as to John Maynard Keynes, who is now once again in fashion thanks to the meltdown, we should pay attention also to Veblen, whose work opened our eyes to the fact that economic man does not exist and that human mores are far less dignified and rational, something that teaching in business schools has chosen to ignore for empty calculations.

Making this last reflection, and many others, possible is perhaps evidence of the rich and lasting legacy of Wasser's diverse essays. They do not attempt to work systematically with their subject matter, and they put real demands on the reader to be able to contextualize and fill in the voids of the kind of background trivia that Wasser is too erudite to bother us with. But the reader who navigates around the diverse obstacles and omissions will find a landscape of stylized remnants of a yesteryear of higher education and learned Western culture that may still provoke both ideas, insights and a bittersweet sense of longing for a world of values and qualities that we may like or dislike but which, that we know, will only fade ever farther away into oblivion unless we are reminded about it, as professor Wasser does.

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Dregni, Eric. *In Cod We Trust: Living the Norwegian Dream*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008; 195 pp. ISBN 978-0-8166-5623-3. $22.95 hardcover.

Many Americans have a special and complex relationship with the country—or countries—of their immigrant forebears. Their homeland is certainly and unequivocally the United States and yet there may be some lingering sense of kinship with distant lands such as Korea, Lithuania or Italy—a sense that is often too vague to be labeled ethnicity. To some extent identification with another country may be a matter of choice between two or more lands of origin; an American may be Irish or Swedish or both. In the Midwest there are many who know next to nothing of Norway who claim to be Norwegian. Most of them do not write books about it.

Eric Dregni, who teaches writing at Concordia University in St. Paul, decided to write a book, and applied to the Fulbright program for a grant to spend a year in Trondheim. The result is *In Cod We Trust*, a low-keyed both entertaining and enlightening book about living in a strange land, at times a

very strange land. For Scandinavian readers Dregni's book may be a useful reminder of how peculiar our ways of life may appear to those who visit us. For Scandinavian students of the US, moreover, it may be a necessary reminder that our own reactions to the mores of Americans may have their counterpart in Americans' reactions to a culture we take for granted.

American Studies courses pay little attention to food. In Dregni's study of Norway, however, food is a main obstacle in his efforts to appreciate the land his great grandfather Ellef left in 1893. I happen to be a passionate lover of *gammelost*, *rakfisk* and other foods that Dregni so unsuccessfully struggles with. (He provides a useful glossary.) Should I then resent his disrespectful accounts of what is not only dear to me but actually central to my identity? Regardless of how I should react, I was from the first chapter taken in by Dregni's self-deprecating style and I could not but smile as I read of his culinary and other misadventures. Indeed, Dregni presents his highly successful venture in understanding as a series of failures, from his mock-disastrous Fulbright interview to his favored route to his "long-lost ancestral home" in the Sogn village of Fortun. So carefully has he employed what we may call a *verfremdung* technique throughout his narrative that his concluding affirmation of arrival—"I could understand now why people remained here"—is free from the sentimentality that so easily may clog stories of home-coming. Essential to Dregni's delightful style are the contrapuntal roles given his wife Katy and their Norwegian-born son Eilif.

Dregni's criticism of Norway and Norwegians is so carefully and so politely done that it may easily be missed by the inattentive reader, as when he wonders that the students accept him, an utter stranger, as Norwegian (because of his genes) while their teacher David Mauk, who speaks fluent Norwegian and is married Norwegian, remains a foreigner. Dregni implies, but does not suggest, an eleventh rule of *Janteloven*: "You shall not believe that you can become Norwegian." Of course there are misunderstandings and inaccuracies; this is not a book about Norway but about Eric Dregni's experience of a year in Norway. Reacting to his misconceptions of history or food-making would place a reader in the position of Dregni's interviewers for the Fulbright grant who misunderstood first the geography and then the value of his Cambridge education.

When I again return to the United States, that I believe that I know so well, I will hopefully have learned something from Dregni about the essentially different experience of the native and the visitor, the studied and the student, and remember how exotic the natural may appear to the outsider

and how blundering the visitor may seem to the host. Consequently, I am recommending Eric Dregni's *In Cod We Trust* not so much for what it may say about Norway as for what it may teach us about encountering another land.

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Sitney, P. Adams. *Eyes Upside Down: Visionary Filmmakers and the Heritage of Emerson*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 417 pp. (index included). ISBN 978-0-19-533115-8. $25.15.

Few paragraphs in American literature are as well known as the "transparent eyeball" passage from Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature*. The critical bibliography that in various ways engages what has been referred to as the "most notorious" part of Emerson's work is impossibly vast.[1] Yet, despite the concept's evident connection to the field of visual culture, it is only now that we have a thorough, transaesthetic exploration of the material and conceptual trajectory of the transcendental philosopher's impact on American film art. P. Adams Sitney's monumental study of the Emersonian influence on mid- to late 20th century experimental filmmaking is thus an extremely welcome contribution to both cinema studies and American studies, and—above all—to that fertile interdisciplinary space where the prospective interests of the two fields overlap.

A point of departure for Sitney is his conceptualization of American aesthetics as fundamentally Emersonian. When Emerson resigned from the Second Church of Boston in 1832, the event was richly symbolic of the increasing secularization of the ferocious sermons of the New England divines. The essentially oral style that this particular artistic discourse engendered—at once committed, severe, rapturous and uncompromising—became a performative touchstone for generations of later poets, painters, composers and filmmakers, most of whom in Sitney's reading could be identified as "unwitting Emersonians" (4).[2] What this book posits, then, is the existence of a strong historical continuity in the field of American aes-

1 Harold Bloom, *Agon: Toward a Theory of Revisionism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1982, 157.

2 P. Adams Sitney, *Eyes Upside Down: Visionary Filmmakers and the Heritage of Emerson*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 4. All further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.