolic heritage, the perceived "essence" of a nation, such as language, religion and traditions. Here there is little tolerance for deviance and the "others" become very visible, according to Nira Yuval-Davis (1997).

Although the Roma were recognized as Swedish citizens in 1952, there was still a long way to go before they would be granted cultural citizenship, as the recorded conversation indicates. The conversation took place just before the Roma gained citizenship, and the cultural distance between the interviewer and the Roma family appears considerable. Judging from the questions that Andersson asked them, he seems to have assumed that there would be quite a gap between the normative ideas of the Roma and those of the *folkhem*. This can be seen in his questions regarding the most obvious living conditions, but also regarding citizenship, such as whether they were registered and paying taxes. The information that an elderly Roma man was born

in Sweden seems to have come as a surprise to Andersson. The two men had lived in the same country their whole lives, and it might be supposed that they shared many cultural references, but Andersson focused on the dissimilarities, for instance asking them twice if they had been on many adventures. The Roma, in turn, seem to have interpreted his questions based on previous experiences of assumptions held by non-Roma, and they tackle these assumptions in their answers.

The Fortune-telling Session – a Focal Point

From the recording, we received the impression that Andersson conducted the interview rather spontaneously; at least the questions do not seem to have been planned in advance. The first question is about where they come from, and thereafter the conversation to a large extent develops by Andersson seizing on something in an answer or a comment and coming up with new questions from that. In this way, the Roma played a part in the development of the conversation, although it is Andersson who takes the lead. It is Andersson who asks questions to which he expects answers, just as he asks the Roma family to tell his fortune and play music. They take up their instruments and play him a few tunes, and a woman reluctantly tells him his fortune, which we will focus on here.

During the fortune-telling session something happens that we perceive as a misunderstanding. It is interesting to take a closer look at this, since the consequences shed light on the situation of the Roma. When the Roma's different livelihoods had been discussed, Andersson asked if they also told fortunes. After a few family members saying "yes" and the elderly man saying that he does not (this was a mainly a female occupation, Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018: 93), a woman whose voice indicates advanced age says:

> "We tell a little about how it has been and how it will be."

This is followed by less audible comments from several people until Andersson interrupts:

> "But if you see me here, can you tell something about me?"

> "I can. How it has been and how it will be."

In the background, there is simultaneously a conversation in Romani chib, and the woman has to be persuaded by the others before she begins telling Andersson his fortune:

"Answer him. Tell him his fortune."

Slowly the divination session begins. It is difficult to hear exactly what is said because several people are talking at the same time and some are shouting, partly in Romani chib. But a few phrases can be discerned, such as such as "you have been good", "you have been happy" and "it will become better now". The mood seems to be good, despite the fortune teller's initial reluctance. After a while, Andersson says:

"What do you think, should I do anything more than this?"

"Besides the recording?" someone asks.

Several are now talking in Romani chib and a little Swedish can also be heard, among other things phrases like "you earn better" and "you have a lot to do and better earnings". The person who says this is laughing at the same time. Someone else says, "you have better business too, and it will become better later".

"Well, that's right," Andersson says and probably turns to the woman again: "Do you think I'm married?"

Several phrases regarding the divination are spoken but difficult to hear from the recording, at the same time as conversations in Romani chib continue. We interpret Andersson's question to mean that do the Roma family members think he should do something more than this. As a way to move the fortune telling forward, he wants to hear more about what the woman has to say about him. In connection with his question, however, several are talking in Romani chib saying, among other things: "Don't tell so much, he will write about it in the newspaper." They now seem scared and even more cautious. The idea of being written about in a newspaper does not seem to be appealing.

In general, the quality of the sound is quite bad, and when several people are talking it is difficult to grasp everything that is being said or going on. Nevertheless, in this situation it can at least be discerned that the Roma are engaged in a parallel discussion simultaneously with the fortune-telling session. The Roma misunderstand Andersson's question and do not want their location to be exposed in a newspaper article, and therefore become concerned. At the same time, they help the woman to continue the fortune-telling session by jokingly shouting harmless phrases about Andersson's life and also what are probably standard phrases in the fortune-telling occupation, for example "your happiness will come" and "you are a good man". They also continue answering his other questions afterwards.

The fortune-telling session is in numerous ways a focal point in the interview where several events take place simultaneously. The Roma are asked to tell the fortune of a visitor to their camp, unlike their regular practice of offering to tell people's fortunes for pay in the streets, in specific tents or caravans in their camp or at a market. Andersson's position of power in this situation enabled him to ask for this and expect it as a favour, although it was otherwise an important source of income for the Roma (e.g. Fernstål & Hyltén-Cavallius 2018: 93–95). The woman who told his fortune was initially reluctant to do this, and during the session there was a misunderstanding which caused the Roma to start worrying about what the interview would be used for ("he will write about it in the newspaper"). Still, the older woman continued the session and soon Andersson asked them questions about their lives, which they answered consistently.

The fortune-telling session seems to have been conducted with the strategy to mostly joke and say standard phrases, and in the continued interview the interviewees emphasized their good citizenship, being registered in Sweden, not living off others and paying taxes: "We contribute, just like you," the elderly man said.

Conclusions

Our examination of the verbal exchange in the recording highlights the positions that the Roma family members were forced into, the positions that they tried to occupy and their struggle, even resistance, against the experience of being positioned as not belonging to the nation, that is, as foreigners or as persons living off society instead of contributing to the common good. Our analysis underscores the fact that one's possibilities to position oneself in society are preconditioned by a number of factors and influenced by one's identity and social status at that particular moment in time.

Our analysis has shown that this jointly constructed conversation between the collector Andersson and the Roma family members was characterized by asymmetrical power relations between the interviewer and the interviewees. At the same time, the Roma family exercised agency in striving to position themselves as closer in identity to the interviewer than the latter had presupposed in order to challenge assumptions of the family's "foreignness" implied by the interview questions. These suppositions were met with a polite but firm form of "tactics of the weak" expressed in the Roma family members' replies (Scott 1990).

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Letter: Till KONUNGEN, signed by J. Taikon, 7 June 1945

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E-mail

E-mail conversation between Charlotte Hyltén-Cavallius and Gunvor Nygren, president of Reftele local history society; 19 January 2018 and 24 January 2018.

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