

Torbjørn Sirevbg. *American Patterns: An Interpretation of U.S. History and Life*. Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, Oslo 1988.

For some time the teaching of American Studies in Scandinavia has suffered from lack of an introductory textbook geared to the needs of students who enter the university. Torbjørn Sirevbg's *American Patterns*—written for an audience already familiar with the United States either from visits or from courses at lower levels in the educational system—is therefore a highly welcome addition to the short list of choices open to the teacher. Sirevbg has rendered a useful service in condensing and organizing the themes to fit the needs of Scandinavian class-room teaching. The closest predecessor to the present work is probably Edmund Fawcett's and Tony Thomas's widely praised *America and the Americans*.

*American Patterns* is divided into eleven chapters covering various facets of American social life in a historical perspective. The first two chapters introduce the regions and the population. The following two chapters present main aspects of the American belief system as it has developed through the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Next follow chapters on the political system, the economy, social structure, religion, education, mass media, and foreign policy. Although the chapters are not comparative in scope they may serve to stimulate class discussion comparing the local Scandinavian state of affairs with American beliefs and practices.

Each of the chapters are well informed and well written. They are composed with a view to the names, facts, and dates, that teachers of American Studies would like to take for granted at a more advanced level. Indeed, the "interpretation" referred to in the title appears to cover a conventional and competent view of the United States in the light of the interdisciplinary field of American Studies. Sirevbg notes in his introduction that this kind of interpretation involves the un-learning of parts of "what we already think we know." A more detailed discussion of this theme would perhaps have further enhanced the usefulness of the work. The lists of additional reading appended to each chapter often appear a bit dated. Most of the books mentioned belong among the "classics" of the fifties and the sixties with very few titles from the 1980s.