

## Book Reviews

it with selections on the religious pluralism of Danish Americans. The final part touches on the disillusionment and defeat that many immigrants felt as they struggled to find places in a new society with a strange language and alien ways.

In general, Hale chooses letters that both reveal nineteenth-century experiences and interest modern readers. He carefully reflects the wide range of human response to the problems of adjustment. For example, he balances panegyrics to American economic success and political freedom with disgruntled and dyspeptic grumblings about American greed and deceit. Yet readers must resist the notion that the letters are truly representative of all Danish immigrants. Most of the letters Danes dispatched from America to the folks back home, like those of people everywhere in most times, were dull, mundane, and not highly literate. The editor tends to publish, as the owners tended to preserve, only those accounts that were lively, well composed, and revealing. The writers of such letters were not ordinary or typical. Inevitably a collection of them innocently injects a bias that easily seduces the unwary reader.

Hale's introduction to Danes in North America is an exceptionally fine survey of Danish immigration to this country. Moreover, Hale begins each chapter with a succinct summary of background material to enhance one's ability to evaluate the translations that follow. Similarly, he briefly introduces each letter or other account with a statement that extracts its special significance. His easy, free-flowing style attracts the reader to the primary material of the book. Hale's translations bear the same characteristics of cogency and readability. Although his English settings are no doubt accurate, they also bear Hale's personal style, which gives the letters a homogenized quality and seems to alter the distinctive characteristics that the Danish originals must have conveyed.

Iowans interested in the ethnic history of their state will find this book especially attractive. Hale and his selections often mention the large concentration of Danish immigrants and their institutions in Iowa in this major contribution to the history of Danes in America.

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*A Special Relationship: Germany and Minnesota, 1945-1985*, edited by Clarence A. Glasrud. Moorhead, Minnesota: Concordia College, 1983. 128 pp. Notes, illustrations, index. \$6.00 paper.

Between 1979 and 1983, four conferences, which the Minnesota Humanities Commission and the National Endowment for the

Humanities largely funded, have dealt in one way or another with Minnesota's German heritage and German connection. The proceedings of the first two conferences, published in 1981 as *A Heritage Deferred: The German-Americans in Minnesota*, treated German immigration to the United States in general and to Minnesota in particular, especially during the nineteenth century, and attempted an overview of problems unique to the German-American experience. *A Special Relationship: Germany and Minnesota, 1945-1985* emerged from the third conference, which occurred in April 1982.

This third conference was to be more present-minded, and to explore the involvement of Minnesota people, businesses, and institutions with present-day Germany. Conference planners billed it as "a one-day event for the business and academic communities," which raises serious questions about the audience to which the conference directed the various presentations, and gives *A Special Relationship* a rather schizophrenic quality. Moreover, if there is a "special relationship" between Minnesota and the Federal Republic, the papers in no way demonstrated it.

The opening address by the ambassador of the Federal Republic is a thoughtful and informed speech. It deals with German immigration to the United States, but concentrates on German-American interaction since 1945 and attempts to explain the somewhat different perceptions of East-West relations in the two countries today. The speech mentions Minnesota just once, in passing. Surely the most seriously academic paper presented at the conference was Fritz Stern's "The Cult of Talent and Genius: A German Specialty." The volume contains only a brief and somewhat confusing summary of the paper, and its subject, of course, has no relation to the stated purpose of the conference.

LaVern Rippley forcefully—and forcibly—promotes that purpose in "West Germany: Economic Power—Political Power." Rippley tacks on to a layman's account of the West German economy and how it got that way—Rippley's area of expertise lies elsewhere—sections on "Minnesota and Germany," on the twin cities, on German-owned companies, and on the importance of Duluth. Rather inexplicably, Rippley also adds a brief section on the German Democratic Republic. The article offers some interesting statistics on both Minnesota and the German economy, but not much that is new or that would justify putting the two parts together in one article.

Gerhard Weiss is, on the whole, more successful. His "The Image of the German in Contemporary Minnesota," while eclectic and certainly unscientific in its sources, is both an informative and thoughtful piece. Although most of the evidence Weiss collected comes from

Minnesota and deals with that state, the article stresses repeatedly that developments in Minnesota merely paralleled those in the country at large. The pictures, particularly the Minnesota Historical Society's nineteenth-century photographs, add both clarity and charm. Less substantial is Norbert Benzel's piece on "Cultural Exchange, Germany-Minnesota." Benzel concedes that there has been no comprehensive study to assess this exchange and then offers little more than autobiography and a plug for language study in general and Concordia College in particular.

R. W. Franklin's "The German Theological and Liturgical Influence in Minnesota: St. John's Abbey and the Liturgical Revival" is the most interesting and important contribution to the volume. The uninitiated may need more background on the liturgical movement, and students of religious art and architecture would need more about "Beuronese style," but here at last is a sound piece of scholarly work in an area where Minnesota did serve as a bridge between Germany and the United States.

Melvin Waldfogel's "The German Impact on Modernism in Art" and Gunter Dittmar's "German Rationalism in Modern American Architecture," though also interesting, are ultimately less successful. Waldfogel sees no "special relationship" for the post-1945 period and therefore reaches back to earlier German influences in Minnesota (but mostly elsewhere) which emigrés, art dealers, and Americans who studied in Düsseldorf or Munich introduced. The emphasis he does place on Minnesota is of local interest, but distorts his main argument. Dittmar, by contrast, ignores Minnesota almost completely in his useful, if not altogether novel article, which concentrates, despite its title, as much on the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Chicago school as it does on the reciprocal one of the Bauhaus and Mies van der Rohe. The final contribution, "Issues in German-American Trade and Investment," is the outcome of a panel discussion which the chairman, Daniel Hamilton, prepared. It is far more focused and incisive than the earlier economics article, but again is weakest when it seeks to make a special case for Minnesota.

The appendix consists of a rather touching account of Norbert Benzel's life and experiences as an immigrant (by Clarence Glasrud), lists of German companies with Minnesota subsidiaries and Minnesota companies trading with Germany, and what one can only describe as a lengthy institutional advertisement, by Wolfgang Eber, for the Swiss-German company of whose subsidiary he is group administrator.

Local and state history, culture, and economic development are important and often neglected fields, and conferences on these

subjects are particularly welcome. So is the publication of their results. In the present instance, however, both the conference and the resulting publication (though attractively and even expensively printed, it is a "book" neither in format nor content) lacked a clear and sensible focus. As a result, an inappropriate element of boosterism reared its head, distorted the conference results, and diminished their value.

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## Contributors

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