

Poul Houe and Sven Hakon Rossel (eds), *Images of America in Scandinavia* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, Georgia: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1998), x + 232 pp. ISBN 90-420-0621-8, cloth, \$66; 90-420-0611-0, paper, \$20.

Poul Houe and Sven Hakon Rossel deserve credit for giving us a timely and useful book that places itself in a tradition of scholarly study of the impact of the United States on Europe. This is a tradition where Scandinavian contributions have been of major significance, beginning with Halvdan Koht's *The American Spirit in Europe* in 1949. Much groundwork remains to be done, however, and scholars working in this fascinating yet problematic field are faced with the conflicting demands of making synthesizing and interpretive use of what has already been done and digging up the many basic yet still unknown pieces of information that are needed for an improved interpretation. The contributors demonstrate different approaches to this complex field of study.

The volume is carefully designed. Tasks have been set and contributors selected. There are two articles each on Denmark, Norway, and Sweden; one on the impact of American literature and one on more general cultural and political responses to the United States. In addition Sven Rossel has written an introductory article on the image of the United States in Danish literature (with some comments on Denmark and Norway) and Poul Houe has written a concluding essay on three American novelists, Willa Cather, Ole Rolvaag, and Sophus Keith Winther, and the Swedish Vilhelm Moberg. Some of his readings are valuable contributions, but his article is necessarily an appendix to the central theme. Iceland and Finland have not been included even though these countries would have provided fascinating perspectives given their different histories. What we have is an account of how Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes have looked at themselves in the American mirror.

Hans H. Skei and Rolf Lundén have written on translations of American literature in Norway and Sweden, respectively. Apart from studies on the reception of Hemingway and Faulkner, little work has been done in Norway, and Skei has written the first survey of a subject that, as he correctly observes, 'deserves a book of its own' (98). Lundén has been able to make excellent use of earlier scholarship, general works such as by Harald Elovson (1930), Carl Anderson (1957), Sten Torgerson (1982), and himself (1991, 1992), more specialized studies on specific authors, and statistical studies. The general conclusions drawn by both are interestingly similar. Claus Secher, who also has statistics at his disposal, has interpreted his task somewhat differently in that his article focuses on the manner in which Danish critics and literary historians, in particular Frederik Schyberg (1930) and Sven Møller Kristensen (1948), have interpreted American literature. All three have contributed to the history of reading in Scandinavia. Skei's account distinguishes itself from the two others in two respects: he pays attention to the translators and he considers the impact in Norway of books written and published in Norwegian in the United States.

Secher's article unavoidably overlaps with that by Steffen Elmer Jørgensen on 'Aspects of the American Cultural Impact on Denmark 1776 to 1995,' as does Rossell's article on 'The Image of the United States in Danish Literature.' It would seem that a collaborative effort by the three would have given a more comprehensive account than three individual studies. Indeed, collaboration between all eight authors would have made for a better book. While Jørgensen's concept of culture does not include literature and the arts, except in popular culture, it does include agriculture, industry, and the economy, areas that are not considered by Birgitta Stene ('The Swedish Image of America') and only touched upon by Øyvind Gulliksen ('American Influences on Norwegian Culture'). On the other hand, Gulliksen includes religion while the impact of the United States on churches and religious movements in Denmark and Sweden has not been considered. Surely the volume would have benefitted from cooperation between the contributors, both at an early stage where the areas and aspects to be considered could have been discussed, and at a later stage when drafts could have been exchanged for comment, criticism, and inspiration. The Marshall Plan, for instance, is considered by Gulliksen but not mentioned by Jørgensen. This may be because it had no impact in Denmark, but the question is not raised. Fulbright, the American who may have had the greatest impact on images of America in the minds of Scandinavian academics and professionals in the second half of the twentieth century, is not mentioned in the index. Indeed, only Gulliksen writes about academic research and educational institutions. The volume would also have benefitted from better copy-editing.

While all authors have done impressive research and arrived at valuable insights and interpretations, Birgitta Stene deserves special mention for the extraordinary breadth of her article on Sweden. Øyvind Gulliksen's article stands out for a different reason: unlike the others, he includes himself in the culture that is studied. His integration of personal autobiography with historical scholarship is a model of how studies of cultural impact and cultural images may be performed.

Each article has a bibliography. It would have been better with one for the whole book. Had the contributors exchanged bibliographical information as their work progressed this may have added to the value of their project. Some bibliographical omissions that come to

mind are H. Arnold Barton, *A Folk Divided: Homeland Swedes and Swedish Americans, 1840-1940* (1994), Sigmund Skard, *USA i norsk historie* (1976 – only the shorter, American version is listed), Harald S. Næss, *Knut Hamsun og Amerika* (1969), Jørund Mannsåker, *Emigrasjon og dikting: Utvandringa til Nord-Amerika i norsk skjønnlitteratur* (1971), Ingeborg R. Kongslie, *Draumen om fridom og jord: Ein studie i skandinaviske emigrantromanar* (1989), and Reidar Øksnevad, *Sambandstatene i norsk litteratur* (1950 – a bibliography!).

Houe and Rossel's volume is a good beginning. Hopefully more will follow.