

From *Cultural Analysis*, vol. 2, 2002

Ytrehus, Line Alice, ed. *Forestillinger om "Den Andre"--Images of Otherness*. Kristiansand, Norway: Høyskoleforlaget AS, 2001. 246Pp. NOK 298 (approx. \$32).

The current volume is an ambitious effort by a group of Nordic scholars to addressing the discursive construction of and subsequent representations of the "Other" in Europe. The approaches of the essayists reflect a broad series of disciplinary perspectives—linguistics, ethnography, cultural history, sociology and folklore—and provide excellent insight into how an interdisciplinary approach to complex phenomena can lead to an understanding that is more than the sum of its parts. Although the majority of the articles deal with the Nordic countries, two articles move further a field to interrogate the impact of constructions of "Otherness" in European political discourse and action. The first of these articles engages Nazi-era Germany and the confluence of anti-Semitism and anti-modernism in the third Reich's genocidal ideology while the second focuses on recent developments in Austria and Serbia. The volume is book-ended by two excellent critical essays by the editor, Line Ytrehus, a folklorist from the University of Bergen, that give analytical focus to what otherwise may have been a highly competent—yet slightly disjointed—series of articles. With Ytrehus's primarily historical introductory essay and her final theoretical essay revealing the challenges confronting scholars who explore the status of ethnic minorities in the Nordic countries, the collection is properly situated in the context of European and global concerns surrounding the discursive construction of the "Other."

Ytrehus's opening essay provides an excellent historical overview of the construction of "Otherness" in Europe, highlighting the frequent representation in oral tradition and visual media of the ethnic "Other" as unclean, childlike, primitive, uncivilized, criminal and a source of dangerous contagion. Using the early nineteenth century public displays of the African woman Saartjie Baartmann (the Hottentott-Venus) as a starting point, Ytrehus traces the development of the category of ethnic "Other" in modern European thought, and emphasizes how, "differentiation and hierarchies in interpersonal relationships can have dramatic consequences for the practical organization of everyday life" (13 *my translation*). She links the emergent category of ethnic "Other" to that of burgeoning nationalism(s) in the nineteenth century. This historical overview of the construction of the "Other" lays the groundwork for the ensuing articles.

In her lead-off article on the "Shifting notions of 'Us' and 'Them' in Norway," Marianne Gullestad reveals how the word "innvandrere" (immigrant) has, in Norway, become a rhetorically charged—and over determined—word that carries significant political weight, noting, "The meaning of the word [innvandrere] seems to oscillate between an implicit code based on 'race' (dark skin) and social class, and a dictionary definition in which these categories are not relevant. This span of ambiguity partly explains its rhetorical power" (49). Societal debate in Norway has shifted away from issues of class to issues of gender and cultural difference in recent decades, and these debates have accordingly raised significant barriers for immigrants' possibilities to be considered by non-immigrants as part of the overarching imagined community of Norway. In large part, the "innvandrere" are seen as a threat to the imagined Norwegian community defined by a master narrative of the welfare state. Ultimately, because of the

perceived differences—differences constructed by majority discourse—that separate the majority from the immigrants (this is an exclusionary process), the "innvandrere" emerge discursively as a threat to what it means to be Norwegian. Although the particular importance of the social welfare state in Norway—and in the other Nordic countries—make Gullestad's argument immediately applicable to the Nordic countries, she correctly notes that a similar exclusionary process plays itself out to a large extent throughout Western Europe.

Pertti Anttonen's study of the emergence of the modern nation Finland provides an excellent historical overview of how folklore can be deployed in the highly political environment of nation building. While the role of Lönnrot's *Kalevala* in the imagining of a Finnish nation has been explored by numerous other scholars (indeed, it is a classic case study in the relationship between folklore and nation building), Anttonen adds a significant dimension to our understanding of how "Sami" and "Karelians" were both mobilized through the *Kalevala* and its attendant scholarship as conceptual categories in the process of defining a Finnish identity. He reveals the ramifications of this "Othering" for the actual populations that were "Othered" in what turns out to be significantly different manners. Whereas the "Sami were "Othered," partly because of their nomadic life style, and forced into a position where they were represented as the primitive "Other," the Karelians became "Othered" in a manner where they emerged as a window onto a lost, earlier Finnish culture.

Stein Mathisen's picks up the thread of the "Othering" of the Sami in his essay examining discursive constructions of the Sami in contemporary Norway. He explores in turn three of the main popular conceptions of the Sami: the magical Sami (often represented as a potentially menacing outsider in folk narrative), the primitive Sami (linked to a nomadic lifestyle, and reflective of the early anthropological notions of societal development) and the contemporary notion of the ecological Sami (an Othering akin to the process familiar in contemporary New Age practice where indigenous peoples are seen as the guardians of ecological wisdom). As Ytrehus notes in her introduction, this final construction of the Sami as ecological sentinels and the subsequent attempts at "cultural preservation" predicated on the need to safeguard this ecological wisdom is an equally limiting process as other, more deliberately exclusive processes.

The subsequent two essays represent a marked shift in the direction of the volume and disrupt the primary focus on the Nordic countries. Although both essays address quite competently significant events (indeed arguably the most significant) in the history of ethnic relations in twentieth century Europe, they seem oddly out of place. Christhard Hoffmann presents a commendably knowledgeable study of the confluence of anti-Semitism and anti-modernism as part of an emergent struggle over identity formation. This struggle laid the foundations for the success of Nazi ideology in pre-war Germany and allowed the vicious genocidal policies of that regime to reach fruition. Likewise, Martin Peterson provides an intriguing analysis of the rise of anti-foreign sentiment and violent nationalism in Austria and Serbia. The case of Jörg Haider's vituperative FPÖ has a disturbing resonance with the emergence of new ultra-Nationalist parties throughout Scandinavia such as the troubling emergence of Pia Kjöersgaard and her Dansk folkeparti as a major voice in Danish politics. Peterson's admonition that in order to combat these disquieting trends one must develop a deeper understanding of the processes that lead to a build up of nationalistic fervor and ethno-political mobilization is one well heeded.

Solveig Moldrheim brings us back to the Nordic countries in her essay, focusing on representations of "ikke-hvite" (non-whites) in Norwegian magazines from 1952, 1975 and the 1990s. She explores the structure of stereotypes, offering a two-dimensional scheme for the classification of stereotypes, with the positive-negative dichotomy defining the x-axis and the exclusive-inclusive dichotomy defining the y-axis. On the basis of this model, Moldrheim is able to show both historical continuities and variation in the development of stereotypes of the "ikke-hvite" (and therefore not Norwegian) in the influential popular media. One could perhaps take issue with the underlying category, "ikke-hvite," as Moldrheim's unsatisfactory explanation of her selection of the category (136-7) seems to fall prey to the exact phenomenon she explores; to an extent her argument begs the question. Despite this analytic lapse, she is able to reveal how there is a clear construction of a category of people who are not Norwegian based on perceptions of skin color among, at the very least, the magazine and ad-copy editors. The extent to which popular reception aligns with this construction of "Other" is open to debate.

Mette Andersson provides a fascinating exploration of how young Pakistani Norwegians negotiate identity in a society in which the negative stereotypes of South and West Asian immigrants are stacked against them. She focuses her study on ambitious, young members of the Pakistani Student Association in Norway. Through an analysis of her interviews, she reveals how an individual negotiates a series of identities on an on-going basis that, in the case of her informants, are deliberately and tactically deployed to undermine the narrative construction of Pakistani Norwegians in majority discourse. Calling these young men and women "ethnic entrepreneurs," she notes that, "For these young people a central aim is to contribute to invalidate the stereotypes about immigrants and Pakistanis in Norway. They want to hold on to the minority traditions they consider to be good, and quit with traditions they view as oppressive and negative" (180). This development is consistent with the types of identity negotiation and cultural hybridity recognized in numerous immigrant communities across the globe.

In an essay describing SOSTRIS, (Social Strategies in Risk Society), a project that looks at groups that have been locked out of the job market in Sweden, Germany, England, France, Spain, Italy and Greece, Birgitta Thorsell and Peterson combine an overarching sociological methodology with an ethnographic focus on individual life histories. As such, SOSTRIS provides excellent comparative materials across numerous European countries for our developing understanding of the interplay between structural phenomena such as the job market and cultural phenomena such as the classification of some people as "ethnic others" and the closely related stereotypes that purport to describe these "others." The final essay in the volume explores how informal spoken language can act as a marker of in-group or out-group membership. Akin to the "valley girl" talk of Frank Zappa fame, Ingrid Hasund explores in depth how small word use in spoken Norwegian acts on both an inclusive and an exclusive level as a linguistic marker of group membership. Given the broken language that constitutes a significant element in the stereotypes of immigrants (see, for example, *Mujaffah spillet* on the website of Danmarks Radio), it is clear how conceptions of the "Other" are not limited solely to perceived differences in physical appearance or received notions of differences in cultural practices.

The essays all stem from an international conference held at the University of Bergen in 1999 entitled, "Images of Otherness: Tradition and Identity," which emerged

from a larger research project focusing on "Det Nye" [The New] at the Center for European Cultural Studies and was funded in part by the now defunct Nordic Network of Folklorists (a successor to the ill-fated Nordic Institute of Folklore). Unlike many conference volumes that are marked by either far too much uniformity or far too little central focus, the current collection essays presents a series of competent essays all focused on a complex issue of considerable importance in contemporary society. Since many of the essays are in English, the volume is accessible to audiences outside of the Nordic countries. Of course, it would have been advisable for the introduction with its essay summaries to appear in English. The volume would make an excellent addition to most classes focusing on contemporary Europe and will also be of interest to researchers engaging topics related to nationalism(s) and minority / post-colonial studies. Although some of the English is tinged by non-idiomatic expressions ("Swedish do-better" instead of "Swedish do-gooder" (191)), these minor gaffes—all of which could have been easily corrected by a native English speaker—should be overlooked given the volume's important contribution to our understanding of the construction of the "Other" in the Nordic countries and Europe.