

but the weight of occidental theory construction threatens to undo the worthy bridge building between cultures. This bridge building could have been furthered in a continued project, and therefore I can only deplore the fact that what was planned to be “further publications” is now the final product of this project (*The Art of Brevity*, ix). I indeed recommend this collection for its addressing of a colorful variation of theoretical issues associated with and even prompted by short fiction.

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Norwegian-American Essays 2008, Migration and Memory. Volume 12 in the series Norwegian-American Essays. Ed. Øyvind T. Gulliksen and Ass. Ed. Harry T. Clevén. NAHA: Oslo, 2008.

Norwegian traditions and renewal in Scandinavian migration research

During the past ten years, emigration research in Sweden has been less than vibrant and academic works on “Swedish America” have become increasingly far between. In Norway, on the other hand, interest in and development of academic research on Norwegian emigration and Norwegian America is a very living and vibrant force in University departments around the country. Research on Norwegian immigration is also strong in the United States.

How far Norwegian research has gotten is demonstrated in the excellent interdisciplinary volume *Norwegian-American essays 2008, Migration and Memory* which revisits Norwegian America and sheds additional light on immigrant life by using immigrant narratives and memories as sources. This is a very welcome addition to Scandinavian (and Scando-American) emigration research as new sources and new perspectives can complement and qualify the research e.g. on ethnic institutions and present us with new insights on overarching cultural processes connected to ethnic identity.

In the introduction by Øyvind T. Gulliksen the concept of Memory is discussed as he tries to construct a context in which to place the essays on Norwegian-American narratives of migration and memory. He points out the timeless quality of migration by referring to other American immigrant groups’ construction of their narratives and the similarities that seem to exist over time.

The ten essays in the book are divided into four categories: Music and the arts, Church and society, History and Narrative and, finally, Letters and

literature. It is an impossible task to discuss all of the essays in this short review and instead, I will focus on more overarching themes in the book and exemplify them with some of the contributions. Generally speaking the book is filled with interesting theoretical perspectives. One example is generation. In Betty Bergland's contribution on cultural memory and the writings of a third generation Norwegian-American, Orabel Thordtvedt, she analyzes how immigrant narrative can be connected to the preservation of a "communal cultural memory." Bergland does a very good job of making sense of the way the writer is presenting her narrative and claims that Thordtvedt not only wanted to preserve the heritage of her ancestors from Fyresdal, Norway, but to connect herself to the past and to the migration. Bergland discusses the typical and atypical of this particular story and claims that it stands out as it is a good example of a rich collective history. But despite the richness of the story, Thordtvedt seems to me to touch upon very familiar subjects and, as Bergland herself says, falls into an old narrative pattern of migration as a "saga of struggle and success." The rural element is also fairly typical for this traditional and not altogether fortunate connection between memory and migration.

Lori Ann Lahlum's contribution to migration narrative deals with a fresh perspective as she has focused on children of Norwegian immigrants and the role that these played in Norwegian communities both as a labor force and as a key component in the changing relationship between the new host society and the immigrant community. Lahlum's contribution gives us good insight into how children became important as they came to manifest what it meant to be Norwegian-American through the cultural mix they themselves experienced. Her contribution, in a very practical way, illustrates the need for additional studies of American-born children of immigrants in order to better understand e.g. the process of Americanization. Lahlum's contribution to the book is the most important one most important and also connects to the generational dimension of immigranthood. She proves in very concrete ways that children are more than "second generation immigrants" as their experiences markedly differ from their parents. But, as in many of the essays in the volume, the material has a distinct rural character.

Time, change and, to some extent, generation, is also important in Elliot Robert Barkan's contribution on Norwegian Americans in the Pacific Northwest. Barkan shows, by using Seattle as an example, how the Norwegian culture reshapes and changes rather than disappears and is assimilated in a city environment. His contribution seems to me important as it points

us to the role that time plays in cultural processes, the changing character of ethnic identity, and the changing institutions maintaining an ethnic heritage.

Perspectives on immigrant religion and the church are often important in immigrant narratives, and Kristin Adriansen who has focused on one individual woman, Sister Elisabeth Fedde, and her work within the context of the Norwegian-American church. In doing this, Adriansen moves away from older perspectives that have primarily been interested in the church as an institution. Japreet Kaur Gloppen's contribution on literature touches upon gender and the way that Ole Rolvaag uses literary techniques borrowed from the Gothic literary tradition to unravel myths of immigrant rural life. Gender theory is used to great effect in order to problematize power relations encountered by the immigrant woman at center stage in Rolvaag's novel.

So, to sum up my impressions of this volume: I like this book since it opens up a number of interesting perspectives on immigrant life where new types of sources offer new perspectives on Norwegian immigrants and Norwegian immigrant identity. I especially greet the effort of analyzing the role of the children of immigrants and how many of the contributions relate in interesting ways to time, space and generation. The use of the narrative source material also demonstrates how fruitful it can be to give voice to historical actors, such as children, that previously have been invisible in previous research. I would have liked to see an even stronger focus on this aspect of narrative accounts and immigrant memory. I, as a social historian cannot but wish that these interdisciplinary perspectives had been more connected to the social and historical context of larger contingents of Norwegian immigrants.

Another problem with the book is that none of the essays genuinely tries to present perspectives on the urban-living population. As it now stands the large Norwegian urban working class is left almost without mention. More could also have been done to connect the Norwegian experience in the new world to the popular music and literary heritage by more sociologically inspired efforts. In the contribution on Norwegian folk music a passage claims that the church was highly sceptical of this folk culture, but we get to know nothing more about this. The sources used in the essays seem to offer an ideal opportunity to present perspectives on the relationship between folk culture and the culture of the ethnic leadership and hence offer a great opportunity to problematize the very idea of uniform ethnic identity itself. I would also have wished for some of the content of Gullikssen's excellent

introduction on memory, migration and inter-ethnic perspectives to have found its way into the empirical work in the essays. But despite these short-falls I think that this volume is important and points the way to new and fruitful efforts in the field of emigration studies in Scandinavia. I hope that the volume will inspire similar research on Swedish emigrant narratives.

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