

Reviews

Lizette Gradén, *On Parade: Making Heritage in Lindsborg, Kansas*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2003. *Studia Multiethnica Upsaliensia*, no 15. 247 pp. ISBN 91-554-5724-X, ISSN 0282-6623.

Susanne Österlund-Pötzsch, *American Plus: Etnisk identitet hos finlandssvenska ättlingar i Nordamerika*. Helsinki: Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2003. Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, no. 658; 251 pp.; ISBN 951-583-099-0, ISSN 0039-6842.

Ethnicity has always been an important factor in American history, and during the past several decades the U.S. has again been receiving large number of immigrants. The discussion about the significance for American society of this “new immigration” has at times been intense, and fears have, for example, been voiced that the social and cultural cohesion of the United States is in jeopardy. As Richard Alba and Walter Nee have reminded us in their recent book *Remaking the American Mainstream*,¹ the current pace of immigration and the intensity of discussion both show significant similarities to the situation a century ago, when the large European mass migration to the U.S. peaked.

Alba and Nee discuss the ways in which recent immigrants from South and Central America, Asia, and the Caribbean are interacting with American society. But they also make interesting comparisons – which no doubt will be the subject of much discussion – with the experiences that the European immigrants from a century ago and their descendants had and continue to have in their encounter with the U.S. In this way they pose the question of the contemporary significance of ethnicity for the descendants of the European mass immigration, many groups of which are by now in the third generation and beyond in America. To some, it may seem surprising to associate a continuing sense of ethnicity with, for example, Scandinavian American groups, whom many would consider both assimilated and an established part of the American mainstream. Still, as Odd Lovoll has shown for the Norwegian Americans² and as the two books under review show for Swedish Americans and Americans of Finland-Swedish descent, ethnicity does continue to play a role, albeit in a different way than it did for Scandinavian immigrants a century ago or for immigrants coming to the U.S. today.

1. Richard Alba & Walter Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 2003).

2. Odd Lovoll, *The Promise Fulfilled: A Portrait of Norwegian Americans Today* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

Lizette Gradén's *On Parade: Making Heritage in Lindsborg, Kansas* is an innovative study of Svensk Hyllningsfest, a biennial Swedish ethnic festival in Lindsborg, Kansas, based on extensive fieldwork in scholarly tradition of ethnology and anthropology. Lindsborg is a town on some three thousand inhabitants in central Kansas that was established by Swedish immigrants from the province of Värmland in 1869. Over the years it has continued to attract immigration from Sweden, and with the nickname Little Sweden, U.S.A it has become well known both in Sweden and the U.S. for its Swedish profile. At least three American doctoral dissertations about Lindsborg exist, and it is a common topic in books about Swedish America published in Sweden.³

Lindsborg's Swedishness is expressed in different ways. One of the most important – and perhaps the best known – is the biennial festival Svensk Hyllningsfest, which is the focus for Gradén's analysis. The festival has been celebrated since 1941 as one dimension of the celebration of the anniversary of the supposed arrival of Spanish explorer to what is today Kansas in 1541, when it was a part of a patriotic celebration of Kansas. Although the main analysis is a close study of the parade in 1997 (and to some extent the parade two years later), Gradén also provides a larger context through an historical background with discussions of the parades in during the half century preceding 1997. Here, Gradén shows the changing nature of the parade, with a revival of interest in the late 1950's, so that by 1997 it included thousands of participants and spectators. She places the renewed interest in the parade in a larger American ethno-cultural context, showing that the "ethnic revival" of the 1960's and 1970's not only affected Americans of southern and eastern European background, but that Svensk Hyllningsfest became a way for Swedish Americans, most of them in the third generation and beyond, to express and reaffirm their sense of ethnicity.

One of Gradén's most interesting results is her discussion about the way in which the Swedish ethnicity expressed through Svensk Hyllningsfest is specific to the Swedish-American cultural context. She convincingly shows how the meaning of being Swedish in Lindsborg is a part of an on-going process of identity negotiations, where cultural patterns from Sweden, Värmland, the U.S., Swedish America, the Midwest, and Lindsborg are used and reused in different contexts. Swedish ethnicity in Lindsborg in the 1990's takes on a meaning that sets it apart from both Swedish ethnicity in Sweden, but also from earlier interpretations of Lindsborg Swedishness. It is, for example, striking to see how Lindsborg's Swedish Americans make a clear distinction between their own sense of Swedishness and that which exists in Sweden, suggesting an interesting understanding of the workings of ethnicity in an American context.

3. Wayne Wheeler, *An Analysis of Cultural Change in a Swedish-American Community* (University of Missouri, 1959); Larry Danielson, *The Ethnic Festival and Cultural Revivalism in a Small Midwestern Town* (Indiana University, 1972); Steven Schnell, *Little Sweden U.S.A.: Ethnicity, Tourism, and Identity in Lindsborg, Kansas* (University of Kansas, 1998); Anders Runwall & Bertil Hagert, *Lindsborg – svenskstaden i USA's mitt* (Vällingby: Harrier, 1979).

Gradén thus shows how Lindsborg's Swedish Americans actively reflect on what their Swedish background means, and how and when it becomes relevant in their lives, illustrating the on-going significance of ethnicity for Swedish Americans in Lindsborg. She also argues that Lindsborg as a community has been shaped by the parades and general emphasis on the town's Swedish background. For example, tourism and other commercial aspects of Lindsborg's Swedishness play an important role in maintaining its ethnic profile. Lindsborg residents with other ethnic backgrounds than Swedish have also chosen to embrace the town's predominant ethnicity.

Susanne Österlund-Pötzsch's stimulating study *American Plus* deals with the role of ethnicity for Americans of Finland-Swedish descent, and it too comes out of the ethnological and anthropological tradition. Unlike Gradén, she does not focus on a particular event, but bases her conclusions mainly on field work and interviews, conducted both in Finland and the United States.

A study of Finland-Swedish ethnicity in America is very welcome, as we know relatively little about the emigration of the Finland-Swedes to North America.⁴ It has been estimated that the emigration of this Swedish-speaking minority in Finland constituted about 20 per cent of the total Finnish emigration, which means that the rate of emigration was considerably higher among the Finland-Swedes than the among the Finns in general.

Once in the New World, the Finland-Swedish immigrants have been difficult to follow. As a relatively small group, it became difficult for them to sustain a network of ethnic institutions – the most important organization being the Order of Runeberg from 1920. Moreover, for linguistic and cultural reasons, they often joined churches and organizations founded by Swedish immigrants, thus disappearing into the much larger Swedish-American group. Österlund-Pötzsch's analysis convincingly illustrates this dilemma for the Finland-Swedes. Many of her interviewees had assumed that they were of Swedish background, and were surprised to learn that their families had originally come from Finland. Some were not even aware of the existence of a Finland-Swedish group in Finland or in North America.

Österlund-Pötzsch argues that to most Americans of Finland-Swedish background, ethnicity is something that exists in addition to their American identity – thus the title *American plus*. In line with scholars of other European-American groups, she views the Finland-Swedish ethnicity as voluntary and contextual. Americans of Finland-Swedish background are seen as “secure” in their American identities not needing to prove themselves Americans, which determines the way in which they use their ethnicity.

4. The standard work is Anders Myhrman, *Finlandssvenskar i Amerika* (Helsinki: Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1972).

The empirical part rests on a thoughtful analysis of the nature and contents of the Finland-Swedish ethnicity. Österlund-Pötzsch identifies several elements that seem to play an important role as ethnic building blocks, such as the use of and fascination for the language, membership in churches and organizations, participation in celebrations and festivals, the eating of certain foods, and an interest in learning more about and traveling to Finland. The reasons given for engaging in these activities can range from friendship and family associations, ways of affirming a personal identity, to a sense of pride in the ethnic group and its heritage. The urge to find out more about one's background through genealogy and through traveling to Finland to visit particular persons or places, seems particularly important, and is something that would be well worth exploring further, perhaps in a comparative context.

Both studies make important contributions by showing how ethnicity continues to play a role among Scandinavian Americans today. The results suggest that the Swedish Americans in Lindsborg and the Americans of Finland Swedish background may be exhibiting what Herbert Gans has called "symbolic ethnicity," and that they may indeed be far down the road of Gans' straight-line assimilation. Still, the two books also argue that the ethnicities under consideration have taken on a role that goes beyond Gans' symbolic ethnicity. At least to those persons who are active as planners and participants in Lindsborg's Svensk Hyllningfest or those who participate in Finland-Swedish historical organizations and travel to Finland to trace their genealogical background, ethnicity can still be a powerful factor in the fashioning of both private and public identities. The two books under review thus remind us of the need to be mindful of the malleability of ethnicity in American life.

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John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America*. New York, The Penguin Press, 2004. 400 pp.; ISBN 1-59420-020-3; \$17.65 hardcover.

The Right Nation is a survey and evaluation of the conservative movement from the 1950s and 1960s onwards. This is, of course, hardly virgin territory. Indeed, anyone seeking to collect the published literature on the history and evolution of contemporary American conservatism would quickly fill a modestly-sized house.

Some of this literature has concentrated upon the conservative "revolution" of the 1980s and 1990s. Dan Balz and Ronald Brownstein's appraisal of the right, *Storming the Gates: Protest Politics and the Republican Revival* (Little, Brown and Company, 1996), was one of a number to concentrate on the rise of former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, the *Contract with America*, and the Republicans' Congressional election victories in November 1994. Other accounts have surveyed the longer-term history of the movement. In *Right Face* (Museum Tusulanum Press University of Copenhagen, 2002), my colleague Niels Bjerre-Poulsen looked at the broad structural shifts in the