



## Dressed for Peddling: Dalkullor, Marketing and Practices of Tradition

*Ella Johansson*

An old photo from the archive of the Kulturen museum in Lund in southern Sweden shows a day of celebration sometime in the early 1890s (see Fig. 3.1). Two Swedish museums of cultural history, Kulturen in Lund and Skansen in the capital of Stockholm, were the world's first open-air museums. These museums were constructed as small-scale versions of the nation, presenting an educational project about the Swedish people, the “folk” and their heritage. At the open-air museum of Skansen,<sup>1</sup> the idea was to represent “all” of Sweden through buildings representing the different regions, all collected in a limited and strollable area. Both Kulturen and Skansen organized parties or festivals where people both benefited from and contributed to the atmosphere of the environment as they dressed up in “suitable” outfits. It was a way to engage the public, raise money and give life to the “walk about Sweden” that was the open-air museum's idea.<sup>2</sup> The founder of the Kulturen museum, Georg Karlin, arranged ticketed events, which included markets and bazaars, as well as

---

E. Johansson (✉)

Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology, Uppsala University,  
Uppsala, Sweden

e-mail: [ella.johansson@etnologi.uu.se](mailto:ella.johansson@etnologi.uu.se)

© The Author(s) 2022

J. Ahlbeck et al. (eds.), *Encounters and Practices of Petty Trade in Northern Europe, 1820–1960*,

[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-98080-1\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-98080-1_3)



**Fig. 3.1** A playful folklore setting and a day of celebration at one of the world's first open-air museums, Kulturen, in Lund, Sweden, in the early 1890s. The museum was constructed as a small-scale version of the nation, and in the photograph, people are dressed up as immigrants, different minorities, and some are wearing regional costumes. (Photo by Lina Jonn. The Archive of the Kulturen Museum in Lund, Sweden)

what he called “purely ethnographical festivals” with attractions like “a Scanian peasant wedding” or “Gypsy camp,” featuring theatrical folklore pieces enacted by students.<sup>3</sup>

The women in this photo are all wearing what were called “national costumes,”<sup>4</sup> in this case mainly local southern Swedish costumes with their characteristic white headscarves. The sixth person from the left in the front row, with a dark peaked hood and a striped apron, is wearing a Rättvik costume from *Dalarna*, also known as Dalecarlia. This costume embodied more than anything else the national image of Swedish women. Although the costume originally was a local dress, it became popular among upper- and middle-class women in the late nineteenth century in the cities, and it could be bought ready-made. The Rättvik costume also became a

common motif in popular culture, appearing on countless postcards, brands, advertisements, and packages of products.<sup>5</sup>

In a way, the photo with individuals wearing different “traditional” or “national” costumes in a masquerade-like manner seems to mix notions of “otherness” and “sameness.” Hence, the question of who is impersonating “the Other” and who is impersonating the “national ancestors” is not clear-cut and needs further discussion. If this is a celebration of the Swedish nation, it does not at first glance seem to be about an exclusion of groups that in those days were seen as strange or socially ambivalent in relation to the nationalist ideology of distinctiveness and internal homogeneity. This is a playful folklore setting, where immigrants and minorities are given space in some odd ways.<sup>6</sup> For instance, the woman dressed as a “Sámi woman” is wearing a “national costume”; however, this so-called “Lapp costume,” in white or blue, was also worn by non-Sámi women. The dress was seen as a suitable outfit for ladies who went skiing. Like everyone else in the photo, this woman has given herself the right to dress up as a representative of a minority, secure in the claim it still embodies Swedish identity and solidarity. Similarly, several men are dressed as representatives of ethnic groups or otherwise “alien” people. For instance, the man in the center of the photo is probably dressed as an Italian organ grinder, part of a poor group who peddled around Sweden—and Europe more generally—at that time. This chapter exemplifies the relation between the fascination with the dangerous and alien and its part in the Swedish nation-building.<sup>7</sup>

My starting point involves the costumes from the Swedish region of Dalarna and the women who wore these dresses under different circumstances. The Rättvik costume, with its high, black hood and horizontally striped apron, will be a focus of the study. I will focus mainly on the women from Rättvik and Dalarna, who wore the traditional costume in modern and urban settings. This practice will be located in relation to contemporary notions of femininity and respectability and in terms of the making of identity and tradition for the Swedish nation and, to some extent, for the Dalecarlians themselves. Additionally, I will touch upon another group of women from Dalarna, that is, the hair-crafters from Mora.

Dressed in their costumes, Dalarna women were also mobile, and they were in fact seen in great parts of the country, above all in Stockholm, where they comprised a big and visible group of migrant workers from the district. The mobility and visibility in metropolitan life of the Dalarna people are, of course, an important reason for their fame.

The Dalarna mobile livelihoods were certainly not at the margins of how national identities were constructed. I will here look further into how heritage and concepts of national ethnicity were shaped by encounters between rural and urban, work and leisure, and markets and market strategies. I will argue that both poverty and the precarious, mobile livelihoods of the Dalecarlians were pivotal in the construction of the modern Swedish nation-state and national identities. The migrant work of the *Dalkarlar* (men) and *Dalkullor* (women) is well studied in literature and in ethnographic notes in folklife archives, and it has been published on in several texts, for example, by Lars Levander and Göran Rosander, and more recently by historian Anna Götling.<sup>8</sup>

### PICTURESQUE HERITAGE PRODUCTION

The Rättvik dress has a black skirt, on the front of which an apron-like, horizontally striped piece of cloth is sewn. It is the only example of horizontal stripes in Swedish traditional dress.<sup>9</sup> It is remarkable that the costume allows for public appearance without an apron, a garment that was as important for female decency as covered hair was for married women.

The most distinct feature is the peaky, dark hood. The hood was only to be worn by unmarried women (i.e., those women who also went to work in Stockholm). The hood seems to have gotten higher and pointier during the nineteenth century, especially when worn as a national costume, where the hood was used by both the married and unmarried, but also among the proper *Dalkullor* from Dalarna.

In the “authentication process” of the *Dalkullor*, cultural representations such as art and fiction were also used to depict a romantic and idealized notion of the “national maid.”

There was thus a movement from the visibility of exotic and colorful dress in the urban landscape to paintings and the picturesque rural, folklife genre in the mid nineteenth-century Düsseldorf School, to the tableaux or living paintings of the museum. Early national Romantic-period ethnographical or folkloristic texts often had titles such as *Folklivsbilder*, *Taflor ur folklifvet*, or *Dalmålningar*, comprising pictures, paintings, and tableaux from folklife.<sup>10</sup>

The folklife genre painting by Amalia Lindegren *Lillans sista bädd* (“The last bed of the little one”) from 1858 shows a cottage interior. A woman in a Rättvik costume, reserved for unmarried women, is crying while kneeling over a cradle. A small girl and two men are surrounding the

crying mother. This painting came to represent the origin of the Nordic Museum, which focuses on cultural history, and the open-air museum of Skansen. At the Scandinavian Ethnographica collection housed in the vivid downtown shopping street Drottningatan in 1873, Arthur Hazelius built a tableau of this interior with Rättvik-dress mannequins impersonating the mourning figures. The following year, the painting was published in the widely disseminated magazine *Hemmets familjejournal*. The interior tableau also appeared at the World Expo in Paris in 1878. There, as well as in Drottningatan, a “live” *kulla*, known as *Pariser Anna* (“Parisian Anna”), flanked the exhibit as a kind of hostess.<sup>11</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, Dalecarlian dresses were commonly worn by non-Dalecarlian women—namely, by upper- and middle-class women—but also as a uniform for the saleswomen in the capital’s leading department store, as well as by serving staff in many restaurants and cafés. It seems as if the Dalecarlian female costume granted women of all social classes and backgrounds some sort of social status and sign of virtues, such as trustworthiness, diligence, and respectability.<sup>12</sup>

### DALARNA AND REPRESENTATIONS OF SWEDISHNESS

The fascination with Dalarna in the nineteenth-century nation-building processes, here represented and “exaggerated” in both material and visual artefacts, is in many respects coherent with mainstream theories about nationalism and concerns about origin, purity, and authenticity. A utopia or model for the nation may be found or invented in a mythical past and at the same time appear in a contemporary *topos*. Many scholars have pointed out that in the case of Sweden, the district of Dalecarlia—and more precisely the parishes around Lake Siljan—has come to stand for the most representative region of “Swedishness,” with the area being interpreted as a link to a glorious past.<sup>13</sup>

Levander has documented the traditional language and culture of this region, as well as the heroic travels of the women hair peddlers from Våmhus.<sup>14</sup> In other publications, apart from the ones on Dalarna, he also revealed his interest in the “illegitimate” sides of traditional society such as outcast groups, vagrancy, crime, begging, and peddling.<sup>15</sup> There are, of course, a lot of oral history and folklore collections about the migrant Dalecarlians. Rosander discussed factors that made Dalarna a national ideal, even though the lifestyle of its inhabitants was very “atypical.”<sup>16</sup>

Dalarna was admired for its archaic and authentic material culture. Long church boats, as well as the collaborative social system that went with them, were believed to carry traces of Viking ships and *Ledung* organization, understood as the first expression of Swedish state formation.<sup>17</sup> The Dalecarlian use of a runic alphabet up until the twentieth century, ancient types of low timber houses with dragon ornaments inside and outside, and, not least, the traditional costumes of the peasants were all important material elements that contributed to interpretations of the Dalarna culture as archaic and essentially Swedish.

Above all, Dalarna represented a social utopia. The egalitarian group of smallholding yet still landowning peasants, with elaborate systems of cooperation, was idealized. Ethnologist Göran Rosander has pointed out, however, that this was not at all typical for the rest of Sweden but instead limited to this geographical-cultural district.

Northern or Upper Dalarna had a heritage system based on “real estate,” dividing property in the form of *realia*, that is, dividing up the land and matters in their actual form. It was *not* customary, as in other parts of Sweden that one brother got the farm, and the other brothers and sisters were compensated with money or an equal value of mobile goods. The land around Lake Siljan was gradually divided up into extremely small farms with extremely small plots, and extensive villages grew in all directions, crammed with very small farmhouses.<sup>18</sup> There seems to have been few attempts to limit the number of children, and all siblings ended up as landed farmers. This was important, since it meant that they all had shares in extensive forested commons, which could be exploited, for example, by grazing, forestry, and tar, charcoal, and iron production. Many other supplementary sources of income were also necessary. This was arranged through domestic craftsmanship and seasonal migration. The latter included more or less organized begging and, later in the early modern era, trading in the form of house-to-house peddling, as well as migrant wage work outside the area.

The migrant work was called *herrarbete* (“gentry work”), meaning labor for people who paid others to work for them, a system that supposedly did not exist within their own communities. Men had been regularly leaving Dalarna for migrant work since the sixteenth century or late medieval era. Earlier, it is believed that, they supplemented meager agriculture by breaking ore and processing and trading iron. Men’s trading was combined with their own manual craftsmanship, for example, working in metal, wood, or painting for export to other, mainly rural parts of Sweden.

There was a developed internal division of specialties and products between parishes and villages. In Stockholm, construction work and woodwork, such as sawing firewood for the wealthier families and institutions, were ways of making money.

People from Dalarna thus spent a lot of time away or on the road, mainly in neighboring provinces or in Stockholm. Some men and women also traveled to other countries, such as Finland, Russia, Germany, and Britain. Widely known and identified as a group, they were recognized through their dress. The term *dalkarlar* or *dalfolk* (literally, “the people of Dalarna”) was used for men and women together, although *dalkarlar* means Dalecarlian men; alternatively, *kulla* (pl. *kullor*) has become the common Swedish word for women from Dalarna, although specifically referring to unmarried women.

### LABOR MIGRANTS AND UTILIZATION OF THE COSTUME

Peddling, in particular, was part of the trade that made the dress, figure, and silhouette of the women from Rättvik a national symbol. Let us start with their migrant wage work. Women are said to have started doing *ber-rarbete* around 1770, yet it is very possible that they worked in the surrounding agricultural areas even earlier.<sup>19</sup> Their visibility in Stockholm was partly due to the outdoor work they did, with gardening being both the first and the most recent type.<sup>20</sup> The *Årstafruns dagbok*, an extensive diary of the lady of the Årsta estate in the county of Stockholm, reports the annual arrival and leaving of her garden *kullor* as early as the late eighteenth century.

Another occupation that definitely contributed to the “image-building” of the *kullor* was their involvement as *roddarmadamer* (“rowing madams”) during the period of 1822–1862. They maintained a kind of “boat cab” or small-scale ferry enterprise between the many islands in the archipelago and the bays of Stockholm. It was hard physical work, consisting of either rowing or manually operating a paddle-wheel boat, but the women are reported to have entertained their passengers by telling melancholy stories or by singing and blowing their horns. The boats were sometimes decorated with green branches. The first *roddarkullor* were hired by wealthy Stockholmers to row their private boats, for example, between their town houses and their nearby rural homes, or for outings. These private boats soon came to be put into use in regular business, with *kullor*

rowing them for full-time employment, being free to make as much as they could if they worked overtime after ten in the evening.

There was often conflict between *kullorna* and poor Stockholm women, who had originally enjoyed the privilege of rowing to support themselves. Late popular sources describe—but falsely, it seems—that the *kullor* thoroughly outcompeted the old rowing madams, whose practice of the trade had long been permitted. There are striking parallels with modern-day taxi organizations and controversies in multicultural metropolitan areas in relation to ethnicity and newly arrived groups. In 1853, *kullor* controlled 67 registered boats, around which time they were gradually replaced by steamboat lines.

It is likely that the rowing business gave a pastoral and romantic aura to the women (see Fig. 3.2). Very hard work that seems to have little to do with national romanticism, however, was building labor, where they did the heaviest of tasks, carrying mortar and brick up to the male construction workers. Dalecarlian groups of men played significant roles as

**Fig. 3.2** A *Dalkulla* from the parish of Floda blowing a horn. The mobile livelihoods of the Dalecarlians were pivotal in the construction of Swedish national identities. (Photographer unknown. Nordiska museet)





subcontractors in the industrial growth of housing and infrastructure in Stockholm and Sweden overall. Related and neighboring women joined them as wage- or pieceworkers at these as well as at other building sites.<sup>21</sup> The work of Dalkullor as stevedores, another break from gender norms, seems to have been predominant in small harbors on northern Swedish coasts, where they also worked at sawmills.<sup>22</sup>

The first factory to hire men and women from Dalarna was the Liljeholmens candle factory, founded in 1839. The factory operated on a seasonal basis. A xylography from 1861 shows all the workers in the factory hall being women from Rättvik. Breweries, dairies, and water factories also specialized in hiring *kullor*. They washed and labeled the bottles; this was perhaps the most heavy, damp, and unhealthy work that they did but also the best paid job work female workers could have. Paintings and pictures show them transporting, loading, and unloading very large and heavy milk containers.

In the early era of mass reproductions, the Rättvik costume benefited from its graphic qualities, being strikingly clear and easily identifiable, even in simple black-and-white print. Thus, *kullorna* are often seen in otherwise “trivial” and mundane pictures of cities and factories, as well as in advertisements and packaging.

Apart from private gardens, a big group of around a hundred women worked at Stockholm’s Northern Cemetery in Solna. In gardening work, the picturesque, staffage quality of their dress was obvious. Yet, it is striking how “uniform-like” and professional the dress looks in the mass photos from the barrack of the *kullor* by the Northern Cemetery. One can note that they were not as popular in Solna among the lower strata of society as among the bourgeoisie. Housewives from the shanty town of Hagalund threw stones through the windows of their barracks during the economic crisis and food shortages in 1920. This was because *kullorna* were thought of as having the money to buy the food the Hagalund people needed. Possibly involved in the animosity were other feelings of rivalry and contempt for the group of single women. Even the local Mayday demonstration that year was directed against them.<sup>23</sup>

A type of work that *kullorna* seem to have very consistently avoided was household work. As laborers, they were as badly paid as other women were in their time. That meant half the payment of what men got for the same kind of work, as is evident in the documents from the mixed workplace of the Liljeholmen candle factory. Yet, it seems that their strategy was to maximize income in pure money, in order to bring cash back to Dalarna

after their migrant season. They did not compromise in this by conforming to norms about femininity, frailty, or security. It is also possible that their avoidance of household work was part of an ideology of not mixing with non-Dalecarlian people, reflecting a kind of endogamous identification based on ethnicity. This is not to say that their endogamy was very strict in practice, however, as a lot of anecdotal material speaks to the contrary.

Dalecarlians from Rättvik coming to the capital for seasonal work housed themselves—men and women together—in the stable of an inn on Hornsgatan Street. There they rented one big room and two smaller ones, where they slept and teamed up for simple and low-cost cooking. In some cases, the Stockholm upper-class ladies who visited the slums were very worried about the living conditions of the working class, as they imagined the confined housing conditions could cause sexual immorality and other moral problems.<sup>24</sup> Still, the moral standards of *kullorna* in their mixed quarters were never questioned. It is said somewhere that the costume was worn to mark oneself as not being a prostitute, in order to be able move freely in the urban environs at all hours without being solicited by men.<sup>25</sup> This would have been in contrast to other unmarried female workers, who could not survive without some kind of economically based relationship with one or several men.

Since the young women who came from Dalarna were wearing their costumes in the streets of Stockholm, one could ask how their visibility was connected to the possibility of making a living, as well as how they were looked upon by their employers, customers, and people who encountered them in the streets. According to all types of text and evidence around this well-publicized and popular group, Dalecarlian people had an overwhelming good reputation as being completely honest, extremely hardworking, and very trustworthy. When it came to sexuality and chastity, the women were known for marrying into their own community and having an extremely low rate of birth out of wedlock. This was in an era where the illegitimacy rate was very high in other settings, especially in Stockholm and the regions surrounding Dalarna.

### RURAL VAGRANTS AND FEMALE PEDDLERS

In the early modern era, one Dalecarlian complementary means of subsistence—which was not in any obvious way the case among the *kullor*, who went to Stockholm later in the nineteenth century—was begging. In the

early modern period, Dalecarlian begging was organized through established routes, with assigned districts for different parishes or villages. This especially involved children. During “normal years,” beggars were given food through culturally defined rules of generosity: two spoons or ladles of flour should be poured in the beggars’ bags by each host. In “folk memory” recordings, the neighboring district of Hälsingland is described as “the Eldorado of the begging Dalecarlians.”<sup>26</sup> According to interviews with people from Älvdalen, the farmers in Hälsingland were made to believe that begging people from Dalarna would ruin the fertility of the fields with magic if they were not fed. They would be “happy to get us back” for that reason.<sup>27</sup>

How organized and “profitable” the mendicant begging actually was, is, of course, a matter of relativity and interpretation. Just like the *herrarbete*, it was a way of fighting hunger and starvation. Begging could also be more subtle and combined with peddling—sometimes with “symbolic” merchandise of very low value that people would buy as part of a moral economy—or searching for work, as well as getting food and lodging for small services when traveling on the way to work somewhere else. This all comprised part of the migrant work conditions in rural communities.

In his solid and empirically very detailed—but perhaps not so easily accessible—doctoral dissertation, Rosander also presents several examples of negative stereotypes about the Dalecarlians. The examples mainly originate from rural and/or lower social strata, not from the wealthy citizens of Stockholm of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In contrast to the examples given above, in these anecdotes the Dalecarlians are described as lazy and sly. Thus, it seems that the Dalecarlians managed to increase their status considerably during this period. The aura of trust combined with exoticism around *kullorna* was also used in advertisements by the emerging industrialists. The Victoria (later Mazzetti) chocolate factory and Alfa Laval-Separator used Rättvikskullor in their advertisements. Rättvikskullor also wrapped parcels at the department stores Nordiska Kompaniet and Leja. Rättvik-clad women were one of the most common images in Swedish advertisements of the time. Another commodity branded with Dalkullor was tobacco. Many sources report that Dalkullor were often chain-smokers who used iron pipes. The simple black-and-white pictures from tobacco emballage or matchboxes show, for example, a pipe-smoking Dalkulla carrying a pipe-smoking baby on her back in a bag, or majestically looking out over a wild landscape, pipe in her hand and surrounded by a herd of cattle.<sup>28</sup>

Pipe-smoking women can represent a focal point of exotism and orientalist odalisque romanticism, with water pipes, hashish, and opium. Smoking tobacco in an iron pipe was also seen as a habit of Sámi, Roma, and traveler women. It is one of the visual stereotypes that surrounded them and in later stages was reproduced, for example, in the imagery of “Tinkermovies,” a popular film genre. There is, however, cause to assume that many women in the mainstream, core culture all over rural northern Sweden smoked a pipe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is important to note that nations and nationalism are not entirely constructed out of sources of imagined purity and heroism. The authenticity of the nation seems to also need a heritage that includes pollution, ambivalence, and sexuality, in the same way that this is ascribed to subaltern groups.

### MANAGING CULTURAL POLLUTION

I will continue the description of *kullorna* in the contexts that stressed their factual and symbolic connection with groups that were poor, marginal, vagrant, and excluded. Such classifications go back to premodern society, with its concepts of domiciliary rights, vagrancy, infamy, and dishonesty.

One of the oldest images of *kullor* is a painting representing women from Mora or Våmhus, peddlers and craftswomen selling rings and other jewelry made from horsehair. Made in the 1830–1840s, this was when journeys possibly began to extend across Europe (see below). Horsehair was an ideal material for poor and marginalized peddlers and travelers. It could be obtained at little or no cost, had little weight and volume, and could be processed to increase its value with a reasonable margin of profit. Horsehair was not a problematic material in itself; it was used for upholstery and furnishing fabrics. Yet, in the symbolic world of premodern Europe, the handling of dead horses’ bodies was a strong taboo, being a task for hangmen. These two tasks of handling deaths and the remains from humans and horses were central in the classification of a social pariah group considered “dishonest,” a categorization that is connected to the domiciled population’s classification of excluded and vagrant groups, including travelers, tinkers, and gypsies.<sup>29</sup> Presumably, the Våmhus *kullor* got the small amounts of horsehair they needed from living horses. This was problematic, however, in terms of symbolic pollution and purity. Not only horses themselves—being both holy and yet inedible, potentially

polluting animals—but also hair can be ambivalently regarded as somewhere between purity and danger. Hair has an ambiguous relation to the body; it is a part of the body but also something that can leave the body in cleaning and grooming, and in this respect, it is both powerful and polluting, like bodily fluids. Thus, hair is culturally problematic and carries various social stigmas. While this was not the case for the *kullor* themselves, who were involved in the hair trade, it was likely involved in the fascination they evoked.<sup>30</sup>

Pieces of horsehair were laced with contrasting colors to produce patterns. Similar crafts can be seen in present times, for example, as bracelets crafted and sold in the streets by so-called “New Age travelers.” The rings could often be laced with inscriptions. The latter would refer to love and friendship, but there were also rings with naughty inscriptions.

The Swedish novel classic *Det går an* from 1839 is a radical advocacy for conscientious marriage or even free love, in the name of women’s freedom and self-rule.<sup>31</sup> The protagonist Albert buys a pair of horsehair rings from a group of Dalkullor during the beginning of the steamboat journey stage of the novel. He gives one to the other protagonist, Sara, who was the one to first take interest in and negotiate the purchase. At the end of the journey, she will decline his formal proposal, yet suggests to him a life together “in free love,” which allows her to maintain her glazieri and legal adulthood. The rings from the Dalkullor are paradigmatic of the theme of the novel, in which illegitimate liaisons are represented as more authentic and virtuous than the established and corrupt version, legal marriage. In a similar way, the incident reflects the ambiguous role of the Dalecarlian women combining illegitimacy, primitivism, and simpleness with cultivation, decency, and virtue.

The next step in the evolution of the Vämhus peddling tradition was to abandon horsehair for works in human hair. This development did not reduce the problematic symbolism concerning bodies, pollution, and borders. According to oral tradition, the craft was learned by young women in England in the 1830s, which would indicate that they were transnational migrants already before the crafting of human hair.

The heroic history-writing of the hair-crafting Vämhuskullorna presents the women’s journeys to metropolitan cities like Helsinki, St. Petersburg, Copenhagen, London, Hamburg, and Berlin. Such business occupied 200–300 women every year, half of them abroad.<sup>32</sup> The women’s spirit and ability to conduct business are in present times stressed as role models of entrepreneurship, as exemplified by the fact that the founder

of the Greyhound bus company, Carl Eric Wickman, and one of the most famous Swedish building contractors, Anders Diös, had mothers who were hair *kullor*.

Different types of dress were used very strategically. Fashion dress was worn when selling in Britain and Russia, whereas traditional costumes helped business in Denmark and Germany. A group of five *kullor* all married in Berlin, meeting their future husbands when wearing fashion dress, and a famous *kulla* married to become Countess Kalling in Sweden. Others are said to have married high officers, industrialists, and noblemen, and an “almost prince” in Norway, Scotland, Finland, and Russia.

Levander reports that a peddling Dalkulla—interestingly, probably before 1840, when peddling among the wealthy homes of Stockholm—was embraced by a lady who felt and examined her skull through the hair “for lumps.” She was enthusiastic over her findings and exclaimed that the young *kulla* should come and live with them, to become educated and take her rightful position “amongst us.”<sup>33</sup>

There is a notion in these stories that people from Dalarna stood outside or above the social hierarchy and rank, either by not understanding or ignoring it, or by possessing some kind of intrinsic aristocracy themselves. In teaching of standard history, this was reinforced by their direct negotiations with, and assistance to, the future King Gustav Vasa to free the nation from the Danes. It was promoted by the common proverb in which Dalecarlian soldiers answer the orders of an officer: “Orsa company will not make firm promises.” In the nationalist narrative genre of popular memory collected in the folklife archives, Dalkullor have been in direct contact with the kings of Denmark, the United Kingdom and Sweden, either being invited to show their goods or themselves contacting the royalty to negotiate their terms of working in the country. These stories speak of an identity, network, and social capital that stands above all forms of social hierarchy.<sup>34</sup>

#### PARADOXES OF AUTHENTICITY: THE “FOLK” AS “INVENTORS OF TRADITION”

Dress did, of course, have a function in identifying this certain group as a category, allowing them to profit from the reputation as honest and hard-working people to hire as workers, to buy merchandise from, or to help or at least respect. Traditional dress from other local districts and parishes

around Stockholm filled the same role in branding certain quality products, mainly food produced in the hinterland, shipped to Stockholm by the producers and marketed on a daily basis. The Dalecarlian women's costumes were also a signal of chastity and unsociability to men from other groups, and they served to establish and maintain the group's endogamy in urban and even metropolitan environments. They also let the members of the group identify each other in a complex environment for mutual support.

When comparing older and newer pictures, the uniformity of the actual dress increased over time. Simultaneously, contemporary hairstyles and blouses were mingled with the dress of the proper *kullor*, who still kept their most distinguishing garments, the skirt and the hood.<sup>35</sup> Overall there is a strong cause to reinterpret such "traditionalism" not only in terms of an invented tradition by "nationalist" actors, but as an aspect of the group's own involvement in the outside world, including mobility, the market, and modernity, as well as their active use of, and invention of, tradition.

The dialects of Northern Dalarna are very ancient and can be seen as survivals of older strata in time. To an outsider, they are incomprehensible, as if they were languages of their own. The Älvdalen tongue is, in fact, classified as its own proper language. Yet, the *herrarbete* meant that everybody was "bilingual." This bilingualism possibly explains the traditionalism in the "insider" language. A constructed secret language is also known from the male painters from Rättvik and the tanners and furriers from Malung, as well as the peddlers from Västergötland and the chimney sweepers, the latter being a profession associated with the old "dishonest" social groups or guilds, such as hangmen and knackers. Secret—and sometimes invented or constructed—languages are indeed one of the features of vagrancy and marginality.

One thing that the Dalarna people had in common with other mobile, more obviously ethnic or ethnicized groups in different parts of history was that they were not merely a result of traditionalism, but of intensive encounters with cities and urbanity, mobility, market involvement, and so forth. Many Swiss so-called traditional areas, such as Lötchental, with cultural "relics" and "survivals," had the male population on the move as mercenaries for many centuries. The Swiss mercenaries were the group in which *nostalgia* was first diagnosed as a disease. The Dalecarlians share this form of melancholy and could also be compared with the Polish Gorals and their very similar lifestyle. Known for their colorful traditional dress

and seen as national icons as well, they still work as seasonal migrants at building sites in Europe and North America. These groups shared a similar strategy in that they carefully guarded and divided their property, and thus remain landed peasants or farmers.

It is likely that the awareness and interest for one's own tradition—and the nostalgia, emotional intensity, and even sentimentality toward one's own cultural forms that can be distinguished when coming back home, for example—are based in “modern-like” experiences of mobility, market behavior, and urbanity. History might help us see a more complex inter-relationship between poverty and ethnicity. Ethnification can be a strategy from the poor themselves, as well as a way of the state and the elite to demarcate and identify the poor.<sup>36</sup>

The invention of tradition should not only be understood as strategic marketing and branding of oneself. We should consider the people from Dalarna as discovering themselves in the same sense and under similar conditions as the romantic elites who invented the idea of the nation. Also, the romantic nationalism had strong roots in a “diasporic” situation, namely, the culture young students developed in their local communities’ “nations” at centrally located universities, away from their homes. “Nostalgia,” as an emotional structure, represents a genesis of identity politics, with similarities between high-brow nationalism and the business culture away from home developed by people from the peripheries in Europe.

This probably also spills over in a strategic use and invention of tradition. Accordingly, perhaps the Stockholm bourgeoisie had cause to identify with the Dalecarlians. The latter already knew a lot about the disenchantment and re-enchantment of the tradition that the elite in the capital were trying to encompass.

## NOTES

1. Skansen was conceived on the basis of the world exhibitions, and especially the Parc Étranger in Paris in 1867. For example, at the exhibition of the peasant village of Austria-Hungary, Arthur Hazelius got the idea of exhibiting life-sized, costume-clad wax dolls of peasants from the work of the Swedish artist Karl August Söderman. Bringéus 1972, pp. 7–10; Bjarne Stocklund. 2001. “Idéen om ett friluftsmuseum.”
2. Johansson 2007, pp. 81–85.
3. Mark 2001, pp. 52–55.



4. Lundström 2005, p. 181.
5. Michel Pastoreau. 2001. *The Devil's Clothes. A History of Stripes and Striped Fabric.*
6. Norma Montesono-Parra. 2002. *Zigenarfrågan. Intervention och romantik.*
7. This chapter was originally a presentation at the German conference “Faszination des Illegitimen” with sub-sessions such as “Illegitimate lineages in the family tree of the nation building,” see Constanze Gestrich, and Thomas Mohnike. 2002. *Faszination des Illegitimen. Alterität in Konstruktionen von Genealogie, Herkunft und Ursprünglichkeit in den skandinavischen Literaturen seit 1800.* This has made me look closer at how surprisingly in some aspects the Dalarna could be idealized, while the thing they encountered (i.e., the migrant peddlers and laborers) represented the same kind of phenomenon that would cause condemnation and exclusion, both from the point of view of the classificatory systems of a traditional society and from the modern nineteenth century, middle-class “Victorian” or “Oscarian” ideology.
8. Lars Levander. 1935a. “Hårarbete i Dalarna”; Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett. 1998. *Destination Culture.*
9. Michel Pastoreau. 2001. *The Devil's Clothes.*
10. Mark 2001, pp. 52–55.
11. Bjarne Stoklund. 2001. “Idéen om ett friluftsmuseum.”
12. Lars Levander. 1935b. “Hårarbete i Dalarna”; Lars Levander. 1944. *Vämbusfjärdingen.*
13. The social and material cultures of Dalarna have triggered the idea of the area being the most authentic and ancient district in Sweden. Göran Rosander. 1976b. “Turismen och den folkliga kulturen.”; Ella Johansson. 1987. “Vår stolta särprägel. Nationalism och svenskhet i etnologin.”; Ralph Tuchtenhagen. 2005. “Aus dem Tälern zu Nationalen Högen.”
14. Lars Levander. 1943–1953. *Övre Dalarnes bondekultur under 1800-talets första hälft.*
15. Lars Levander. 1933. *Brottsling och bödel*; Lars Levander. 1934. *Fattigt folk och tiggare*; Lars Levander. 1935a. *Landsväg, krog och marknad.*
16. Lars Levander has documented the traditional language and culture of Dalarna. Göran Rosander has published on migrant labor and the early tourist industry and the brand images of the Dalkullor. Historian Anna Götlind has written about the special types of migrant labor the women from Dalecarlia engaged in. My points are informed by theoretical perspectives that did not exist in the time of Levander or Rosander, before constructivist theories on nation-building and the invention of tradition, as well as the perspectives of Orientalism, postcolonialism, and queer theory on exclusion and inclusion, exoticism, mimesis, masquerade, imitation,

- and desire. Still, many aspects of their material, especially the anecdotal notes, add a great deal to what I see as an unconscious or anticipatory “Faszination des Illegitimen” in Rosander’s and Levander’s research.
17. Ella Johansson. 1987. “Vår stolta särprägel. Nationalism och svenskhet i etnologin.”
  18. Elisabeth Wennersten. 1971. “Realarvets sociala regelverk”; Ulf Sporrang and Elisabeth Wennersten. 1995. “Leksands sockenbeskrivning.”
  19. Supporting this, historian Maria Wallenberg Bondesson, who studied on witch crazes and revivalist movements (2002). “Rum, väckelse och gemenskap. Om väckelserna i Delsbo, Forsa och Enånger i Hälsingland under 1700-talets sista decennier” and in 2003. *Religiösa konflikter i norra Hälsingland 1630–1800*), finds Dalkullor earlier in the surrounding districts, where they worked on farms. Some took a prominent position in the revivalist movement as preachers and ecstatic mediums, thereby transcending their low status as extra workers.
  20. Christine, Lindquist. 1984. *Rapport över Dalkullor vid Göta kanal år 1813*.
  21. Christine, Lindquist. 1984. *Rapport över Dalkullor vid Göta kanal år 1813*.
  22. Anders Björklund. 1977. *Splitvedsjäntor och andra arbeterskor vid de norrländska lastageplatserna*.
  23. Göran Rosander. 1967. *Herrarbete*.
  24. Jonas Frykman. 1977. *Horan i bondesambället*.
  25. Oral communication with Prof. Nils Arvid Bringeus.
  26. Göran Rosander. 1967. *Herrarbete. Dalfolkets säsongvisa arbetsvandringar i jämförande belysning*.
  27. Lars Levander. 1914. *Livet i en älvdalsby före 1870-talet*; Lars Levander. 1953. *Älvdalskt arbetsliv under årtiondena omkring 1800-talets mitt*.
  28. Göran Rosander. 1989. “Dalkullor i reklamen.”
  29. Brita Egardt. 1962. *Hästslakt och rackarskam*; Adam Heymowski. 1969. *Swedish ‘travellers’ and their ancestry*; Birgitta Svensson. 1993. *Bortom alla ära och redlighet*; Norma Montesino. 2002. *Zigenarfrågan*; Judith Okeley. 1996. *Own or Other Culture*.
  30. Mary Douglas. 1966. *Purity and Danger. An analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*; Jonas Frykman. 1977. *Horan i bondesambället*.
  31. Almqvist 1838. Translated as “Sara Videbeck and the Chapel” by Adolph B Benson in 1919.
  32. Levander 1944a, p. 183.
  33. Levander 1944a, p. 183.
  34. In the case of the Swedish king, this seems to be derived from the story of “the beautiful dalkulla,” who in some sources is said to have met the crown prince. Anna Götlind. 2013. *Förbindelser*.
  35. These signal professionalization; see Trevor-Roper 2008, pp. 195–215.

36. Birgitta Svensson. 1993. *Bortom alla ära och redlighet*; Norma Montesino. 2002. *Zigenarfrågan*. I am indebted to discussions with Norma Montesino-Parra for the conception of this chapter.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Almqvist, Carl Jonas Love. *Det går an. Hvarför reser du?* Stockholm: Hörberg, 1838.
- Almqvist, Carl Jonas Love. *Sara Videbeck and The Chapel*, translated by Adolph B. Benson. New York: Twayne, [1919] 1972.
- Björklund, Anders. *Splitvedjäntor och andra arbeterskor vid de norrländska lastageplatserna*. Stockholm: Liber Förlag, 1977.
- Bringéus, Nils-Arvid. "Artur Hazelius och Nordiska museet." *Fataburen. Nordiska museets och Skansens årsbok*, 7–32. Stockholm, 1972.
- Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge & Paul, 1966.
- Egardt, Brita. *Hästsakt och rackarskam. En etnologisk undersökning av folkliga fördomar*. Nordiska museet, PhD dissertation. Lund: University of Stockholm, 1962.
- Frykman, Jonas. *Horan i bondesambället* [Whores in peasant society], LiberLäromedel, PhD dissertation. Lund: University of Lund, 1977.
- Frykman, Jonas, and Orvar Löfgren. *Culture Builders. A Historical Anthropology of Middle-class Life*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987.
- Gestrich, Constanze, and Thomas Mohnike (eds.). *Faszination des Illegitimen. Alterität in Konstruktionen von Genealogie, Herkunft und Ursprünglichkeit in den skandinavischen Literaturen seit 1800*. Würzburg: Ergon, 2007.
- Götlind, Anna. *Förbindelser. Fem Leksandskvinnor i Gamla stan—plats, arbete och resande under 200 år*. Stockholm: Stockholmia förlag, 2013.
- Heymowski, Adam. *Swedish 'travellers' and their ancestry. A social isolate or an ethnic minority?* Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. PhD dissertation. Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 1969.
- Houltz, Anders (ed.). *Arbete pågår. I tankens mönster och kroppens miljöer*. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. PhD dissertation. Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 2008.
- Johansson, Ella. "Mägde der Nation. Dalkullor in der nationalen Ikonologie und sozialen Praxis." In *Faszination des Illegitimen. Alterität in Konstruktionen von Genealogie, Herkunft und Ursprünglichkeit in den skandinavischen Literaturen seit 1800*, edited by Constanze Gestrich and Thomas Mohnike, 81–102. Würzburg: Ergon, 2007.
- Johansson, Ella. "Vår stolta särprägel. Nationalism och svenskhet i etnologin." *Nord-nytt. Nordisk tidsskrift för folkelivsforskning* 30 (1987): 43–49.

- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
- Levander, Lars. *Livet i en älvdalsby före 1870-talet*. Reprint [Elfdalens hembygdsfören.], [Älvdalen], [1914] 1979.
- Levander, Lars. *Brottsling och bödel*. Stockholm: Gidlund, [1933] 1975.
- Levander, Lars. *Fattigt folk och tiggare*. Stockholm: Åhlén & Söner, 1934.
- Levander, Lars. *Landsväg, krog och marknad*. Stockholm: Gidlunds and Institutet för folklivsforskning vid Nordiska museet och Stockholms universitet, [1935a] 1976.
- Levander, Lars. "Hårarbete i Dalarna." *Svenska kulturbilder* 4, no. 7/8 (1935): 135–154.
- Levander, Lars. *Övre Dalarnes bondekultur under 1800-talets förra hälft 2 Förvärvsarbete*. Stockholm: Jonson & Winter i distribution, 1944a.
- Levander, Lars. *Övre Dalarnes bondekultur under 1800-talets förra hälft*. Stockholm: Jonson & Winter i distribution, 1943–1953.
- Levander, Lars. *Vämbhusfjärdingen. Den nya tidens genombrott i en Dalabygd*, edited by Olof Köpmans, Hed Olof Anderssons, Filip Rombos et al. Serie: Folklivsskildringar. Stockholm, 1944b.
- Levander, Lars. *Älvdalskt arbetsliv under årtiondena omkring 1800-talets mitt*, Reprint, Mora. Utg. av Stig Björklund. [1953] 2002.
- Lindquist, Christine. *Rapport över dalkullor vid Göta kanal år 1813*. Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, Historiska institutionen, 1984.
- Lundström, Catarina. *Fruars makt och omakt. Kön, klass och kulturarv 1900–1940*. Umeå: Umeå universitetet, 2005.
- Mark, Jan. "I begynnelsen var teatern eller resan till landet längesen." *Friluftsmuseet. Kulturen i Lund: Kulturhistoriska föreningen för södra Sverige* (2001): 152–161.
- Montesino Parra, Norma. *Zigenarfrågan. Intervention och romantik*. Lund: University of Lund, 2002.
- Okely, Judith. *Own or Other Culture*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Pastoureau, Michel. *The Devil's Cloth. A History of Stripes and Striped Fabric*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
- Rosander, Göran. *Herrarbete. Dalfolkets säsongvisa arbetsvandringar i jämförande belysning*. Lundequistska bokhandeln. PhD dissertation. Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 1967.
- Rosander, Göran. *En Leksandssägare i Stockholm: ur en kassabok från 1840-talet*. Falun: Dalarnas Museum, 1972.
- Rosander, Göran. *Dalska arbetsvandringar före nya tidens genombrott*. Stockholm: Institutet för folklivsforskning, 1976a.
- Rosander, Göran. "Turismen och den folkliga kulturen." *Dalarnas hembygdsbok. Årsbok Dalarnas hembygds och fornminnesförbund* (1976b): 213–225.
- Rosander, Göran. *Gårdfaribandel i Norden. En översikt av en gammal handelsform*. Stockholm: LT and Institutet för folklivsforskning, 1980.

- Rosander, Göran. "Bryggerikullorna. Några anteckningar om säsongsmässiga arbetsvandringar." *Svensk bryggeritidskrift* 10 (1962): 225–240.
- Rosander, Göran. "'Industriens vaktparad'. Varuexpositioner i Sverige före första världskriget." *Saga och sed. Kungl. Gustav Adolfs akademis årsbok* (1983): 105–159.
- Rosander, Göran. "The 'nationalisation' of Dalecarlia. How a Special Province became a National Symbol for Sweden." *Arv. Scandinavian Yearbook of Folklore* 42 (1986): 93–142.
- Rosander, Göran. "Hur Dalarna blev svenskt ideal." *Saga och sed. Kungl. Gustav Adolfs akademis årsbok* 1993 (1994): 7–73.
- Rosander, Göran, "Dalkullor i reklamen." *Företagsminnen. Bromma: Föreningen Stockholms företagsminnen* (1989): 22–33.
- Sporrong, Ulf, and Elisabeth Wennersten. *Leksands sockenbeskrivning D. 10 Marken, gården, släkten och arvet. Om jordägandet och dess konsekvenser för människor, landskap och bebyggelse i Tibble och Ullvi byar, Leksands socken 1734–1820*. Leksand: Kommunen, 1995.
- Stoklund, Bjarne. "Idén om ett friluftsmuseum." *Friluftsmuseet* edited by Ella Johansson. Lund: Kulturhistoriska föreningen för södra Sverige. (2001): 10–27.
- Svensson, Birgitta. *Bortom all ära och redlighet. Tattarnas spel med rättvisan*, Nordiska museet, PhD dissertation. Lund: University of Stockholm, 1993.
- Trevor-Roper, Hugh Redwald. *The Invention of Scotland. Myth and History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Tuchtenhagen, Ralph. "Aus dem Tälern zu nationalen Höhen." *NordEuropaForum* Heft 1 2005. 2005 DOI10.18452/7850.
- Wallenberg Bondesson, Maria. "Rum, väckelse och gemenskap. Om väckelserna i Delsbo, Forsa och Enånger i Hälsingland under 1700-talets sista decennier." In *Periferins landskap: historiska spår och nutida blickfält i svensk glesbygd*, edited by Ella Johansson, 163–180. Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2002.
- Wallenberg Bondesson, Maria. *Religiösa konflikter i norra Hälsingland 1630–1800*. Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis. PhD dissertation. Stockholm: University of Stockholm, 2003.
- Wennersten, Elisabeth. "Realarvets sociala regelverk: om släkten, gården och jorden i Ullvi by." *Leksands sockenbeskrivning* 10 (1971): 73–331.

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

